Fantastical Footprints and Fictionalising Science: Folk tales, Fact or Fallacy?

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**Stories have** **a**n established **tradition** **of** using science as a source for inspiration; but science uses stories too. Archaeology dresses data in folklore to aid public engagement**,** with journalists and heritage institutions **drawing people in** throughthe imagination**.** Community projects develop around folk stories and their associated empirical data with transmedial interpretations of material culture and land-art creeping into our galleries, sites and schools. Folk tales and fantasy find themselves sharing space with science in graphic novels and Minecraft, the study of trans-fictional narrative is seeping into interdisciplinary discussion and thus archaeology is no longer confined to the facts; it is developing a new voice **through the fantastic**.

The fledgling discipline of Geomythology epitomises this change. It draws upon folk stories**,** myths and legends to inspire **scientific enquiry**, crossing boundaries in an attempt to unite fantasy and fact. Until recently this endeavour has been dominated by an attitude which ranks stories as the poor cousin, as ‘garbled explanations’ of geological events by ‘preliterate societies’. They are dismissed as being fictional attempts at science. Now the tide isbeginning to turn and stories are answering back, claiming their place as an equal voice in this relationship.

Drawing upon current and traditional theories of anthropology, folklore, philosophy and cognitive narratology this paper opens discussion on how to tackle the complexities inherent in developing this new territory. Striking a balance between discipline borders is riddled with challenges; including the need to translate across subjects where there is yet no shared language. So how best might a methodology be developed for addressing this? **Does** a story even manage to effectively construct, represent and recollect the past? Is there really a battle between fact and fiction here, or are folktales and science **the same** – stories we all tell in a phenomenological response to landscape.