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I welcome Seymour's timely observations on the imagery of ancient Iraq in British newspaper accounts of modern conflict in the country. My comments here are those of a participant-observer (albeit trained as neither) in the international media furore that erupted after the looting of the Iraq Museum in mid-April 2003. They should be considered an addendum to the article rather than a critique.

British archaeologists and historians of ancient Iraq are not, on the whole, trained to deal with the media, for until this past year we had almost no expectations of our scholarly work's being reported in the mainstream press, where Britain and ancient Egypt have traditionally dominated such archaeological headlines as there were. Consequently, in the days following April 18, when the story broke that the Iraq Museum in Baghdad had been looted, much of its complexity was lost through miscommunication. The journalists and their academic informants were operating on two different Kuhnian paradigms: "Practicing in different worlds, the two groups of [specialists] see different things when they look from the same point in the same direction" (Kuhn 1962:149). In the first ten days both sides were further hampered by the fact that each assumed that the other had better access to information in Iraq, but as the phone lines had been bombed out some time before we were all dependent on what reporters in Baghdad chose to cover and how accurately they managed to report it. On the one hand I (and the close colleagues with whom I discussed the process as it happened) wished to present the impossibility of knowing for the moment exactly what had happened, the complexity of Iraq's history and its importance to world culture, and why the large-scale theft of large numbers of small undocumented finds (whether from the museums or, worse, straight from archaeological sites) was in some ways just as great a loss as the removal of several dozen well-documented major works from the public galleries of the Iraq Museum.

The majority of the journalists, in contrast, focused on "art," "gold," and "treasures" from the Iraq Museum (to the exclusion of the looted Mosul Museum, standing monuments, and archaeological sites) and privileged Sumerian and other ancient artefacts over classical and Islamic objects. Many of the reporters were in fact the newspapers' art correspondents, more used to covering the Venice Biennale than discussing the archaeology of brown things. The worst of the journalists typically wanted Oriental glamour, decadence, and opulence: ideally, fabulously valuable golden treasures stolen to order for a shadowy art collector or drugs baron with the aid of corrupt Ba'athist museum curators. Around half a dozen proposals for television documentaries along such lines came my way in the second quarter of 2003, none of which, I am happy to report, ever got off the ground. The Doonesbury cartoon strip (admittedly not a British

product but syndicated in the *Guardian* newspaper) ran a long story about the adventures of a stolen artefact from the Iraq Museum, but, bemusingly, it featured a scroll, that most atypical of ancient Mesopotamian objects. (Papyrus, leather, and other organic materials survive only exceptionally in the archaeological record of Iraq.)

But the reportage was not all dismally Orientalist, and the overall outcome was mostly positive. The best of the journalists listened and discussed and gave us space to write our own pieces. Donny George Youkhanna, research director of the Iraq Museum, was interviewed at length and rightly portrayed as hero rather than villain (Gibbons 2003) (though one suspects that his name, Christianity, and impressive fluency in English all helped to domesticate him for the British market). The British government was embarrassed into tightening up antiquities legislation, first for artefacts of Iraqi provenance and now for "tainted cultural objects" worldwide (<http://www.hms0.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031519.htm>, <http://www.uk-legislation.hms0.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/20030027.htm>). No government has yet, however, managed to fund any cultural renewal projects in Iraq, though the British heritage sector and associated NGOs have been very generous with offers of in-kind support.

Most heartening, perhaps, there is heightened public awareness of Iraq's extraordinary archaeology, history, and cultural legacy to the world. Visitor numbers to the Mesopotamia galleries of the British Museum rose substantially last April and appear to have remained high. A recent British School of Archaeology in Iraq study day on the Sumerians was a sellout. Responsible journalists in print and broadcast media are now setting out to produce more thoughtful, deliberative pieces on Iraq, its people, and its history that set out to understand rather than gawp or condemn. Maybe there will come a time when it is as taboo to allow the destruction the cultural heritage of any country in the name of war as it would be to sanction the modern pillage of the Pyramids or the Parthenon.

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There is a long and enlightening paper to be written about the complex relationship between perceptions of the past and modern geopolitics in Iraq. Yet one might question if 605 newspaper stories over 23 years, the "vast majority" of which, according to the author, come from just five sources (the *Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Independent*, the *Guardian*, and the *Financial Times*), offer a broad enough sample to be revelatory about the complex relationship between Iraq's perceived past and its fluid present. Indeed, we do not require a statistical analysis of British press clippings to know that images of the past in Iraq—as well as in Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria—have been deeply entwined with Western imperialism and local nationalisms since