



### Neil Faulkner obituary

El arqueólogo e historiador Neil Faulkner nos dejó el pasado 4 de febrero de 2022. Un linfoma acabó con él; con una persona que tuvo una relación de amistad y colaboración con esta revista y conmigo mismo.

Su partida merece que le dediquemos unas líneas en esta necrológica (en inglés, obituary). Ésta narra, sobre todo, los buenos actos que el difunto tuvo conmigo (y, por ende, con esta revista) así como la calidez y cercanía que mostró.

It was only when I saw the cover of one of his books that I became aware of Neil. His books had not yet been translated to Spanish, and due to that, I had never come across one of his works while scrutinising bookshelves in the library or the bookshop.

That changed however, when the cover of one of Neil's books caught my eye. Red and outspoken, "from Neanderthals to neoliberals; a Marxist History of the world" immediately appealed to all I had ever looked for regarding historical theory. Many authors fear writing Marx related terms on the cover: this wasn't Neil's case.

Marxism and History; two concepts that have been linked since the XIXth century. Although one could carry on endlessly talking about these theoretical frameworks, the truth is Neil was one of the few authors brave enough to be able to combine in his work two features most (decent) historians share (besides passion for the understanding of human social behaviour); theory (a rather strong historiographical background) and practice (understood as *praxis*). And these two concepts aren't always found together.

Regarding my meeting him, I have told the story many a time, as the treatment I received when emailing Neil was anything but expected. One could think someone as busy and widely known as him wouldn't even bother to answer a request or a friendly text from a student (as they receive many on a daily basis); I couldn't have been more wrong. In academia webpages, one can ask for the full PDF of the article if the author has not uploaded it. Needless to say, most of the time these requests, sadly, go unanswered.

Neil proved me wrong, not just by contacting me through my personal email, but also by sending me a series of scans of an article which dated back to the nineteen nineties. This surprising predisposition motivated me to ask him for an interview in this very archaeological magazine (and again, surprisingly he agreed!).

And not only did he agree, but he also continued talking with me. This led to an exchange of books; I sent him one of my own after he sent me "Digging Sedgeford" (a volume that was no longer available online and which contributed to the writing process of my master's thesis). Neil was extremely kind, as he wouldn't really benefit from the interview or the book exchange. He truly wanted to be involved in new projects, to collaborate with me and other colleagues... In short, he was always a very accessible researcher.

Sadly, I was later informed that he had passed away. This news caught me (and the rest of the community) off guard. His involvement in this magazine demanded some kind of tribute or, in this case, an obituary, as some sort of "thank you".

His work, naturally, goes far beyond the one described above. He is mostly known for his history related research. As aforementioned, he differentiated himself when compared to other historians: he believed that History was irremediably linked to social activism. In accordance with this, he abided by a certain historiographical school of thought which aims to explain the past from a different perspective. His particular conception of the "history from below" (using the term coined by Markus Rediker) was embodied in many books; *A people's history of the Russian Revolution*, *Apocalypse: The Great Jewish Revolt*, *System crash...* etcetera.

He was quite the multifaceted kind of researcher, and he didn't stick with one single branch of our discipline. In fact, I came to discover he had conducted several excavations, applying his perspective to the field that studies human past through material sources: Archaeology.

In articles like "Archaeology from below" and books like the aforementioned "Digging Sedgeford" he presented his own particular reading of the concept of "democratic Archaeology." He later explained to me that the idea that underlined this view was the acknowledgement of the role of the locals from the place where the dig was taking place. He was an adamant defender of the participation of students and villagers, regardless of their level of education, in some aspects of the archaeological process. This would bring the past in a more immediate and tactile way to a non-passive audience. I have the certainty that this concept in and of itself is not entirely new, but he managed to do something not many have succeeded in doing; he put it into practice - and for that, he's due credit.

That is maybe one of his defining features (besides his apparently never-ending kindness). He started off being an archaeologist (irremediably linked to practice) and only later switched to written History. This switch almost certainly shaped his *modus operandi*, which helped produce many of his titles mentioned above.

He was always very active, and he gave me the impression that he was always developing new ideas (or planning to). Although I only had a brief contact with him, he played a huge role in who I am now as a social scientist. His ideas correlate to those of my (former) research group, as we all are advocates of the so-called "Social Archaeology". Besides, he became a role model for me, as he represented everything I'd like to become with regard to my career (not yet entirely extinct) as an archaeologist and as an author.

This obituary does not only intend to pay Neil a well-deserved tribute. It's a message aimed towards the younger generations of historians and archaeologists. To all the people who don't yet know Neil, believe when I say that his work is a true treasure trove (or at least it was for me).

Neil left us on the 4th of February, 2022, aged 64 due to a lymphoma. He is survived by his partner, Lucy, their three children, Tiggy, Rowena and Finnian, his sister, Maura, and mother, Mary.

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