**Death, Burial, and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity**

by Jon Davies


London: Routledge, 1999

256 pp.

ISBN 0415129915

Paper

Reviewed by Jennifer Hiller

With the intent of reviewing the understandings and treatments of death in several of the major world religions present in antiquity (Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Zoroastrian, Greco-Roman, Judaism, and Christianity), Davies provides a world tour of death cults and their origins. Pointing to thanatologies, or the "meaning of life as seen through the lens of death," he argues that a society’s view of their creation - "cosmology sculpted by history" - and the associated attitudes towards creation of the deities and natural forces involved influence the social understanding of death. He goes on to review both the key elements of the cosmologies and the funerary rituals and myths of afterlife associated with each of these cultures, with an eye towards understanding the differences between them as well as the effects that they had on one another’s evolutionary trajectories. This analysis culminates in his final chapters, which discuss pagan Roman burial customs and myths and contrast them with the then-young Christian faith; he analyses Christianity as both very similar and very different from what came before it. He further contrasts the martyr-hero of Christianity with the traditional hero of the older religions, and argues that the boundary set up between the mortal and the divine, which traditional heroes tried to breach in a search for immortality, was relatively easily traversed in the martyr deaths of the early Christian heroes. He concludes by elucidating the similarities between the reverential treatment of the early Christian martyr and the Euro-Christian war hero of the two world wars, pointing out that the external forces acting on a society (war, instability, and the like) have the capacity to influence the funerary customs of often specifically delineated sectors of society, such as war dead.

The book provides a fascinating introduction to the funerary rites and myths of several societies in Europe and the Middle East in antiquity, and for a reader new to the subject, the similarities and differences between each (as well as the inter-relationships to be found, evidence of religious cross-pollination) are
clearly pointed out and well-explained. Someone not schooled in the mythologies of these cultures may feel a bit lost in some of the terminologies and sources used, but Davies certainly does an admirable job of condensing a tremendous amount of comparative material into a manageable and comprehensible volume. There are some incidences of confusion with chronology, though; students of Near Eastern archaeology may rail at the author’s treatment of the vast repertoire of funerary behaviour in the Near East from 4000 BC to 800-600 BC as essentially unchanging, and not germane to a discussion of the development of religious ideas in the more major religions. The archaeology of the Near East is addressed briefly, but the focus is on the religions of the states. This is, however, an understandable approach if one takes into account that Davies works in religious studies, not Near Eastern archaeology, and the vast corpus of information encompassed by both these disciplines would preclude a more thorough treatment of prehistoric and protohistoric religious traditions.

Overall, the book is easy to read, and provides a good introduction to the study of comparative funerary religion for archaeologists and others outside the discipline of religious studies. The information and arguments were well-presented and understandable, and the descriptions of the funerary cults of the past societies, and the relationships between those cults and the perceptions of humanity and society as a whole, were fascinating. It’s well worth the time, even if it’s outside one’s normal field of interest.

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Prehistoric Britain from the Air.
by Janet and Colin Bord, photography by Jason Hawkes
London, Phoenix Illustrated, 1997
158 pp.
ISBN 0-75380-707-6

Reviewed by Mark E. P. Hows
A large format book with 158 pages, extremely well laid out with a small amount of text linking 130 beautiful colour aerial photographs of some of Britain's best known prehistoric sites. The book is divided into three main sections, England, Scotland and Wales although omitting Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. The book covers hillforts, standing stones, stone circles, henges, hillfigures, burial chambers, man made caves, ancient villages, huts and long barrows.

The book has a short introduction providing the reader with alternative sites to visit rather than the tourist traps of stately homes and the like, and it is these sites that are depicted and described in the book. The aerial view allows some of the prehistoric sites to be seen from a completely different perspective and for some sites, such as the Uffington white horse, as they were intended - a view that is not usually available to us. Some sites take on a new significance as they can be seen not in isolation but as part of the landscape when viewed this way.

The informative narrative provided about each site investigates myths and legends associated with the sites and this is interwoven with the archaeological evidence providing an account of how each site was used and some insight into the ancient patterns of life associated with the sites. It reveals valuable information about the layouts of hillforts, villages and stone circles, something that is overlooked by the majority of books on the subject, and this is the great attraction and strength of the book.

Most of the major prehistoric sites are depicted with along with some lesser-known but very interesting sites, with a particularly good section on Uffington Castle and white horse, Stonehenge is of course shown in great detail. I was pleasantly surprised to find several hillfigures covered in this book.

There is also a list with National Grid References and a map of most of the places to visit depicted in the book, along with a useful bibliography.

My main criticism is the omission of any photographs from the particularly archaeologically rich Orkney and Shetland Isles and only one site from the Hebrides (Dun Beag Broch on Skye) is depicted, but even so, this is a wonderful book and a worthy addition to any bookshelf, particularly for £14.99.
**Understanding the Neolithic.**

by Julian Thomas
London, Routledge, 1999
University of Lund, Sweden, 1997
266 pp. (including figures, bibliography, index)
(paper)

Reviewed by Liam Kilmurray

*Understanding the Neolithic* is a book that explores five main areas of archaeological evidence: economic (subsistence), monuments, deposition practices, mortuary analysis and pottery. Set in Southern Britain, chiefly the areas of Avebury, Stonehenge, and the Upper Thames Valley, the analysis concentrates on the Neolithic period (ca. 4000 - 2000 B.C.). Amongst a myriad of sites and a sometimes-exhaustive array of data (much to the author’s credit) these areas are investigated in what Thomas refers to as ‘parallel narratives’. This book also addresses the reasoning behind archaeological interpretations of these central practices, both those that have led to our present understanding of the Neolithic, and the author’s reevaluation of some of these issues. The five practices are woven ‘together’ in the final sections of the book that sets up the three regional analyses. Thomas argues that these five different aspects of culture change may have had a degree of autonomy, and that as they operated on different temporal and spatial scales they should perhaps not ‘gel’ together to fit one explanatory model. In all, this produces a lively and informative book that re-examines and reasserts the importance of some of the concepts that underpin our understandings of the Neolithic. This contributes to a clearer understanding, if not of the Neolithic then certainly about the Neolithic.

Thomas’ theoretical approach (Chapter 1) is declared as genealogical, described as an analysis that searches for points in time where human practices were subject to structural change. This approach has at its base the undermining of conventional assumptions regarding the past, and to that end Thomas is also
critical of the meta-narrative of continuous progress. A genealogical approach is one in which totalities are disbanded and "all common senses dissolve" (p. 5). There is no set human nature; it is, as Neitzsche is enrolled to confirm, transient and historical. Thomas’ philosophy involves aspects of Heideggerian thought and Marxist views on the social relations of production. Thomas argues that the most important contribution Marx made was the notion that being in the world precedes consciousness of the world. This is a theme close to Thomas’ heart, and the subject of much of his more recent writings (1997, 1998). In the text at hand some of these views are re-worked briefly, and the extent to which they inform his interpretations varies throughout the text but is, perhaps, best seen in the propositions that people use materials to think with and that there is no *a priori* meaning in the world but rather meaning exists through language and materiality. Meaning is historical, and material culture, as active and signifying, plays a crucial role in the creation of identity.

**Economy and Agriculture**

This section (Chapter 2) begins with an overview of some of the earlier influential interpretations of the Neolithic in Southern Britain. Thomas is critical of previous classifications of the Neolithic, specifically the economic base seen to lie at the heart of the period. Previous economic approaches which saw agriculture as a defining attribute of the British Neolithic are seen to have "slipped into orthodoxy on very shaky foundations" (p. 30). Thomas aims to demonstrate how such interpretations have hindered a fuller understanding of the diversity of the Neolithic. Such orthodox views of the Neolithic, he argues, treated pottery, cereals, sedentism and domestication as elements of a Neolithic ‘package’. This leads to the expectation that where one element of this ‘package’ is found the others will be also be discovered, leading towards a view of the Neolithic as a ‘bounded totality’ (p. 11). One reason offered for the persistence of these explanations is that they are seen as resistant to theoretical developments, and it is this that Thomas challenges, aspiring towards finally loosening the hold of such interpretations.

One of the main casualties of processualist accounts of the Neolithic is the fact that variability in regional practices has not been fully recognized or addressed precisely because of this belief that agriculture is the essence of the Neolithic. Scarce evidence is drawn together into hybrid models that propose a universal Neolithic regime. Thomas stresses mobility and the continuing use of wild resources in the early Neolithic, arguing for the variability of economic practices, well documented by an examination of numerous sites.
Monuments

‘Reading Monuments’ (Chapter 3) discusses the changing perceptions of megaliths within British archaeology. The author briefly critiques Renfrew’s original proposal that the scale and complexity of monuments could be seen as an index of the society that created them. He is also critical of circular arguments, such as the territorial model. Continuing on from his critique of early Neolithic subsistence models Thomas argues against interpretations which propose a development of monumental construction after agricultural surplus had been amassed, or those that view them as arising from tensions over access to resources. Historically he sets the erection of megaliths at a ‘conjuncture’ in time (the duration of megalithic construction, however, spans some 1500-2000 years), qualitatively different than the succeeding Bronze Age with its permanent field systems. Starting from the point of view that monuments should be considered "less as objects in themselves than as transformations of space through objects" (p. 35) he argues against any form of explanation that posits universal explanations.

Thomas offers new and sometimes startling interpretations of monuments. This, in fact, is one of the strengths of the text. One of the criticisms of such an opus would, however, contend that, in the broad sweep that the book covers, and in the many monuments visited, there is little ‘dwelling time’. Types of monument go whizzing by, whole traditions of both buildings and their interpretations are dealt with in a matter of pages. The analysis does, however, offer new and exciting insights into familiar areas. An example of the broad vision of the text may be clearly seen in the observation that causewayed enclosures, as ‘open’ monuments, can be seen to lie at the entrance to whole regions. The placement, for example, of Windmill Hill is suggestive of a role in regulating the movement of people and things in and out of the region (p. 202). Unfortunately, despite the novelty of such an approach, it is not followed up in any great detail, and indeed it could not be in such a wide-ranging examination. The analysis of monuments is a strong component of the text, yet other than novel interpretations of some of the possibilities of monument spacing and placing, and indicating the questionable nature of previous approaches, or urging a more regionally specific reading of their space, it does not offer any new paradigm for their interpretation.

Depositional Practices

An area of Neolithic archaeology that has been very rarely addressed is that of depositions, either in the form of unstructured small caches or quite large formalized pits. Thomas raises the absence of such analysis and proceeds to
examine the nature and significance of these numerous depositions in southern Britain (Chapter 4). Although little changed from the earlier version of this book, this section is nonetheless pivotal as accepted accounts of deposits, or ‘dirt’, are explored. Thomas attacks Schifferian behaviorism and seeks meaningful patterns of inclusion and exclusion from which to make allowable social statements about the cultural practices of these depositions. In this approach Thomas succeeds in painting an image of human action around these deposits that rises above the processualist versions that placed people in a subsidiary capacity, there to ‘do things’ to the material (p. 62). Although Thomas thus imputes agency into these practices, the agents themselves remain obscured by the practices. We are, however, forced to reconsider earlier explanations of such deposits and Thomas succeeds in presenting these deposits as emanating from within culturally and historically specific conceptual schemes in which contingent meanings are expressed.

Throughout this analysis of depositions (which forms a large part of the book) there is little discussion of who made these depositions, who was authorised to do so and who might have been prevented from doing so? Who would return to these deposits, and over what time-frame, what were the rules for making such depositions? Such questions come down to the composition of the society, or the structures through which agency operated. These questions are not tackled explicitly, and their resolution is highly problematical within the limits of Neolithic archaeology. Yet their absence tends towards a history of the Neolithic in which past lives are objectified in material things. The author recognises that this book can be accused of representing a history of practices (p. 228), claiming that we should not, indeed, separate material culture from society. He also acknowledges that "artefacts and resources always realised their potential in the context of power relations" and strategies to promote interests (p. 228). He recognises the materialist concentration, and within those confines produces an informative account of prehistoric material practices.

**Pottery**

The way Thomas addresses pottery (Chapter 5) is to search for meaningful relationships and patterning in both design and placement, searching for similarities and differences. Indeed the lack of differences in pottery style and manufacture is seen as a positive exclusion, given the number of possible forms that might have emerged (p. 98). Applying current approaches that emphasise the symbolic and social significance of material culture, pottery is seen as just one among many types, yet it is one that is central to Neolithic definitions and understandings. The complex relationship between Peterborough Ware and Grooved Ware is analysed and, while examining their spatial patterns and
depositional preferences, Thomas promotes a vision of pottery as a "particularly appropriate window on Neolithic materiality" (p. 225). The text devotes ample space to understanding the social significance of, for example, the absence of any vessel type other than Grooved Ware at the West Kennett palisade enclosure and its relationship with wooden structures (p. 218), and the chronological implications of the sub-divisions of Peterborough Ware. This is an enlightening section of the text, in which the exhaustive compilation of ceramic data is used in imaginative ways, probing and dissecting spatial patterns and examining ramifications such as the impact of pottery on the rhythms of social life. Thomas concludes that, like all material things, pots only gain significance in context: they have no primary functional meaning with secondary symbolic meanings added (contra Hodder 1999, who allows now for the possibility of these two levels of meaning). Finally, the increasing diversity of pottery types and decoration throughout the Neolithic is interpreted as referencing an increasing signification of differences, not in the rank of individuals but rather in specific circumstances.

**Mortuary Analysis**

The section on mortuary analysis (Chapter 6) deals with the wide range of tomb-types and burial methods. What emerges from the data considered is, none too surprisingly, that there is no universal scheme but rather regional preferences that change through time. One of the strengths of this diachronic analysis is indeed the ability to describe changing patterns of mortuary practice. Thomas discusses the major trends in mortuary analysis within archaeological thinking over the past 20 years or so, illustrating the necessary caveats to an understanding of what it is that burials may signify. Although the spectre of ‘masking’ and the role of ideology in burial is raised, the burials are, as in most archaeological interpretations, taken at face value for what they could tell us about Neolithic society, and there is little further discussion of issues such as burial signifying an ideal order and not, in fact, a past reality.

In consideration of the fact that in the British Neolithic the dead are more visible than the living (p. 126), Thomas decries the paucity of productive debate that might lead to clearer procedures for mortuary analysis. Despite an "extensive battery of conceptual apparatus" for interpreting funerary evidence, these are, he continues to argue, "grounded in mutually antagonistic philosophies" (p. 126). Recognising the contribution of archaeologists such as Tainter, Saxe, Chapman, and, among others, Binford, towards revealing structures in the data concerning body treatment and grave goods, Thomas argues that these do not reveal an undistorted map of social relations. Mortuary
analysis, he opines, is alone not sufficient for an interpretation of Neolithic society, a view shared by most post-positivist archaeologists.

As is other Neolithic accounts, burial is virtually confined to discussions of monumental contexts. Thomas looks at the early Neolithic circulation of body parts, providing data and statistics from a host of sites and publications. As megalithic tombs were earlier described as transformations of space, the circulation of body parts within them solidifies their designation as places of transformation. This practice declined over time and was gradually replaced by a single burial tradition. Thomas interprets this as signifying a change in social formations, from bounded and inclusive social entities to fluid and overlapping groupings. The relationship of people to the dead moved from one of ‘being alongside the dead’ to one of ‘descent from the dead’ (p. 226). He concludes that social relations now extended vertically into the past as opposed to the earlier Neolithic when they extended horizontally into the present.

At this stage in the book we can clearly see the parallel stories that Thomas is recounting, and see areas where the data, as foretold, would not exactly ‘fit’ together, due mainly to the different temporal scales involved. However, we can also appreciate the changes apparent in each of the chosen practices as the analysis moves from early to late Neolithic. This is seen in the above burial changes, and in the analysis of pottery and depositions where major changes take place in different horizons, particularly towards the latter quarter of the 3rd Millennium B.C. It is an interesting manner in which to address the Neolithic and, despite the concentration on distinct practices such as pottery or burial, Thomas is careful not to totally isolate these areas from other social contexts. It would have been timely here, I suggest, had Thomas returned to a point he acknowledged earlier in the text: the existence of single burial in the early Neolithic, which might have enlivened the discussion on the transformation to single burials in the later Neolithic.

**Regional Sequences**

The regional narratives towards the end of this book present an opportunity for assembling the large volume of data studied and, while not unifying the different strands of investigation, taking the patterns and conclusions from the data and re-examining them in regional contexts: the Stonehenge environs, the Avebury region and the Upper Thames Valley. The conclusions reached and questions raised are now drawn into these regions as Thomas analyses what the developments in tomb building, mortuary practice, pottery etc. can tell us about the social changes in each region. The analysis of these patterns reinforces the view of the extent to which the material repertoire was used differently both
within and between regions. These regions differed in some respects; for example in the Upper Thames Valley monuments were ‘more repetitive’, drawing on a more limited assemblage of types. Monuments here also tended to be smaller, and there were different patterns of clearance and settlement type, characterised by discontinuous activity. The Avebury region, we are told, indicated a trend towards long distance exchange, witnessed in the procurement of lithics and other items from some distance, and in the ‘open’ qualities of henge constructions. This area exhibited different, more varied, depositional practices from other areas in southern Britain, and was also set apart from these regions by the uniqueness of monument styles. The monuments and material culture of Stonehenge created defined locations for different activities and authorities

**Criticisms**

An area where there appears in the text a contradiction between accepting the historical situatedness of practices and employing modern concepts is seen in Thomas’ rejection of Bradley’s idea that Hambeldon Hill may have been the residence of elites (p. 40) on the grounds that the nearest concentrations of earlier Neolithic activity are ‘several miles’ away. This seems to contradict the strategy of maintaining the ‘aliens’ of Neolithic society. Given the observation then that even palate tastes may have been different (based on different bone ‘cuts’ than today, p. 27) in the Neolithic, it appears contradictorily ‘presentist’ to then suggest that two miles or so may have been too distant for an elite residence to exist. It may well have been considered too far, but the point is that there is an imposition of modern views of distance that must surely be questioned.

Further, Thomas addresses the heuristic device of the textual analogy (p. 36-38, c.f. 92-96), seeing the landscape and its artefacts as a text. I would question the efficacy of this textual analogy and agree with Barrett & Fewster’s recent remarks that the ‘concretising of material culture as written text’ suits analyses of society which see "an underlying structure as the key to human behaviour" (1999:10). More helpful, they suggest, would be to view material culture as a spoken discourse in which meaning is not as distanciated as it is in written text (1999:10). This is an important aspect of material culture interpretation as it enables archaeologists to impute subsequent actions and different methods of delivery such as innuendo and tone in the discourse of material culture.

**Conclusion**
Understanding the Neolithic concludes with what is perhaps its most potent chapter (10). Here Thomas reiterates his genealogical approach to prehistory and drives home one of his main contentions: that such an approach is opposed to totalising accounts of the Neolithic in particular and history in general. Such totalising seeks to "impose a premature finality" (p. 221) (implying that there may be a finality at some point in time?). Contrary to the homogenising totalities, this is a Neolithic in which various societies are seen to have been internally differentiated and heterogeneous, where "differentially situated persons exercised power and access to cultural resources in different ways" (p. 163). The Neolithic made new ways of being human possible, in which the principles of exchange, ‘performed transaction’, and circulation were of cardinal importance. The late Neolithic is characterised by multiple social contexts and different sources of identity, different ‘flows of substance’. Thomas argues that through artefacts, animal and human bones, pits and mortuary constructions, people gained their sense of (Neolithic?) humanity.

This account began by addressing the economic classifications of the British Neolithic, raising doubts as to the validity of such constructions and suggesting that the Neolithic is best conceived of as a change in social relations. The Neolithic of central Europe and the Linearbandkeramic were primarily economic phenomena, but by the time the Neolithic ‘reached’ Britain it existed largely in the realm of ideas. Understanding the Neolithic concludes with the ‘realisation’ that there was "no single pattern of economic change through the British Neolithic, but more a general trend towards diversification" (p. 223).

Overall my opinion of this book is that it is good value for money and time. Though perhaps in content not vastly different from the 1991 edition, there are noteworthy differences that make the book highly topical and render it very readable in today’s archaeological climate. It may well be better aimed at a post-graduate audience rather than undergraduates due to the fact that, despite the inclusive examination of the Neolithic, a fair deal of familiarity with the history of archaeological interpretation of the Neolithic and of the various sites mentioned is required. Finally, it is encouraging to read Thomas’ admittance that despite our ever - increasing armoury of theoretical constructs, we recognise that we cannot get at the ‘real’ past, and at some point we must simply write a story, which is, in effect, what Thomas has done.

Works Cited


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**The Archaeological Process: An Introduction.**

by Ian Hodder

Oxford: Blackwell, 1999

242 pp. + xiv, 24 illustrations, 1 table

ISBN 0-631-19885-7 (paper)

Reviewed by Matthew Spriggs

Archaeological writing careers often go through several stages. They begin with an early bright ideas phase, when interesting but often in retrospect rather naïve prognostications are made. Having got everyone's attention, the scholar often then moves into an over-achieving phase where too much is published, representing often superficial and undigested ideas. The aim here is to achieve a measure of job security and rise up meteorically through the pecking order. If this tactic works, a mature phase then follows, usually after the scholar has achieved Reader or Professor rank. Bigger and well-thought out projects are often the basis for more mature reflection on where the discipline is headed. Sometimes, usually attendant upon retirement, a magisterial phase begins, but with this always comes with the danger of increasing pomposity. In some sad
cases, the espousal of extreme right-wing politics at this stage is a clear sign of approaching dementia.

I loved Hodder's early work of the 1970s, drawing heavily upon the 'new geography' of Chorley and Haggett et. al. In retrospect, a lot of the assumptions of the spatial archaeology he helped pioneer can be seen as naïve, but they were stimulating and liberating ideas in British archaeology which even at the beginning of the 1970s was desperately trying to distance itself from the more extreme Hempel-worshipping forms of Americanist 'New Archaeology'. Something went wrong for Hodder about 1982, perhaps around the time of the publication of *Symbols in Action*, and he entered a long period of the intellectual doldrums, with too-much and too-smart works of little lasting substance. He also spawned some real monsters as students and acolytes, and archaeology remains much- vexed by them to this day. As in our least-favourite CDs by our favourite artistes, there are always solitary passages of genius, and such nuggets can indeed be found in many of Hodder's books of the later 1980s and early 1990s. His 1992 compilation *Theory and Practice in Archaeology* contains a few (but by no means all) of them.

The professorship finally came in 1996, and as my model would predict, there is considerable evidence of a more mature and measured view of the subject emerging in Hodder's work now that he does not have to prove so much any more. The Çatalhöyük project, both in choice of site - it would be very hard not to find amazing material there - and in its reflexive conception as a kind of 'excavation of an excavation' is destined to become one of archaeology's real classics.

The book under review is an introduction to the set of ideas that led up to the thinking behind the project. There is a clear lineage of these back to his bright ideas period, but the main criticism of this book is that here are still too many ideas that did not work in the 1980s and 1990s and still do not at all convince today. When will we be free of Derrida, Ricoeur, Foucault, Lyotard and these other charlatans? The fact that British archaeological theorists can mention them all in one breath would make any self-respecting French intellectual have a coughing fit over her Gauloises. A *bricolage* of completely contradictory thinkers' ideas half-understood and taken out of context is still baloney whatever way you slice it, and whatever the political *couleur* of the *bricoleur*.

A feature of much of the 'Me-generation' of archaeological theory was that they wrote primarily for each other, not to engage with the practice of archaeology. Most archaeologists throughout the world were disenfranchised
from the debates by the deliberate use of impenetrable jargon, and carried on with surveying and digging and thinking about the past regardless. The first two chapters of *The Archaeological Process*, 'Crises in Global Archaeology' and 'Archaeology - Bridging Humanity and Science', rehearse a lot of ideas most archaeologists managed to absorb during that era without wide reading in the latest -isms. Readers may well feel vaguely insulted by Hodder's presentation of these ideas as some new revelations he has come up with in order to get the rest of us 'Digging outside the shelter' as he puts it in the Preface, an echo of Merriman's (1991) call for museums to 'look beyond the glass case'.

The result is a history of recent archaeology that few practitioners will recognise. For instance, I too was a student of David Clarke and have always felt that Hodder never understood or else has forgotten his master's project. Clarke's *Analytical Archaeology* (1968) was not so much the height of confidence in universal methods among new archaeologists as Hodder claims here (p.2), it was more an attempt to codify a pre - New Archaeology schema, that of Gordon Childe's hierarchy of archaeological entities, so that the subject could move on. It was also as much a response to new computer technologies and their logics as the book under review here. The more things change …..

While Hodder was away talking theory with his mates, archaeologists came to realise that much greater reflexivity (= a self - critical approach) was required, that to an extent our theories reflect our background and our prejudices, that this does not require a relativist position in relation to all theories, and that the archaeological evidence can contradict what we think about the past. We also recognised that there were multiple audiences and multiple constituencies interested in the past (called here 'multivocality'), that in some circumstances indigenous peoples might have great difficulty with the practice of archaeology as it affects their interests, and that their legitimate concerns must force a concern with archaeological ethics world - wide.

But this is not all Hodder is saying, and if you can grit your teeth for the first 31 pages, you will be rewarded with chapters that do not always repeat the obvious as if it just came down from the mountain. Hodder's main point is that archaeological fieldwork itself remains relatively untheorised. The production of knowledge at the trowel's edge often dominates the eventual interpretation offered by the archaeologist, but is usually invisible to the reader of a final excavation report or synthesis of a region's archaeology. In that sense we can never properly evaluate another archaeologist's interpretation of a site. We might find it convincing or unconvincing but the process by which it was reached is a trail gone cold. An archaeological report of any site is a deliberate
mystification, a cooking of the books, a premature closure of debate. The tapes are wiped, the tracks are covered up. In a sense a conventional archaeological report is a forgery. There are brilliant forgers who are never caught, and some who are arrested as soon as they try and pass their first still - wet hundred-dollar bill. But we should not forget that they are all criminals one and all.

So, the question is, can archaeologists ever make themselves into honest men and women? Can we give our interpretations the context they lack? If our interpretations as presented are a crime, can we provide the evidence of how and why that crime was committed so our deviant mind can be understood and treated? The Çatalhöyük project is attempting to do just that, carrying reflexivity beyond the comfortable zone we are all now well used to into more dangerous areas of self-analysis. Daily diaries are entered on a web site as well as standard recording sheets and a wide audience can read these 'true confessions'; the archaeologists are themselves under constant surveillance, with use of videotape of their excavation and a nosy anthropologist asking them why they hold their particular exotic beliefs; even the dread white-coats appear every other day on an inspection. No, not prison psychiatrists, but the laboratory specialists we usually just send bags of material off to with the assurance that they are all from secure contexts (when often they are not).

Hodder points of the fact that using the web and CD-ROM technologies we can produce reports that through links to daily diaries, record sheets etc can reveal much of the background to the final interpretations we author, and can allow the reader to interrogate a variety of data and better evaluate our conclusions. The hidden process of knowledge generation is, at least to some extent, revealed. Most readers will perhaps not have the time or the inclination to follow every verdict back to the clues on which it is based, but the archive is there at the click of a mouse. Hodder also notes that readers can get into a report at different levels. Accounts designed for children, the general reader, first-year students taking a methods course, or specialists in the archaeology of that time or place can all be constructed and cross-referenced.

The equipment to allow this form of publication is all easily available, including CD 'burners' to produce CDs on demand, so money cannot be used by any serious archaeologist as an excuse. But time can be. As someone who has tried to do a similar project on a much smaller scale, the time spent on data entry and constructing the necessary links is enormous. But is it any more onerous than producing a conventional archaeological report and properly archiving the data generated? Probably not, and you are producing more of an original work of art rather than a forgery.
The book seems to be written for an advanced undergraduate audience and has the feel of a semester-length course guide. This might explain why a lot of it repeats the obvious, but not why so much of the obvious is claimed as new. The progression between chapters is quite clear. After the first two (mentioned above) it moves on to 'How do Archaeologists Reason?', 'Interpreting Material Culture', 'Towards a Reflexive Method', 'The Natural Science in Archaeology', 'Using the New Information Technologies', 'Windows into Deep Time: Towards a Multiscalar Approach'. 'Archaeology and Globalism', 'Can the New Digital Technologies Deliver a Reflexive Methodology?' and the Conclusion 'Towards Non-Dichotomous Thinking in Archaeology'.

It is a useful book to check up on where British archaeological theory has reached at the end of the 1990s. But perhaps this is the problem I had with reading it. Because Australian archaeologists have had to come to terms with many of the issues seen here as manifestations of a post-modern world, particularly the relationship between archaeologists and indigenous peoples, they have already sorted through many of the arguments themselves, without ever having read the social theorists quoted here. To the extent that archaeological social theory is merely reflective of the times in which we live, this is perhaps not surprising. If you live a post-modern life, you must have constructed your own internalised post-modern theory of it in order to survive.

Hodder's only references to Australia are to quote Ros Langford's (1983) polemical article in Australian Archaeology on the relationship between archaeologists and Aboriginal people as she saw it at that time, and to make a completely unsubstantiated claim that in the conflicts over Aboriginal land rights, 'archaeological objective science came to be associated with vested establishment interests against which local communities had to fight'. Although not referenced, this presumably is from a certain reading of the furore more than twenty years ago over the film The Last Tasmanian. Set up as straw-persons to make a point, we are not allowed to change.

Is the problem that many of the British archaeological theorists have never had much to do with indigenous peoples? The multivocality they seem to have discovered and the post-colonialist theory they espouse may both be more to do with the threat of break-up of the British state and the increasing assertiveness of its own internal colonies in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Cornwall, than any real understanding of the current situation in the third and fourth worlds, and in settler nations such as Australia. There is too much talking - the talk instead of walking - the walk in current British archaeological theory. This book perhaps reveals the isolation of British archaeology from the rest of the world, rather than providing the theoretical
leadership it assumes. While British archaeologists may well need to 'dig outside their shelters' - it is up to them to say whether their own practice is being caricatured in the book - much of the rest of the world is perhaps already out there in the sunshine, reflexive trowels in hand.

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