



Digging the Dirt: The Archaeological Imagination

Jennifer Wallace

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When Jennifer Wallace travelled round Greece as a student, hiking through olive groves to hunt out the stones of old temples and lost cities, she became fascinated by archaeology. It was magical. It was absurd. Give an archaeologist a few rocks and, like a master storyteller, he could bring another world to life. Give him a vague hunch about the past, and he was prepared to spend hours raking through the soil in search of proof.

From the plain of Troy to the Titanic, and from Britain's Stonehenge to Ground Zero in New York, Digging the Dirt explores the excavation sites that have exerted the strongest pull on the public imagination. Some sites, in which bones are indistinguishable from dust, have driven archaeologists to despair. Other sites haunt poets with memories of loss and romance. All reveal the relevance of archaeology to our deepest cultural anxieties.

Passionate and intelligent, Digging the Dirt engages with the work of philosophers and writers who have been stirred by the life below the ground, while never losing sight of the pressing demands of archaeologists today. In a world of postmodern spin, Wallace calls for a renewed sense of the poetics of depth and shows how excavation can play a vital role in bringing powerful political forces to account.

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