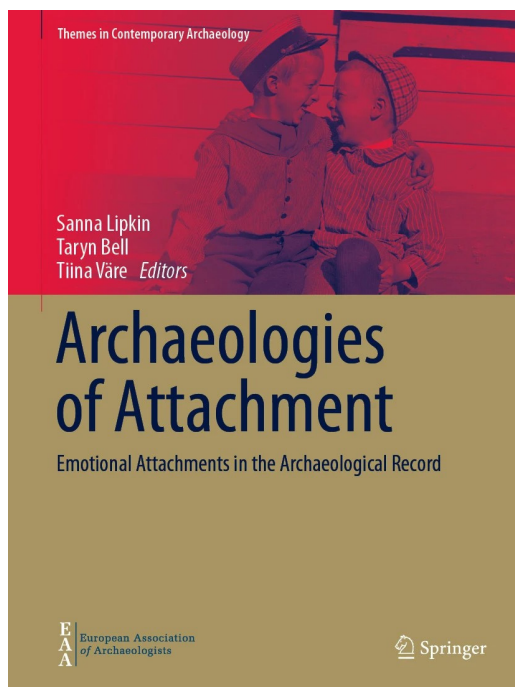


**Sanna Lipkin, Taryn Bell, Tiina Väre** (eds.) *Archaeologies of Attachment – Emotional Attachments in the Archaeological Record*. Springer, 2024. ISBN 978-3-031-66569-11. xi, 121 pp. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-66570-7>

Attachments and emotions. Those mundane yet complex companions that impact our decisions-making, social behaviour and relationships, mood, sleep pattern and appetite. The way we talk and act, the things we lust for and those we try to avoid or fear. Considering that it is often hard to get in terms with and to interpret our own attachments and emotions, let alone those of others, the contributors in the volume ‘Archaeologies of Attachment: Emotional Attachments in the Archaeological Record’ took a brave leap to the deep end. The book was published in September 2024 as the latest instalment in the European Archaeological Association-backed ‘Themes in Contemporary Archaeology’ series from Springer.

The volume has its roots in an online session the editors organized in the 27th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists hosted by Kiel University in 2021. All three editors have their own niche of interest in emotional and attachment matters: Dr Lipkin (University of Oulu) in emotional attachment, childhood and funeral archaeology. Dr Bell’s (University of Leeds) research focuses on object attachments with a time span reaching all the way back to Upper Palaeolithic. Dr Väre’s (University of Helsinki) main connection to past emotions is through her research on breastfeeding practices in Finland through stable isotope analyses of archaeological skeletal remains.

There have been some valuable contributions to the study of emotions and affects in archaeology since the beginning of the 21st century (e.g. Tarlow 2000; 2012; Harris 2010; Harris & Sørensen 2010; Creese 2016; Bell & Spikins 2018; Nugent 2019; Bell 2022). Emotions in processes and rituals, such as those connected to burial practices and mourning



have also become more prominent in historical research in recent years (see, e.g., McNamara & McIlvenna 2014).

Emotion-centric approaches have not been readily embraced by archaeologists. The main criticism is that emotions are too intangible, individualistic and subjective to study (Nugent 2019, 109). Furthermore, being sensitive about the past or allowing emotions to surface – either past people’s or researchers’ – are often avoided: archaeology is object- and material-centred, and in this setting the sentient being remains hidden or withdrawn. Archaeology has long avoided speculation on the humane characters, thereby distancing past personhood.

This recent volume under review is a brave and encouraging addendum to the small choir of researchers wrestling with this complex and often overlooked theme. The book is inspired by the psychological theory of attachment and aims to ‘improve understanding where and how archaeologists can look for evidence of these attachments’ (p. 3). This hands-on orientation is exactly what is needed to make

attachment perspectives gain wider foothold in archaeology, and to add new, holistic approaches to the interpretation of material culture, sites and historical sources.

The book is divided into four parts. The first (Chapters 1–2) is introductory. The second part (Chapters 3–6) focuses on social bonds and the third part (Chapters 7–9) on emotional attachments to objects and non-human subjects. The last, fourth part (Chapters 10–11) summarizes the conclusions and presents further applications of attachment theory.

The editors' Introduction represents the reader with the theoretical framework and suggests ways of recognizing attachment and emotional bonds in the archaeological record (Chapter 1). Taryn Bell's article (Chapter 2) sheds light on the versatile uses of attachment theory when interpreting archaeological data in the context of religion, material culture, social relationships and place. Bell's focus is on the Palaeolithic, which shows that emotion-centric approaches should not be overlooked when dealing with prehistoric evidence. Bell gives excellent examples on how, for example, human-animal bond, place attachment and animal depopulation and adaptation in changing circumstances can leave their marks on archaeological material such as burials or art.

In Chapter 3, Tiina Väre digs into the very roots of our mammalian evolution as she explores how breastfeeding and early age attachment have affected psychological resiliency, well-being and infant mortality in eighteenth century Finland. Her approach is based on scientific methods in the research of human remains. Väre brings up interesting aspects regarding early weaning, human behaviour and intergenerational impacts regarding breastfeeding and archaeological remains.

Sanna Lipkin (Chapter 4) approaches attachment and emotions in the context of the Great Wrath (1712–1721), trauma, coping mechanisms and reconciliation. Her research is based on cultural heritage such as historical sources, site-related memorials, folklore and burial evidence. Lipkin's article reminds us that psychological well-being and the effects of stress, trauma as well as positive coping mechanisms can indeed be detected in archaeological material and on archaeological sites. A content

warning: Dr Lipkin does not spare the reader from the horrible barbarism of Russians during the Great Wrath.

Saara Tuovinen (Chapter 5) casts light on fictive kinship and its manifestation in archaeological evidence. Fictive kinship is used in the context of family or other affections and attachments that are not based on genetic relations, such as foster parenting. As a case study, she focuses on the nineteenth-century family of the Clementeoffs, a childless couple with two foster daughters. This chapter is a good reminder that, just as in the contemporary world, the family dynamics of past were not always simple or based purely on blood relations.

In Chapter 6, Tibor-Tamás Daróczy ventures into the underworld of prehistoric non-human burials of the Eastern Carpathian Basin. Through Neolithic and Copper Age animal burials, Daróczy builds a picture of emotionally charged, affectuous bond between humans and animals, which includes mainly dogs, but also, for example, sheep, cattle, hare, toad and hedgehog. In terms of archaeological theory, the chapter uses phenomenology to approach burial grounds as meaningful and emotionally loaded sites.

Sometimes object attachment can be complex and problematic. In Chapter 7, Lindsay Büster looks at discard of objects through material assemblages of later prehistory and compares those with contemporary complex object attachments. Her chapter reminds us that objects can have many functions and that just because an artefact survives in the archaeological record, this does not always mean that it was appreciated or valued by its owner. This article (and the third part of the volume with its object-centric approach in general) prompts me to suggest that object biographical approaches (Kopytoff 1986) and the less anthropocentric approach, object itineraries (e.g., Joyce 2012; Hahn & Weiss 2013; Joyce & Gillespie 2015), could in the case of complex object relations emphasize the ontological grounds of attachment theory.

In Chapter 8, we head again to a mortuary as Alessandro Quercia leads us to a first and second century necropolis in Piedmont in northwestern Italy. Quercia's focus is on an artefact assemblage of a five-to-ten-year-old

boy's grave. This theme approaches the object attachment from a perspective in memory and identity, value and meaning.

Tuuli Matila (Chapter 9) approaches our times and mundane encounters with objects. The material culture under her inspection are photographs dating back to the years around World War II. Photographs are memories in image form, often emotionally powerful. When we look at a photo, it looks back at us. Through personal, affectuous bond with her own family photos from that era, Matila brings up the position of an observer. The position of the observer and critique of the gaze is crucial in archaeology since politics, trends, opinions and – despite all the requirements for fundamental objectivity – emotions cannot be avoided; they determine where our thinking is focused (Carroll 1993, 245).

In the final commentaries of the volume (Chapter 10 by the editors and chapter 11 by Siân Halcrow), the authors suggest that also the emotions of researchers should be contemplated. I highly recommend this. It is therapeutic and acknowledging one's own emotions and affects as a researcher is an important part of not only the research process, but also of wellbeing. I have recently reflected on my own affects, fears, academic culture shock and emotional bond – lust-love-hate -relationship – to one of my research subjects, a 300-year-old anonymous wreck. In the poetic, biofictive and autobiographical book 'My Darling Wreck – You are a rotting asshole' (2024), I simultaneously felt my own 'wreckness' or vulnerability, and a mindful, existential relationship with those people in the past who had left evidence of themselves as axe strokes on a ship's timber or applied tar, the fragrance still incredibly fresh and intense. Maybe recognizing our own feelings would also help us recognize the feelings of archaeologists and the feelings of archaeology and thus aid us in the study of emotional past. In this reviewed book, Tuuli Matila's chapter on family photographs revealed the researcher's own emotions. The editors do discuss their feelings in Chapter 10 in a very deep and open way. Maybe each chapter could have had their own emotional *post scriptum* or reflection? Or maybe it is the topic for another book?

To sum up, the volume under review prompts the reader to look at objects, places and archaeological evidence in a new, curious way. As the volume puts it, 'attachment theory posits that human behaviour is largely driven by emotions' (p. 38). Archaeology is, to a large extent, about telling tales. Sites and artefacts are interpreted and filtered through stories. And is it not so that any narrative that lacks affects and emotions is a dim and unrealistic abstraction of life, lacking its very essence?

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