

Post-Processual Archaeology and After

MICHAEL SHANKS

THE TERM “POST-PROCESSUAL” TELLS YOU ONLY THAT THIS archaeology came after processual. Implied is a coherent program, approach, method, body of theory. But post-processual archaeology cannot be said to have any of these. Processual archaeology is still a dominant orthodoxy in the largest community of archaeologists in the world, in the United States, so even the “post” is a misnomer. Nevertheless, archaeology textbooks, in their treatment of theory, regularly have a section on this archaeology.

Post-processual archaeology usually poses as a container for all sorts of trends in the discipline since the 1970s, many arising as a critique of the processual orthodoxy in Anglo-American archaeology, and of traditional culture historical archaeology. Included here are neo-Marxian anthropology, structuralism, various influences of literary and cultural theory, feminism, postpositivist social science, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and many others. This is not the place to deal with these trends in detail.

It is enough to start by saying that post-processual archaeology is a matter of controversy. Nor is it difficult to find a caricature of post-processual archaeology, in textbooks, among excavators on a field project, anywhere archaeology is a matter of debate rather than simply a source of information about the past. The caricature takes the form of an archaeology rooted in an abstract body of difficult (and probably irrelevant) theory which, in opposition to processual archaeology, celebrates historical particularity and the individual (see Gardner, chapter 7), and lacks a methodology that can deliver any kind of secure knowledge. The proponents of post-processual archaeology, in this caricature, are often seen as overly politically motivated, as much interested in contemporary cultural politics as in developing knowledge of past societies. I call this a caricature because a careful reading of the primary literature shows that it makes little sense.

One of the lesser aims of this chapter is to correct these misconceptions. And, given this caricature, I will begin with what post-processual archaeology is not. The reader who has never come across post-processual

archaeology may skip the rest of this section and take the point simply that it is controversial.

Post-processual archaeology is not the result of a paradigm shift in the discipline, a revolution from one kind of science to another. No new normal science (with a new orthodoxy of method and research agenda) has emerged among a community of archaeologists to replace processual or any other kind of archaeology.

Post-processual archaeology is not a coherent theory of the past or of archaeology. Nor is it a body of armchair theory that has grown in the rarefied atmosphere of some university in the absence of any connection with archaeological practice.

The core of post-processual archaeology is not a celebration of the individual set in a particular historical narrative, as opposed to the generalizing explanation of processual science.

Post-processual archaeology is not the archaeological offspring of a postmodern mentality which denies the possibility of secure knowledge of the past or indeed denies the significance of the past itself in a play on the meanings of the past for the present, where multiple contradictory pasts can claim equal validity.

I take the caricature seriously because the polarization of extremes it involves is a genuine feature of Anglo-American academic archaeology. By this I mean that many of my colleagues and their committees and institutions act as if this caricature were accurate. I know many archaeologists in the United States who see the only alternative to orthodox processual science (however modified by the demands of contract archaeology) as an extreme and politically motivated relativism—post-processual archaeology. The debates in conference halls and in the pages of the professional journals have been heated. Academic and professional appointments have hinged on whether someone is seen as a proponent or not of post-processual archaeology. The polarization is real (and parties on both sides have been responsible for the caricatures, or straw men as they are sometimes called). It has been and is part of the social and historical dynamic of Anglo-American

archaeology. It is partly also, I think, a particular campaign in the old culture wars between ideologies of the sciences and humanities (see below).

For this very reason my colleagues from other traditions (in India, Japan, France, Germany, and Spain) can find the debate sterile; their archaeologies have a different social and political dynamic. Their culture wars have been different and so too field archaeologists.

It is important to understand the social dynamics and organizational politics of a discipline. But the issues here are at once and have always been much more than this. I think it is possible now to see through the polemics. For me, the case of post-processual archaeology is that of a committed quest for a better and more thoughtful, but not more exclusive, archaeology. And the positions argued by archaeologists who might be called post-processual (and usually by other than themselves) have now touched most parts of the discipline and profession.

I find myself here coming too close to an inappropriate definition. Instead I want an understanding of the term to emerge through an outline of some key concepts, debates, and connections beyond archaeology.

LOCATION AND PRACTITIONERS

Where might you find post-processual archaeologists? Post-processualism is mainly an academic phenomenon found in university archaeology departments. Its core community has been in Britain, but there are many also in Scandinavia and the Netherlands. A significant portion of a new generation of anthropological archaeologists in the United States seems to be taking up post-processual interests, while there is also a post-processual strength there in historical archaeology. There are a few vocal post-processualists in the museum profession worldwide, fewer still in professional fieldwork.

A key point is that only a minority of post-processual archaeologists would accept the label. And the ideas have spread beyond the practitioners. This is very clear from some of the main conferences held in archaeology, those of the World Archaeological Congress, the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) in Britain, and Nordic TAG in Scandinavia. All are thoroughly informed by post-processual agendas. So too, many of the latest textbooks, though not claiming themselves post-processual, are permeated with the issues I will outline in this short sketch and which have come into archaeology through what has come to

be called post-processual archaeology (Thomas 2000; Johnson 1998; Preucel and Hodder 1996; Gamble 2001; Hodder 2001).

EMERGENCE AND DISTRIBUTION

What prompted the emergence of post-processual archaeology? It first appeared as critique, rooted in dissatisfaction with the way archaeology was going in the 1970s (see Watson, chapter 3). In the United States this was the consolidation of a certain kind of scientific research methodology tied to a systemic conception of society and culture. Specifically the critique aimed at a redefinition of social practice, social units and groupings, and of the nature of culture, all seen to be the heart of a social archaeology aiming at the reconstruction of societies on the basis of their material remains.

Society was seen not as an extrasomatic means of adaptation (the premise taken up in processual archaeology), but a communicative medium. The first studies in post-processual archaeology were of symbolism—interpretations of the meaning of things, of prehistoric burial practices, of house design, of pottery decoration. This was a cognitive archaeology of mind (see Gabora, chapter 17). And symbolism demanded not a fixed specification of singular meaning but a more subtle exploration of the range of possible meanings. This interpretation was not the outcome of a processual method of testing hypotheses and subsuming particular cases beneath generalizations. It proceeded more tentatively, building connections through archaeological data. It was clear from the beginning that post-processual archaeology had a very different overall agenda, often aiming less at knowledge of the past for its own sake, than a knowledge that linked intimately with contemporary issues and interests, such as different values placed on the past. In spite of the differences, post-processual shares a great deal with processual archaeology:

- An outlook critical of the prevailing status quo
- An outlook based on a traditional notion of reasoned critical debate as the cornerstone of the academy
- A location primarily in the research-oriented academy
- An enthusiasm for reflection on the procedures and concepts of a discipline, superficially an enthusiasm therefore for theory (though I hesitate to call this simply theory because processual archaeology is interested primarily in methodology)

- An intellectual optimism that social archaeology has something significant to say about past societies and cultures rather than simply documenting their remains
- An anthropological, or more generally sociological, outlook

Right from the beginning the dissatisfaction and different modes of critique comprised a diversity which has not diminished but increased. If we speak of post-processual archaeology at all, it should really be in the plural, in the spirit of this volume.

CONCEPTS AND INTERESTS

In this section I will outline some of the key concepts that have attracted interest in post-processual archaeologies. As in the social sciences and humanities, the level of abstract discussion can be disorienting. This is therefore also something of a check list for identifying post-processual work. If you read an article about archaeology that agonizes over one or more of these terms, you are probably entering the post-processual! The concepts group around the following.

- Social theory. Just what is the object of an archaeology which aims to explain and understand past societies? The possibility of a social archaeology depends on an adequate conception of what comprises society and culture.
- History and historiography. Basic issues again of time, social change, the event, and narrative.
- Science. What is the character of adequate knowledge and the conditions under which it might be achieved?
- Reflexivity. The self-understanding of a discipline (see Koerner and Price, chapter 21).
- Creative practice. Across all these fields there is an interest in the nature of creative productive practice—in the people and their remains that archaeologists study, and in the archaeological work itself.

I cite examples for each, which works through the concept in relation to an archaeological case and/or contains further discussion and bibliography.

Social Structure and Social Practice (Barrett 1994)

Culture-historical archaeology referred its finds to higher order assemblages and *cultures* in order to describe and explain (structuring effected by cultural norms) and as a means of generating narratives of the past. Processual archaeology relates the patterning of

finds to the workings of sociocultural *systems*—groupings of structured behaviors in social totalities which operate as systems.

Theory since the 1970s has struggled to rethink the character of cultures and systems, these structures, and particularly how they come into being. Post-processual archaeology has not been at all satisfied with the cultural systems of processual archaeology. The criticism is that the systems of processual archaeology are too one-sided, too deterministic, too inflexible. The explanations that processual archaeology has generated seem to be dominated by general overarching social forces and entities. How did real people fit into them?

The issue is actually an old sociological conundrum of social reproduction—people are born and socialized into preexisting social norms, organizations, structures. These structures only can be said to exist in the actions and thoughts of individuals yet clearly extend beyond. How does this work? How are we to understand how people are both determined by social structures, yet also act in ways that work to change those structures?

Post-processual archaeology has followed a great deal of social theory in positing more dynamic social structures. The issue is one of balancing determinism and free will when clearly people do not make history as they will, but nevertheless are not wholly determined in their actions by transcendent social structures and historical forces. It is about how action is to be conceived. Here post-processual critique has come to depend heavily on social theory after Giddens and Bourdieu, who both posited notions of social practice rooted in dynamic relationships between structure and the actions/intentions of knowledgeable *social agents*. This is sometimes described as a contrast between an interest in social behavior (what people do) such as that found in processual archaeology, and an interest in social practice (what people do but understood as conditioned by their knowledge, aims, and intentions).

Overall this matter of *agency* has been sometimes caricatured as a post-processual search for the individual in prehistory. It is not actually about this at all, but rather about how we are to conceive of society in a way that allows its constituent people to be active and creative in reproducing and changing their society (see Gardner, chapter 7).

Processual archaeology has seen social system predominantly as a set of standard types of society drawn from cultural evolutionary thought—bands, lineage,

chiefdoms, states (and derived and related forms). The main features are horizontal and vertical divisions, particularly class and ranking, and the distribution of resources, through social groupings, via exchange and other economic mechanisms. Indeed much processual thought has been seen as focused on economics (see Barker, chapter 29).

This too has been deemed inadequate by archaeological theory since the 1970s. First, issue has been taken with the general categories of band, tribe, chiefdom, state—again seen as too general and inflexible. Second, the internal dynamics of society have been alternatively conceived. Neo-Marxian thought, for example, has given different emphasis to the fundamental features of the social totality, usually focusing on relations of production (see McGuire, chapter 6). More generally the notion of a type of social totality plays a less prominent part in post-processual archaeology.

Power (Miller and Tilley 1984; see Ames, chapter 28) Agency can be defined as the creative potential of human subjects. It refers to their capability to realize their projects, to act as knowledgeable subjects. Human agents have intentions and motivations. They rationalize and reflexively monitor the world around them. This immediately implicates power at the micro level of action, and complements the standard treatment of power as a feature of institutions and top-down application (in the hands of elite individuals, for example). Again attention is focused on local archaeological contexts rather than broad social categories.

Communication, Categorization, and Cognition (Hodder 1982a,b)

With an emphasis on knowledgeable agents as the subject of history, cognition and communication have come to be at the heart of the social and cultural—people classifying and signifying in different ways. The need to account for cognition and communication has been the rationale behind a great deal of post-processual archaeology. Indeed the most long-standing of post-processual archaeologies has been a cognitive archaeology of the mind (see Gabora, chapter 17). The interest is not just in what people did but what it meant—from the meaning of pottery design to what mortuary practices are saying. The disciplinary fields that deal with symbolism and the grammar of culture are much in evidence—structuralism and semiotics, for example.

The Embodied Subject (Meskell and Joyce 2003; Shanks 1999)

So instead of social systems and other social totalities, post-processual archaeology is interested in social subjects, thinking and plotting agents who work their way through society and history seeking goals, constantly sending out signals and signs, constantly interpreting the cultural signification around them. In addition, some processual archaeology has emphasized how subjects are corporeal—feeling and experiencing. There has been a sustained attempt for over ten years to develop an archaeology of the body which deals with matters such as treatments and conceptions of the body, emotion, and aesthetics of self and body.

A Sense of Place (Tilley 1994a; Bradley 1998)

This conception of the subject also means that space is lived and meaningfully constituted, as well as being the neutral setting for social practice and change. Drawing on cultural geography, a post-processual landscape archaeology has emerged which focuses on landscape as a cultural realm of experiences and meanings. Prehistoric monuments have been interpreted as nodes in cultural landscapes of choreographed experience and material cosmologies, as well as containers for the bones of the dead.

History against Cultural Evolution (Shanks and Tilley 1987, 1992; Pluciennik 2005)

The critique of social totalities and stress on human agency has thrown considerable post-processual suspicion on cross-cultural generalization (types of society) and cultural evolution schemes. Again this is part of a post-processual focus on local context and a past that features historical difference rather than similarity (the similarity implied by the broad categories of evolutionary thought).

The post-processual critique of evolutionary thought has also involved its logic of adaptation and selection, concepts far from the characterization of social practice found in sociology and cultural anthropology, post-processual archaeology's cognate disciplines. Evolutionary thought has little interest in agency and semiotics, and clearly operates at a different scale (Bentley et al., chapter 8; Collard et al., chapter 13).

Against Metanarratives (Rowlands 1989)

The cross-cultural generalizations so often employed in processual archaeology have intersected with a variety of metanarratives, overarching narrative schemes

under which particular archaeological sequences may be subsumed or accommodated. These are the very familiar accounts of the development of social complexity, including the rise and fall of civilization, the origins of agriculture (see Pluciennik and Zvelebil, chapter 27), the development of the state. Other meta-narratives deal with the roots of contemporary political forms such as the nation-state (metanarratives of European origins, for example). While some post-processual archaeology has been interested in narrative, it not an interest in these grand schemes, which again seem to gloss over local contexts and specific archaeological histories.

Epistemology and Ontology (Tilley 1994b; Hodder et al. 1995)

Processual archaeology has developed methodologies of hypothesis testing which aim to bring about a tight relationship—epistemological closure—between the accounts offered by the archaeologist and observed data (see Watson, chapter 3). The efforts of post-processual theory have been mainly in a different direction, exploring the character of what archaeologists are interested in—the ontology of society. The critique of generalization has intersected with suspicion of this closure. Post-processual archaeologists tend to see their endeavor as interpretation—a never-ending process of exploring cultural pasts that are seen as indeterminate and open networks rather than contained systems.

Discourse (Shanks 1996)

Archaeological interpretation itself is carried out by knowledgeable agents—archaeologists. Accordingly, it is less easy for post-processual archaeology to treat itself as a set of neutral algorithms for producing knowledge of the past. Archaeologists too are motivated, interested, located, strategizing (see Bintliff, chapter 10). Hence there is a conspicuous absence of methodological prescription in post-processual archaeology. Instead, the discipline is seen much more as a political field—archaeologists located in institutions and society, working, like many others, on material finds under a project of establishing knowledge of (past) society and culture. The concept of discourse refers to this notion of archaeology as a mode of cultural production. It has enormous implications, most notably that archaeologists don't so much discover the past as produce accounts of it; their attention is drawn as much to contemporary values and attitudes as to the past itself.

DEBATES AND TENSIONS

This check list of post-processual concepts and interests is not meant to imply a unity or orthodoxy. Far from it, the items on it are embedded in the following debates and issues.

The Politics of the Past (Shanks and Tilley 1987, Leone and Preucel 1992, Leone et al. 1995)

That data are theory laden and not just neutral finds of a discovered past has long been accepted. An early argument of post-processual archaeology was that facts cannot be separated from values. The past is endemically about value (what is preserved, what is chosen for study). This point has been taken further. The notion that knowledge is discourse means that all inquiry is interested, all interpretation is located in the projects of particular archaeologists. These are complex articulations of power and knowledge (the power and resources necessary simply to mount a professional field excavation). Values and selective interest are embedded. As Koerner and Price discuss in chapter 21, the questions go to whose and what past to keep and study. This is a political field. The debate is how to proceed. Is there a possibility of neutral science at all? Is it a matter of securing a methodology? Is it a matter of correcting political bias, or of representing different interests? Is it a matter of tolerance?

Multiplicities, Pluralism, and Relativism (Lampeter Archaeological Workshop 1997)

That knowledge is discursive and located in particular projects is related to the inseparability of past and present. This further entails another argument—that there is not just one past, but many, dependent on particular interests and values. For some, this undermines any authority that the post-processual archaeologist might want to claim. Surely the past happened and is over, cannot be changed? It cannot be invented at will, and if it can what makes any account of the past better than another? The counter is to hold that the past is never singular, that the sociocultural fabric is multiple, slippery, undecidable, always more than any representation that is made of it.

The issue is also that of relativism, that accounts of the past are always relative to something else. All those points under the politics of the past undermine the notion of an adequate explanation that seeks validity through closure. There are always more and other interpretations (Chamberlin 1890). But how do we judge these? Are all accounts dependent on cultural location, in which case should cultural difference not

always be respected? This is a complex debate. But to my knowledge, no archaeologist has ever argued that anything goes and that all accounts of the archaeological past are equally valid.

Threat or Complement to Science? (Shanks 1999)

The idea of multiple pasts and multiple accounts of the past seems to run counter to a scientific archaeology, that there can be a tight relationship or closure between scientific account and its object of interest, that this closure constitutes validity, at the expense of other accounts. Here science is sometimes pitted against relativism, post-processual archaeology against those who overtly claim their scientific status. But it depends on how archaeological science is conceived. Is it really so singular?

Archaeological research may be seen as a process of simplification which aims to understand the inner workings of its object of interest. This process of modeling, in aiming at a tight relationship between explanation and that to be explained, may actually result in a representation or account that looks little like the original but grasps and explains some of its essential working. Research here focuses in a convergence on the object.

Alternatively, research may operate in a less reductive way, taking its source material as a resource for constructing a model which aims to elaborate and amplify. Research might here aim to enrich its object of interest through a disclosure of connections and associations, in a divergence away from the object of interest.

Whether or not one or the other is called science, both strategies may be rigorous and empirical, open to critical scrutiny and assessment. Post-processual archaeology has tended (with notable exceptions) to look like the latter.

Past Meanings: Making Sense (Hodder et al. 1995; Buchli and Lucas 2001)

The cognitive archaeology of mind has found it very difficult to assign specific meaning to things like mortuary rituals or iconographies. There are many ethnographic and historical cases which caution against it. Post-structuralist thought too has thrown doubt on the ultimate decidability of meaning. It is clear that in the realm of culture there are multiple rather than single meanings. Culture itself has come to appear as a slippery semiosis or process of signifying and interpreting sense. Hence an interest in exploring the meaning of things is actually less about attributing

meaning than a process of understanding, making sense, or understanding the conditions under which meanings were established.

Postmodern Irrelevance? (Bapty and Yates 1990; Walsh 1992)

Why all this introspection and self-reflection in archaeology? Is all this agonizing just pointless postmodern navel gazing? It could even be harmful in detracting from the scientific authority held by a unified science with a secure sense of its aims and methods. Some have felt that the urgent and important issue in archaeology is not theory at all but the rescue of a fast disappearing past. Academics may have the luxury of ruminating on the relative philosophical merits of hermeneutics and critical realism, whereas real-world professionals have to find a way of stretching their budget in doing a good job on the recovery of a prehistoric hunter-gatherer camp.

Others point out that such a pragmatically oriented and conservative technics actually has little to offer in the way of intellectual comment and has abrogated its responsibility of judgment and expertise to other agencies that will determine policy. The point embedded in post-processual archaeology—thinking about archaeological approaches to the past and experimenting is not a dispensable luxury.

Method: Doing Post-Processual Archaeology (Lucas 2001; Hodder 1999)

Post-processual archaeology has no methodological texts. It has often been commented that no new field methods have arisen. This is partly because its interest has been in exploring the nature of its object of interest and elaborating the conditions under which this encounter takes place. While its conceptual tool kit or body of theory is extensive and abstract, key features almost preclude a general methodology. These are:

- Its sensitivity to specific location of research and study
- Its emphasis on the multiplicity of the past
- The complementarity of different approaches (pluralism)
- The model of open-ended interpretation, the hermeneutic stance favored by many

The contrast I drew above between convergent and divergent research outlooks is relevant here, since post-processual archaeology implies open exploration and elaboration rather than a reductive and efficient

simplification. Nor is there any necessity for a radically different methodology. Science studies have shown that laboratory science is far from the philosophical model of hypothesis testing and the experimental method, and there is far less of a fit anyway with field archaeology.

POST-PROCESSUAL THEORY AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

From the very beginning post-processual critique was rooted in studies of archaeological material. It has never been simply a body of theory or critique. The key concepts listed above, while often belonging to debates in social theory that reach far beyond archaeology, occur primarily in attempts to develop more adequate archaeological accounts of past societies that, for example, embody a more dynamic notion of social structure, recognizing the creativity of human agency, or avoiding the generalizing determinism that was seen to be associated with the society types of culture evolution.

Symbolic and structural archaeology (Hodder 1982b), right at the beginning of the post-processual project, focused on case studies of European prehistory. Since then British and European prehistory has been profoundly changed by post-processual prehistoric archaeology. Included here can be the projects of John Barrett (1994), Chris Tilley (1994a, 1996), and Julian Thomas (1999). There are now many writers who display a range of empirical work (Miller and Tilley 1984; Hodder 1987a,b; Whitley 1998; Thomas 2000). Some are focused on particular aspects of the post-processual project, for example, the major collections of work in gender archaeology (beginning with Gero and Conkey 1991). There are experiments in writing (Spector 1992; Shanks 1992; Schrire 1995; Edmonds 1999; Campbell and Hansson 2000; Pearson and Shanks 2001; Shanks 2004). There are major empirical works in the archaeology of Greco-Roman antiquity (Shanks 1999) and medieval studies (Johnson 1993, 2002). Historical archaeology in the United States is inconceivable without the post-processual critique at its heart (Leone and Potter 1988, McGuire and Paynter 1991). An archaeology of the contemporary past has emerged as part of a broader material culture studies (Buchli and Lucas 2001; Buchli 1999; Pearson and Shanks 2001; Campbell and Hansson 2000).

More generally it is increasingly being recognized that post-processual critique has worked its way through much of academic archaeology. Key topics that indicate this are reflexivity, politics and ethics,

stress on the importance of cognition and communication, explorations of pluralism, gender, and open experiment.

POST-PROCESSUAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN CONTEXT

The diversity of post-processual archaeology is clear when the connections are considered with the social sciences and humanities and with institutional and political cultural change since the 1970s.

Theory

A general expansion of academic research in the humanities and social sciences in the 1960s and afterward was associated with disciplinary diversification and, by the 1970s, with increasing introspection. A simple indication of this is the increase in academic books and journals devoted to theory (e.g., Hodder 2001). Curriculums adapted to include new courses in theory. Academic publishers like Macmillan and Hutchinson, as well as the university presses like Cambridge, introduced series to service the new academic industry. Waves of new approaches, rethinking doctrines and critiques, swept through literary studies, sociology, geography, history, and other disciplines—structuralism (coming out of linguistics and anthropology), neo-Marxism (after a revitalization of the New Left in the late 1950s and 1960s), and a series of philosophies like phenomenology and realism. It seemed no longer enough to study a body of material; the study itself, its methods and assumptions, needed justification in more or less careful philosophical grounding.

The diversification, the sometimes rapid succession of new ideas and the context of critical academic debate made for vigorous and often belligerent theory wars. Processual archaeology had been part of the enthusiasm for a rethinking of anthropology along social science lines. It has clear affinities with the new geography (David Clarke made a great deal of them). It was intensely critical of other archaeologies (read: Lewis Binford) and in turn received the intense attention of post-processual critique.

The polemic of theory wars encouraged rhetorical polarization of differing positions, like processual and post-processual—the straw men of debate mentioned above, caricatures of an opponent easily knocked down. But it is possible, I think, as the diversity becomes more established in university departments, to see a general increase in sophistication. The pluralism this has entailed is being more recognized as a strength of a discipline like archaeology rather than a problem.

The Linguistic Turn in the Humanities and Social Sciences

One of the waves of rethinking in the humanities and social sciences focused on the character of culture (Hodder and Hutson 2003). Building on structural linguistics, structuralism, poststructuralism, and related fields like semiotics proposed culture as communication. It became possible to treat any kind of cultural manifestation as a signifying field, with underlying rules of grammar and pragmatic expression. This has sometimes been called the linguistic turn (see Bintliff, chapter 10; Koerner and Price, chapter 21). It had a great deal of influence on archaeology, particularly post-processual. The renewed interest in cognition and symbolism from the mid-1970s is archaeology's own linguistic turn, with a project of establishing systems of meaning in bodies of material culture seen as analogous to text. For some post-processual archaeologists the archaeological project became one of interrogating sign systems.

What emerged in the 1990s was a modification of the initial thesis (objects as text), and a realization that (material) culture, one of archaeology's prime interests, is indeed meaningful, but meaning is inherently slippery, negotiated by makers, users, and interpreters. The words used to express this include polysemous and undecidable.

Critical Theory

For some, the term "critical theory" refers to the fertilization of literary studies by Continental thought, particularly deconstruction (after the work of Jacques Derrida). For others it is almost synonymous with theory itself. But it is also useful to be more specific and connect the term with a strand of Western Marxism (outside of the Soviet Union and China) within which the work of the Frankfurt School (in Germany in the 1920s and after the 1950s; in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s) is prominent. Practitioners include Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Benjamin, and Habermas.

The general outlook of critical theory has been very influential. There is a branch of post-processual archaeology that calls itself critical archaeology (Leone 1986). Critical theory is rooted in notions of critique, a practice that crystallized in the work of Kant. Critique is reflection on the condition of possible knowledge and involves a rational reconstruction of the conditions which make language, cognition, and action possible. Critique is also, after Hegel and Marx, distinctively suspicious of orthodox systems of thought.

Critique tends to oppose neat systems of thought on the grounds that they are always inadequate to reality. It asks questions of people's identity, their subjectivity, how they come to be subject to powers beyond them. Critique is also associated with a political project of liberation from distortions, constraints, and traditions via insights into the working of power.

This articulation of knowledge with empowerment and liberation is a notable issue in the politics of archaeology. Critique, in connecting study and research to its contexts, is a constituent of any discipline that thinks reflexively about itself.

Material Culture Studies and the Interdisciplinary

The boundaries of traditional disciplines have become increasingly permeable, again since the 1960s and especially in the humanities and social sciences. Geography, for example, redefined itself in the 1960s as the study of space, a dimension in just about all of the humanities and social sciences. Comparative literature, women's studies, cultural studies, media and communication studies, and, of late, performance studies are interdisciplinary fields that have emerged.

Archaeology has never been one of the traditional disciplinary fields like history. It sits uncomfortably between Classics (itself only coherent because of the cultural capital invested in Greco-Roman antiquity), history, art history, cultural and biological anthropology, and indeed also earth sciences. Arguably archaeology has never become an interdisciplinary field like those listed above, though there are signs that attempts are being made to deal creatively with the diversity of archaeology, helped by deeper appreciation of theoretical agendas (Hodder 2001). Post-processual archaeology has encouraged diversification and has contributed to the emergence of another interesting interdisciplinary project—material culture studies, which ranges from design and art history through anthropology and cultural studies to materials science. One department in the United Kingdom, at University College London, has made material culture the core of its mix of anthropology and archaeology. The question of integration and diversity is a key to the disciplinary future of archaeology.

Culture/Science Wars

In my university they are called the fuzzies and the techies, and the difference is institutionalized in the separated departments of cultural/social anthropology and anthropological sciences. It is the old division, after C. P. Snow in 1905, between the two cultures of

the sciences and the humanities. This distinction is one of the main battlefields of the theory wars. Some post-processual archaeologists have explicitly rejected science as a spurious rhetorical strategy in archaeology (Tilley 1990).

More generally and particularly in the United States the sociological and anthropological study of science, science studies, has generated enormous controversy over its characterization of science as a social construction (hence constructivism). The debates are again spoiled by extreme polarization. What I think is clear is that this inspection of science reveals it to be so much richer than the philosophical distillations of scientific method, which, for example, lay behind the reformulations of archaeology as science in the new archaeology of the 1960s and early 1970s. This work is for me laying down conditions for a deeper understanding of a diverse multidisciplinary archaeology (Lucas 2001).

Postmodernism

Another culture war still runs between those who have championed a new cultural outlook called postmodernism, and those who oppose it as an abandonment of good reason. This is quite an enormous cultural issue, revolving around the very character of the contemporary world order and our understanding of it (Walsh 1992; Bintliff 1993).

Archaeology, as well as cognate disciplines, is certainly implicated. Archaeology has been a prominent agent in the establishment of the identities of modern nation-states and in an evolutionary understanding of the diversity of human culture generally. It is intimately connected with the growing sector of cultural tourism, people visiting the past in their leisure time. Professional archaeology and museums are subject to major cultural policies, usually involving conservation, the inventory of items deemed heritage, and public education. More generally archaeology is part of a cultural field of understanding that includes the privileging of empirical research over traditional and spiritual understanding of the past, of systems of inspection, management, and discipline. Archaeological metaphors of excavating deep to reveal origins vital to rational senses of identity extend far beyond the discipline.

Some have connected post-processual archaeology with postmodernism. We are again in a world of caricatures. Postmodernism might be described as a set of movements in the arts, philosophy, the social sciences, style, and popular culture which have moved away from

the features of a modernist aesthetic and practice. Some connect it with the changes in the modern political economy of flexible capital accumulation. Both are characterized as fragmented, referencing different pasts and cultures without regard for traditional forms of authenticity, working on the demise of the old certainties of class culture, ethnic identity, and the institutional forms of the nation-state. Fundamentally in the hands of the postmodern intellectual, theory and method aim to elaborate the multiple relations between culture, class, ethnicity, and gender positions and their effects on cultural production and consumption, destabilizing easy singular readings of cultural products.

This celebration of diversity and critique of the authorized outlook of a cultural high ground is unsettling to many, especially when neutral abstract reason itself seems to be challenged. Postmodernism has been seen as antireason and relativist.

This part of the culture and theory wars is an intellectual minefield. Potentially, archaeology is deeply involved in vital cultural agendas that are redefining contemporary culture. Potentially because many archaeologists see no connection at all, particularly if they see their role as one of producing knowledge of what happened in the past.

Postcolonial Ethics and Politics

The ethnographic encounter which for a century and more has defined anthropology as a discipline, the fieldwork conducted in another culture, has been an issue that has brought the discipline to a crisis. In our postcolonial times, it has become clear that ethnography and anthropology are seriously compromised by their intimate association with colonializing imperial powers—in their regimes of knowledge of other, subordinate societies. The question now is not how do we rescue disappearing other cultures, nor even how do we represent other cultures, but how do we get on with other people when we find the notion of the distanced neutral and scientific observer untenable (Meskell 1998; Shanks 2000).

Many archaeologists may see this as irrelevant to archaeology, which deals with the past. But the separation of synchronic present, the subject of ethnography, and diachronic past, the subject of archaeology, clearly arose in the same cultural project of locating other cultures in relation to a superior inspecting agency which aims, in an unreciprocated project, to generate knowledge of them.

The issue of the study of Native American archaeological remains is one that throws this connection into

focus. There is genuinely felt opposition from some people to an external agency inspecting them and their past for knowledge which is claimed to be good for its own sake, or in the service of an abstract epistemology which has little respect for traditional beliefs.

There are crucial questions here of the ethics and politics of archaeology. Is there just one archaeological method applicable to all cultures no matter where and when they were? Can there really be more than one archaeological science?

Globalism and Heritage

Uses of and references to the material past have increased with modernity and since the formal inception of archaeology in the eighteenth century. There is a growing culture industry centered on preserved and packaged pasts, figuring in tourism, the entertainment industries which frequently implicate interpretations of the past, and all sorts of negotiations of identity and belonging. The material past is articulated in various ways, as the prehistoric origins of a nation-state, the historical roots of the United States, the experience of an exotic and lost civilization, of monuments seen to represent all that is cherished or despised in a culture.

Some have discerned a latest cultural phase, belonging with postmodernity and termed globalism (Hodder 2001, Shanks 2000). It refers to the expansion, especially after the fall of the eastern bloc in 1989 and after, and with the opening up of communist China to market forces, of the capitalist market across the globe. And with this have come new movements to celebrate and protect the local and regional in the face of standardization promoted by faceless multinational corporations for the sake of profit. And the local and regional are always in historical setting. Heritage is a key concept. Archaeology, as the mobilization of material fragments of the past, is there.

This is most often happening without any reference to academic archaeology. For some this is the way it should be. Many archaeologists would make a radical separation between research and interpretation for a wider nonprofessional and popular audience, between the production of knowledge of the past and its subsequent use. But these distinctions have been blurred by post-processual archaeology with its notion of archaeology as the mediation of past in the present. This gives tremendous credence to projects which aim not only to set archaeology in historical and cultural context but also develop ways of intelligently commenting on these globalist issues.

Cultural Resource Management

There is already a professional interface between the discipline and the wider community—the field of cultural resource management. This sector is by far the largest employer in archaeology, yet it is only just beginning to enter into a creative dialogue with archaeological researchers. It has been and largely remains a service sector for a conservation ethic promoted by state interests and in the context of development projects. The conservation ethic, that some parts of the past are of cultural value, is a direct mobilization of the past in the present through its structured continuity.

Though clearly there would be no future for archaeology without policies that ensure the protection of the remains of the past, the worlds of academic research and cultural resource management remain distant. Whatever priority and authority is given to research for the simple sake of knowledge of the past, an effective dialogue through the agendas unfolding within this wider context of postcolonial and globalist postmodernity seems urgently required. Post-processual archaeology has something to say. It is up to the archaeologists themselves to act.

ARCHAEOLOGY WITH ATTITUDE

The roots in critique and the focus on the character of social practice means that there is thus a core that can be called post-processual archaeology, though strictly it is plural and we should refer to post-processual *archaeologies*. Some have been content to redescribe post-processual archaeology as interpretive archaeology—rooted in interpretation. But then a range of centripetal and centrifugal interests and issues immediately carry us off in all sorts of ways. Here it is better to think of post-processual archaeology as a field of discourse—a field of matters and controversies which are connected but have no necessary unity.

Alternatively, one can see the post-processual as an attitude central to cultural creativity. These are the features of this attitude:

- Constant questioning and critical skepticism
- Working with the indissoluble articulation of past and present in the archaeological project
- Asking how can we understand cultural difference, past and present
- Imagining that difference

I prefer to emphasize this attitude described in the previous section. Because for me, it better enables the

discipline to deal with the crucial issues that it is now facing.

I have written of a notable split between academic archaeology and the contract sector of archaeologists who serve the demands of development and conservation legislation and values, excavating and publishing to order. Professional contract and cultural resource management often has little scope for the experiment and reflection which has so concerned me in this sketch of post-processual archaeology.

Archaeological agendas are clearly set far beyond the academy as well as within it. The disciplinary self-reflection promoted by post-processual archaeology has helped understand how this works, with studies of the history of the discipline as well as ideas of archaeological heritage, and the politicization of the archaeological past. My sketch of the contexts of post-processual archaeology shows how archaeology is increasingly implicated in vital and contemporary cultural shifts.

One trend that is clearly affecting cultural resource management and archaeology is globalism. Let me add to my comments above by way of a concluding example. We are in the postcolonial world of global interconnection. It is a paradoxical articulation. On the one hand is a unifying force of the abstract commodity form (the capitalist free market), together with its associated culture industry (predominantly Western and American). On the other hand is an infinity of individual and local points and moments of consumption—both real and alienated abstractions. An example is the ubiquity of Western popular culture, such as music, consumed in an infinity of individual ways in the mix of songs on an iPod.

In this globalism the mobilization of the material past seems to figure larger and larger. Material archaeological roots give a real sense of local identity in contrast to global culture. This different past happened here. Yet the sites and finds remain joined in a global system of value and accreditation—notions of the world heritage site, or through standard notions of cultural value embodied in the culture ministry's inventory and tourist itinerary of cultural sites worth preserving and visiting. This is the real dispersal of what I have called the field of discourse that is archaeology.

One response might be to emphasize archaeology as a professional science with a standard set of procedures. Yet even my brief sketch here should indicate that this will not enable an effective engagement with the cultural energies in global archaeology. What I think is needed is an archaeology able to cope with

the globalist agenda. For me this can only be a cultural resource management made flexible in its own articulation with a cultural sensitivity and sophistication afforded by a reflexive discipline such as that developed in post-processual archaeology.

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