Introduction: CHAT @ TAG in Context

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Each year, the Contemporary and Historical Archaeology in Theory (CHAT) conference convenes to highlight archaeological research on the recent past. The annual gathering is a forum for critical discussion of historical archaeology and the archaeology of the contemporary world that seeks to expand the academic and political limits of archaeological thinking. In short, CHAT provides an opportunity outside of the customary conference circuit for archaeologists to present new work in a progressive and socially affective, yet rigorous, scholarly atmosphere. CHAT has taken place in the British Isles since 2003, with past events held in Bristol, Leicester, Dublin, Sheffield, London, and Oxford.

In May 2009, we undertook to bring this vital discussion to North America by hosting a CHAT-themed session at the Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference (TAG) at Stanford University. This volume comprises seven papers that were presented at that session and two papers commissioned after the conference. Though the contributions are diverse, each one is crafted in the spirit of CHAT in that they each explore the recent past, stretching and challenging political, theoretical, and methodological conventions. These nine papers, focusing on archaeology from the late 19th century onward, are followed by a concluding critical commentary by Barbara Voss. This volume aims to showcase variety and individuality, as well as tease out commonalities among the wide array of archaeological projects that fall under the shared endeavor of exploring the recent past.

The development and current state of our subfield has been ably covered by others (see Hicks and Beaudry 2006; Buchli 2007; Hall and Silliman 2006; and Harrison and Schofield 2009), and articles, books, and journal volumes focused on our interest area are being released at an impressive rate (see Holtorf and Piccini 2009; Harrison and Schofield forthcoming; and McAtackney et al. 2007). In light of these significant publications, we view the articles presented in this volume not as definitive
in any way, but rather as a modest sampling of some of the topics and themes currently being examined by our subfield.

The first two articles explore moments of destruction. González-Ruibal and Hernando trace the movements and interactions of loggers, ranchers, indigenous hunters, and police in the contested landscape of the Brazilian Amazon. The authors reveal potent material and emotive connections between South American jungle devastation and suburban American sun decks. Yazdi focuses on the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck the city of Bam, Iran, in December 2003. The research project began shortly after the quake hit and examines the material remains of the city’s destroyed households. In a country where public expression is strictly controlled, and personal space is paramount, it is perhaps through lost and abandoned material culture that we might understand more about private life in Iran.

Formation, justification, and maintenance of the nation state connect the next three papers. First, Funari and Funari demonstrate how conceptions and representations of ancient Egypt had a profound effect on the very birth of Brazil as an independent country. This “Egyptomania” continues to influence, as it is visually and materially tied to present day ethnic and social inequalities. Second, Samuels examines the material and ephemeral traces of utopian Sicilian villages built in 1930s fascist Italy. As with other twentieth century totalitarian states, Mussolini’s Italy appropriated archaeology for propaganda and to bolster expansionist ideologies. Seventy years later, archaeology is now being used to interpret the failed project of Italian fascism itself. Third, Wilkie and Mosher explore the enactment of American Prohibition during the formative years of the 20th century, probing the diverse ways American citizens’ drinking patterns were affected by the ban. Here, the materiality of drinking vessels and associated material culture is indicative of these changing habits.

Parno cautions against complacency in field practices. He critiques methods in field photography, deconstructs photographic representations, and questions some of the methodological taken-for-granted in our discipline. Parno offers a timely reminder that we can never separate archaeological practice from archaeological subject. The next paper moves from contemporary practice, to considerations of the future. Edgeworth reorients our attention from the common, graspable artifact and instead looks both up and out at massive artifacts, and down and in, at miniscule ones. The increasing presence of these macro and micro materials may have profound implications for our discipline in the near future.

Lewis uses a Geographic Information System to reconstruct Karl Marx’s neighborhood and the city paths he walked in 1850s Soho, London. Lewis links Marx’s immediate material associations and embodied tactile experiences with the creation of his masterpiece, Das Capital. The final paper in
the volume moves from London to Oxford, and from industrialization to deindustrialization. Penrose’s interest in Oxford is not centered on the stoic stacks of the Bodleian Library, but rather the noisy floor of the car assembly plant. Her paper initiates the archaeology of the postindustrial and deindustrial, that is, an archaeology of shifting economies and transforming landscapes.

As the collected papers demonstrate, archaeologies of the recent past are messy, complicated affairs. We can no longer place data and interpretations into neat categories of artifact classes, time periods, or horizons. As archaeologies of the recent past become increasingly comfortable within the academy, both the number of researchers practicing such archaeologies and the diversity of their views continue to increase. We hope that this collection of articles will contribute to spurring debate and, through this debate, further the scope, rigor, and interest in archaeologies of the recent past.

More information on the Contemporary and Historical Archaeology in Theory conference series can be found at www.contemp-hist-arch.ac.uk.

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Genealogies of Destruction: An Archaeology of the Contemporary Past in the Amazon Forest

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ABSTRACT
In this article we look at the destruction of the Amazon forest through an archaeological lens. We describe the devastation brought about by illegal loggers and ranchers to the last remaining old-growth forests of Maranhão (NE Brazil), where the Awá hunter-gatherers live. We argue that archaeology can provide an alternative and more critical look at global consumerism by manifesting the crude materiality and abject violence that lurks behind the goods consumed in the West. We followed the tracks of a group of loggers deep inside the forest and report what we saw.

Résumé: Dans cet article, nous examinons la destruction de la forêt amazonienne sous l’angle de l’archéologie. Nous y décrivons la destruction par les entrepreneurs forestiers et les éleveurs de bétail des dernières forêts vierges de l’État du Maranhão (nord-est du Brésil), où vivent les chasseurs-cueilleurs Awá. Nous affirmons que l’archéologie peut offrir un autre regard plus critique sur le consumérisme mondial, en démontrant la matérialité brute et la violence indigne qui se cachent derrière les biens de consommation en Occident. Nous avons suivi les traces d’un groupe de bucherons au fin fond de la forêt et relatons ce que nous y avons vu.

Resumen: En este artículo analizamos la destrucción de la selva amazónica desde la óptica de la arqueología. Describimos la devastación ocasionada por los madereros ilegales y los ganaderos en la última selva primaria que queda en Maranhão (en el noroeste de Brasil), donde vive el pueblo de cazadores-recolectores de los Awá. Nuestra hipótesis es que la arqueología
Excrements, the end of all things, bear the weight of all our crimes. We recognize in them what we have assassinated. They are the concise summary of all the evidences that testify against us. They put their archaic stamp to this process of digestion of power that develops in secret and that would remain secret without this stamp (Elias Canetti in Mbembe 2000:271).

**Introduction: Beyond Consumption**

Numerous anthropologists today agree that globalization is first and foremost a creative process that allows new cultural forms to emerge through cultural contact, hybridization, diasporas, transnational networks, travel, and other means (Inda and Rosaldo 2002). Many ethnographies emphasize the fact that so-called traditional communities are negotiating, challenging, appropriating, and contesting Western cultural products in diverse and meaningful ways—such as Aboriginal peoples watching Hollywood movies (Michaels 2002) or the Kayapó Indians of Brazil using modern audio-visual media to reconstruct their cultural identity (Turner 1982). At the same time, some argue that non-Western societies are establishing new links and connections that skip over the West altogether—Indian movies consumed in Nigeria, for instance (Larkin 2003).

Instead of a gloomy picture of homogenization, loss of culture and Euro-American hegemony, sociologists, anthropologists and material culture specialists often insist on the bright side of globalism: they argue that we should not worry about the encounters propitiated by new means of communication and transportation. After all, cultural contact has been around for millennia and cultures have always been changing under different pressures, influences, and sources of inspiration. In material culture studies, the prevailing paradigm maintains there is much room for negotiating and reinscribing apparently homogeneous industrial products (e.g. Miller 1998). This is opposed to the darker perspective on modern technology defended by late nineteenth and early twentieth century
philosophers—both of the right (e.g., Martin Heidegger) and of the left (e.g. Walter Benjamin) of the political spectrum (Miller 1987).

With other critics (Graeber 2002), we here argue that this optimistic perspective is a patent sanction of neo-liberalism and late capitalism—the forces behind globalization (also Stiglitz 2003; Escobar 1994). We agree with LiPuma (2002:296), who states that “the West has inundated its others so that no corner of the globe has been left untouched by capitalism, the nation-state, and internationalized Western Culture.” After all, it is still the West that is imposing itself everywhere and not the other way round (Hernando 2006; González-Ruibal 2009). To be sure, hybridization is producing new cultural products, but processes of hybridization do not erase long-standing traditions of domination (Escobar 1994:219)—on the contrary—these are only inserted into new forms of domination, which they sometimes help to legitimate.

Cultural hybridity is certainly not at odds with increased social inequalities and ecological degradation (Appadurai 2001:17). Under the misleading appearances of creativity fostered by global contacts, there is a very real process of destruction and exploitation caused by the Western world (González-Ruibal 2008). Nonetheless, many social scientists that study globalization from a cultural point of view seem to have forgotten macro-politics and economics (Jameson 1998), as well as long-term processes (Wolf 1999). Alternatively, archaeology can provide a view from within, focusing on details and fragments. Archaeology deals with ruins, the abandoned, the decaying, and the abject. It exposes genealogies and links, and it is concerned with origins. It excavates beyond the surface, both metaphorically and literally.

Archaeologists should be digging into genealogies of a different nature than those explored by many anthropologists and geographers of globalization. Foster (2006:286) writes that

instead of tracing a line from acts of guilty consumption to the hidden truth of the exploited producers, some geographers have taken up anthropological preoccupations with symbols and meanings in order to emphasize the strategic interests and partial knowledges with which particular actors encounter and construct a commodity at different moments in its circulation.

According to Foster (2006:290), researchers should not concern themselves with commodities, but instead, they should assume responsibility for representing things, or things-in-motion. Not responsible for fellow human beings, not even for things (Olsen 2003), but for the image of things. This blissful perspective does not consider the pervasive and ever-present forces of oppression and inequality.

Ostensibly then, everybody is a smart and creative consumer (see critique in Wurst and McGuire 1999). It is a world of meanings and symbols
that anthropologists are interested in, devoid of materiality (Olsen 2003). Unlike Foster, we agree with Harvey (1990:423): “We have to get behind the veil, the fetishism of the market and the commodity, in order to tell the full story of social reproduction.” Though our methods are different from those of geographers or anthropologists, archaeologists can and should track the genealogies of modern commodities.

What then is the nature of an archaeological engagement with the paths and tracks of global markets? How do we follow commodities? As archaeologists, it is not our job to explore the institutional and commercial intricacies of global trade, its transnational organization, or the specific roles of entrepreneurs, state agents, middlemen, exploited laborers, overseers, and corrupt officials. This is the work of other specialists. Archaeologists work with what is left from the past, with ruins and abandoned artifacts regardless of age. Archaeologists, then, can study the debris of globalization and the material consequences of capitalism in “pillaged territories” (Mbembe 2001). Whole landscapes have been destroyed by global capitalism (Harvey 1990:426) and transformed into archaeological ruins. Our work is to explore these landscapes and restore blood and dirt to sanitized commodities consumed in the West. Apart from material manifestation, archaeology has another function to fulfill: it has to contextualize the iniquities of globalization in the long-term history of colonialism and the expansion of the western world (Wolf 1999).

In this article we trace how consumption in the West translates into destruction in what used to be known as the “Third World”. By tracing the genealogies of a piece of furniture or a building material, we uncover the violence that lurks behind everyday, seemingly mundane objects, “creatively consumed” by the privileged citizens of the West. We will discuss just one of the links of the genealogy of destruction of the Amazon forest and its peoples: a snapshot of the point of departure, where it all begins. The area that provides the raw materials is the state of Maranhão in northeastern Brazil, one of the poorest regions in the country. In its last remaining forests, the Awá Indians (also called Guajá) (Cormier 2003) struggle to continue with their way of life as hunter-gatherers in spite of the interference of the State in their lives and the invasion of their lands by peasants, loggers and ranchers.

Towards beginning to understand the current predicament of the Awá, we must start a few thousand kilometers away from their forests, which are rich in coveted hardwoods. Among those, ipe and pau d’arco (Tabebuia sp.) are the most prized in the West: they are widely employed in the making of outdoor decks and furniture. If we type “ipe wood” in an Internet search engine, we find several companies that sell ipe in the United States. Most of them assert their business responsibility and environmental concerns, and insist that they ask for certificates from different agencies (such
as the Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente [IBAMA] and the Forest Stewardship Council [FSC]). With international attention focused on the destruction of the Amazon forest, this is the least one might expect from a minimally clever seller of tropical wood. One of the companies (www.ipefurniture.com) admits that “some of our current stock” has an FSC certification. In any case, certificates are regularly fabricated along the route from the forest to the north (Cray 2001). The proof of this is that the Amazon forest is shrinking by tens of thousands of square kilometers each year.

One of the companies trading in ipe (www.ipedeckingsource.com/) has in its main webpage a cozy image: two blond little girls running on their tricycles over the bright surface of an ipe floor set on a large, open terrace facing the ocean. Ipe is an expensive wood, and so are beach mansions. An ipe floor in the United States is a purified object, that is, an object whose many links to violence and squalor have been severed. An artifact without a genealogy—or with a fabricated one—clean and shallow. An ipe floor is an abstraction.

### The World from Above

To abstract implies a removal, a drawing out from an original location, and an enforced movement of elements from one level to another. Abstraction, then, involves the transposition of worlds; an extracting of essences, or elements, or generalities from one original plane into another. The new world, the created level, the (re)presentation, provides the potential arena for the manipulation and control of images. (Jenks 1995:9).

The question that arises is “which image should we finally attend to?” or indeed, “which image (re)presents the world?” (Jenks 1995). Abstraction implies distance, removal, and selection. We are always choosing the distance that we want to maintain towards the “real”; how much of the “real” we want to glimpse (how much pain and stench). In the Western world, this distance has never stopped growing. We began by removing ourselves from all that is raw and sordid (feces, carrion, open wounds), but by the early twenty-first century we have come to loathe almost everything that is not purely virtual—anything that cannot be reduced to the safe distance of a digital monitor, that cannot be aestheticized and anaesthetized.

It is not that this process of separation from the world depends on free will. As Elias (1987, 1994) demonstrates, emotional repression is the
condition for individualization. It is through the emotional detachment from the world that human beings start to perceive themselves as individuals, that is, as “bounded, unique, distinctive being[s], contrastive both against other beings and against a social and natural background” (Geertz 1984:126). Emotional detachment from the world increases as part of historical processes of individualization, that is, processes of socio-economic complexity and the development of power hierarchies. As Westerners, it is inherent to our culture that we feel more individualized, more powerful and more separated from the world around us than any other human being that currently exists or has ever existed.

The choice of images and the distance toward reality is continuously suggested to us by the modern regimes of power. At times, there is not even a hint of a choice, but the imposition of a particular abstraction—that of the towering eye of power. Abstractions work at different scales: they condition our cognitive maps of the world, our relations to others, to our bodies and to the things around us. The ipe floor in North America is a particular abstraction, but so are maps and satellite images of the Amazon. Following Jenks, we ask: Which image(s) represent(s) the world?

Viewed from 4,000 km above the Earth’s surface (at the scale of a map or satellite image), the Amazonian forest looks like a seamless mass of green, an untouched Eden even. We can choose this image, this particular distance from the real, and stop. Or we may continue our descent a few thousand kilometers. The Eden, then, breaks down. Fish-bone forms now crisscross the satellite photograph. They are the roads open in the middle of the forest, which assist the penetration of peasants and loggers. These extend through the highways, felling trees, open clearings for pasture and cultivation, establishing miserable frontier settlements, where violence and poverty are rife.

But from above, there is no chaos: the geometrical patterns are engrossing. There is order, a mathematical precision only perceptible from on high. In other parts of the Amazon, instead of fish-bone layouts, what we find are large squares and rectangles, such as those that prevail in the State of Maranhão (Figure 1). It is order of a different kind: sharply cut and aligned fields, as if responding to the spatial logic of a land registry. This is modernity at its clearest: control over nature, Cartesian space, order in the wild, property, and limits. Again: we could choose this image and stop. This is certainly more realistic than our previous viewpoint: it tells about the economic exploitation of the Amazon rainforest and its progressive disappearance under the pressures of modernity. Nonetheless, this is still too purified an image, one without mud and blood. The forest, now viewed from just 30 km above the surface, is a space of nature where modernity is imposing its domination. It is (our) Culture against Nature. What we still
do not see, however, even from this elevation, are the indigenous inhabitants of the forest. This is not by chance.

It is certainly not that the indigenous inhabitants are “primitive” and “simple,” blended in nature like plants and animals and therefore invisible. What we have are two different ontologies and ecologies, two different ways of living in the world. The most conspicuous way of being, the one that leaves a monumental trace in the landscape (as do highways, cultivated fields, settlements) is naturalist, according to Descola’s classification (2005). This ontology establishes a “discontinuity of the inner being” and a “continuation of physicalities” between humans and non-humans (Descola 2005:241). People, animals, and the forest share the same matter, but are separated by their spirit. Humans do have a spirit, and non-humans do not. Therefore, non-humans can be tamed, exploited, and destroyed as we bear no true responsibility towards non-spiritual beings.

Figure 1. Satellite image of a patch of Amazon forest in the State of Maranhão invaded by ranchers. (c) Google Earth
There is a primeval, clear-cut division between us humans and the rest of the world, and this division legitimates our actions towards (or against) other beings. This original split is, in turn, enmeshed in other divisions: scientific categories, social hierarchies, bounded nations, forests divided into plots. Hunter-gatherers, on the contrary, live in a world without divisions, “a one and only world in which humans figure as ‘people-organisms’ that maintain relations with all other existing beings [existants] indiscriminately” (Descola 2005:345; see also Ingold 1996; Viveiros de Castro 1996). This is what Descola calls an animist ontology. As opposed to what is still often implied, hunter-gatherers are not a mere extension of nature, “primitive”, as they are supposed to be. On the contrary, they have a sociocentric attitude, in that all relations with all existants in the world are couched in human terms (Descola 2005:349). These relations are lived as a real entanglement in which humans and non-humans participate—as a particular ecology, that ties people, animals, and plants together. They are not mere metaphors consciously imposed by the human mind onto a blank natural world (Ingold 1996:135–136, 150).

In the case of the Awá, the works of this ecology are particularly obvious in the intimate relations they maintain with several animals, especially monkeys, whom they breed and suckle as their own children (Cormier 2003). The ontology of hunters, then, is as culturally complex as ours (Hernando 2002). The difference is that it leaves almost no material trace in the landscape: the social action of hunter-gatherers (the social including all relations between humans and non-humans) does not generate an impact on the environment or create cultural products whose visibility is projected spatially or temporally (Criado 1993:33).

In our modern regime of thought, to leave a trace as texts (Mignolo 2003:127–135) or monuments (González-Ruibal 2009:122–129) is indispensable to have a history. And to have a history is indispensable to be respected as a full human being. Monumentality and writing in turn are related to the State1 and, since Hegel, the idea has prevailed in the West that History proper or World-history can only be that of the State: “Those who are lucky enough to qualify as World-history are thus categorically distinguished from those who are not. Henceforth the excluded will be settled in a space called Prehistory with World-history reserved solely for the chosen nations” (Guha 2002:35). The straight lines and perfect polygons that inscribe order into the Amazon forest delineate the precise distance between History and Prehistory.
The World from Below

The Awá first came into contact with Brazilians in 1973, as their forests were being incrementally eaten away by development projects (Treece 1987), and invasions of impoverished peasants, loggers, and ranchers. The contact was traumatic and led to the premature deaths of hundreds of Awá. Those who survived were moved to reservations. No more than a third of the original population withstood the violence of the encounter and at present there are little more than 300 Awá—only a handful of which still live an independent life in the forest.

Our fieldwork among the Awá was carried out between 2005 and 2008 in the Awá indigenous reservation (terra indígena or TI), one of the four territories occupied by this group in Maranhão. The TI are lands delimited and legalized by the State and protected by the National Indian Agency (FUNAI). In theory at least, entering an indigenous territory is very difficult: several permits issued by the FUNAI and the Brazilian Research Council (CNPq) are needed. This is to prevent free entry to malicious individuals or interests. These bureaucratic precautions, of course, do not prevent loggers to raze the ostensibly protected forests and endanger the native inhabitants.

In August 2006, we had the opportunity to participate in a police operation aimed at stopping the activities of illegal loggers inside the TI Awá. We documented criminal evidence with photographs, sketches and GPS mapping (Figure 2). Our work—a forensic and archaeological mode of documentation—was not too different from what we had previously undertook among the Awá themselves, following them in their hunting expeditions, and mapping houses, camps and trails. In each case, we applied our archaeological sensibilities and methods to study the present and recent past.

When we arrived to the area in the tropical forest where the operation was taking place, the policemen were coming back from their first day of work. They arrived with three-four-wheel-drive vehicles, several motorcycles and a huge tractor used to make roads in the forest. What they had found was an example of “selective logging,” a practice that is devastating the Amazon twice as fast as previously thought (Asner et al. 2005). They had located several campsites, about 30 people (illegal woodcutters), many chainsaws and other tools.

We returned to the place the next day in order to follow the chase and document what had already been discovered by the police. When we arrived, the campsites and roads had been abandoned, some the day before, others during the night after the police raid. Archaeologists arrive up to several million years late, and others just a few hours—the latter...
group includes garbologists, for example (Rathje and Murphy 1992). In this case, we dealt with archaeological sites that were less than 24 h old.

We followed the main dirt road made by the loggers (Figure 3). It was wide enough for two vehicles in some places, and certainly wider than most roads that one can find in this part of Brazil. The road crosses the heart of the Awá reservation and, with other ramifications, severs the forest and isolates patches of trees. The native village and the FUNAI post are located only six kilometers away to the nearest illegal logging activity. At some points along the track, there are heaps of precious wood left behind in a hurry. The route cuts indiscriminately through rivers and creeks, preventing the free flow of sorubim, electric eel and other fish—a staple source of food for the Awá. Those rivers that are not cut by roads are interrupted with lines of fish traps, to feed the woodcutters. This is the ecology of modernity: a world of divisions and barriers, where natural flows are cut short or channeled. The road in particular is a true index of modernity. It implies a particular way of perceiving the forest from the outside, a way of engaging with the world from a distance. The road bursts the forest open

Figure 2. Map of the invasions of Awá land in 2006. Note the proximity of the Awá village to the area that is being deforested. (photo by the author)
and helps to systematically exploit it—its trees magically transformed into commodities.

The relationship of the illegal loggers with nature could not be more different from that of a hunter-gatherer. Laura Rival (1996:148) writes that the Huaorani do not merely hunt and gather…, but walk, observing with evident pleasure and interest the movements of animals, the progress of fruit maturation, or simply the growth of vegetation. When walking in this fashion… one does not get tired, or lost. One’s body takes the smell of the forest and ceases to be extraneous to the forest world. One learns to perceive the environment as other animals do. One becomes a ‘dweller’ deeply involved in a silent conversation with surrounding plants and animals (Figure 4).

Zent (2006) writes a similar description for the Jotí of Venezuela, and it is true in many other cases as well. The same can be said of the Awá, who have only one word for both hunting and walking—watá. The way in which the Awá dwell in the forest is typical of peoples who do not distinguish between nature and culture. However, what the Awá live as an integrated whole, moderns perceive as a divide. Whereas the Awá lived immersed in inextricable relations with trees and animals and rivers, moderns strive to create distances—emotional and physical. They clear wide paths in the forest so as to rationalize nature—so as to create nature: one

Figure 3. The road opened by the loggers in the middle of the forest. It was blocked with timber to hamper the entrance of the police. (photo by the author)
cannot fight what does not exist. They abhor being surrounded by trees, plants and animals. The clearing makes the divide visible and scares away fears of the forest. Once it is created, the only conceivable way of engaging with nature is through destruction or domestication.

We visited four campsites recently stormed by the police, and we discovered another one that had not yet been found or raided. When we arrived, the only person present was a single scared peasant. We did not need a verbal confirmation to reconstruct what was going on in those camps, to know of the daily life of a woodcutter in a dirty hole in the rain-forest. It comes as no surprise that Taussig (2004:39) resorts to Kristeva’s notion of abjection to refer to heat in the tropics: “a thoroughly unrepresentable state of diffuse anxiety, depression, and self-loathing that seems to dissolve your very being”. Humidity and heat during the day, humidity and cold during the night. Immense boredom. The same conversations

Figure 4. An Awá woman, resting in her hut—an extension of the forest
with the same people. The same beans, the same rice. The same green veil surrounding oneself every single minute for months. You cannot even see the forest when you are in the forest. You just see green—light green, dark green, dry green, damp green. And a dusty brown trail where the trees have been cut down.

The second campsite, surrounded by dense vegetation, is very close to the river Agua Preta (“black water”). The main structure is a flimsy shack made with wooden poles and a black plastic sheet. These are some of the items that we found in the campsite:

- Three hard hats
- Chainsaws’ spare parts
- Two water filters
- Five pairs of work boots
- One pair of flip-flops
- Four 20-liter jerry cans with gasoline
- A portable stove
- A plastic washbasin
- A pressure cooker thrown on a dirt floor, its contents—a bean stew—spilled
- A pile of meat, spread over tree leaves, with flies buzzing around
- A heap of rubbish (wrappers, cardboard, plastic)
- One kilogram of salt in a plastic bag
- Three packets of margarine
- A large tin of cooking oil
- A small plastic bottle filled with home-made hot sauce
- A pile of charcoal
- A fish trap in the nearby river
- A stray dog, wandering and scared

The place stinks (Figure 5).

The third campsite is the largest. The previous one was seemingly only a sub-camp of this place. If the second campsite was oriented to the task of tearing down the forest, this one plays the role of a central base, where supplies are stored (food, fuel, spare parts), and people come to eat, sleep, and rest.

There is a kitchen space made with plastic sheet and poles, a wide room with stools and wooden benches (Figure 6). Finds are plentiful here.

We can only list some of the many items (Figure 7):

- Four large gasoline drums and tens of jerry cans of different sizes
- Clothes, blankets and hammocks
- Rice, beans and meat on a pot over a stove
Figure 5. Camp 2 as seen from the river Agua Preta. (photo by the author)

Figure 6. The main structure in Camp 3 as seen from the kitchen area. (photo by the author)
Six bottles of nail varnish and one bottle of acetone
A hair brush
Four dishes, three pans, two skimmers
A broken water-filter
A bunch of letters on the kitchen table—written by women and addressed to men
Half-eaten watermelons
Christmas greeting cards
Invoices and bills
Pornographic magazines
A bamboo cage for turtles
Three DVDs with Brazilian video clips
Rubbish inside a cardboard box
15 glasses and two plastic cups
Bags with beans and rice
17 eggs in their cardboard boxes, some smashed
Two bottles of shower gel
Soap and clothes (T-shirts and jeans) over a washing board in the river
A harpy eagle’s wing (*Harpia harpyja*)
Five empty cans of cheap Brazilian beer
Two stools made of tree trunks
A large tractor’s wheel
A chainsaw

The things in the camps are durable. Unlike Awá material culture, they resist entropy. They do not quickly decay or rot away: plastic, Styrofoam,
stainless steel, oil, synthetic rubber. Like modern people, these materials do not comfortably mingle with the organic substances of the forest.

Our local guides are happy because they have found many useful things that they can keep. For somebody living in a mud hut in the middle of the tropical forest with no electricity or running water, and a day’s walk to the nearest shop, looting this camp is like going to the mall—but free. Another way of shopping. What they do not keep is burnt by the police.

We keep up the chase of woodcutters, following the traces of a large tractor, heavily printed on the dusty road. After a while, we find another place occupied by the woodcutters. It is a porticoed wooden shack, a typical dwelling for laborers living in cattle ranches. The police enter the place, well protected with their bullet-proof vests and Berettas. There is nobody around though, the hut is empty. In the forest surrounding the shack they find chainsaws, bags of beans and rice, crackers, biscuits, watermelons, fruit cans, gasoline, lots of meat in Styrofoam boxes with ice (Figure 8). The

Figure 8. A cache of chainsaws in Camp 5. The loggers established a base in an abandoned hut belonging to a large ranch. (photo by the author)
loggers planned to be in the forest cutting wood for several months, at least until the start of the heavy rains in early January. The place must have been abandoned only a few hours before we arrived. Again, a bewildered peasant is found hiding in the forest.

We lose the tractor’s tracks in an intersection. The machine was probably loaded on a truck and taken away. We follow the road presumably used by the truck until we enter a large, barbed-wire-enclosed ranch (Figure 9). The ranch occupies thousands of hectares, part of them in the Indian reservation, part on the Gurupi national biological reserve (something like a national park, theoretically with a high level of protection). There are hundreds of cows grazing in the meadows that were rainforest only four or five years ago. Somebody makes a rough guess of 3,000 heads of cattle. The place is planted with capim, a tough grass that prevents the forest from growing again. The ranch is neatly delimited with barbed wire: a clear line that cuts away nature from culture. Barbed wire embodies many of the pillars of modernity (Netz 2004): order, division, control of the flesh and of the land, private property. In the Americas, barbed wire and pasture have been the indexes of predatory capitalism for well over a hundred years (Taussig 1980:70–92).

We ask the ranch laborers about the owner and they tell us that this is a fazenda do Rui (Rui’s ranch), an absentee landowner living in the state of Espirito Santo, 2,500 km away from here. And a truck with a tractor? No evil seen, no evil heard, no evil spoken. Without land or property of their
own, their frail survival depends on not knowing. The landowner probably does not know either: where exactly his ranch is, how many laborers he has, whether there are Indians living around or not. And he likely does not care. Nearby, if we looked, we would find fazendas labored by slaves, we are told. Maybe the people we are talking to are slaves themselves, or indentured laborers. The chief of the FUNAI post tells us about a certain Gilberto Andrade, fazendeiro, político, ladrão (“landowner, politician, thief”), from the town of Paragominas, who has enormous ranches in indigenous reservations and national parks, in which poor camponeses (peasants) work as slaves, trapped into the repayment of endless debts. He has a large ranch upstream of the Carú, the river that flows through the Awá reservation. This is where warlord capitalism reigns.

**Conclusion**

Genealogical links are severed, no one person knows the whole story: the ties are broken between the ranch in the rainforest and the clean, urban world of the landowner and the timber merchant. Other links are likewise dissolved: those between the Indians and the woodcutters (the Indians are mythical beasts for the loggers, who have never seen them, but fear them nevertheless); between the miserable woodcutters and the timber merchant; between the landowner/timber merchant and the proud, upper-middle class owners of a fashionable home in the United States. We have to restore these links.

The use of catachresis—seemingly bizarre juxtapositions (Shanks 2004)—is an attempt to skip the gaps in broken genealogies: the ipe floor in a mansion adjacent to the heap of rubbish burning in the forest. The exquisite and the abject, together. This is the image that better represents our schizophrenic world. The juxtaposition exemplifies the return of the repressed: a glimpse into the “Real” that we have excavated. Žižek (2003) reminds us that what we perceive as reality is never complete, there is always a dark, pre-ideological core that cannot be covered up with layers of discourse—“the Real”. There is no reality without specter. What the specter hides is not reality, but what is primordially repressed in it; the irrepresentable X on whose repression reality itself is founded (Žižek 2003). The spectre behind the ipe floor is not “the deforestation of the Amazon forest”, which is already a discourse and an abstraction, inserted into the ideological apparatuses and imaginary of late capitalism, but the stench of rotting meat in Styrofoam boxes, the gaze of a scared peasant, and the squalor of a plastic tent in a logging camp. It is an abject material world that lurks beneath reality.
Behind the dark hues of the ipe floor in your terrace there is a pot of beans dropped over an earthen floor, flies buzzing over dirty dishes, an eagle killed for pleasure, pornographic magazines in a miserable kitchen, and poorly spelled love letters. There are a handful of hunter-gatherers attempting to survive in a nearly devastated rainforest, a few absentee landowners and timber merchants, and hundreds of impoverished laborers. This is of course a disturbing flip side to the comfortable Western reality of consumer choices, re-inscription of industrial goods, and the negotiation of identities, that “critical” material culture specialists offer us time and again. They won’t dig under the exotic ipe floor to find skeletons, rubbish, the stink of petrol, the illegal scars of the forest. This is the work of archaeologists. Those who seek in other spaces—and not only in other times—the genealogy of their privileged society. Archaeology, then, not only means genealogy in a de-materialized, Foucauldian sense. It also means following the wake of materiality itself, looking for objects and technologies, for material conditions of existence, which together allow the appearance of the clean and harmonious material culture of Modernity. Archaeology can be more critical and radical than anthropology or any other social science. It penetrates deep, into the very roots of Western culture as it spreads through time and space.

**Coda**

In July and August 2008 we undertook our final fieldtrip to TI Awá. Things had not improved. The loggers did not turn up the year before, wary as they were of the police raid of 2006. But by 2008 all fears were gone and they were back with renewed vigor. The chief of the FUNAI post despairs, as he sees the invaders encroaching upon the last remaining land available to the Awá—less than 10% of the total surface of the reservation, a radius of five km around the village. We hear the chainsaws and the tractors as we walk in the forest. The chief of the post estimates that between 500 and 1,000 hectares are cut down every year inside the reservation. With the devastating loss of canopy comes rising temperatures and less rainfall.

Shortly after we left the reservation, in September, the Awá captured a logger that entered their land, and killed him with arrows in the village. Some time later, Pinawachá (one of the Awá men living in the reservation) died, apparently drowned in the river. Another Awá, To’o, had also died in mysterious circumstances in October 2006, when going to a meeting with other Indians to deal with the invasions of Arariboia—the last *terra indígena* where the Awá still roam free and independent. In this territory, the destruction of the forest has sped up in recent years (with 50 trucks loaded
with wood leaving the reservation every day) and the physical survival of
the Awá is in danger. Several Awá, including children, have been found
dead in the forest by their neighbors, the Tenetehara Indians.

Amid this gloom, we had a glimpse of hope in July 2009. Following a
campaign by the Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI), the FUNAI,
and Survival International—and after many years of procrastination—the
judge of Maranhão who is in charge of enforcing the legalization of the
terra indígena Awá finally signed the document that orders the eviction
of the squatters in indigenous land. How effective it will be, remains of
course to be seen. Also, at the time of finishing the writing of this article,
a large police operation (codename Arco de Fogo) was being organized to
expel all invaders from protected Awá lands, but how can invasions be
prevented forever in an immense territory that cannot be walled off or
patrolled? How forceful are legal documents and police operations when
there is no political will to put and end to the destruction of the Ama-
zon forest?

In Europe and North America, meanwhile, we continue to order ter-
races and patios made of ipe, a wood known for its rich, attractive color,
fine grain, and resistance to moisture and insects. Apparently, it resists
bloodstains just as well.

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Note

1. We understand the State here in Clastrian terms, as the political organization
that is predicated upon generalized social inequalities.
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Public and Private Lives in Iran: An Introduction to the Archaeology of the 2003 Bam Earthquake

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ABSTRACT

Bam, Iran, was destroyed by a powerful earthquake in December 2003. In what is perhaps Iran’s greatest tragedy in living memory, the majority of the mud brick houses and concrete buildings were completely flattened and more than half of the city’s population was killed. Five years after the disaster, a team of Iranian archaeologists and ethnographers excavated the remains of six houses destroyed in the earthquake. The excavated material culture demonstrates the stark contrasts between the residents’ public lives lived outside of their homes, and their private lives lived inside of their homes.

Résumé: Bam, en Iran, fut détruite par un violent tremblement de terre en décembre 2003. La majorité des maisons en briques cuites et des constructions en béton armé ont été complètement rasées, et plus de la moitié de la population a péri dans ce qui fut peut-être la plus grande tragédie qu’aït jamais connue l’Iran. Cinq ans après la catastrophe, une équipe d’archéologues et d’ethnologues iraniens a entrepris les fouilles des vestiges de six maisons détruites par le tremblement de terre. La culture matérielle mise à jour met en évidence des contrastes marqués entre la vie publique des habitants à l’extérieur de leur habitation, et leur vie privée à l’intérieur de celle-ci.

Resumen: En diciembre de 2003 Bam (Irán) fue destruido por un devastador terremoto. En lo que quizá sea la mayor tragedia que se recuerda en Irán, la mayoría de las casas de adobe y los edificios de hormigón se vinieron abajo y pereció más de la mitad de la población de la ciudad. Cinco años después del desastre, un equipo de arqueólogos y etnógrafos iraníes han excavado los restos de seis casas destruidas en el terremoto. La cultura material excavada demuestra los fuertes contrastes entre la vida pública que
26 December, 2003

At 5:27 a.m. a powerful earthquake shook the city of Bam, Iran, to the point of near total destruction. The mud brick and clay houses put up little resistance to the violent shaking. Walls and roofs crumbled and collapsed, leaving thousands of victims trapped beneath the rubble (Lateef 2004). The intense shaking led to the collapse of 70% of the buildings in the city center, killed 43,000 people, and left 30,000 injured and another 100,000 homeless (Atsumi and Okano 2004; Fielding et al. 2005; Jackson et al. 2006; Monroe and Wicander 2005:198).

Bam is an ancient city located in the heart of the Lut Desert, on the Kerman-Zahedan highway in southeastern Iran. The central products of Bam are palm dates, milk and dairy products. Thousands of families in Bam and the surrounding villages generate a large part of their income from the sale of cow’s milk, and before the earthquake, Bam was known as Iran’s national source of milk products. The city is principally known for Arg-é Bam, the mud-constructed citadel built about 2,000 years ago.

Figure 1. Bam’s ancient citadel
(Negaresh and Khosravi 2008) (Figure 1). The citadel covers an area of 200,000 m², and the entire area was heavily damaged in the earthquake (Langenbach 2005) (Maps 1, 2).

There are few sociological texts that describe pre-disaster Bam, and thus what is usually standard information on population is not always available here. Even the most straightforward of statistics, a basic population count before the earthquake, ranges from 98,000 (Abolghasemi et al. 2006) to 150,000 (Jackson et al. 2006). Though some sociological research has been conducted since the earthquake (e.g., Meskinazarian 2006), these are not helpful in learning about pre-disaster Bam since there has been a massive turnover in the population. Half the citizens died in the earthquake, and the dead have been replaced by new residents from elsewhere in the country (Yassamy 2006).

There are, however, some government statistics available. According to these, before the disaster more than 70% of Bam’s residents worked in palm gardens and farms, while another 20% were employed by the government, and about 10% worked in commercial markets. Over 50% of Bam’s residents could be categorized as middle class before the disaster (Kerman Program and Budgets 2003). The number of drug addicts in Bam is significant: informal statistics suggest the number of addicts in the population is as high as 30–40%. The majority of these addicts abuse traditional drugs

Map 1. Location of Bam within Iran. www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/iran.html
like opium and naas (a drug native to eastern Iran and western Pakistan) (Movaghar and Goodarzi 2005; Sepehri and Meimandi 2003).

In the first few weeks following the earthquake, many survivors buried their loved ones and then left the city (Garazhian and Papoli Yazdi 2008). After about 2 months though, many returned to the rubble piles that were previously their homes. They began to clean up the debris. But these returned residents did not come back to the Bam they once knew so well—they came back to a different Bam, and thus were forced to adopt new ways of life in order to adapt to their altered environment.

Archaeology and Disasters

Archaeologists studying in natural disasters have predominantly worked on the effects of earthquakes on non-portable materials (especially architecture), and not on the affected people (e.g., Ellenblum 1998; Iain et al. 2008; Marco et al. 2003; Soren 1988; Stewart et al. 2003). This previous work has looked at the relationships between archaeology and geology, but has largely overlooked issues of social context. In contrast, the Bam Ethno-archaeology Project is particularly interested in exploring human reactions in disaster contexts, rather than focusing on the physical changes to materials (architectural or otherwise). Through our project we learned that we could partially reconstruct pre-earthquake lifeways. This was truly an
Recent anthropological and archaeological scholarship has defined “disaster” as a process involving the combination of potentially destructive agents, the natural and/or technological environment and a population living in a condition of vulnerability (Oliver-Smith 1996). Following this definition can help us explore the human aspects of a society before and after a disaster. Much like thick ash deposits from a volcanic eruption, a devastating earthquake can also “freeze” people and contexts in the moment just before the earthquake struck. But rather than ash, the frozen contexts after an earthquake are found under tons of rubble.

**The Bam Ethnoarchaeology Project**

With financial support from the Bam Citadel Research Foundation, and with permits issued by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, just 40 days after the earthquake the Bam Ethnoarchaeology Project began. Our research agenda was focused on investigating five central themes in relation to Bam and the 2003 earthquake: population change, material culture, graveyards, markets, and domestic architecture. In this article I discuss some of these themes (see also Garazhian and Papoli Yazdi 2008). The overriding goal of the Project was to apprehend the gradual process through which Bam residents were returning to normal ways of life.

The first four seasons of field work were non-invasive. In this stage we studied the changes in material culture and in the residents’ lifeways through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Only after these four seasons of ethnoarchaeological study did we begin excavations at destroyed houses. The impetus for this shift in strategy was that we realized that in our four seasons of research we did not recover much information on the moment of the disaster itself. We slowly apprehended that due to the pervasive concealment of lifeways.

Thus the team found out only through the process of research that this ethnoarchaeology should be refashioned into an archaeology of the present (González-Ruibal 2006:122). In summer 2008, the fifth season of the project, we excavated six houses of six houses that had been destroyed in the 2003 earthquake. The main research strategy was to concentrate on the remaining personal and portable material culture at these houses in order to discern owner’s individuality and personality, those characteristics that are normally concealed in public. These are the non-discursive realms of experience described by Buchli and Lucas (2001:14).
Finding ruined houses apt for excavation four years after the earthquake was problematic because much of Bam was already reconstructed. We first found eight houses that were candidates for excavation. Next, the owners of these destroyed houses (in each case relatives of deceased families) were invited to meet with the Bam Citadel Research Foundation and the archaeologists. The project lawyer spoke with the families, explained the project, its objectives, and methods. At this meeting the archaeologists also gave a presentation about contemporary archaeology, and about the methods we intended to use in Bam.

Following the informational meetings, two families decided that they did not wish to participate in the research project. The remaining six families agreed to allow their houses to be excavated, and they signed legal papers attesting to their decision. The archaeologists also promised to follow specific steps and rules, agreed upon by all parties: the archaeologists would return any recovered valuable objects (such as money, documents, gold and silver) to the families. Three of the families (the Hafazabadis, Bidabadis, and Mowlawis) wanted to have representatives present during all the excavations, and we agreed to this. Also, the Mowlawi family only agreed to a total of three days of excavations, which we again agreed to. All parties participated voluntarily, and no money was exchanged.

One month after the conclusion of the field season we arranged for an exhibition of the excavated materials. We presented to the survivors the material evidence for how their relatives had lived and died.

Public and Private Lives in Bam

In this article the lifestyle of each studied family has been divided into two parts: “the outside”, which roughly corresponds with the publicly observed aspects of life (e.g., jobs and socio-economic status), and the “the inside” which roughly corresponds with the concealed parts of the families’ lives. Additionally, we managed the research strategy on two scales: the micro, short-term individual scale and the macro, long-term, social one (Gosden 1999:6; Hodder 2000:26). These two parts and these two scales are of course intertwined. We would find that each individual had a partially secret life that only appeared in the material remains.

The four case studies presented below are only preliminary discussions. Key themes such as privacy, gender, identity, loss, emotion, and family permeate these stories of lives that once were. I plan to develop these in later publications, but for now I simply want you to reflect on these stories and these lives.
The Takhti Family

Outside

The Takhti’s house was smaller than the other houses excavated in this study (Figure 2). It was approximately 300 m² and did not have gardens or a private yard. The house can be divided into two parts: a kitchen, and a second room which is connected to a small storeroom. The Takhti family included a father, mother, two sons, and a daughter. The father was a driver, and the mother was a housewife. Both parents had only elementary school level educations. All three children were under 8 years old.

Inside

Two trenches were opened in the house, one in the kitchen (Figure 3) and one that bisected the bedroom and the small storeroom (Figure 4). The material culture found in the kitchen suggests that the father was abusing opium—he had boiled opium several times shortly before the earthquake.

A metal drawer was found in the storeroom in which Mrs. Takhti had kept several things. One was her private diary, which she had written in for about one year. Her writing style is very informal, and has many misspellings. Her diary was written in abrupt sentences as a dialogue with an imaginary interlocutor, and we surmise that this imaginary conversation

Figure 2. The Takhti House before excavation. Photograph by the author

All names have been changed.
Figure 3. The Takhti House, the kitchen. Photograph by the author

Figure 4. The Takhti House, bedroom. Photograph by the author
partner was her husband. Seemingly, she was writing down the conserva-
tions that she could not have in reality:

You went out with your friends. I was alone; I went to my mother’s house.
Coming back, I bought a kilo of potato.
You put only a little money. You went to Dehbakri, I was alone, I could only
buy half a kilo of vegetables.

The main themes in her diaries are poverty, limitation, loneliness, her hus-
band’s negligence, and her hopes and dreams. She also noted seemingly
mundane issues such as the family income and expenses. Their family
income was low—the equivalent of about thirty US dollars a month. Mrs.
Takhti allotted some of their money for herself to purchase toiletries,
which she had kept in that same metal drawer. In the drawer we also
found religious books and anti-addiction brochures, which may represent
Mrs. Takhti’s attempts to help her husband overcome his dependency.
None of the Takhti’s survived the earthquake.

The Bidabadi Family

Outside

The Bidabadi family lived in the central part of Bam. Their home was
completely destroyed in the disaster (Figure 5). The house floor was shat-
tered. The Bidabadi family included 5 people: the father (Mr. Nosrat),

Figure 5. The Bidabadis House. Photograph by the author
mother (Mrs. Bidabadi), son (Hadi), daughter (Saghi) and the mother’s brother (Mr. Bidabadi). The family also had an extensive garden covered with palm and orange trees.

The uncle and father were both lawyers, and the mother ran a luxury salon near the house. Saghi had been married at 28, which is 10 years later than the average marital age in Bam. At about 150 years old, their house was one of the oldest residential complexes in Bam. The architecture speaks to the family’s high social standing and socioeconomic status. This is reinforced by the material culture found inside the home, including the furniture (Figure 6), stamp and cigarette collections (Figure 7), hunting equipment and the presence of personal spaces (Figure 8).

Figure 6. The Bidabadi House. Photograph by the author

Figure 7. The Bidabadi House. Photograph by the author
Inside

The Bidabadi family is remembered today by the mother’s family name and not the father. Six years after the family members died in the earthquake, everyone refers to the late Mr. Nosrat as “Mr. Bidabadi”—the maiden name of his wife. This is not unique, but it is rare in Iran. It is clear that the socioeconomic status of the mother’s family affected the memory and commemoration of her husband. The house and all surrounding lands and gardens were the mother’s property, a fact that seemingly lent her authority in the family.

The house was divided into three parts: areas for men, areas for women and areas for all members regardless of gender. In the male space (Figure 9), significant finds included pleasure items such as hunting equipment and musical instruments. One of the men wrote poems that were found saved in one of his books. None of the surviving family friends knew that the men of the family had these possessions and interests. The presence of women can be detected in other parts of the home. In the storeroom, photos of the mother’s parties were found, showing Mrs. Bidabadi’s luxuries such as expensive clothes and jewelry.

In the southern part of the storeroom, a box containing 120 love letters was found. The letters were written over an eight year period by Saghi, the daughter, who clearly had a close relationship with a man. According to the letters, and further research we conducted, Saghi loved this man. Since relationships between the sexes before marriage is taboo, it is relevant to note that the love letters were stored in such a way that anyone in the
home may have seen them. Saghi ended up married to another man, but she kept the love letters in her parents’ house. Seemingly Saghi was not afraid that her family, and perhaps even her husband know about her secret love.

Saghi had a strong personality and seems to have chosen her own way in life. Based on her collected airplane tickets and her diaries, we know that she traveled all over Iran. She even chose her own husband, which is unusual in Bam. Based on conversations with informants, Saghi had quarreled with her husband on 22 December 2003, the day before the earthquake. Following the argument, she went to her mother’s house. The Bidabadi family was to host a dinner party for Saghi’s husband as a way to invite him to solve the problem, but the party never occurred. None in this household survived the earthquake.

The Hafezabadi Family

Outside

The Hafezabadi house was located in a district of Bam known for its palm trees and gardens (Figure 10). Most of the people who lived in this district were middle and lower-middle class. The mother and the father of the family were teachers in elementary schools. They had two sons, one six and one ten years old. We excavated three trenches at the house and found toys, books and photos of the sons in each one. The father was interested in sports, especially soccer and body-building. He had been a member of a
soccer team, which made him a prominent member of the community. The mother was an orderly person who directed the housework. The recovered material culture, including pay statements and religious books, support the idea that the Hafezabadi family was a religious, middle class family. They worked in their own gardens to supplement their official incomes, partly to provide for their sons.

Inside

The Hafezabadi house had four rooms. The first room is located in the southeastern part of the house and was completely empty of portable artifacts (Figure 11). The second room, in the southern-most space, was where a majority of the material culture was recovered (Figure 12). We recovered a bed in this room, suggesting that it is a bedroom. In this same room, Mrs. Hafezabadi’s bag was found in which her students’ homework was recovered. The students’ last homework assignment before the earthquake was an essay answering the question “what do you do after going home from school?” None of the Hafezabadi household survived the earthquake.

The Mowlavi Family

Outside

The Mowlavi family lived in the northeastern part of Bam (Figure 13). The family included a mother and father and two children, a daughter and a
Figure 11. The Hafezabadi House. Photograph by the author

Figure 12. The Hafezabadi House. Photograph by the author
son who were both under six years old. The father worked in the market as a salesman and the mother was a housewife who enjoyed making handicrafts. The house was large and extended to about 400 m², and it was surrounded by gardens. The front door opened to a small hall which connected to two other rooms.

**Inside**

Two trenches were opened. One was opened in a room in the southeastern part of the house. The materials found there were abundant and could be used to reconstruct the events of the family’s final night. The room was about 20 m² and in the middle of the room there was a rug with two cushions. A piece of nylon was found on one of the rugs, likely where a child slept (Figure 14). A doll, a toy gun, a headband, and a TV remote control were near the cushions. A red scarf was found near the door in which pieces of long, colored hair was found. This is likely Mrs. Mowlawi’s hair.

The second trench was located in the northwestern part of the house in a room connected to a narrow corridor. A rug covered the floor and two sitting blankets were in the eastern and northern corners. A small table was located in the middle of the room, on which Mrs. Mowlavi’s handmade flowers and dolls were located. Two small plastic boxes were found in a niche that in Iran is usually used for children to gather money. There was still a little money (5,000 Rials, or about five US Dollars) in them.

Based on the excavated data we can reconstruct some details of the final minutes of the Mowlavi family: the children were playing with their toys.

*Figure 13. The Mowlavi House. Photograph by the author*
(a doll and a toy gun) before sleeping, while their father was watching TV. Mrs. Mowlavi slept on a cushion near her daughter while Mr. Mowlavi slept near his son. The clock had fallen down from the wall and frozen at 5:27 a.m.—the precise time of the earthquake. All from the Mowlavi household perished.

Conclusions

I am an Iranian archaeologist who works in my own country. I excavate in houses that are similar to my own house. I have eaten, slept, protested, and have been married in a similar manner as my dead subjects. Why then am I excavating domestic settings and architecture which is so intimately familiar to me? What can be my motivation for excavating houses which were in use only 6 years ago? Iranians carefully conceal aspects of their lives that must be hidden as they are contrary to both tradition and the law. The public appearance of these aspects of life can have dangerous results, ranging from being socially ostracized (for example, in the case of relations with the opposite sex) to problems with the law (such as in the case of possessing drugs, wine or satellite television) (Aghajanian 2001; Godarz 2007). Iranians learn to conceal these taboo parts of their lives from public view. I do this too. At work, I act as if I am a very religious person. But at home, in my own private space, I do not have to pretend, so I do not. The evidence for this discrepancy in my own life is found in the material culture I daily handle: the

Figure 14. The Mowlavi House, bedroom. Photograph by the author
books I read, the love letters I write, and the films I watch. These practices of concealment result in paradoxical behavioral patterns between how people act inside their homes and how they act outside their homes. As with most aspects of human behavior, these patterns leave signs and markers in material culture.

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Ancient Egypt in Brazil: A Theoretical Approach to Contemporary Uses of the Past

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper we consider archaeology as a product of social interaction, and discuss how ancient Egyptian materiality has been an important part of identity building in Brazil. We begin by reviewing our theoretical setting, and suggest that a postmodern approach is most helpful to our goal of understanding the social context of the public uses of archaeology. The paper then turns to the trajectory of “Egyptomania” in Brazil, from the 19th century onwards, highlighting the importance of cultural movements such as Kardecism and Masonry in this trend. We argue that the use of Egyptian subjects in Brazil has connections with social inequality, racism, and gender biases. Finally, we present a case study on positive recent trends in the presentation of ancient Egypt in school textbooks which highlights critical approaches to the use of ancient Egyptian subjects in contemporary Brazil.

Résumé: Dans cette étude, nous étudions l’archéologie en tant que produit de l’interaction social, et examinons dans quelle mesure la réalité de l’Égypte antique a joué un rôle déterminant pour construire l’identité au Brésil. Nous commençons avec l’examen de notre cadre théorique pour affirmer qu’une approche postmoderne est la plus appropriée pour atteindre notre objectif, qui consiste à comprendre le contexte social des utilisations publiques de l’archéologie. L’étude se penche ensuite sur l’évolution de « l’égypomanie » au Brésil, depuis le XIXe siècle jusqu’à nos jours, en soulignant l’importance des mouvements culturels dans ce courant, comme le Kardecisme et la Franc-maçonnerie. Nous montrons que l’utilisation des thèmes égyptiens au Brésil a des liens avec l’inégalité sociale, le racisme, et les préjugés sexistes. Pour terminer, nous présentons une étude de cas sur les tendances manifestes actuelles de la présentation de l’Égypte antique dans les livres scolaires, qui souligne des approches
décisives pour l'utilisation des thématiques de l'Égypte antique dans le Brésil contemporain.

Resumen: En este trabajo consideramos la arqueología como un producto de interacción social y sostenemos que la materialidad de los antiguos egipcios ha sido una parte importante de la construcción de identidad en Brasil. Comenzamos revisando nuestro trasfondo teórico y sugerimos que el enfoque posmoderno es el más útil para nuestro objetivo de entender el contexto social de los usos públicos de la arqueología. A continuación, el trabajo aborda la trayectoria de la "Egiptomanía" en Brasil, a partir del siglo XIX, destacando la importancia de movimientos culturales como el kardecismo y la masonería en esta tendencia. Lo que sostenemos es que el uso de temas egipcios en Brasil está relacionado con la desigualdad, el racismo y los prejuicios de sexo. Para concluir, presentamos un estudio de caso sobre las recientes tendencias positivas en la presentación del antiguo Egipto en los libros de texto de las escuelas, que destacan los enfoques críticos en el uso de los temas del antiguo en el Brasil contemporáneo.

KEY WORDS
Ancient Egypt, Brazil, Identity

Introduction

Archaeological theory has moved from a “loss of innocence” (Clarke 1973) to a clear political engagement with present day concerns. Since archaeology is the product of particular social forces and is socially contextual, this paper argues that in evaluating the origins of knowledge it is important to consider the context of past and present thought. The notion of the “invention of Brazil” has been widely studied for several generations, but little attention has been paid to the role of Egypt in this process. Egypt, however, has been at the forefront of the Brazilian imagination since at least the 1822 beginning of the nation state. The influence of Kardecism or Spiritism, in the 20th century, contributed to the popular appeal of Egypt, as did the continued influence of Masonry. Ancient Egypt is the most popular school subject in Brazil: more popular than any other historical subject, civilisation or period. School textbooks pay special attention to ancient Egypt, and particularly to the celebrated achievements of the Pharaonic era. In Brazil, newsstands carry a weekly magazine that deals exclusively with Ancient Egypt, attesting to the massive popular appeal of the subject.
As Ucko (1995:16) suggests, since the early 1980s and the founding of the World Archaeological Congress, the fiction of a factual, objective archaeological science has faded. A worldwide Polyphony of theoretical voices and perspectives has also been widely acknowledged (Gamble 1995:xvi). No archaeologist can now separate themselves from their data since archaeological narratives always compromises this distinction. Additionally, no archaeologist can afford to ignore previous interpretations of evidence, and it is increasingly accepted that the archaeologist, through her narrative description, is fully implicated in any representation of the past. By exploring how we represent the relationship between ourselves and the past we might see ourselves as creators of the past through its materiality (Munslow 1997). Foucault (1984:50) stated that

The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at on and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibilities of going beyond them.

Foucault’s words resonate with the well-known Socratic motto, “the unexamined life is not worth living” (Plato, Apology 38a). It is also not far from Clarke’s (1973) warning of a “loss of innocence”. Archaeology, as with other social sciences at the brink of breaching self-evidences, entered the post-modern condition denying the natural as an explanatory model (Foucault 1991:76; Hamilton 2003:154). Consequently, if there is no ineffable truth, then the archaeologist must never claim that his or her account and interpretation is the only, or the natural, way of telling the story of the past (Arnold 2000:93; Hingley 2008).

Archaeological narrative is always subjective, and rooted in social and cultural values (Augé and Colleyn 2004:118). Increasingly the discipline recognizes that archaeological knowledge cannot be neutral or apolitical, by virtue of its very nature as a human endeavor (Veit 1989:50), and that archaeological work should result in a motivation for the development of critical thought (Sanoja and Vargas 1990:53). The observation that archaeologists produce evidence to be turned into knowledge, “sein Wissen ist — wie noch Kant sagt—cognitio ex datis” (“knowledge is, as Kant said, the result of thinking from rough data”) (Kittsteiner 1997:6), has also been acknowledged in Brazil. But so have the ironic words of a senior French archaeologist who has worked in Brazil since the 1960s: “tout ce que l’ont fait ou trouve est nouveau… ce qui n’encourage ni à l’autocritique, ni à fuir la routine” (“everything we do and find is something new in the
Brazilian context, so that this does not encourage people to be self-critical and indeed discourages the search for new paths”) (Prous 1994:11).

Archaeology has been used to forge national identities and reinforce dictatorships in Europe (Legendre et al. 2007; Galaty and Watkinson 2006; Funari 2008a), as well as in Latin America (Funari et al. 2009). In this paper we follow in the steps of Ucko (2003:v) in examining the changing appropriations of Ancient Egypt in Brazil over time (Bakos 2003). “Egyptomania”—the recycling and reinventing of Egypt’s icons and images—has been an active field of research for a number of years (e.g. Humbert 1994; 1996; Fazzini 1996; Shaw 2004:137–159), and the “invention of Brazil” has similarly been a popular research topic for several generations (e.g. Monbeig 1976; Broggio and Droulers 2005). However, and interestingly, little attention has been paid to the relationship between Egyptomania and the invention of Brazil. With this paper we aim to fill this gap, and thus we explore the role of Egypt in inventing Brazil and Brazilians.

Ancient Egypt in Brazil

Egypt has been in Brazilian minds since at least the 1822 beginnings of the nation state (Bakos 1996; 1998; 2004; Saballa 1998). In 1808 the Portuguese Royal House transferred the capital of the empire to Rio de Janeiro, in their flight from the Napoleonic thrust in Europe. Brazil was raised to the status of part of The United Kingdom of Portugal, and thus cities such as Algarve and Rio de Janeiro received an array of Imperial institutions, including the National Museum (Beltrão and Kitchens 1990).

In 1822 Peter I (son of John VI), heir to the Portuguese throne, proclaimed the independence of Brazil but kept most of the Imperial institutions as the backbone of the new nation. The National Museum was modelled after other European, Imperial Museums, and Peter I decided to have Egyptian antiquities at the core of the museum’s collection as a sign of the Imperial pretensions of the new country. During the Imperial Period (1822–1889) Egyptian antiquities were a potent sign of the universal ambitions of the Brazilian Royalty, for them, Egypt represented the first and most enduring civilisation, the ultimate origin of Brazil even. Pharaonic Egypt was a stable theocracy with strong centralised power in the hands of the Pharaoh, who was considered a God (Funari 1997; 1999; Gralha 2002; 2005)—certainly a laudable model in the eyes of Brazil’s Royals.

Even though the Brazilian Emperor was not God, he ruled as the supreme and sole representative of God in the New World, a ruler blessed directly by the Catholic Church. The importance of the Egyptian connection is highlighted by the fact that Peter I ordered the purchase at auction of an entire collection of Egyptian antiquities, what would become the core
of the National Museum, in Rio de Janeiro. Additionally, Peter I had written the Brazilian Constitution himself—overruling the proposal by the representatives in Parliament—and he introduced to the constitution a fourth branch of government: the “power of the moderator”, that is the Emperor, which rules over the classic trio of the legislative, judiciary and executive branches. Though perhaps not directly inspired by the Egyptian experience, the timeless Egyptian antiquities served to legitimise these Imperial arrays of power.

Brazilian imperial elites exchanged experiences through Masonic meetings and this contributed to the spread of Egyptian fashions in general, but mainly to the adoption of Egyptian motifs in architecture (Bakos 2003). Although Brazil was officially a Catholic country (and other religions were not recognised), the imperial elites kept close relations with the Masons, for whom Egyptian iconography played a central role. During the Imperial period, the influence of Egyptian fashion did not reach ordinary people, as the majority of the inhabitants of the country were slaves or illiterate, poor peasants and workers.

The era of the Republic (beginning in 1889) led to a series of changes in society, not least significant the genesis of primary education for the wider public. A focus on Pharaonic Egypt continued in the National Museum, and it was introduced in school textbooks as the first civilisation and the root of Western Civilisation. The clear message was that history began with Egypt.

The primacy of Egypt in Brazil is again emphasized through a comparison of its influence with the influence of the 17th century Brazilian Maroon community, Palmares. School textbooks devote at most about a half page to Palmares, and usually a single paragraph. This, even though Palmares is a national heritage site and its leader, Zumbi, officially considered a national hero. In contrast, school textbooks pay special attention to ancient Egypt, and particularly to what is considered its main achievements and mythic lures: the construction of the Pyramids and other monuments, its mysterious religion, and its success in producing economic surplus. All Brazilian history textbooks for 11-year-old students (6th grade) include at least a ten page long chapter on the Egyptian civilisation. High school history textbooks for 16-year-old students also devote at least a full chapter to Egypt. From this comparison we surmise that black resistance is thus at least twenty times less relevant than Egypt as a textbook subject (Funari and Carvalho 2006).

Despite this intense interest in everything Egyptian, it is interesting to note that Egypt after the Pharaohs is completely ignored. This is also seemingly the case elsewhere in the Western World. The Arab period represents the end of ancient Egypt and, consequently, in the end of Brazilian interest in Egypt. Due to historical reasons, however—not least the fact that Portugal had been under Arab rule for several centuries and that both vocabu-
lary and material culture attest to these Arab roots—the oblivion of Arab Egypt is telling. In part this is due to the persecution of Arab culture by the official Catholic hierarchy for the last several centuries in both Portugal and Brazil. Ancient Egypt is represented in Brazil as uprooted from its historical context, as if there was no relation between two completely different civilizations in the same Nile Valley: the ancient Egyptian civilization and the later, Arabic one.

It is the same exclusion from history accepted within Brazil, a country considered as unrelated to the native inhabitants and cultures before the arrival of the Portuguese. Pupils in Brazil have much more information on Ancient Egypt than about the indigenous inhabitants of the country. Prehistory is a subject still neglected in school textbooks and most teachers are not trained to deal with it. All teachers in training in Brazil study ancient civilizations, such as Egypt, but prehistory is rarely mentioned. Brazilian anthropologist Carlos Fausto (2000:30–36) stated that “the Amazon is our Nile”, but Indians are as excluded from the Brazilian past just as the later Arabs are from Egypt.

The spread of Kardecism in the twentieth century also contributed to the popular appeal of Egypt. By the end of the 19th century, the spiritism of Alan Kardec, born in France, came to Brazil. This religion mixed some of the karmic conception of Hindu inspiration with Christian precepts and a certain 19th century rationalism. Kardecist spiritism flourished in Brazil. It was, from the beginning, a middle class religion, though it also had blacks and the poor among its followers (Prandi 1997:7). Kardecism is a religion based on the belief in the communication with the spirits of dead people and it is inspired partially in the Ka/Ba concepts of ancient Egyptians. Kardecism, or Spiritism, was developed as a religious movement in France, spearheaded by Hippolyte Leon Dénizard Rivail, born in Lyon, France, in 1804. Under the adopted name of Allan Kardec, the religio-philosophic doctrine of the transmigration of souls has been hugely successful in Brazil, since the mid 19th century (Hess 1991). The Book of the Dead is one of the books read by Kardecists as a source for their creed.

Novels both by Brazilian authors and foreigners, with plots set in ancient Egypt are popular. The most popular, and considered a classic Spiritist book, is The Voice of Ancient Egypt, republished several times since 1946 (Lorenz 1946). Hollywood films with Egyptian subjects drew huge audiences in Brazil throughout the 20th century (Funari 2008a). Scholarly books on ancient Egypt were translated into Portuguese and, from the 1980s onwards, several scholarly books by Brazilians were published (e.g. Cardoso 1982). The principal archaeology museum in the country, The University of São Paulo Archaeological and Ethnological Museum, founded in the 1960s, has an Egyptian antiquities section. The Egyptian antiquities section in this Museum is the most popular section of the exhibition.
The Egyptian section of the museum plays the same function as the Egyptian chapter in school textbooks: it is there to remind people that Brazilian history begins in Ancient Egypt. Today, there are several Egyptologists in Brazil, some of them working with British and French scholars, such as Cardoso (1986), Bakos (1993), Brancaglion (1993) and Gralha (2002). In recent years, several books for children on Egypt have been published, some of them written by Brazilians (e.g. Raquel Funari 2001).

In recent years in Brazilian newsstands have sold a weekly magazine focused solely on Ancient Egypt. Each issue features several topics relating to ancient Egypt and every 4 weeks or so the reader also gets a small reproduction of an Egyptian artefact, such as a statuette of an Egyptian god or goddess. In 2001, there were two major exhibitions of ancient Egyptian antiquities in São Paulo, attracting more visitors than any other similar exhibitions. One was held in the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP) and the other one in a private hall, the Fundação Álvares Penteado (Faap), both under the auspices of several private and public institutions and chaired by the Brazilian Egyptologist Antonio Brancaglion. The collection came from the Louvre as well as from other Brazilian collections. The images associated with these exhibitions were of the greatness of our forefathers, the ancient Egyptians.

Egyptian material culture plays a unique role in Brazil, quite distinct from other Latin American countries. There are scholarly archaeological studies of Egyptology in other South American countries, particularly in Argentina. The Argentine Science Foundation (CONICET) supports several Egyptology projects (cf. Campagno 2006). However, in Argentina as elsewhere in Spanish-speaking Latin America, Egypt does not play a special role in popular identity building.

### Brazilian Pupils and Egypt: A Case Study

Ancient Egypt is an important subject for Brazilian pupils (Funari 2006). History syllabi often include a discussion of ancient Egyptian history and culture and the subject is usually studied by fifth or sixth graders and again by High School pupils. The perceptions of students are shaped by several factors, not least their social and religious background. Religion plays a particularly important role, as Ancient Egypt is a subject of Sunday church classes, as well as the Catholic catechism and in other creeds, such as Kardecism and Judaism. As for social imbalances, several pupils perceive Egyptian themes as an allegory for their own subaltern situation. Last but not least, gender differences are also related to the perceptions of ancient Egypt, as girls are generally interested in cultural issues and boys in military subjects (Funari 2008a, b).
Narratives about the past are a series of arguments about the world and society, and they can be interpreted in many ways through different understandings. Books are part of developing learning strategies, the basic tool for understanding history and archaeology as a narrative of the past. What is written and taught about the past in this way is connected to current reality. For the study of ancient history in general and ancient Egypt in particular, archeology plays a special role in the books used by Brazilian pupils. Interestingly, Ancient Egyptian materiality is now increasingly used to challenge social imbalances and to foster critical thinking, respect for cultural diversity, and gender, religious and racial justice.

In the textbook *Navegando pela História* (‘Navigating History’) by Silvia Panazzo and Maria Luisa Vaz (2004:85), the following activity is proposed:

Imagine you own a travel agency, and name it. Collect what you have learned about Ancient Egypt as well as contemporary Egypt to organize a trip to that country. Write a short text on Ancient Egypt so as to raise the interest of tourists. In this leaflet, include short trips to the Nile River and a visit to the Pyramids, religious temples and other monuments built in the Middle Kingdom. You and your group should add pictures of the places to be visited. Beside each picture, write a short note explaining the importance of the tourist sights, pointing out the transformations that happened in Egyptian society.

This is an interesting proposal since it gives the chance to deal with essential concepts in the understanding of the past, such as time, images and statistics. The pupils build speech and above all, do so in a fun way. The inclusion of present day Egypt as a subject of interest is also laudatory, considering that the pupils are encouraged to understand Ancient Egypt in its present day material and social context. The downside of the proposed activity is the subconscious use of a class bias, for the student is encouraged to consider him or herself to be a proprietor, the owner of a travel agency, not an ordinary worker. Considering that most students are poor or middle class, this bias should be related to an unconscious aristocratic ethos, permeating social relations in Brazil, as suggested by anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (1991).

In the textbook *História em documento, imagem e texto* (‘History Through Documents, Image and Text’) by Joelza Rodrigues (2004:115), there is short passage about “values”. Students are asked to compare the contents of a historical text to current social behavioral rules. This exercise encourages students to express their own standpoints, in relation to a sequence of sentences attributed to ancient Egyptians (and supposedly found written in a sarcophagus). The dead person, according to the exercise: “did not commit unfaithful acts against others”, “did not harm animals”, “did not practice evil acts”, “did not contribute to the another’s
impoverishment”, “did not lead anybody to suffer or cry”, and “did not kill anybody”.

Students were then asked to answer a series of questions: “Think about each sentence. Did a deceased person when facing Gods and Goddesses say these sentences? Which of these actions would be grounds for punishment? Which would be considered faithful even if not contained in law?” The pupil is thus encouraged to think that the dead person had to face a god in the afterlife, and had to answer for her actions during life. This activity clearly stresses the importance of social norms, in Egypt and today, and may lead the pupils to consider whether social hierarchies, in Egypt and in Brazil, should be natural features to be preserved and respected.

In the textbook *Nova história crítica* (“New Critical History” by Mário Schmidt (2004:98,101), there is an item “Critical Reflections,” in which an interesting reflection about racism is proposed based on Ancient Egypt. Egypt is characterized as:

the great dark skinned Civilization. In the cinema and on television, the actors who play the ancient Egyptians are normally white-skinned and even blue-eyed. Nevertheless, Egyptian people were dark-skinned Africans. As you can see in the sculpted panel, the two young nobles in the times of the pharaoh have African features: thick lips and curly hair put up in a plait. They wore make up on their eyes and eyebrows. Unfortunately, for a long time, prejudice from Europeans against dark-skinned people led them not notice who the real creators of the wonderful Ancient Egyptian Civilization were. (Nowadays, however, Arabs, mostly white skinned people, mainly compose the Egyptian people).

In a society like Brazil’s, where racial prejudice is normally concealed, this activity generates the possibility of a discussion on the importance of the points in common when comparing Brazil to this great civilization on the African Continent, stigmatized by slavery (Bernal 1996, 2005; Castilhos 1984). It also gives the opportunity to figure out how images of the past are subjectively created.

Material evidence has also been used to foster critical thinking about the role of Egypt in Brazil. In the collection ‘*A vida no tempo dos deuses*’ (‘Life in the Time of the Gods’), Funari published the book *O Egito dos faraós e sacerdotes* (‘Egypt of pharaohs and priests’) (Funari 2001), designed for students aged eleven. The book draws heavily on the materiality of ancient Egypt. It aims at showing the diversity of cultural aspects of Egyptian society and the role of ordinary artifacts in shaping religious identities. Materiality is used to foster discussion of gender, social, and religious diversity in past and present Brazil. This archaeological approach stresses transformational and hybrid identities, relating Egyptian subjects to present-day power relations (Hingley 2010).
All these activities are related to the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* (National Syllabus), which are the directions set by the government. These propose that cross-cultural themes be explored in the classroom, as well as the concepts of cultural diversity and citizenship. It is understood that people build their identities through history. History as a narrative about the past is interpretation, the work of historians and archaeologists, but also ordinary people and pupils, just as other discourses about the past are (Jenkins 1999).

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, Brazil’s fascination with all things Egyptian comes down to issues of hierarchy and inequality. Egypt as the land of Pharaohs and pyramids, on the one hand, and ordinary fellahin, on the other, in a way, mirrors contemporary Brazilian society. Authorities and elite monuments are as distant to ordinary people as the Pharaohs were to the fellahin. Those same Brazilian authorities, like the Pharaohs, are not only distant rulers, but they raise contradictory reactions in ordinary people, who might also associate themselves with the enslaved Jews. Brazilian President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) in this case might play an inspirational role as a modern Moses figure, liberating the masses from secular slavery. Archaeology has been playing a role in discussing present day material culture, the fight against oppression during dictatorial rule and other relevant subjects (Funari et al. 2009), but it also has an important part to play in dealing with the contemporary relevance of seemingly distant topics such as Ancient Egypt.

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Of Other Scapes: Archaeology, Landscape, and Heterotopia in Fascist Sicily

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ABSTRACT

Foucault’s concept of the “heterotopia” has been applied broadly throughout the humanities and social sciences. Archaeologies of the recent past are well-suited to examine these “other spaces”: blurring the line between past and present while juxtaposing archaeological, archival, and ethnographic data, they can draw attention to the gaps, contradictions, and alternate orderings that make up the world around us. Using the extensive agricultural land reforms and building programs undertaken by Italy’s Fascist government in Sicily in the 1940s as an example, I extend the heterotopia concept to an analysis of archaeological landscapes, critically exploring the benefits and limitations of a heterotopic perspective in archaeological contexts.

Résumé: Le concept d’« hétérotopie » de Foucault a été largement utilisé dans les sciences humaines et sociales. Les archéologies du passé récent sont bien adaptées pour étudier ces « autres lieux »: en brouillant la frontière entre le passé et le présent tout en juxtaposant des données archéologiques, d’archives et ethnographiques, elles peuvent attirer l’attention sur les écarts, les contradictions et les systèmes alternatifs qui constituent le monde qui nous entoure. En utilisant l’exemple des vastes réformes agraires et des programmes de construction entrepris par l’État fasciste italien en Sicile dans les années 1940, j’étends le concept d’hétérotopie à une analyse des paysages archéologiques, en explorant de façon critique les avantages et les limites de l’approche hétérotopique dans les contextes archéologiques.

Resumen: El concepto de “heterotopia” ideado Foucault se ha aplicado profusamente en todas las ciencias humanas y sociales. Los estudios arqueológicos del pasado reciente son adecuados para analizar estos «otros espacios»: a medio cambio entre el pasado y el presente yuxtaponiendo a la vez datos arqueológicos, archivísticos y etnográficos, son capaces de llamar la atención sobre las lagunas, las contradicciones y los
ordenamientos alternos que forman el mundo que nos rodea. Utilizando a modo de ejemplo las exhaustivas reformas de terrenos agrícolas y los programas de construcción emprendidos por el gobierno fascista de Italia en Sicilia en los años 40, amplió el concepto de heterotopia a un análisis de los panoramas arqueológicos, analizando con una mirada crítica las ventajas y los límites de la perspectiva heterotópica en los contextos arqueológicos.

KEYWORDS

Heterotopia, Landscape, Fascism, Sicily

Introduction

On July 20, 1939, Benito Mussolini, the enigmatic leader of Italy’s Fascist dictatorship, announced a campaign of land reforms, building projects, and resettlement programs aimed at restructuring Sicilian agriculture (Stampacchia 1978:586, 2000:357). The most publicized features of this enterprise were eight rural outposts, called borghi, that were inaugurated across the island in 1940 (Figure 1). In this article I will examine these borghi from a perspective informed by Foucault’s concept of heterotopia. After briefly introducing the concept, I explore some of the problems and limitations of its application to archeological contexts. I will then discuss some of the interpretive possibilities that it nonetheless enables, including an extension to the analysis of archaeological landscapes. Ultimately, I argue that although the concept of heterotopia is not entirely satisfying, it nonetheless opens up productive questions and lines of inquiry for archaeological research. This is perhaps particularly true for archaeologies of the recent past.

The Sicilian agricultural reforms of the late 1930s and early 1940s built upon a series of earlier projects. These included the construction of four rural villages in the 1920s, and a series of experiments in public finance and private entrepreneurship that resulted in four additional rural towns. Six more borghi were begun in 1940, and several others were planned but never realized (Barbera 2002:146–171; Dufour 2005:307–399; La China 2009; Pennacchi 2008:243–275). The borghi of the 1940s built explicitly off the model of the Pontine Marshes, a vast malarial swamp south of Rome that the Fascists successfully drained and made arable, and upon which they inaugurated five “New Towns” and twelve borghi between 1932 and 1938 (Pennacchi 2008:288). Sicily’s borghi followed the basic model of the New Towns, generally consisting of a central piazza bordered by the
church, post office, dispensary, Fascist Party headquarters, agriculture office, police station, and craftsmen’s shops.

Sicily’s borghi were explicitly designed to break the power of the large semi-feudal estates, called latifondi, that had characterized agriculture in Sicily and southern Italy for centuries (Blok 1975:58–84; Schneider and Schneider 1976). These estates were typically owned by absentee landlords who relied upon middlemen to sub-let small allotments to peasant farmers on extremely unfavorable terms. The farmers themselves did not live on the fields they worked, but commuted to them from hilltop towns (Hilowitz 1976:5). Because farmers would often have small stakes in multiple properties, they would commute from the town or city where they lived to the rented fields that they worked, typically spending their nights in rented quarters at the latifondo’s central buildings, the baglio or masseria, and only returning home on the weekends (Pluciennik et al. 2004:38–44).

Not only were the latifondi economically unjust, they were also under-productive; for these and a variety of other reasons—not least among them to substitute the power of the State for that of the landowners and the Mafia enforcers that maintained discipline in the countryside—the Fascists framed their agricultural reforms as a “Colonization of the Sicilian Latifondo” (Stampacchia 1978). The Fascists emphasized “colonization” in its original Latin sense, referring to the colonus as the founder and cultivator of a farmstead (Burdett 2000:18). Land surrounding each borgo was to be redistributed to peasant farmers, providing them each with an individual

Figure 1. The eight borghi inaugurated in 1940 by the Agency for the Colonization of the Sicilian Latifondo (map by the author)
agricultural plot that included a farmhouse where their families would live (Dufour 2005; Carbonara 1941).

Only the people staffing the borgo’s offices and services were intended to live within its confines; the bulk of the resettled population was to be housed in the new homesteads. Designed to accommodate a family of eight and several farm animals, they were situated on individual agricultural plots that the estate owners were compelled to rent out for 20-year intervals. In this new rural landscape “land and houses form an alternating rhythm, a cadence that finds its symphonic conclusion in the borgo” (Accascina 1941:185).

Archaeological Approaches to Heterotopia

In this article I examine Sicily’s borghi within the context of Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia. Heterotopias have been a quiet presence in scholarship across the humanities for the past 25 years, and a recent spate of publications (in urban studies, comparative literature, geography, and anthropology) suggests that they continue to have at least a slippery hold on the margins of these disciplines (e.g., Dehaene and De Cauter 2008; Ewald 2009; Saldanha 2008). My goal here is to engage with how the concept of heterotopia has been incorporated into the archaeological literature, and what its application both hinders and enables.

Foucault first mentioned heterotopia in 1966 in the preface to The Order of Things, where he describes it as a discursive space in opposition to, or at least in tension with, utopia. Whereas the utopia provides consolation, the heterotopia, by undermining the basic logic of words, grammar, and language, is deeply disturbing (Foucault 1994:xviii). Foucault developed this idea in spatial terms in 1966 through two radio broadcasts, followed by a 1967 lecture titled “Of Other Spaces” (Johnson 2006:75–76). In these addresses he again uses utopia as his foil: because the utopia is both a eu-topos, a good place, but also a ou-topos, a no-place, it cannot exist by definition. Foucault therefore proposes the heterotopia as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia” in which utopian ideals are made manifest (Foucault 1986:24). Furthermore, heterotopias have a specific function as places where “all other real sites that can be found within a culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 1986:24). If the utopia is a mirror reflecting an ideal world, the heterotopia would be a carnival mirror, twisting and contorting what it reflects to either expose reality as an illusion, or to suggest an alternate way of seeing things.

Foucault clarifies his concept with six principles: (1) that all societies create heterotopias, (2) that their function can change through time, (3) that they juxtapose several incompatible sites within a single real place, (4)
that they break or disrupt traditional concepts of time, (5) that they may require certain acts, performances, or rituals, to gain entry into them, and (6) that they only exist in their relation to all other sites and spaces (Foucault 1986:24–27). However, as many authors note, these principles have been applied haphazardly in the subsequent literature (Johnson 2006:81). This is in part because Foucault’s original concept was incomplete, and probably discarded: the concept did not circulate widely until “Of Other Spaces” was published in 1986, 2 years after Foucault’s death and nearly two decades after the lecture was initially delivered (Saldanha 2008:2082; Soja 1989:16–19, 1996:154). Its open-endedness as a “theoretical ‘work in progress’” (Hook and Vrdoljak 2002:206) has therefore invited a vast range of interpretations and applications. Genocchio (1995:36–37) traces much of the confusion surrounding the term to a “strange inconsistency” in Foucault’s writing: while *The Order of Things* locates heterotopia primarily in discursive space, “Of Other Spaces” imagines them in a more tangible domain.

Genocchio argues that any attempt to make these two conceptions fit neatly together is fraught; they are separate intellectual projects, and forcing them together simply muddies their impact and comprehensibility. Nonetheless, Hetherington (1997) provides an enduringly flexible discussion of heterotopia, defining them as sites of alternate ordering “whose existence sets up unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate things within either the body of a society or within a text...their presence either provides an unsettling of spatial and social relations or an alternative representation of spatial and social relations” (Hetherington 1997:8).

Recent articles examining heterotopia typically list the radically diverse range of sites to which the term has been extended. Foucault (1986) himself cites prisons, brothels, insane asylums, cemeteries, colonies, and gardens as salient examples of “other spaces.” As these are just the kinds of sites that have been attracting the attention of archaeologists of the recent past, we ought to have some insight into how to productively employ heterotopia as a concept and continue to develop its meaning. Historical archaeologists should be particularly well-equipped to trace these complex spaces, precisely because we frequently have many forms of data at our disposal, from excavated material and survey data to archival and ethnographic resources. We are spoiled for riches in terms of the quantity, but also the diversity of our dataset; while this overabundance of information carries its own interpretive burdens, it should allow us to build the sorts of textured analyses of time, space, power, and alterity that a thorough engagement with heterotopia demands.

Archaeological applications of the heterotopia are diverse in their geographical and temporal scope, as well as in which aspects of the term they choose to emphasize. Cemeteries, tombs and graveyards figure prominently
because they “acquire extra layers of meaning as the abject and the ordinary are brought into uneasy conjunction” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:83; see also Cormack 2004:46–49, 106–107; Ewald 2009; Foucault 1986:26). The temporal disjuncture between life and death, the physical disjuncture between permanence and ephemerality, and the affective disjuncture between pleasure and fear are brought to the fore as a result. Temples make appealing heterotopia for similar reasons, delineating sacred from profane space to act as foci around which the social and spiritual world is ordered, “a place in which things were juxtaposed in such a way as to prompt reflection on the nature of other places” (Owens 2002:304; see also Shackley 2002).

Other heterotopia are defined explicitly by their marginal or deviant relationship to accepted societal norms. These include the “differentiated space” that Weiss (2007) identifies in a 19th century South African boarding house, and extend to mental hospitals and retirement homes (Cenzatti 2008:77). Following Hetherington (1997:i–x), some heterotopia are seen as central to the project of modernity, as in Alexander’s (2000) discussion of Turkish state-run sugar factories. Meanwhile, Soja’s (1989, 1990, 1996) influence on urban studies defines the heterotopia as a hallmark of post-modern geography, encapsulating heterogeneity, multiplicity and non-uniformity (Siebers 1994:20–21). Archaeologists have picked this up by using heterotopia to describe explicitly post-modern spaces, hyper-real simulacra that entangle disjointed temporalities, geographies and identities (Owens 2002; Hall and Bombardella 2006).

Museums and cultural exhibits have also been drawn into the discussion: for Hetherington (1996), Stonehenge’s heterotopic qualities reside in its current status as an open-air museum. For Kahn (1995), museums can generate a “heterotopic dissonance” by assembling disparate objects in an attempt to create a disingenuous semblance of order. She argues that this is confusing and uncomfortable for visitors, and ought to be avoided by exhibit designers. However, Lippert (2006) takes the opposite stance, seeing heterotopia as a discursive space that generates new kinds of meaning by exploring the multiple identities of artifacts involved in repatriation dialogues. As a result, heterotopic dissonance becomes a productive space in which an object’s manifold identities are embraced. Soja is particularly emphatic on this point, describing the exhibition he helped organize to commemorate the bicentennial of the French Revolution as a heterotopia because it exposed “the masking map of appearances…to discover a whole new life-world filled with generative essentials, hidden signifiers, and deeper meaning” (Soja 1990:36).

Unfortunately, there is a common tendency in the archaeological literature, and in other disciplines, to define heterotopia vaguely or in passing, often with an overly literal definition that read it as a hetero-topos: a
different place, or a place of (multiple) different places. For example, Goodwin (2006:50) describes an archaeological fieldworker with a Munsell soil chart: moving a trowel “from hole to hole until the best match with the color of an adjacent patch is found…she creates what Foucault calls a heterotopia, a juxtaposition of two radically different kinds of space.” The result is that it requires little effort to argue that almost any site, space or activity is heterotopic in one way or another.

The juxtaposition of multiple places and multiple time periods is characteristic of virtually all sites, spaces, and places; from there it is not a difficult jump to discuss how these juxtapositions can be read as jarring, disturbing, and indicative of an alternate ordering of social and spatial relationships. Care must therefore be exercised in our definition and application of heterotopia in archaeological contexts, lest the term be stripped of all meaning and theoretical utility. Building on Hetherington (1997), I therefore suggest defining heterotopia, for archaeological purposes, as real spaces that, by juxtaposing incommensurate spatial, temporal, or social systems, generate a jarring, disorienting, or disturbing alternate ordering. These spaces are most usefully understood as generating new kinds of meaning, rather than foreclosing them.

Heterotopic Landscapes

It is tempting to describe Sicily’s Fascist borghi as heterotopia, as Burdett has done for the New Towns of the Pontine Marshes (Burdett 2000:16–19). The borghi fit easily enough within Foucault’s six principles: as spaces that collide ideals of traditional pastoralism and Fascist modernity, rural and urban forms, and the civic center with the agricultural periphery, they manifest an unsettling juxtaposition of incommensurate spatial and social systems. The borghi would have been regarded as ritual spaces by the regime, alters to the Fascist valorization of rurality (Gentile 1996; Stampacchia 2000). They were also marked by an alternate temporal ordering: all of the inaugural plaques date to Year XVIII of the Fascist Epoch, which began in October of 1922 with Mussolini’s March on Rome. Above all, they represented a complete break from the centuries-old relationship between land, labor and property on the island. However, the utility of this straightforward application immediately encounters a major obstacle.

Most authors take Foucault’s (1986:27) claim that heterotopia have a specific function in relation to all other sites and spaces surrounding them as an invitation to describe the role of these “other spaces” within broader societal systems. However, Saldanha (2008) provides an important caveat to this interpretation, arguing that it implies a latent structuralism. Positioning heterotopia outside of, or in some sort of relational tension with, a
perceived social order reifies that order as an internally-coherent reality. This repeats the structuralist assumption that society is a bounded whole that can be logically decoded. Saldanha warns against any such conceit, worrying that heterotopology has become “a kind of geographical structuralism, or even functionalism, dealing with the work parts do in sustaining the whole” (Saldanha 2008:2084).

In the context of Sicily’s Fascist borghi, and bearing Saldanha’s critique in mind, I argue that the heterotopia’s relationship with all other sites and spaces necessitates a landscape approach. Although they were the most visible feature of Fascist land reform, the borghi were but one element in a broad and ambitious plan, which included building new roads and bridges, digging canals, and planting trees to combat soil erosion and for use as windbreaks. It also included the approximately 2,500 associated farmhouses with which the government intended to blanket the countryside. Fuller (2004:179) argues that it was specifically in the design, aesthetics, and dispersion of these farmhouses that “architects negotiated the careful juxtaposition of ‘tradition’ with ‘modern’ requirements, and followed the government’s wish to effect both physical and moral reforms.” Fascist philosophers and engineers alike were fascinated by the ability of the built environment to condition and control their inhabitants, “to carry out in stone what could not or had not been completed by force” (von Henneberg 1996:374–375; cf. Fuller 2007).

The idea behind the Fascist colonization of the Sicilian latifondo was to draw farmers out of the hilltop towns and re-settle them on agricultural allotments blanketed across Sicily’s interior. The Sicilian architect Edoardo Caracciolo (1942:286) described this as a “new urbanism” that consisted of the elimination of the two poles, antithetical for centuries, of city and countryside to substitute for them a new organism that can be considered the pulverization of the city center onto the agricultural surface...an organization of urban character over vast extensions of rural space.

The farmhouses were the key to this Fascist re-ordering of Sicilian agriculture, a rurban landscape in which farmers were finally able to live on their own fields, with the borghi easing the agricultural populations’ transition from nucleated to dispersed settlement by fulfilling their everyday civic and social requirements (Figure 2). In order to understand the borghi as heterotopia, we therefore have to expand our frame of analysis beyond the borgo itself to encompass all of these satellite features; we have to speak of a heterotopic landscape that moves beyond discussions of disruptive and unsettling architecture to encompass the vast and turbulent palimpsest of feudal, Fascist, and Mafia networks within which Sicilian farmers were embedded.
Pluciennik et al. (2004) also take a landscape approach in their “archaeologies of aspiration,” which seeks to understand the historic landscapes of central Sicily in terms more complex than those of simple domination and resistance. Because land was the common denominator uniting farmers, landowners, Mafia enforcers, and Fascist officials, they argue that an archaeological appreciation of landscape is an appropriate means through which to trace each group’s overlapping and competing aspirations. A heterotopic approach to landscape complements this perspective by mapping how these conflicting interests are manifest in spatial practice, with an emphasis on entanglement and the alternate material and social orderings that they generate. In this way, a heterotopology of landscape tacks between critical Marxist approaches which trace the spatialization of power (e.g., Hall 2000; Leone 1984) with phenomenological approaches which emphasize the subjective experience of movement and dwelling (e.g., Ingold 1993; Tilley 1994).

However, a heterotopology of landscape could be somewhat problematic, given the existing literature. Most descriptions of heterotopia describe enclosed sites: the gated community, the tomb, the casino, the temple. All of these sites have edges or boundaries, and this seems to be an important aspect of their ability to function as heterotopia, as lenses or mirrors that reflect, distort and disturb our social and spatial worlds. They are a part, and yet apart, from all other spaces surrounding them. However, by emphasizing landscape, the heterotopia no longer just describes a differentiated site of alternate ordering, but traces how alterity is spatialized at

Figure 2. Fascist rural-urbanism: Borgo Fazio with farmhouses in the background in 1940 (ECLS 1940:190)
various scales, from the home to transnational migrant flows. I am therefore not arguing for a shift in scale from the site to the region, describing a heterotopic landscape that is in some way other than or differentiated from the landscapes that surround it. Rather, I attempt to trace inclusion and exclusion, uniformity and difference, and order and disorder across a landscape. As a result, I am less interested in describing Sicily’s Fascist landscapes as heterotopia than in exploring how a heterotopic perspective, or thinking “heterotopically”, affects our methodological approaches and interpretive conclusions.

**Discussion**

A fundamental challenge to understanding the Sicilian land reforms heterotopically is to tease out the differences between a utopian new order and a heterotopic alternate ordering. There is a constant danger in eliding the distinction between utopia and heterotopia, a problem which Burdett runs into in his description of the New Towns of the Pontine Marshes. Burdett (2003:100–101) describes the New Towns’ utopian dimensions by focusing on the intangible qualities of rhetoric, representation, and imagination in journalistic accounts from the 1930s. However, Burdett (2000:17) also describes the New Towns as “other spaces” that “translated the modern utopian ideal into spatial practice.” Here the heterotopia is basically a synonym for utopia, the only difference being that the heterotopia exists in material form, an “effectively enacted utopia” (Foucault 1986:24). In the context of agricultural Sicily, I would instead argue that the key difference is not between materiality and immateriality, but between planning and its unintended consequences.

The Fascist land reforms were without a doubt utopian in intent. Projects like the draining of the Pontine Marshes and the construction of the New Towns and *borghi* were framed as a reclamation, or *bonifica integrale*. This served as a master trope under Fascism, meaning a reclamation of arable land as well as national spiritual potential (Ben-Ghiat 2001:4–7; Burdett 2000:18; Fuller 2004:178). The Fascist regime explicitly envisioned land reclamation as a form of redemption for the individual and the nation, a “concrete manifestation of the fascists’ desire to purify the nation of all social and cultural pathology” (Ben-Ghiat 2001:4). In Sicily this pathology was typified by the pervasive influence of the Mafia and the perceived moral degeneracy of the Sicilian peasantry. This attitude is subsumed within “the Southern Question,” a popular belief that southern Italy’s social and economic backwardness has historically held back the country’s development as a modern industrial nation (see Gramsci 2005; Schneider 1998). The colonization of the Sicilian *latifondo* was one of the
means through which the government hoped to combat this perceived moral and economic delinquency.

Land reform was also social reform, an attempt to re-educate the Sicilian peasantry and slowly mould them into the form of fully-integrated Fascist Italians. The target of the colonization of the Sicilian *latifondo* was therefore not only the great estates, but also the resettled farmers, who were colonizers in the Latin sense while simultaneously being subject to a colonial reform by the Fascist state. While planners emphasized the hygienic improvements of the rural farmhouses over the cramped quarters in the hilltop towns—citing clean air, fresh water, and mosquito-proof windows (Snowden 2006)—the farmhouses were also designed to enforce a division of space to prevent young boys from inappropriately co-mingling with their sisters, or the family’s farm animals (Fuller 2004:173). The new farmhouses themselves were intended as vehicles of moral hygiene, purging the Sicilian peasantry of their perceived delinquencies and preparing them to serve their country as proud Fascist agriculturalists and soldiers. Isolating families on their individual plots had the added advantage of inhibiting their ability to maintain a class-consciousness and organize agricultural production on their own terms (Barbera 2002:148; Ghirardo 1989:78; Martinelli and Nuti 1978:272). In both the reclaimed Pontine Marshes and the reformed Sicilian countryside, the Fascists planned a perfect world: rational, modernist, and free of social pathology.

What, then distinguishes Fascism’s utopian ideals from the heterotopic features of the landscapes that emerged? The difference between utopia and heterotopia in Fascist Sicily is the same as the difference between high-modernist planning and the complexities and unintended consequences that emerge when it articulates with pre-existing spatial and social practices (see Scott 1998). Rather than being an effectively enacted utopia, heterotopia emerge from the effects of an enacted utopia. Stated another way, the Sicilian response to Fascism’s attempted seizure of control generated a heterotopic landscape, of which the *borghi*, the farmhouses, the *latifondo* estates, and the hilltop towns were all a part. A heterotopology of Fascist Sicily therefore seeks out the organic responses, the alternate orderings that resulted from the Fascist attempt to impose a new order. Methodologically, this involves tracing the competing spatial practices employed by groups and individuals in the Sicilian countryside, mapping each stakeholder’s attachment to the landscape (Byrne 2003; Byrne and Nugent 2004).

The shape that land reform actually took had everything to do with the shifting allegiances, priorities and abilities of four groups—the government, the landowners, the Mafia, and the farmers—whose conflicting interests and access to power generated an alternate ordering. For example, despite the government’s best efforts to create a Fascist modernist rural-urbanism, in practice it was totally dependent upon and entangled with the persistent
feudal order of things. Archival, survey, and ethnographic data reveal that the government relied heavily on the latifondo estate owners to effect the reforms. Rather than just expropriating land and building farmhouses where they pleased, the government used the threat of expropriation to compel the estate owners to ‘voluntarily’ improve parcels of their land for redistribution to peasant farmers. In response, the landowners exploited loopholes in the colonization legislation to minimize its impact. The official definition of a latifondo was an estate greater than 200 hectares in size; by selling off plots of land in order to break their estates up into non-contiguous parcels, landowners were often able to avoid penalty. When compliance was unavoidable, it was the landowners, not the government, who were responsible for constructing farmhouses on the new subdivisions.

While the plans and models from the official archives describe about a dozen official farmhouse “types,” it appears that landowners had a wide degree of flexibility in choosing what the houses on their properties looked like, and where exactly they were located. For example, a row of four farmhouses built on one former latifondo estate are identical to two houses built opposite one another, 15 km distant (Figures 3 and 4). While we might assume that this was the result of standardized Fascist architectural planning, the houses’ design does not appear in any of the official farm-

![Figure 3. Fascist-period farmhouses in the Comune di Mazara del Vallo in 2009 (photo by the author)](image-url)
house types published by the Agency for the Colonization of the Sicilian Latifondo. It transpires that the two estates were owned, at the time of the land reforms, by the same person: he was responsible for their design and placement, not the government.

Power relations on the ground were far more entangled than a utopian analysis of Fascist planning allows. Even though the government claimed that the Mafia had been crushed by Mussolini’s “Iron Prefect,” Cesare Mori, in the late 1920s (Duggan 1989), it must have had some role in how the re-settlement programs were effected. Although the evidence is not readily accessible, a heterotopic perspective at least encourages us to seek out the marginal spaces, the gaps in the visible grid of power through which mafiosi may have exploited and exerted their influence.

We can further extend this line of inquiry by reading the entanglement of Fascism and the latifondi productively as a heterotopia that generated new kinds of meaning and possibility for Sicilian farmers and their families. One of the primary goals of this research is to understand the resettled families—men, women, and children—as active players in the re-ordering of the Sicilian agricultural landscape, rather than just pawns embedded within larger regimes of order based on Fascism, the latifondi, or the Mafia.
Farmers with large families and few landholdings were selected by the government for resettlement (cf. Pitkin 1985:96). Not only was their transferal to the countryside voluntary, but ethnographic interviews indicate that it appears to have been genuinely appreciated.

However, the most significant action taken by farmers was a subsequently widespread rejection of the farmhouses and borghi. The government was aware that convincing farmers and their families to leave behind the civic and social comforts of the city would be difficult (Mazzocchi Alemanni 1942:480–481), but their attempts to make the countryside hospitable through the borghi were unsuccessful: as Barbera observes, “what sense can there be in a piazza without a city, lost in the desolate countryside” (Barbera 2002:156). Furthermore, the growing availability of automobiles in the 1950s made the Fascist-period farmhouses largely superfluous because farmers could easily travel from the towns to their fields. There was no longer any need to live full-time in the countryside. Many borghi fell into disrepair and the farmhouses were either abandoned, used for storage or as agricultural work spaces, or converted into “country homes” for weekend trips. A heterotopic perspective encourages us to see the rejection of these buildings for their original purpose not as a failure of Fascism’s rurban utopian ideals, but productively as an alternate ordering that grew organically out of farmers’ needs and desires, and aided by their newfound mobility.

Conclusion

Although its name changed, the agency responsible for the colonization of the Sicilian latifondo continued to build borghi and farmhouses well into the 1960s (La China 2009). Some of the Fascist borghi were abandoned, while others were re-occupied in the two decades following the war. Still others have been “re-functionalized” as study centers or for other public uses; there is currently a plan underway to include several of the Fascist borghi in a tourist route (ESA 2009). I am less interested in the question of whether or not the borghi ‘qualify’ as heterotopia, today or in the past, or even what function or effect they had in relation to the landscapes of which they became a part. Rather, I have suggested the kinds of challenges that a heterotopic perspective adds to our methodological and interpretive approaches. Rather than examining the role that these “other spaces” play in reifying totalizing notions of power and authority, I have shown how a heterotopology of landscape can instead provide access into how order, disorder, and alternate-ordering articulate in everyday practice. This is precisely where archaeology has much to contribute, by providing small-scale accounts of how high-modernist planning or utopian order actually play out on the ground.
There is, in fact, nothing unique to a heterotopic perspective that cannot be accessed through attention to Bender and Winer’s notion of “contested landscapes” (Bender 2001), or even Scott’s “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990; see also Hall 2000). I am therefore wary of overextending a heterotopology of Fascist Sicily. The challenges, contradictions, and dead ends that are inherent to Foucault’s heterotopia make it frustrating to employ, especially in the light of alternative theoretical avenues available. However, it is these very challenges that make it worthwhile as a heuristic device, encouraging us to examine how difference and alterity are spatialized through multiple, relational, and dynamic constructions of landscape.

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Historical Archaeo-Geographies of Scaled Statehood: American Federalism and Material Practices of National Prohibition in California, 1917–1933

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the ways that a more explicit engagement with the discipline of historical geography could contribute to archaeologies of the recent and contemporary past. Scholars working in this time period must consider multiple scales of connectivity between people and places through time and would benefit from political geography’s recent theorizing on scale and the state. We present a preliminary case study of what we term a historical archeo-geography drawing upon archaeological materials from late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century sites to demonstrate how state and federal legislation is enacted at the household level.

Résumé: Cette étude aborde de quelles façons une participation plus affirmée pour la discipline de la géographie humaine pourrait favoriser les archéologies du passé récent et du passé contemporain. Les universitaires qui travaillent sur cette période doivent prendre en compte les niveaux multiples de relation qui existent entre les individus et les lieux à travers le temps; ils bénéficieraient de la théorisation récente sur l’échelle en matière de géographie humaine et de l’État. Nous présentons une étude de cas préliminaire de ce que nous appelons l’archéogéographie historique, en nous appuyant sur les objets archéologiques provenant de sites de la fin du XIXe siècle jusqu’au milieu du XXe siècle pour montrer comment la législation des États et de la fédération se traduisait en pratique dans les foyers.
Resumen: El presente trabajo plantea la cuestión de si un compromiso más explícito con la disciplina de la geografía humana podría ayudar en los trabajos arqueológicos del pasado reciente y contemporáneo. Los académicos que trabajan en este periodo de tiempo deben tener en cuenta varias escalas de conectividad entre las personas y los lugares a través del tiempo, con lo que se beneficiarían de la reciente teoría sobre geografía humana centrada en la escala y el estado. Presentamos un estudio de caso previo de lo que hemos denominado «arqueogeografía histórica», basándonos en materiales arqueológicos procedentes de yacimientos de finales el siglo XIX y XX, para demostrar cómo se aprueba la legislación estatal y federal a escala interna.

KEYWORDS

Spatiality, Historical archaeology, Historical geography, Political geography, California, Eighteenth Amendment

Introduction

Archaeologies of the recent and contemporary past have become more prominent in the last 10 years, with projects developing throughout Europe, the Caribbean, North and South America, Australia and Africa (e.g. Buchli and Lucas 2001a; Hicks and Beaudry 2006; Johnson 2007; Majewski and Gaimster 2009). There are increasingly two genres found within these archaeologies: first, a more empirical, excavation-based approach, which is most commonly found in the United States tradition, but elsewhere as well (e.g. Beaudry 2006; Hicks 2007; Voss 2008; Wilkie 2010); and, second, a more aesthetically rooted approach that seeks to document and describe archaeological traces of the modern (e.g. Buchli and Lucas 2001b; Gonzalez-Ruibal 2006; Holtorf 2004) Both genres produce important work, bringing an archaeological gaze to questions of colonialism, post-colonialism, racism, sexism and alienation in the modern world. What has been an enduring and ongoing problem for these projects has been the question of spatial scale—how to integrate microscalar site-oriented archaeological analyses meaningfully into macroscalar synoptic understandings of political, social and economic contexts. This has been particularly true for American historical archaeology. While it has become quite adept at creating intimate portraits of isolated archaeological assemblages from households or small communities, it is less successful at integrating materials across space and time in
sophisticated ways. Some of the more convincing studies have drawn explicit-ly upon understandings of landscape and the notion of ‘spatiality’ as developed within the academic field of human geography.

We suggest that archaeologists would benefit by drawing more explicitly upon further engagement with the intellectual and analytical tools of human geography (specifically, from the human geography subfields known as historical geography and political geography). While this paper will focus in most detail upon our first efforts to integrate archaeological and geographical scales of knowledge as a means to understand the effects of the political system of federalism on individual and community lives, the issues that we are struggling with are relevant to anyone studying sites of the recent and contemporary past—sites that were enmeshed in social and political relations that connected them simultaneously to people across the street, across the globe as well as to the state apparatus.

A call for more human geography-archaeology interaction is somewhat radical in the United States, where the disciplines of anthropology and geography have not shared the same kind of cross-pollination sometimes seen in the U.K. The relationship between the disciplines has fostered a divide between anthropology’s subdiscipline of historical archaeology and human geography’s subdiscipline, historical geography. This divide, although explainable, seems strange to us given the practices and goals we share in common (but have developed independently). We offer some possible explanations for the American divide, but our primary goal is to build a bridge across the divide through the development of the trans-disciplinary practice of historical archaeo-geography. We offer a demonstration of this practice through a study that wed: (1) existing social science theory regarding the spatiality of political statehood with (2) long-standing historiographic debates from academic history regarding the nature of American federalism and use them to interpret (3) material practices at home, in private clubs, and in the commercial built environment of California during the era of National Prohibition (1920–1933). Underpinning this historical archaeo-geographic approach, we argue, are concerns for understanding spatiality and the multi-scalar nature of human existence. The approach’s engagement with ‘state spatial theory’ highlights how strong, universal attempts at state hegemony can generate spatially differentiated material practices of compliance and non-compli-ance by the human subject under American federalism. We recognize that this study is still quite preliminary, but feel that at a time when historical sites are being excavated at an increasing rate, the question of how to meaningfully interpret, synthesize and contextualize this vast amount of data cannot wait.
Mind the Gap: The Separation of Historical Geography and Historical Archaeology in the United States

Historical geographers and historical archaeologists view and think about the world in similar ways. We recognize that there is a materiality and spatiality to the lived world (Mitchell 2000). We share concern for space and place in time (synchronicity) and over time (diachronicity) (Mitchell 1987). We have an intense commitment to the archives and to the triangulation of primary documentary evidence (Conzen 1993). Given our objective focus on things in the landscape, however, we are necessarily drawn away from the archives, the Ivory Tower and into the field to observe, count, and map (Earle et al. 1989). And yet with few exceptions (see Butzer 1964, 1976, 1982; Butzer et al., 1974; Butzer and Omo Research Expedition 1971; Denevan et al. 1986), historical geographers and historical archaeologists of the recent past who reside in the U.S. academy have not actively collaborated outside the realm of contract archaeology or state-required impact statement preparation. Why?

Institutional mismatches that exist within American “Research-1” universities may be part of the explanation. Few anthropology departments with specializations in historical archaeology are located at institutions with geography departments that specialize in historical geography. Furthermore, from the 1930s until the late 1970s, academic geography in the U.S. developed in relative isolation given the pressure it was under to prove continually its relevance as a stand-alone discipline within the American university (Hartshorne 1939; Smith 1987). Although the field embraced and built upon the work of other disciplines during that period, active collaborative partnership with those outside of academic geography happened sporadically, in isolated cases, under quite institutionally idiosyncratic conditions, and mainly within the realm of ‘regional science’ (the academic cross-pollination of urban economic geography and urban and regional economics). Institutional pressures have started to ease over the past 30 years, however. The ‘spatial turn’ in the social sciences and humanities in the 1970s made the work of geographers more relevant to those outside the field (Warf and Arias 2009) while the ‘cultural turn’ in geography during the 1980s encouraged humanistic and cultural geographers to engage contemporary social theory as espoused in critical textual studies (Jameson 1998) and anthropology. Additionally, the general public’s recognition of the globalization factor in the 1990s convinced educators and public policy makers that geography education matters at the primary and secondary-school levels and, in turn, that geography is an important part of American higher education (Geography Education Standards Project (U.S.) et al. 1994; Herod 2009; Murray 2006). Finally, in the 2000s, physical geographers were accepted within the
American academy as bona fide earth scientists and their participation is routinely solicited in large, trans-disciplinary research projects that address important societal (if not global) issues (De Blij 2005).

Despite American geography’s relative isolationism through much of the twentieth century, the field did have a relationship with anthropology that went beyond geographers simply reading the work of anthropologists or anthropologists relying on the published work of geographers to “set the environmental stage” for the action reported in traditional ethnography. Two places figured importantly in that relationship as it was forged and maintained between the 1920s and 1970s: the University of California at Berkeley and Louisiana State University. Together, anthropologists and geographers in these places defined a “school” of cultural geography/anthropogeography that had huge impacts on the development of human geography in the United States, causing it to diverge from human geography as practiced elsewhere in the Anglophone world.

Key figures in this American school were Carl O. Sauer (a professor of geography at Berkeley between the 1920s and 1960s) and Sauer’s third student, Fred B. Kniffen (who became a professor of geography at LSU in the 1930s and trained students well into the 1970s) (Conzen 1993). Both were cultural diffusionists and disciples of the culture region concept, heavily influenced not only by German geographers such as Carl Ritter and Friedrich Ratzel, but also through their personal interactions with anthropologists at Berkeley, especially Alfred Kroeber. Together, Sauer and Kniffen attracted and trained more than 50 Ph.D. students in their hybrid anthropo-geographical approach that privileged a ‘superorganic’ notion of culture, who then moved on to academic appointments at several dozen American universities. Ultimately, these scholars became the core practitioners to one of two major subdisciplines that dominated human geography in the United States (idiographic regional economic geography being the other) until the 1960s when the British ‘brain drain’ accentuated quantitative, nomothetic, logical positivism within the American academic mix (Johnston 2004).

Despite substantive interactions with anthropologists—particularly at LSU where geography has actually shared a department with anthropology since 1941, members of the Berkeley/LSU School of Cultural/Anthropogeography seldom maintained active collaborative research alliances with anthropologists once they left their alma maters. Most of the cultural geographers and anthropogeographers working between 1930 and 1980 in the United States could trace their intellectual genealogies directly back to Sauer (largely through Kniffen), but they had become diluted in geography department faculties that consisted of many other disciplinal sub-specialties (like urban and economic geography, cartography and climatology) that in the 1960s and 1970s were increasingly regarded as more important than cultural and anthropogeography to geography’s search for academic relevance.
By the early 1980s, the Berkeley/LSU School was regarded by many within academic geography as an anachronism.

A broader, reinvigorated, rapprochement between American anthropology and geography did not really begin until—first—the emergence of urban anthropology and its discovery of space and place via urban sociology and then via urban geography during the 1970s and 1980s, and second, American cultural geography’s reorientation in the 1980s away from Kroeber, Sauer and Kniffen’s objectivist, superorganic notions of culture, toward British constructivism and French social theory (Duncan 1980; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Price and Lewis 1993). The move toward social theory within cultural geography is particularly important for it represented a critique not only of Sauer and Kroeber but also an interrogation of trends that had emerged elsewhere in human geography—namely, economic and behavioral geographies’ positivist reduction of the human subject into *homo economicus*.

Since then, both historical archaeology and historical geography have responded to these shifts within their sibling subfields cultural anthropology and cultural geography. They have started struggling (separately) over theoretical and methodological issues regarding human subjects, most notably those revolving around structure-agency relationships as played out in families, communities, states and nations, and as manifested through everyday lived experience (Pile 1993). Both have grappled with what it is to study capitalist societies and the constraints, opportunities, hegemonies, freedoms, impositions, and abuses that come with living in that economic system (e.g. Harvey 1973, 1989a, b; Leone 2006; Ludlow Collective 2001; Mitchell 1996; Mosher 2004; Mullins 1998; Wilkie and Bartoy 2001). And yet, there still has not been much active transdisciplinary collaboration between historical archaeologists and historical geographers in the United States on issues of shared theoretical concern.

**Historical Archaeo-Geography: “Ground Up” Meets “Top Down”**

Despite the re-emergence of inductive “grounded theory”-building as an acceptable form of practice in the social sciences during the 1990s, both academic historical geography and academic (but not contract or applied) historical archaeology have tended since at least the 1970s to initiate their work from abstract positions—drawing upon social/literary theory or historiography—for justification, inspiration and motivation (Creswell 2003; Earle 1992). From theory/historiography, they move into the empirical realm to: (1) construct an interpretation of what is encountered in the empirical realm in light of theory and historiography; and (2) use the empirical realm as a way to critique, improve upon, and reformulate
the initiating theory and historiography. Where the fields vary, however, is the resolution at which they start to do this. Traditionally, archaeologists work on and under the ground and extrapolate ‘upwards and out’; the object(s) of study is (are) the artifact, the unit, the assemblage, the site. The geographer’s tradition, however, is to start more often from a detached ‘god position’ that uses the map or landscape as the initial object of study; interpolation occurs ‘down and between’ (Rose 1997). Drawing upon the work of Michel de Certeau, one could go as far as to say that archaeologists tend to create spatial stories of the “tour” (local everyday life as experienced in situ) while geographers create spatial stories of the “map” (broad complex systems as viewed cartographically or obliquely from a distance) (Certeau 1984). The challenge for historical archaeo-geography is to meld these two approaches.

Indeed, archaeologists like Charles Orser (1996) have called for historical archaeology to work at a global scale, and scholars within the field have begun to construct multi-sited projects to look more explicitly at colonial systems and diasporic movements (e.g. Beaudry 2006; Hall 2000; Lightfoot 2006; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Orser 2007), but these kinds of broad syntheses—the very work that geographers have long been doing—remain underdeveloped within archaeology. The world is not simply the site or a sample of sites set within the global—other scales matter, such as the locality, the regional, the national, and the supranational alliance. The site is nested within them all, a point that human geographers have been working hard to theorize since the late 1970s through their study of the neoliberal restructuring of statehood and the globalization of capitalism (Brenner 2001; Dear 1988; Marston 2000).

With some human geographers sliding away from nomothetic logical positivism as well as superorganicism since the 1970s and 1980s, there has been a move within the field to understand the spatiality of life as performed and experienced by the human subject. And, although historical geographers (as subdisciplinary members of human geography) were actually part of the vanguard within this movement through their interests in locality studies and the urban experience, they still tended to aggregate the primary evidence and use the experience of the individual human subject only for anecdotal flavor (Earle et al. 1989; Harvey 1985), simply because there was not enough material available to say something systematic and scientifically grounded. Until the rise of feminist theory within historical geography, historical geographers tended only to use the official and masculinist-oriented archival record as the main means to understand experience—and that record has been fragmented at best (Domosh and Morin 2003; Kay 1991; Morin and Berg 1999; Rose and Ogborn 1988). Now, engagement with feminist theory, in particular, and postmodernism, in general, has raised questions about positionality and provenance and
subjectivities of various sorts, and has transformed oral history and folklore into acceptable ways to engage the human subject in the past (Earle 1995). Archaeology also has established itself as another means of approaching past lives (e.g. Beaudry 2006; Brooks et al. 2008; Voss 2008; Wilkie 2003, 2010).

**Three Pillars of Historical Archaeo-Geography and Their Relationship to Spatiality and Scale**

As we explore the possibilities for historical archaeo-geography, we believe it would be helpful to erect this practice on three epistemological pillars that already motivate knowledge production within both contemporary historical archaeology and historical geography: (1) the engagement with theory from the social sciences and humanities, (2) the framing of research questions within broader historiographic debates from academic history, and (3) the concern for the empirical realm as it is encountered through artifacts, assemblages, sites, landscapes, places, archival sources, and human subjects. Although historical geographers and historical archaeologists move between these pillars in slightly different ways methodologically, what links their methods is concern for **spatiality**. That is, historical archaeologists and historical geographers are always looking for and thinking about the meaning of simultaneously occurring sets of relationships that exist between empirical objects (or subjects) encountered in three or more locations. Because of their concern for these spatial relationships, concepts like near/far (distance), wide/narrow (area), clustered/dispersed (density), connected/isolated (accessibility), enclosed/open (topology), shallow/deep (volume), and found/lost (presence), become critical adjectives within their attendant languages of practice. Furthermore, to their fields, cartographic representations of these concepts fulfill an analytic (as opposed to idiographic) function. In fact, primary analytic engagement with spatiality via the map distinguishes archaeology and geography from other social sciences and the humanities.

Important to our current collaboration, should be a new notion, however—one that has been pioneered largely by political, economic and urban geographers who study the contemporary (post-1980) empirical realm. This is the idea that spatiality is not only *embedded within*, but also has the capacity to *create*, ‘scale.’ By scale, these geographers are not referring to conventional, popular definitions of the concept (e.g. the mathematical and proportional relationship that exists between a ‘real life’ object or distance and its representation in a photograph or on a map, or even “resolution.”) Instead, their view of scale argues two basic points: first, that material objects (and corporeal subjects) occupy physical space and have mass, the extent and shape of which constitutes ‘the scale of the thing’ (or body). Second, the co-existence of, and the interaction that occurs
between, things and bodies in space create ‘relational scales.’ In this sense, scale is the spatial extent—the far horizons—as well as the internal configuration of the field in which objective things and subjective bodies co-exist, operate and have meaning.

For human-made objects and human subjects, both ‘the scale of the thing’ and ‘relational scale’ are socially produced. Human geographers who employ a political economy approach, for example, argue that within capitalist society, scale is created through: (1) the appropriation and transformation of nature into manufactured objects through human labor power; (2) the development of the wage relationship between capital and labor as it extends through labor markets, and (3) by the invention, adoption and adaptation of manufacturing, transportation and communication technologies that diffuse throughout entire industries and economies. Natural resources, factories, residential neighborhoods, warehouse districts, rail lines, telephone cables—and the functional relationships that are made by human subjects to exist between them—create a variety of scales, e.g. the local mining or industrial district, the regional corporate system, the national marketing and distribution system, the global network of financial capital, etc.

Scale, however, is a dynamic and, at times, ephemeral abstraction. It can expand, contract, ‘nest’ like Russian dolls inside of other scales, and even disappear altogether if the object or subject ceases to exist or if economic, caloric, and psychological costs of overcoming distance become too great. Moreover, objects can be moved and subjects can move between scales—sometimes operating in a geographically limited realm (the local scale) while at other times ‘scaling up’ or ‘jumping scale’ to become a part of longer distance trade or strategic relationships (e.g. the European Union).

In this paper, this understanding of scale forms the theoretical pillar to our historical archaeo-geographic interpretation of National Prohibition (1920–1933). It illuminates the critical role that multi-scaled ‘statehood’ plays in shaping material culture within the overlapping spheres of productive capital and reproductive labor. By using the term statehood, we are referring to the structure and performance of the political state. We must acknowledge, however, that statehood is not completely new terrain to either historical archaeologists or historical geographers. They have previously grappled with it in their study of colonialism, post-colonialism, slavery, the planning of urban infrastructure, and the construction of national identity. As historical archaeology and historical geography shift more attention toward the period that historian Konvitz (1985) refers to as the regulatory era of western civilization (the century after 1880) during which governments legislated social relations and environmental conditions at the local level to a greater degree than ever before, statehood is going to become an even more essential category to the analysis. Artifacts, assemblages, sites, landscapes, places, archival records, and human subjects
produced in the late nineteenth and twentieth century all make more sense when statehood is taken into consideration. We can think of no better example of how to illustrate this argument than to show the tangible manifestations of statehood in place and assemblage as they occurred during National Prohibition. In the United States, these manifestations are to this very day all around us.

State Theory, Statehood and Federalism

Within geography, much of the recent theorizing about scale and statehood has engaged two things: (1) the differential ability that subjects have to construct the local worlds they inhabit while living within larger hegemonic structures of capitalism and state power (Mosher and Holdsworth 1992); and (2) the alleged decline since 1980 in the importance of the nation-state as the governmental level that calls the political shots and the scale that contains the bulk of economic interactions (such as those performed by the corporation and the NGO) (Brenner 2004; Marston 2000; Marston et al. 2005). In both cases, changes in statehood generate ripple effects of varying consequence to the materiality, spatiality and experience of everyday, local, life that occurs within a state’s territory.

For the study of the United States, the study of statehood requires theoretical and empirical engagement with the structure and performance of the political system of federalism. As a structural form, federalism is based on the idea that legislative, administrative, and judicial responsibilities for governance are to be shared between different levels of the state in the form of subnational (local and regional) and national (central) governments (Dikshit 1971, 1976; Elazar 1981). Further, each level exists at the pleasure of the others: thus as relational scales these levels are mutually constituted. The central/national level (called the federal government in the United States) exists due to the assent of the sub-national levels in its exercising of the ability to act on behalf of sub-national levels on matters as enabled by the U.S. Constitution. As for the sub-national levels (the 50 states, and the thousands of counties, cities, towns and other minor civil divisions that exist below), they are at once granted and retain the right to govern themselves and to enact legislation that is appropriate to local conditions. Through their initial ratification of the U.S. Constitution the 50 (or ‘several’) states (and the jurisdictions beneath them) have also pledged (in theory if not always in practice) to honor the powers of the federal government. Thus federalism as a form of statehood attempts to foster unity at the national level while preserving some degree of regional diversity and local opinion at the subnational levels: e pluribus unum.
In terms of performance, federalism under the U.S. Constitution also amounts to the designation and apportionment of responsibility for different kinds of activities between all levels/scales, with the federal government being most concerned with issues that will preserve republican unity (e.g. internal commerce, sovereign identity, international relations and military protection that construct the national scale), and with sub-national governments being most concerned with issues that allow for democratic engagement on the part of the citizenry (e.g. public health, education, welfare, and protection of private property that construct the local scale) (Mettler 1998; Skocpol 1992). What is notable about the history of statehood within the U.S. is that this designation and apportionment has been in constant flux in response to changes in capitalism and periodic dialectical swings in political attitudes between protectionist elitism and free-trade egalitarianism (Earle 2003). At times during this historical progression, the federal level has taken on more responsibility for activities traditionally performed by local levels of government (or the private sector) in an attempt to ensure consistent availability to all citizens. This amassing of new tasks is referred to as ‘state formation.’ At other times, the federal level has delegated some of its responsibilities down to the sub-national levels in the belief that local governments have a better sense of what citizens really need (or that the private sector can do a better job at providing the service). This offloading of existing tasks is referred to as ‘state devolution.’

So what can we learn about these processes of state formation and state devolution through the archaeological record, from the local built environment, and via the map? How did they operate during the era of National Prohibition? What light do they shed on the assemblage, the landscape, and the primary documentary evidence?

**National Prohibition Legal Geographies and Historiographies**

When the U.S. Congress passed the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution in December 1917, it banned the manufacture, transportation, sale and importation of intoxicating alcoholic beverages (ratification by two-thirds of the U.S. States came in 1919 and enforcement began in 1920). This congressional act served as an exclamation point to a nearly century-long reform movement intended not only to eradicate the moral and social evils of alcohol but also to curb the growing influence of ‘saloon politics’ in American society (Blocker 1976). Machine politicians (such as those associated with New York’s Tammany Hall Democrats) as well as socialist and free-thinking organizations in many places had come to rely on the urban bar room as a locus for support (Powers 1998). The story of national state
intervention regarding alcohol and the saloon was far from settled by the Amendment, however, having really been complicated by the prior actions of many of the (then) 48 U.S. States as well as by hundreds of counties and minor civil divisions that had already exercised ‘local option’ by enacting their own legislation. The pattern of laws they had created could be described almost as a patchwork quilt—with some localities enacting total (and probably unconstitutional) bans on alcohol sales, purchase and possession; others adopting partial bans (the model ultimately exercised with the Eighteenth Amendment); and others doing absolutely nothing (Spaeth 1991).

The geographical problem that the sub-national governments had created prior to the Eighteenth Amendment was thus one of official ‘extramurality’—similar to the sort of pattern that Vance (1990) identified in the medieval relationship between guild-controlled walled European bourgs and the seigniorial faubourgs that had grown up on the other side of their gates. The ‘intramural’ bourg side of the wall had its own legal codes while the ‘extramural’ faubourg had another. What this meant was that many activities that truly were necessary for the continued productive and reproductive existence of the bourg (but that the bourgeoisie thought to be too dangerous or disruptive if located in the bourg itself) ended up being effectively ‘zoned out’ of the bourg and into the faubourg. These activities often included livestock slaughtering, rendering, and tanning, as well as burial of the dead and care of the acutely sick.

In the jurisdictional geography of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century United States, places that legalized alcohol consumption and gambling (and that often turned a blind eye to prostitution), became the equivalent of faubourgs. And because the U.S. Constitution protected the freedom of Americans to travel and to conduct business across jurisdictional boundaries, citizens living in bourg-like jurisdictions that possessed strict alcohol laws simply went to the faubourg-like jurisdictions with lax rules and enforcement that would allow them to drink or to buy booze. Some localities even took advantage of their extramural status to stimulate the local economy, becoming in the process magnets and havens for vice. Thus to deal effectively with the alcohol issue, restrictions had to be “scaled up” to the national level of the federal state so that regulation would cover more territory (Uvin 1995). That was the only way in which the officially mandated pattern of extramurality could be evened out. Besides, Prohibition seemed to be emerging as a global trend, with other countries passing their own bans on alcoholic substances. Thus the push for National Prohibition was really an argument in favor of national state formation and its ability to even out inter-jurisdictional differences.

The real problem with Prohibition came, however, not so much with the constitutional amendment itself, but rather with the subsequent
congressional legislation that enabled the amendment’s enforcement. Called
the Volstead Act of 1919 (after its sponsor in the House of Representa-
tives), the bill had been primarily written by the head of one of the most
organized and vocal pro-Prohibition groups, the Anti-Saloon League (Ky-
vig 2000). It defined any substance that possessed an alcohol content of
greater than 0.5% as intoxicating, and—hence—illegal. Most Americans, as
well as their Congressional representatives at the national level (who had
already passed the Eighteenth Amendment) and state legislators who
worked at the sub-national level (who then ratified the amendment)
believed that the enforcing legislation (that had not yet been written at the
time of the amendment’s passage and ratification) would simply adopt the
2.5% alcohol content definition that had been used during World War I
when curbs had been placed on alcohol manufacture due to grain short-
ages. As always, the devil was in the details; the Anti-Saloon League wrote
a much more stringent law. Nevertheless, the bill sailed through a Congress
that was filled with legislators who believed that this is what their constitu-
ents wanted, a correct assumption in theory but an errant one in practice.

Historian Kyvig (2000) estimates that after 1920 alcohol consumption
dropped in the United States over 60%. Certainly, part of the reason for the
drop had to do with a reformation of American social behavior in light of
commonly cultural held ideals. A more structural economic reason, however,
resided in the laws of supply and demand: the diminished supply caused by
distillery, brewery and winery closures had caused alcohol prices to skyrocket,
and made spirits, beer, and wine unaffordable to many Americans. Alcohol
was nevertheless legally available if one wanted to acquire it due to a legal
loophole in which physicians could write medical prescriptions for alcohol
and pharmacists could dispense it. Once the loophole was closed through
further legislation, home brewing, clandestine homemade stills that produced
small batches of spirits, and bootleg smuggling each became major sources of
supply.

Political scientists and criminologists expect that for any law, there will
be some level of non-compliance. But what the United States experienced
after 1920 was far more than what the pro-Prohibitionists foresaw. This, in
turn, sent the federal government scrambling to augment what turned out
to be an underfunded and understaffed administrative system that would
eradicate and punish those responsible for the alcohol supply. Given that
the Eighteenth Amendment had entrusted the 48 U.S. states with equal
responsibility for enforcement alongside the federal government, police
forces and the courts at all sub-national levels became positively over-
whelmed with Prohibition-related cases. As our case study will show, it
ultimately pitted jurisdictions against each other, severely undermining the
inter-governmental cooperation needed to make the Amendment work.
Our geographical perspective on National Prohibition adds to the existing historiography on the subject. Underpinning much of the literature is a desire to explain why Prohibition was abandoned. For some time after 1933, social commentators and historians looked at Prohibition as a ‘noble experiment’ that failed in the face of an overwhelming and unending tide of peripatetic rum runners, gangsters, speakeasy owners, and loose-living flappers who could pop up anywhere like they were cockroaches. Since the 1970s, however, more nuanced interpretations have emerged that consider Prohibition as yet another Progressive Era social reform movement that managed to morph prevailing attitudes about temperance into a widespread, utopian desire for an outright ban, an idea that both rural and urban inhabitants, including women and the middle class could latch onto. In gaining such widespread support, through calculated use of the national media, pro-Prohibitionists successfully made their cause into a national issue. They had infused their social movement into the national scale.

For many constitutional scholars, the Eighteenth Amendment is almost in the same class as the abolition of slavery (the Thirteenth Amendment) (Kersh and Morone 2002). Both amendments represent the strongest national prohibitory mandates that the U.S. federal government has ever made over personal morality. Both tried to curtail unacceptable practices not only in public but in the home itself. And while all other constitutional articles and amendments have come to apply universally to the citizenry, they are not prohibitory but enabling—granting rights to free speech, bear arms, assemble, vote, etc.

The problem with both of the prohibitory amendments, is that while they erupted out of publicly supported ideals, when it came time for compliance to them locally and in private (and in practice), many Americans acted as if the law did not apply to them or that somehow their non-compliance would escape notice. (In the case of Prohibition, it was common knowledge that high-profile politicians and celebrities were publicly “dry” but privately “wet.”) And because of that, the changes in cultural values and practices that the Amendments hoped to instill did not immediately materialize. In fact, things actually got worse. The Thirteenth Amendment legislated in a *de jure* sense the manumission of enslaved peoples, but it did not in *de facto* abolish the root problem: racial discrimination. The decades following 1865 included the carpetbaggy of Reconstruction, the horrific conditions and maltreatment encountered in the informal slavery of sharecropping (to which the federal government largely turned a blind eye until the 1930s), redlining and the calcification and Africanization of northern urban slums, etc. Similarly, the Eighteenth Amendment criminalized the commercial handling of alcohol, but it did not foster strong, pervasive, cultural attitudes against alcohol consumption or even private possession (Clark 1976; Kobler 1973).

This, however, is what the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act did do: small breweries collapsed under the financial strain, allowing for
several large brewers like Anheuser Busch, Pabst, Miller, and Strohs to control the national beer market after the Amendment’s repeal in 1933 (McGahan 1991). It also forced some manufacturers into other lines of business, e.g. soft drinks, malt syrups and ice cream. The California wine industry, established in the 1870s, was nearly wiped out. The thriving illegal alcohol industry fueled changes in gender roles and normative patterns of American sexuality. The cocktail developed as a result of bartenders attempting to cover the flavor of cheap grain alcohols. Churches struggled to retain access to communion wines. Availability in “wet” neighboring national states in Mexico and the Caribbean increased tourism to these areas. Crime syndicates grew from regional to international in their scope.

In effect, the Thirteenth and the Eighteenth Amendments addressed the legal economy of slavery and alcohol, but they could not legislate the moral economy—that is, the public assent—needed to give them full force and a higher rate of compliance. For the Thirteenth Amendment, the United States is still working on creating that assent (although it has been making some progress—which is part of the reason why so many in the United States and around the globe celebrated the 2008 election of Barack Obama). But with the Eighteenth Amendment, the United States at the federal level/national scale simply gave up. And while shifting economic and political conditions associated with the Great Depression and the rise of the New Deal are now the most commonly accepted explanations for why the abandonment of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act happened, we think that the existing historiography gives short shrift to the spatiality of Prohibition, namely to the administrative nightmare created by shared responsibility for enforcement across state levels/spatial scales, and to continued patterns of extramurality that came to exist due to the blind eye that many local officials turned toward alcohol during Prohibition.

A Historical Archaeo-Geographic Case Study: Prohibition in California

Material evidence of National Prohibition is easily traced in household archaeological assemblages. Beverage containers are easily identified based on their shape. Brandy, whiskey, bitters, rum, beer, wine, milk and soda bottles are easily identifiable based on their body, neck, finish, base, and embossing attributes, and have been remarkably conservative in their respective forms over the last 150 years. While the poorest of families prior to the introduction of automatic bottle manufacture in 1903 reused and resold bottles, it is safe to assume that most bottles deposited at a site were originally acquired for their original contents. Therefore, it is possible to compare pre-Prohibition, Prohibition, and post-Prohibition sites to
evaluate what, if any, short term and enduring impacts Prohibition had on American households.

For this discussion, we draw upon evidence from six California historical archaeological sites that include assemblages that predate, correspond to, and post-date the period of Prohibition (Table 1). Pre-Prohibition period assemblages are drawn from the Los Angeles household of Henry and Ida Haraszthy Hancock (1885–1909), and the Zeta Psi Fraternity of the University of California, Berkeley (1876–1920). These assemblages were selected for several reasons—they were consistently analyzed by one archaeologist, they each contain assemblages that are chronologically attributable to one period or another, and they have good historical association with specific families. Therefore, we can consider the assemblages for patterns that they reveal about general habits of the population without sacrificing an understanding of how specific communities shaped their household practices during these periods of time.

Prohibition period sites include a 1923 dumpsite from the Cordes Family of Santa Monica, a 1923 dumpsite from the Zeta Psi fraternity, and a 1920s dump associated with the Crags Country Club of Malibu, a private drinking establishment for the wealthy of Los Angeles during Prohibition.

Despite the widespread availability of public trash collection in most urban centers during Prohibition, many households chose to bury their trash to hide evidence of illicit drinking rather than put it out for pick-up.

| Table 1 Beverage container profiles at six California archaeological sites |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Site            | Before Prohibition (–1920) | During Prohibition (1920–1933) | After Prohibition (1933–) |
| Location       | Location          | Dates             | % in assemblage = alcohol containers |
| Hancock Rancho | Los Angeles       | 1885–1909         | Milk 15.0          |
|                 | Berkeley          | 1876–1920         | Soda 28.3          |
| Zeta Psi Fraternity | Santa Monica   | 1923              | Unidentified liquor 16.6 |
| Cordes Family  | Berkeley          | 1923              | Whiskey 18.3       |
| Zeta Psi Fraternity | Malibu        | 1920s             | Wine 11.7          |
| Crags Country Club | Malibu          | 1920s             | Beer 10.0          |
| Malibu         | Santa Rosa        | 1940–1950         | Number of containers in assemblage 60 |
| Sepulveda Adobe | Malibu           | 1950              | 46                |

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This was the situation for both the Cordes housesite, which was occupied by a Santa Monica police officer and his family, and the fraternity, whose alcoholic beverage consumption endangered their position on campus. The Crags Country club was located on private rural land and had no dump access.

Post-Prohibition sites are drawn from the 1950s Sepulveda Adobe household dump, also in Malibu, and the 1940s–1950s Coney ranch dump, from Santa Rosa. Both are located in rural areas, thus the recovery of large amounts of domestic trash that would otherwise have been picked up by public waste management in urban areas. Both are also second homes for the families who created the deposits. We mention this because as second homes, these sites may have slightly different beverage consumption profiles than found at primary residences. However, since both deposits were created under similar social circumstances, their differences are somewhat mitigated.

A quick note—comparisons between sites are done based upon percentages of particular beverage containers found in each site. These percentages were calculated based upon the minimum number of vessels represented in each assemblage. The percentages do represent the proportional volume of each beverage category discussed. We are not attempting to reconstruct specific drinking habits so much as to compare disposal practices and infer from those patterns the social behaviors represented. It would be possible to calculate the relative amounts of brandy, whiskey, beer and soda represented in these assemblages, but such an exercise is fraught with a range of problems and ultimately, would only distract us from the intent of our paper.

**Possible Patterns of Consumption Before Prohibition**

The households of the Hancock family and Zeta Psi Fraternity represent two different household extremes for the pre-Prohibition period: one is composed of women and children, the other consists solely of young male college students. However, the Hancocks and the fraternity ‘brothers’ would have been elite social peers.

Ida Hancock lived as a widow during most of the Rancho’s extensive occupation (1889–1909) with two young sons, Allan and Bertram. A third son died in infancy. The assemblage contains evidence that Ida paid close attention to maintaining the health of the sons who survived. The “soda” bottles from this site contain mainly mineral waters rather than the sweetened carbonated beverages we think of as soda (“pop”/“soft drinks”). Before Prohibition, mineral waters were seen as both a morally upright temperance drink as well as a general health beverage. Just as vitamin-
enriched “flavored waters” are a current health rage, so too were soda waters in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Similarly, milk was promoted as a healthy food beverage for children. The relatively high percentage of milk containers represented in the assemblage compared to other households should perhaps be construed in a similar way.

By no means, however, should the Hancocks be viewed as teetotalers. There is clear evidence of alcoholic beverage consumption in the household, as reflected not only in the container profile in Table 1, but also in the fine tumblers and stemwares that were also recovered. The amount of whiskey and gin bottles suggests that the Hancocks may have been consuming their alcohol “neat” (straight), although the soda bottles in the assemblage could be an indication that alcohol was being mixed with non-alcoholic liquids (e.g. ‘scotch and soda’ and ‘gin and tonic’). Interestingly, Ida’s family—the Haraszthy’s—founded one of the first California vineyards, but evidence of wine consumption is modest when compared to the Zeta Psi brothers.

The Zeta Psi brothers consumed significantly less soda and whiskey than the Hancock family, and much more beer and wine. Their beer consumption is especially worth noting. Beer has an important range of social and ritual meanings in fraternal life (see Wilkie 2010) and the high percentage of beer bottles in the assemblage is reflective of those practices. Local and imported wines and champagne bottles found at both the fraternity and Hancock household sites may also speak to particular class-articulated performances on the part of the elite. As we will see, however, Prohibition led to significant changes in these performances in California.

Possible Patterns of Consumption During Prohibition

Three sites contain Prohibition-period beverage consumption assemblages: a dump associated with Zeta Psi fraternity, a dump associated with the elite Crags Country Club, and a household dump associated with the Ernest Cordes family of Santa Monica. The Cordes were a working-class/lower middle-class household, with Ernest employed as a police officer and his wife Katie working as a full-time mother to their two children. Since Zeta Psi is the only site where we can compare pre- and Prohibition period assemblages, we’ll start our consideration with them.

Several trends are immediately noticeable between the two Zeta Psi assemblages. The amount of soda containers doubled, but the percentage of hard liquor and wine containers declined. Gordon’s London Dry Gin—a very popular illegal import during Prohibition—and brandy—one labeled as “medicinal”—are the only products specifically identified. Importantly, a number of California wineries were able to stay afloat during Prohibition
by producing medicinal brandy wines. The ability of the fraternity members to access these wines during Prohibition may speak to their socioeconomic status (the fact that they knew physicians who would be willing to write prescriptions for this ‘medication’). That they desired to acquire wine also speaks to their social positioning.

Most notable, however, is the increased percentage of beer bottles as well as the actual characteristics of the bottles themselves. Among the beer bottles were both “full-leaded” and “unleaded” near beers manufactured by Anheuser Busch, Stroh, and Pabst Blue Ribbon (beers that supposedly had had the alcohol removed). Some breweries sold the near beer extract on the black market as “hootch” while some never removed the alcohol at all, and only changed the bottle and its label under the working assumption that they would not get caught by federal Prohibition agents. The increase in soda bottles in the assemblage may reflect greater reliance on temperance beverages, or more likely, the need to mix low-quality, poor-tasting hootch with something to improve the flavor.

Prohibition legislation allowed for the consumption of alcohol that had been produced and purchased previous to the Eighteenth Amendment and Volstead Acts’s enforcement date, January 16, 1920. This resulted in a thriving counterfeiting trade in the manufacture of labels with pre-Prohibition dates. With a counterfeit label, products could be passed off as an older vintage. In addition, glassworks began making bottles that looked older than they were by acid washing to remove evidence of seams or molding shapes that appeared “older.” At the Zeta Psi Prohibition pit, all of the wine bottles had been acid washed, so superficially they appear to be examples of older hand-blown bottles when close examination shows that they were made by machine.

Oral history provides some additional context to the artifactual data. Fraternity brothers from the Classes of 1925 and 1929 recalled frequenting speakeasies in the neighboring town of Emeryville (Wilkie 2010). Drinking off campus was supposedly easier than risk being caught with contraband by administrators. Several newspaper articles in the Oakland Tribune during Prohibition support this in reports about University of California student alcohol violations (usually loud parties on campus) as well as the university’s official response (the Dean of Men or Student Affairs generally investigated, threatened expulsion, but often did nothing.)

Going off campus to drink, however, had its dangers. For example, on May 15, 1922, just days before the annual spring graduation, Berkeley police picked up four members of the senior graduating class as they returned to campus at 5:30 a.m. in an automobile that had been ‘borrowed’ without permission from a younger student. The four—who included the son of a local minister, members of various sports teams, and fraternity brothers (not Zeta Psi)—were intoxicated and accompanied by a
man they had met and enlisted the prior evening to take them to various speakeasies in his town of residence, Emeryville. In addition to facing criminal charges for auto theft, the students were in trouble for their drunkenness, having violated the school’s code of student conduct. Within a day, one had voluntarily withdrawn from school, another was removed as a graduation speaker, while the fates of the other two hung in the balance (there was no follow-up article) (No author 1922).

The connection that oral histories and the newspapers make between the University of California at Berkeley and the City of Emeryville are important, for they allow us to position the Zeta Psi assemblage firmly within a spatial story of extramurality and into the spatiality of federal statehood as it existed under Prohibition. Briefly, Emeryville is a 1.2 square-mile independent municipality bounded by San Francisco Bay to the west, Berkeley to the north, and Oakland to the east and south. In the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, it was nationally famous for its horseracing track and as a place where city officials turned a blind eye to off-track gambling as well as prostitution, most of which occurred in, above, or near the dozen or so saloons that had been established near the racetrack’s entrance. This prior history of leniency (as well as the city’s bayside location) made it an easy haven for bootleggers and rumrunners after 1920. Some saloons had closed with Prohibition, but others operated as restaurants that continued to clandestinely sell and serve alcohol. These places were joined by other speakeasies that popped up throughout the small city (Emeryville Historical Society 2005).

In 1921, a popular Emeryville destination was a private fenced-in amusement park and picnic ground called Shell Mound Park. That August, a small coterie of federal Prohibition agents raided the place in search of alcohol violations, finding one liquor bottle among a group of picnickers. In trying to seize the bottle, the picnickers rebelled against the federal agents, a gun discharged, and a riot ensued during which a larger group of park attendees corralled the feds while another group began preparing a lynching tree. As the *Oakland Tribune* reported it, the agents were saved only by the arrival of members of several municipal police forces from other jurisdictions from around the East Bay region after it had become clear that Emeryville’s three-man squad could not handle the melee (No author 1921a).

The following week, another article appeared in the *Oakland Tribune*, the first of at least a dozen printed over the next 12 years, that addressed the intergovernmental problems associated with Prohibition enforcement in Emeryville. In this case, California State Prohibition Director, E. Forrest Mitchell stated that the Shell Mound Park incident was evidence of how complacent Emeryville’s mayor of 25 years, Walter H. Christie, was on the enforcement of federal law at the local level. Unlike other surrounding
municipalities, Emeryville had not yet enacted a Prohibition enforcement ordinance that would mandate that local police prioritize compliance and that would serve notice to violators that if caught they would be prosecuted. In this article, Christie countered these charges, saying that his police force had not acted aggressively on drinking violations in Shell Mound Park because it was private property. As such, he believed that the owners should be responsible for keeping order there. But, as a public official he said that he believed that he was duty bound to uphold the law of the land regarding Prohibition even though he had not supported having a local Prohibition ordinance, because of the potential expense to taxpayers. Enforcement would mean having to hire more officers. At this time, Christie also came out publicly as saying that even though he’d keep his opinions about the Eighteenth Amendment to himself, he nevertheless did not agree with it. Such press could only have enhanced Emeryville’s role as a vice haven (No author 1921b).

Within 4 years, non-compliance had become so problematic that the federal government assigned a permanent squad of Prohibition agents to work exclusively in Emeryville. In a 1925 article, Christie again defended his municipality, but this time setting its seeming non-compliance within a broader geographical and context. First, he said, Emeryville was the “victim” of larger cities around it (San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley). Only five people arrested in more than 34 local raids that had been conducted by his police force in 1924 were from Emeryville proper. The problem of non-compliance was coming from outside, he lamented, and this was going to cost his constituents money. Second, before April 1, 1925, all fines collected as a result of raids within the municipality went to the town treasurer and could be used to support Prohibition enforcement. Christie noted that Emeryville had used these fines and forfeitures to hire two additional full-time men at the cost of $3,360 in 1924 and had retained a “special squad” on a part-time basis that had added $3,500 in expenditures in 1924. A change in California state law in early 1925, however, required that any fines collected in Class 5 and 6 towns (of which Emeryville was one) to be forwarded to the county treasurer instead of the local municipality. The rationale stemmed from the fact that many Prohibition cases in California were not heard at the municipal level but at the county level. The counties wanted the fines to help offset their expenses, and thus pushed for a blanket law that would require that all fines collected be forwarded to the county.

Mayor Christie saw this as a huge structural problem. He argued that if Emeryville was to uphold federal and state Prohibition laws through investigation, arrests, and evidence provision—all necessary in getting convictions no matter the court level—then Emeryville needed a special appropriation from a higher level of government or else it needed to be...
able to keep the fines collected in its local municipal court. Otherwise the cost of enforcement would be in excess of the local annual budget (No author 1925). The amount of animosity that he harbored toward Alameda County, the State of California and the federal government on this issue was palpable.

This raises many questions for future research regarding the performance of statehood during Prohibition. To what extent were smaller municipalities hamstrung in their attempts to comply with federal law given the actions of intervening levels of government like the county and state? In this instance, the actions on the part of the State of California and Alameda County had allegedly contributed to a problem for Emeryville. Or, was this intergovernmental confusion simply an excuse for Christie and Emeryville to turn a blind eye to practices that were part of the local culture of the place he had governed since its incorporation? Throughout the country there were hundreds of municipalities with reputations similar to Emeryville’s. What were the intergovernmental dynamics in which these places were embedded?

Returning to the archaeological assemblages, Berkeley’s Zeta Psi brothers had older generational social peers in Malibu’s Crags Country Club. In fact, at least one of the Zeta Psi brothers had a family member who belonged. Originally founded before Prohibition as an elite hunting club, Crags consisted of a club house and members had the option of building a cabin on the property. During Prohibition, the remote and private nature of the club and its cabins made it a place where liquor could flow freely. Not coincidently, the club disbanded shortly after Prohibition’s repeal in 1933 (during the Great Depression when the American economy was at low ebb).

Many historians have assumed that beer consumption greatly decreased during Prohibition. Explanations involve the obtrusive nature of shipment in barrels, and the relative ease of hiding hard alcohol (which provided more of a kick in any case) in small bottles and flasks. Zeta Psi and Crag’s encourage us to question that assumption. Like Zeta Psi, Crag’s Country Club was a uniquely masculine space. At Crags, beer was a much larger proportion of the beverages represented than might be expected, accounting for near half of the bottle recovered. At the Zeta Psi site, while the 114 beer bottles greatly outnumbered the 11 wine bottles and 14 hard liquor bottles, they do represent a smaller per container servings and lower alcoholic content. In any case, the archaeological record at both places suggests that beer consumption remained important during Prohibition, most likely due to its masculine associations. Whether in the fraternity hall, a hunting lodge, a sporting event, or a military garrison, beer was a matter of ritual. In the Zeta Psi case, it continued to be consumed, even if its form was radically altered in the form of near beers. Crags, however, was not consuming
near beers. Manufacturer marks older than other materials from the site suggest that the club had either stockpiled before January 1920, acquired older stocks of beers after enforcement began, or managed to acquire new beer bottled in older bottles.

The amount of soda consumed at Crags' is similar to that used at the fraternity house, while the amount of wine and hard liquor is greater. As was the case at Zeta Psi, Gordon’s London Dry Gin was recovered, as were acid washed wine and champagne bottles. The high incidence of wine at the site may be related to the ease with which these products could be obtained from local vineyards and counterfeited. Initially confusing, was the recovery of several short amber bottles that appear to be Italian-style wine bottles with applied glass handles at the neck. These were also seamless. There is no real historical precedent for such a bottle shape, but certainly, they look like they should be “old”. Several references suggest that these contained brandy and the bottle shape was limited to the period of Prohibition (Munsey 1970). Access to counterfeited as well as illegally imported liquors allowed for the members of Crags to stay wet in a dry nation.

In the case of Crags, the increase in soda bottles is most certainly tied to alcohol consumption. Recovered from the site along with ginger ales and imported Irish mineral waters were sodas used as mixers. Other food-stuffs recovered from the site hint at the specific drinks that might have been consumed: pickle, horseradish, Worcestershire sauce, olive jars, cherry bottles, bitters bottles, Cinzano vermouth and gin. World-famous California bartender Jerry Thomas’ “Le Bon Vivant” cocktail recipe book (originally published in the 1860s but reissued in 1928) includes the recipe for the Bloody Mary cocktail (invented in 1920) that required Worcestershire sauce, horseradish, vodka and tomato juice. The classic Martini (originally developed by Thomas in Martinez, California) required bitters, gin, maraschino, and vermouth. The gin and tonic was already a classic. The Soda Cocktail required white sugar, bitters and plain soda. The Vermouth Cocktail was a mixture of whiskey, maraschino, vermouth and bitters. The Tom Collins included soda, gum syrup and whiskey—although brandy or gin could also be used—topped off with a maraschino cherry.

While cocktails became a popular way to cover the taste of bad liquor, in the introduction to the 1928 edition of the Bon Vivant, Herbert Astbury tried to recast the circumstances of Prohibition with an aura of class, high society, and sophistication: “In these decayed and evangelical times, when drinking has reverted to a savage guzzling of liquid dynamite, the name of Jerry Thomas arouses no answering spark of manhood from the craven victims of bootleg liquor or the cowed and beaten slaves who labor in the gloomy galley's of the Anti-Saloon league. But to the ancients who weep beside the bier of a lost art it brings back beautiful memories of golden
fizzes and stimulating juleps, of cobblers, slings, and sangarees.” (Intro, Thomas 1929).

The working-class drinking of Ernest Cordes’ family, however, shows no tendency toward the niceties of the mixed drinks from Crags Club. The family’s beverages, aside from two milk bottles, three bottles of Hires Root Beer, and three bottles of wine, is dominated by 26 hard liquor bottles, nine of which are whisky hip flasks. Prohibition oral histories suggest that the pint flask was a common gift or tax paid by bar owners to local law enforcement to ensure a blind eye toward illegal activities (Wilkie 2010). It is no wonder that Ernest Cordes buried the empties in the back of the house. Still, we should not be harsh in our judgment of Ernest given that enforcement along the coastal areas of California was weak. An officer who attempted to enforce Prohibition, especially in areas that did not want it, would have been as likely to be ostracized by his community as by his fellow officers. It was probably enough to drive one to drink. As does the conclusion we draw from these assemblages: the geography of compliance and non-compliance was an extraordinarily complicated matter, variegated by class, locational setting, scale, municipal proclivities as well as engagement with other levels of the federal state.

Possible Patterns of Consumption After Prohibition

When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Anheuser Busch (who, like other large brewhouses, had survived by siphoning alcohol from their beers and selling it as hootch) celebrated by sending the still-famous Clydesdale horse and wagon team with a load of “Repeal Ale” to Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the White House. The U.S. had not dried out, but what they drank, what they drank it with, and who made it, had been changed forever. Two mid-twentieth-century sites provide some insights into how post-Prohibition drinking looked. For this we turn to the Sepulveda Adobe, which was used as a summer home by an unidentified southern California family in the 1940s and 1950s, and the Coney Ranch outside of Santa Rosa in northern California. Joseph Coney, the owner of the Coney Ranch, was a wealthy Santa Rosa business man who entertained large groups of associates there each summer, including the Sonoma Trailblazers, an organization that re-enacted western life with multi-day trail rides that ended at the ranch with lots of drinking and celebrating.

In both the Sepulveda and Coney assemblages, soda accounts for larger percentages of the beverage containers than in previous assemblages. There are, however, far more Coca-Cola, Pepsi Cola, and flavored, sugary sodas than mineral waters and tonics. Hard liquor bottles are within the range found in pre-Prohibition period sites. Beer consumption does not account
for much of either assemblage—this despite Coney’s social groups emphasizing masculine pursuits. The Sepulveda assemblage includes multiple examples of brandy and rum, liquors that were widely available during Prohibition. Surprisingly, both assemblages is that they contain impressive amounts of wine, but not the kinds of fine wines of the pre-Prohibition or even Prohibition period. From the Coney ranch, multiple examples of “Petri” jug wine were recovered (Petri had been a pre-Prohibition wine maker who sold his winery and rebought it after repeal. He produced dessert wines to accommodate new American tastes for sweet alcoholic beverages.) The Sepulveda assemblage also includes examples of jug wines by Ernest and Julio Gallo, Regina Wine, Christian Brothers, and Roma Wine. Roma wine, a port bottled in Fresno, advertised itself as “America’s favorite wine because it tastes the best.” Print ads demonstrate that wine consumption—even that of sweet grapey port—was seen to connote a certain kind of sophistication (Merizan 2009). Ida Hancock would not have been able to recognize her family’s legacy.

Sweet cocktails had been the result of America’s gravitation in preferences toward sweet sodas. Not until the last quarter of the twentieth century would national beer and wine monopolies created in the wake of Prohibition be truly challenged by small-scale microbreweries and vineyards that favored craftsmanship over bulk production and drier tasting products over the sweet.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research in Historical Archaeo-Geography

To conclude, this paper has not been intended to be an exhaustive discussion of Prohibition and its impacts. Nor is our intent to demonstrate what a grand failure Prohibition was. Instead, despite Prohibition’s inability to dry out the country, it managed to reshape American consumption habits on a gross level. Further, it forced individuals and the federal state at all levels into new sets of relationships as a result of the attempt to enact geographically universal regulation in a world characterized by local jurisdictional variation.

Specifically, what the various assemblages suggest is that fraternities and clubs continued to recognize the ritual meanings of shared beer consumption. Elite households like the Hancocks used resources available to them to subvert the system and created new ways of reifying their class identities through new modes of acquiring and consuming alcoholic beverages. The working-class Cordes worked within the new illegal economy to acquire alcoholic beverages; it is worth wondering whether Cordes himself redistributed alcohol to other members of his social network. Ultimately, while
Prohibition may have changed what Americans drank, it did little to modify the fact that Americans did drink—even when they were not supposed to.

Social theorist Scott (1998) notes how important it is to look at the world as if we were “seeing like a state.” His agenda, of course, is to unmask and de-naturalize the instruments of state hegemony that dictate the contours of everyday life. His ideas have played particularly well with human geographers as they attempt to clarify the scalar aspects of statehood and their connections to the micro-scale, quotidian world of the human subject. As our work suggests, however, state hegemonies are not absolute—and as Scott concurs in another book, Weapons of the Weak (1985)—subjects have the capacity to develop tactics to resist or ignore attempts at state intervention. Not every effort to erect state hegemony looks the same or fosters the same set of authoritarian results.

In summation, an historical archaeo-geography of American federalism and National Prohibition allows for two things: (1) reconsideration of the top (recent) stratigraphic archaeological layers in light of federal statehood as it relates to the manufacturing, packaging, and disposal of various material forms; and (2) the potential activation of a new constellation of archaeological sites—facilities that were run or funded by various levels of the state within the federal system. What clues can the archaeological record add to our understanding of everyday life—the practice of personhood—within these state places? At least, that is the transformative question that the historical geographer will want to ask. For the historical archaeologist, the countering query will be: into what broader geographical networks of statehood might these sites, assemblages, and artifacts and the subjects who created them, fit? The beauty of transdisciplinarity, we are finding, is complementarity. Historical geography enriches archaeology with the concern for the social construction of scale. Historical archaeology enriches geography with evidence of the materiality of everyday life. Together, through the practice of historical archaeo-geography, both fields will be the better for it.

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Snapshots of History and the Nature of the Archaeological Image

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ABSTRACT

By its very definition, archaeology is situated at the intersection of the material and the temporal worlds. Photography is similarly positioned, and yet it can be manipulated to produce constructed contexts according to a photographer’s agenda. In order to explore how the abilities and limitations of archaeology and photography are entwined, I examine the representational power of the photograph and the phenomenon of Japanese tourist photography. I then discuss the construction of archaeological photographs, both in practice and in the prescribed theory contained in archaeological methods textbooks, as well as how photographs are used to represent the embodied, physical performance of archaeology.

Résumé: L’archéologie, par sa définition même, se situe au croisement du matériel et du temporel. La photographie occupe une place semblable, mais elle peut être cependant manipulée pour créer des contextes d’interprétation, selon le projet du photographe. Afin d’explorer comment les capacités et les limites de l’archéologie et de la photographie s’entrecroisent, j’analyse le pouvoir représentationnel du photographe, ainsi que le phénomène de la photographie touristique des Japonais. J’aborde ensuite l’interprétation des photographies archéologiques, à la fois en pratique et selon la théorie prescrite contenue dans les guides de méthodes archéologiques, ainsi que la façon dont les photographies sont utilisées pour transmettre l’expression physique des opérations d’archéologie.

Resumen: Por definición, la arqueología se sitúa en la intersección de lo material y lo temporal. La fotografía se posiciona de forma similar, con la diferencia de que puede manipularse para producir contextos artificiales, según las necesidades del fotógrafo. Para analizar cómo se entrelazan las habilidades y las limitaciones de la arqueología y la fotografía, estudio el poder representativo de la fotografía y el fenómeno de esta técnica entre los turistas japoneses. A continuación, debato la elaboración de las
fotografías arqueológicas, tanto en la práctica como en la teoría contenida en los libros sobre métodos arqueológicos, así como que las fotografías se utilizan para representar los resultados tangibles y físicos de la arqueología.

**KEY WORDS**

Photography, Archaeological methods, Embodiment, Practice

In deciding how a picture should look, in preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects. Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are. (Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1977:6–7)

It was chilly when he arrived at the site in the morning for the first day of his field school. The dew was still rising and the whole area by the river took on an ambient dampness as the mist melted away under the morning sun. He wasn’t really sure what to expect, but he soon found that the staff had no qualms about putting them all to work immediately. It was only later that morning when the weight of what he was doing there fully hit him. As he pawed tentatively through the dirt in the screen, he found something: it was orangey-brown, about three inches long. It felt warm and rough in his hands as he cleaned the years of earth off of its surface. When it was finally completely exposed, he at last could see what it was: a key.

The magnitude of the discovery was a rush, but he barely noticed the blood rising to his cheeks. Here in his hands he held history, a tiny material fragment of the past, untouched for nearly 400 years. This link to his nation’s ancestors, realized through a rusted scrap of metal, took his breath away. It was the moment that came to define his entrance into archaeology, like so many before him and so many after him.

**Introduction**

As definitions of historical and contemporary archaeology expand further and further into the realm of contemporary practice, it is important to continue to, as Edgeworth advises, “facilitate alternative ways of looking at things, no matter what the prevailing orthodoxy might be” (2006:14). The scope of what is contemporary includes not only hot-button issues such as cybernetics (e.g., Forte and Dell’Unto 2009; Harrison 2009), human rights
(e.g., Doretti and Fondebrider 2001; Saunders 2002; Lydon 2009), and intangible heritage (e.g., Ruggles and Silverman 2009; Smith and Akagawa 2009), but also archaeological practice. Scholars such as Hodder (1999), Lucas (2001), and, more recently, Edgeworth (2003, 2006) have encouraged archaeologists to turn their gazes inwards and to examine what it means to practice archaeology. Included in these considerations has been a focus on the role of photography within archaeological endeavors.

Archaeology, as a contemporary practice that is experienced by tenured professors and young field school students alike, occupies a unique position at the intersection of the material and the temporal spheres. By its very definition, the discipline handles the remains of past societies. This multifaceted relationship informs every archaeological action we undertake, from field work to publication. Similarly, photography is imbricated in this nexus of the material and the temporal. Every photograph captures a still representation of a particular context’s physical setting at a particular moment. This is both a constraining and emancipating quality. It prevents the photographer from illustrating the true depth of any context’s materials, but allows him to construct the context according to his own agenda. Thus photography, with its limitations and abilities, plays an important role in how archaeological subjects and practices are depicted in both public and academic spheres.

To illustrate just how photography is able to manipulate both the material and the temporal, I will first explore how we understand each of these characteristics and how they relate to the power of the image. The phenomenon of Japanese tourist photography of the late 19th-century provides a useful example of how a seemingly simple set of photographs can be deployed to define a culture. I will then discuss the ways in which we construct archaeological photographs. In particular, I will explore the relationship between photography’s perceived function when documenting archaeological practice, the various uses of images in publications, and how these uses are prescribed in field manuals and textbooks of archaeological methods. But before we consider archaeological photography itself, we must first investigate the factors that form the foundation of both archaeology and photography.

**Material → Time → Image**

Within every archaeological query is some sort of interaction between the material and the temporal. While this intersection is implicit in most studies, some place a greater emphasis on the relationships between time and materials. Some projects seek to define detailed artifact biographies that identify various points along an object’s historical trajectory (e.g., Kopytoff
1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hamilakis 1999; Seip 1999; Meskell 2004; Walker and Schiffer 2006) while others focus specifically on discerning how an artifact or structure’s meaning has been changed, adapted, and appropriated in different contexts over time (e.g., Turgeon 1997; Blake 1998; Baram 1999; Harrison 2003). The common factor among these approaches is that they highlight the agentive and dynamic nature of both the objects and the individuals enmeshed within the studied contexts.

There is a point, though, at which the photographic image becomes an idiosyncratic phenomenon. A photograph, while able to visually depict the physical material of a given context, represents only a brief moment in time, what Sontag calls, “a thin slice of space as well as time” (1977:22). It is but a two-dimensional representation of its subject—the observer cannot physically reach into the photo and tactiley experience the context. He is only able to look, as one would through a window, into the photograph’s setting. Some photographers, such as Idris Khan, have tried to subvert this characteristic by manufacturing series of images that depict a full range of motion or by juxtaposing numerous pictures on top of one another in an attempt to illustrate a subject’s complexities (Khan 2004; Hicks and Beaudry 2006:1–9). These methods have produced some captivating images, but photography, as it is typically deployed, rarely captures a setting’s material past and future. Rooted firmly in the moment, the image tells a story of a particular present.

At the same time that they are temporally and spatially fragmentary, images beg the observer to get involved, to tell a story, to fit the part into a whole. It is their muteness that Sontag believes reinforces their seductiveness: “photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy” (1977:23). We want to see what is behind and between things, what is hiding in the shadows, so we make up our own interpretations to make sense of the silence. The picture may tell of the present, but our invented timeline stretches from past to future.

I do not mean to deny photography its ability to produce powerful images. Photographers can be extremely fastidious in the production of their settings. Photographs are accepted as representative of some sort of reality, a characteristic which imbues them with a supreme authority (Sontag 1977:5–6; Shanks 1997:74). The key implication inherent in photographic images is that of presence. We understand a picture as illustrative of a scene to which the photographer bore witness. Photographers maintain control over their subjects in such a way that they are able to manipulate them to accent or temper certain qualities, or to evoke a spectrum of emotive responses (Sontag 1977:6). The photographer can even fabricate a tableau in its entirety, constructing each and every nuance of the setting to satisfy his personal agenda. Clearly photography is a very powerful tool in the negotiation of the material and the temporal. In order to see how the
power of this intersection can be used (or manipulated), I now turn to the phenomenon of Japanese tourist photography of the late 19th-century.

Kusakabe sat back in his chair and stretched. It had been several long days since he had begun coloring the picture and his body was exhausted. Despite his aching back and bleary eyes, he was quite proud of himself—it was beautiful work. Stillfried called her “Singing Girl,” but Kusakabe knew she was just a local prostitute. It was a pity, as she truly looked the part, which was likely a testament to Stillfried’s skill behind the lens. There was a serene grace in the way her fingers supported the shamisen that matched her cool gaze and painted lips. Kusakabe smiled and wondered what sort of music would come from the instrument if she tried to play it. But that didn’t matter. If the tourists would buy it, then they’d all make money. He grimaced and bent back over his painting desk to finish his work.

Japan’s Transformation as a Western Ideal

Initial European involvement with Japan, initiated in 1542 when an exploratory vessel was wrecked at Tanegashima, lasted only 31 years before being cut off by the Tokugawa Shogunate (Winkel 1991:11–15). Over the next 283 years, European contact with Japan came through Dutch traders, who were only permitted to exchange goods with Japanese dealers on the island of Deshima. When Japan finally lowered its barriers to European outsiders in 1856 as a result of Townsend Harris’ series of treaties, the country was met with a rapid influx of Western goods and practices. Large-scale industrialization came with Europe’s entry into Japan and, for a time, many Japanese citizens were worried about a loss of traditional values (Peabody Museum 2007:1). Ironically, it was this traditional culture, captured in tourist photography, that brought thousands of visitors to Japan’s shores.

Felice Beato, a Venetian-born combat photographer who was later granted English citizenship, was one of the earliest Western photographers working in Japan. Beato traveled to Japan in 1863 at the behest of Charles Wirgman, a sketch artist working for the Illustrated London News (Winkel 1991:25). The two founded the first English-language Japanese magazine, which they called “Japan Punch” (later changed to “Far East”). Working in a time in which foreigners were still viewed with an air of distrust (the camera was seen as a dangerous weapon with the power to steal the souls of its subjects), Beato and Wirgman captured, sometimes in underhanded ways, many aspects of Japanese culture (Edel 1986:13–15). For instance, despite being explicitly forbidden to do so, Beato managed to photograph both Prince Arima and later, in 1867, the Japanese shogun (Winkel 1991:25). It was also Beato’s idea to employ tinting artists to color their
prints, which quickly became an extremely popular practice. Beato’s pho-
tography had a significant influence on Western interest in Japanese cul-
ture as well as future photographers working in Japan. Baron Raimund von Stillfried und Ratenitz established a studio in Japan in 1872 and began working in the tradition of Beato and Wirgman. Still-
fried’s first passion was painting so his photographs reflect a refined artist’s eye in their compositions and classical poses (Edel 1986:22). His reputation as a fine photographer led to his appointment to the position of court photographer in Austria. Although details of Stillfried’s life are lacking, it is known that his skill earned him a commission from Emperor Mutsu-Hito of Fujiyama for the royal palace in Tokyo (Edel 1986:23). This is clearly a significant achievement given previous wariness on the part of the Japanese towards European photographers. Stillfried remained in Japan as his work gained popularity throughout the world, but then left in 1883 to return home to Vienna, where he continued to paint and work in photography until his death in 1911 (Winkel 1991:26).

Beato and Stillfried’s hand-colored images allowed Japanese culture to spread across the globe, flooding into areas that had, until recently, been barred from viewing her beauty. The pictures, purchased at tourist curio shops throughout Japan, depicted type subjects, stereotypes that ostensibly represented what it was to be Japanese. In addition to their influence within popular culture, the photographs were viewed with special interest by anthropologists and ethnographers. During this period, many social scientists believed that “type specimen” of individual cultures could be captured in an objective way through photography, thus allowing for scientifically acceptable cross-cultural comparisons (Peabody Museum 2007:1). The pictures came to represent the ‘everyman’ within Japanese culture, but were in reality fixed, isolated, and staged representations of a complex and nuanced society. This sentiment was reinforced following the prints’ accession into Harvard University’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, where each was given a curation number, and each became an artifact (Peabody Museum 2007:1). These images, which were originally intended as tourist souvenirs, took on new lives as ‘unbiased’ scientific samples.

David Odo, visiting curator of the “A Good Type” exhibit suggests that, “a pretty picture isn’t just a pretty picture” (Bergeron 2007). Beyond the fact that the settings were composed in studios using painted backdrops and fabricated natural elements such as papier-mâché rocks, the subjects depicted in the images were often simply random volunteers found by Beato or Stillfried (Figure 1). For instance, a close look at some of pictures displayed at the Peabody exhibition show that the same man was used in separate pictures supposedly showing a farmer in one and a tobacco-smoking laborer in the other (Bergeron 2007). There are also several pictures
purporting to depict men with tattoos but it is clear that a similar exposure of the same man was printed twice and painted with different tattoos.

Many of the photographs appeal to the Western sexual fetishization of Asian women. For these sexualized pictures, the photographers manufactured bathing or dressing scenes using half-naked or nude local prostitutes in coy and erotic poses. Idealization was not limited to sexual fantasy. Despite the fact that by the time Europeans entered Japan, the remaining samurais acted as administrators or courtiers, Westerners desired warlike images of these “Asian equivalents of Medieval knights” and thus purchased staged scenes of combative samurai (Bergeron 2007).

Western photography of Japan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries represented the European idealization impressed upon Japanese culture. What was deemed exotic and appealing by a generation of foreign tourists became the stereotype, and even the scientific view, of an extremely intri-
cate, heterogeneous, and historic society. It is true that the photographers created the original images, but it was the voracious appetites of the European tourists for all things Japanese that constructed the social system of Japanese Tourist Photography. As Hockley advises, we should remember that agency should also be recognized in the consumers and in the images themselves (2004:67). Dunn and Finn have also emphasized the textual nature of the photographic image, positioning it as a document that can be read in multiple ways by multiple audiences (Dunn 2009:9; Finn 2009). Without the knowledge of their complex history, what kinds of stories do observers construct for the Japanese Tourist photos? Does the casual viewer detect their fabricated histories or does he instead see the contrived present depicted in the scenes as legitimate based on their presumed observational authority? In either case, it is apparent that the photographic image has the ability to significantly affect the ways in which people view entire cultures as idealized and contained entities. Given photography’s potent power to shape the perceptions of the material it depicts, archaeologists have rightly been concerned with the images that they generate.

The excavation unit was spotless. Again. He was sure it had been clean the first three times he had meticulously scraped the dirt back with the keen edge of his trowel, but after the site director strode across the surface to check on a feature or something, he had been forced to redouble his efforts. In fact, the exposed soil was starting to look a bit different than it did after his first “cleaning.” As he bent down to remove the last few bits of loose material from the unit, several heavy drops of sweat slid down his forehead, stinging his eyes. He looked around at his filthy clothes for a dry swatch with which to wipe his face, but fragments of excavated soil hung from every part of his body. The summer’s humidity added a thick layer of sheen that seemed to grab hold of the dense loam. He sighed and blinked the salt away. He was grateful to be able to scoop up the final dustpan of dirt and stand up. It had only been one day on the site, but the sun had already managed to torch the nape of his neck and his back and knees complained loudly about the hours of trowel-work. Surveying the pristine unit, he smiled, both from satisfaction and from the memory of the iron key he had removed from the soil several hours prior.

A hand clamped down on his shoulder, interrupting his pensive reflection. “Time for the photo!” said the site director with a smile. “Would you mind moving over there?” The boy frowned as the site director began wrestling with the metal A-frame ladder. The site director had pointed to a distant maple tree, far away from the unit. With a quiet grumble, he trudged off the tree to watch the photographing process from the comfort of the shade.
Some Thoughts on the Nature of the Archaeological Image

Although it is sometimes simply “taken for granted,” as Shanks (1997:73) asserts, photography, a tool employed in nearly every archaeological project, has come under fire from several prominent reflexive scholars. Most archaeological photographic records are just that, records—attempts at sterile, dispassionate recordings representing, in an unbiased manner, the state of a site, unit, feature, or artifact. Those that have problematized archaeological photography, however, have pointed out that any sort of objectivity is out of reach. Hodder describes the process of capturing a visual record in archaeology, noting the great care that is taken to “tidy up” the area to be photographed, ridding it of any stray debris or loose dirt (1999:124). Sidewalls are shaved, grass is clipped, and roots are snipped, all in the name of posterity. One wonders if the outside observer is struck by the absurdity of trying to “clean” a section of earth.

The fallacy here, as argued by Shanks, Hodder, Lucas, and others, is the underlying assumption that the photographic record is somehow outside of the human element (Shanks 1997; Hodder 1999; Lucas 2001). Photography, of course, lies well within the excavator’s interpretive gaze and it is through this lens that the picture is composed and captured. We each become a Felice Beato or Baron von Stillfried, setting up our scenes in an attempt to convey a certain set of attitudes or values. In the case of the typical site photograph, the archaeologist often wishes not only to portray an archaeological subject but also to illustrate his or her skills in conducting a clean and efficient excavation.

Consider the characteristics of a typical site photograph. Content should be clear and readily identifiable. The archaeologist illustrates that he or she can excavate a unit or feature with precision and clarity. On a secondary level, we often see that any feature components have been scored or highlighted with water, clearly identifying the archaeologist’s interpretation of these soil stains as significant. Our view is directed to them. Although we may not absorb it immediately, our eyes also take into account the fact that the area surrounding the feature is “tidy,” showcasing the feature without any distractions such as loose dirt, footprints, or other traces of human activity. In some cases, though, we may see posed excavators, inserted much like Beato and Stillfried’s frozen subjects, who must stand (or crouch) completely still while the photographer prepares the shot. This may seem initially like an “active” shot, but it is in fact a known misrepresentation that depicts the archaeologists as passive, and often clean, participants in a much more complicated, physical process.

This practice, while ostensibly “scientific” and informative, ignores, or rather attempts to disguise, the messy nature of excavation. Apart from the
obvious literal meanings, excavation entails, as Hodder famously wrote, “interpretation at the trowel’s edge” (1999:92). Within the frame of the traditional archaeological photograph, these multi-scalar processes of negotiation and renegotiation of the archaeological material are reduced to a single moment along the timeline of interpretation. Of course, the common response to this point would likely sound something like this: “But I only take photos when I’m finished with a unit.” In most cases, what is really meant by this reply is that the excavation of a unit is finished, not its interpretation. It can be argued that the interpretative process never actually ends (Fortenberry 2006). If that is the case, then our “final photos” only illustrate a limited glance at the development of our understandings of a site.

This practice also neglects the very performative and physically human aspects of archaeological excavation. The majority of excavation entails hours of difficult physical labor in unprotected environments. It is rugged, it is dirty, it is exhausting. Days are spent toiling in extreme conditions, but these circumstances are rarely translated into archaeological photography. Sterile images hide the aspects of an archaeological site that are physically negotiated on a regular basis by the excavation team, such as slippery pathways, towering back-dirt piles, and even unpleasant restroom facilities. I am, of course, not proposing that we all should run out to snap photos of our site bathrooms—even reflexivity has its limits; I am only trying to point out that the typical archaeological photograph overlooks the actual archaeology in the pursuit of some elusive objectivity.

According to Harré, scientists, which can be loosely extended to archaeologists, use certain language tropes to instill trust in their readers by linking the author into an “esoteric order, a ‘community of saints’” (Harre´ 1990:82; and see Joyce 2002:53–54). By omitting the implied “I know” or “We know” before statements of fact, the author inserts his- or herself into a larger group of scholastic stewards who oversee some grand bank of knowledge (Joyce 2002:53; Harré 1990:82). Similarly, as Latour has explored, science is founded on facts constructed within a laboratory, a space that is completely within the control of the scientist (1993:15–18). As long as conclusions are drawn within this regulated area, they can be taken as fact.

This sentiment can easily be expanded to include not only speech or texts, but also images. In this case, however, archaeologists refuse to trust one another, forcing authors to include the “I know” statement in the form of sterile photographs. We need to observe for ourselves the units and features from the field-as-laboratory analyzed in archaeological reports. Although this mistrust may be properly directed in some cases, the problem is that as observers, we forget that our judgments of another’s work are based upon fundamentally constructed images. Once again, we return
to the conclusion that photographs, much like scholarly conclusions, are constructed in exactly the way that the archaeologist would have us absorb them. We can scrutinize record shots as much as we want—they will remain purposeful fabrications, impishly shrugging off the yoke of fact.

We should also consider the extraction of the human element from the photographic record. Many site directors insist on removing all excavators from their units before taking a photograph, but as we saw with our young field school student, this is somewhat counterintuitive (see also Lucas 2001:6–17). Why should we demand such strenuous efforts from our field crews, and from ourselves, only to remove all involved parties from the location of their work? Archaeology is a social activity that promotes discussion, both archaeological and otherwise, between the excavators (Holtorf 2005:30). It is a pity then to see a vibrant and communicative field crew reduced to a single group shot tucked in the back flap of a monograph or report. Granted, it would be difficult to find an archaeological project that does not take “working shots,” or pictures of the field crew at work. But what happens to these images when it comes time for publication?

This is another curious feature of many archaeological photographs: their specified uses in reports and popular publications. It seems that for the majority of our archaeological projects, a sharp divide exists between the photos chosen for each of these types of communication: the “scientific” images discussed above are reserved for academic publications while materials designed to reach non-archaeological audiences generally feature people engaging in the act of archaeology. The difference can be explained with relative ease because the target audience in each instance is different—a public curious about the archaeological process and an informed academy who is already well-versed in the methods of archaeology and is more interested in conclusions. It is this division, one that misrepresents archaeology in an antiquated manner, which needs to be reexamined.

The inclusion of action-oriented images in popular publications is not what should be viewed as problematic. The goal of these materials is to connect with a public who is interested more in “the sheer sense of revealing things below the surface” than “the actual finds and features archaeologists discover” (Holtorf 2005: 24). Archaeology is an adventure in the minds of many of the general public, and so we rightly create popular publications that appeal to these senses of curiosity and wonder (Figure 2). In truth, it is this feature of archaeology that very likely attracted the majority of archaeologists to the field in the first place (Holtorf 2005: 27). There is certainly no shame in admitting that we are still thrilled by the discovery of a unique or particularly interesting find.

But why, then, are we so rigid in our report-related images? Some might argue that practicing archaeologists are readily familiar with the gritty
grind of fieldwork, but this is only a sign of complacency on our parts, a weak response that attempts to conflate every archaeological field experience into one uniform episode. Any archaeologist who has spent time on more than one site knows that the physical conditions (i.e., location, individuals involved, weather, etc.), however similar, are never the same. Instead, I would argue that the answer lies in the sentiment that is echoed throughout field manuals and textbooks of archaeological methods: that photography should be used to depict archaeology's subjects, rather than its practice.

**The Instruction of Archaeological Photography**

My historiographic of archaeological photography in field manuals and textbooks begins with Matthews’ 1968 volume, *Photography in Archaeology and Art*. Intended to be a primer on producing and presenting photographs of artistic subjects, the book delves into the complex engineering of the photographic medium, from choosing the appropriate lens or filter to the reproduction of images for the purposes of publication. Its sixteen chapters mainly describe the technical side of art photography, but one section, titled “Photography for Archaeologists,” tackles the issues inherent in the documentation of artifacts and archaeological sites (Matthews 1968:101–120). After a lengthy discussion of how to capture the details of individual finds (seventeen of the chapter’s twenty pages), Matthews finally mentions that archaeologists are often interested in taking pictures in the field. Not surprisingly, he cautions that, “figures, useful sometimes to indi-
cate the actual scale of a picture, should be included with some care” because the human figure “frequently attracts more its fair share of attention” (Matthews 1968:119–120). If they are to be included at all, Matthews recommends that one or two people should be carefully placed as if they are working “in an unobtrusive position some distance from the camera viewpoint” (Matthews 1968:120). In Matthews’ view, the individuals involved in the excavation are secondary to the archaeological subject of the photograph.

Moving in a similar direction, Noël Hume offers the following mantra in his seminal 1969 work: “Poor photographs of an untidy site are generally a sign of a sloppy worker, and a sloppy worker’s conclusions are rarely to be trusted. It is as simple as that” (Noël Hume 1969:197). If a clean site equaled sound interpretations, one imagines there would be far fewer disagreements within the archaeological community. Noël Hume goes onto describe what should and should not be included in an archaeological photograph, pausing to comment that

a common unresisted temptation is to let one’s girl friend hold the ranging pole, but as she is generally somewhat more decorative than the wall or section being photographed, she takes one’s eye away from the subject and thus makes it a bad archaeological picture. (1969:200)

His opinion echoes that of Matthews: archaeological photographs should focus on archaeology’s subject, not its practice, or rather, its practitioners. Despite his tendency to remove the human element from archaeological photographs, Noël Hume does provide advice on how to capture archaeological practice:

There are two ways of photographing people at work: you either do just that or you prepare your subject area first and then pose people in it. From the archaeologist’s point of view, the latter is by far the more satisfactory because he can present the site as he wants it to be seen—which is not always synonymous with the way it actually is. (1969:212)

Noël Hume’s emphasis on cleaning a site with military precision and depicting a very controlled image of archaeological practice harkens back to processual mentalities of scientific testing and observation, but much like Beato and Stillfried, his results present a static, neat, and inhuman picture of a very active, messy, and human experience.

Harp’s 1975 edited volume, Photography in Archaeological Research, explains how to illustrate people’s involvement with an excavation in much less begrudging terms than Noël Hume. In fact, Imboden and Rinker’s chapter on photography in the field introduces a previously unexpressed view, one that underlies the thesis of this article: it states that “complete
[photographic] coverage should document not only the “things”—artifacts, structures, earth forms—but also the human effort involved in their study and recovery” (1975:85). And yet, despite this perspective, the authors still feel that pictures of archaeologists at work only have a place in “popular publication and for public lectures” (Imboden and Rinker 1975:85). Although “complete coverage” includes the documentation of all aspects of an archaeological excavation, the assemblage of photographs is then divided into separate realms depending on the intended venue. Once again, archaeologists are instructed to reinforce a dichotomy in which the physical practice of archaeology is assumed to be relevant only to a public audience.

Dorrell’s *Photography in Archaeology and Conservation* (1989) is also troublesome. Although he provides a useful discussion of how best to compose shots of people at work, he insists that figures should be placed as to not “distract the eye from the archaeology” or “mask any important features” (Dorrell 1989:51, 151–153). There is little concern given for images whose sole purpose is to express the physicality of an excavation. Dorrell also remarks that,

> although straightforward, informative slides of the site’s structure and stratigraphy serve very well for academic purposes, they may prove rather indigestible fare for public lectures, and a leavening of slides showing excavators at work, dig life, and local conditions is always a welcome addition (1989:120)

“People pictures” are only useful, by implication, as interesting visual aids for public consumption. Much like Imboden and Rinker, Dorrell believes that the practice of archaeology should be documented visually, but all three authors stop short of actually deploying these photographs in a useful manner outside of the public sphere.

This attitude persists in today’s field manuals. Hester et al.’s *Field Methods in Archaeology* states that people can be used as approximate scales or can be placed in photographs to accent various portions of the site (1997:170). This is certainly a valid point, although one would hope that most archaeologists serve more of a purpose than the average ranging pole or visual cue. Hester et al. also recommend that “a few action photos showing people working at routine tasks are very useful not only in documenting the history of the site’s investigation and methodologies employed but also for identifying the individuals who are engaged in the work” (Hester et al. 1997:170). The authors go onto comment that,

> such photographs are ideal for public relations and public information reports: these formats customarily call for photos that include people. However, photographs of personnel are secondary in importance to documenting the procedures and findings (Hester et al. 1997:170).
Once again, the process is reductional, relegating archaeologists to the category of distractions and inconveniences while attempting to mask the performance of archaeological practice.

It is clear to see at this point that these instructional sources are written from a perspective that favors depictions of archaeological subjects, rather than archaeological practice. Even those that explain how best to capture archaeologists at work then reserve these pictures for public audiences, excluding the representation of the physical negotiation of a site from academic publications. What is also interesting is the attention paid, implicitly in some volumes, explicitly in others, to the destructive nature of archaeological practice. For example, Matthews notes that archaeological photographers should be cognizant of processes of destruction and “for this reason alone he should take every care to ensure that all photographs taken have recorded all the various aspects of the work in progress” (1968:118). Dorell also comments that “at least a serious attempt should be made to avoid the situation, all too common, where vital evidence has not been recorded… following the destruction of successive strata” (1989:120).

There is, however, a disconnect between this prescription of maximum photographic coverage and the focus on illustrating archaeological subjects. If concern is given to capturing the details of stratigraphy, features, and other ephemeral traces in the ground that are erased in the act of archaeological inquiry, then why is attention not also paid to the fleeting, practical actions of the archaeologists? These behaviors are just as transient as the excavated earth and equally relevant to the archaeological process. It is impossible to document “all the various aspects of the work in progress” without including the physical practice of the actual excavation in the photographic gaze (Matthews 1968:118). Inclusion should also go beyond simple documentation—pictures of archaeological practice have a place in all publications, academic and otherwise. The authors of the texts mentioned above remain fixed to the idea that the archaeologists are a distraction from the archaeology, a position that ignores the entanglement of practice and results.

**Archaeological Photography at the Major John Bradford House**

As an illustrative case study of interesting and effective site photography, I now turn to the photographic record of James Deetz’ excavations at the Major John Bradford Homestead (c. 1714) in Kingston, Massachusetts. Between 1972 and 1973, Deetz and his students uncovered features on the property including a cellar, a well, and a number of trash pits. The excavations were documented by site photographer Ted Avery whose work is captured in 369 (now) aging Kodak
slides. A brief look at Avery’s shots reveals coverage of nearly every task that takes place on an archaeological site: surveying, trowel-work, taking core samples, removing sod, screening dirt, filling out paperwork, examining finds, moving dirt in wheelbarrows, poring over site maps, drawing plans, cleaning artifacts, backfilling, and many others. Significantly, the majority (205 out of 369, or roughly 56%) of his pictures show members of the field crew at work. Of the remaining 164 pictures, most of which document archaeological features, many have been “bracketed,” resulting in numerous duplicate images. If we adjust the total by subtracting duplicates, then the number of photographs depicting the field crew at work is 205 out of 333, or a surprising 62% of the photographic record. In addition to being able to clearly see the details of units, features, and artifacts as they are excavated, we get to know the members of the field crew as we experience each step of the archaeological dig. We watch as they labor in the dirt and struggle with heavy loads of soil. We see the excitement on their faces as ceramic vessels materialize out of the ground. We share in their contentment as they relax under a shady tree.

In many shots, it is clear that Avery purposefully positioned himself to include the unit and archaeologist in the picture’s foreground while placing the historic house in background (Figure 3). The viewer never loses his grasp on the site’s overall context. The house becomes a character in the archaeological narrative, much like the archaeologists, and plays a role in the story constructed by the observer. If we were to find a fault in Avery’s photographs, it could only be that many of pictures showing archaeologists at work are of the “Back and Butt” variety—that is, we don’t tend to see many faces because the individuals are busily working, focused on the soil beneath them. This is then not so much a condemnation of Avery’s skill behind the camera, but perhaps just an unfortunate side-effect of the archaeological process.

Even with its faults and gaps, the Bradford House photographic record tells a story. Unfortunately, no report emerged from this project so the choices made in the illustration of an associated publication cannot be evaluated against the photographic archive. However, the excavated material is currently undergoing re-assessment at Boston University’s Department of Archaeology Research Laboratory and those involved will have a rich selection of interesting photographs to augment the resulting report. It would be difficult for an observer to come away from Avery’s slides without a sense of the physical effort, performance, and reward of archaeological work. But this is not just a photo-essay: Avery doesn’t miss the archaeology in favor of the archaeologists. Units and features are clearly displayed and identified by an ever-present menu board. The visible context number provides a consistent reference to the overall site plan, enabling the interested viewer to tack back and forth easily from any individual picture to the larger archaeological narrative. This harmony between
the archaeological subject and its practitioners illustrates the unique ability of photography to capture all elements of an excavation without sacrificing either individuals or information.

* Click *

Photographs are certainly not passive and sterile presentations. They hold the ability to relate, with observational authority, the complex intersection between the material and the temporal realms in whatever manner the photographer deems appropriate. From daguerreotype to digital, photographic representations have negotiated this relationship with varying
results. As we have seen, a collection of such photographs defined the ways in which an entire culture of people was viewed by the Western world. The influence of photographic images has equally significant ramifications for representations of archaeology. I echo others who have argued against archaeological images that attempt to capture an “objective” picture of a site or excavation unit because they assume that such objectivity can ever really be achieved. While I sympathize with Costall’s assertion that “pictures do more or less look like what they depict,” the problem is that what we are depicting is not some grand scientific reveal, but rather a subjective interpretation made by an archaeologist (1997:59). We should also remember Sontag’s assertion that photographs demand that their viewers construct narratives to fill in an image’s material and temporal gaps (1997:23). What kinds of stories will people write based on our archaeological photos?

Archaeology is, at its heart, a predominantly embodied experience (see Edgeworth, this volume). Like the young field school student suffering the effects of a day’s work and discovering his first recognizable artifact, or the tinting artist bent over his prints for hours on end, we all relate to our work in very physical, emotional, and personalized ways. It is for this reason that the images in our academic publications often seem vacant of humanity and human-ness. I certainly acknowledge the goals of photography as a bearer of information; after all, archaeology is an inherently destructive process and records must be kept. However, as I and others have argued, photography should also convey at least some sense of the actual archaeological practice conducted at the site (Figure 4). Unfortunately, the textbooks and field manuals used to instruct our students are still mired in outdated attitudes. We should not be afraid to put the

Figure 4. Author and archaeologist Sara Ayers-Rigsby excavating under the floorboards of St. Peter’s Church, St. George, Bermuda, 2008 (Courtesy Bermuda National Trust)
humanity into our archaeological images. After all, the real substance of archaeology, the act of working in the field with our colleagues and the embodied, experiential thrill of discovery, is what attracts the public to archaeology and is what keeps most of us coming back season after season.

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Notes

1 I here acknowledge the extensive canon of work that discusses archaeological representations in a wide variety of forms (e.g., Shanks n.d.; Shanks et al. n.d.; Pearson 2001, 2007; Moser and Smiles 2004; Russell 2006). This article intends to tackle the issues inherent in the favoring of archaeological photography over other means of archaeological representation.

2 Preservation Virginia’s “Archaearium” is a rare exception among museums as it situates archaeological concepts and features next to the exciting performative aspects of archaeological practice. For instance, the Archaearium showcases the profile of an excavated well that has been reconstructed in the museum. Conserved finds are suspended in the space according to their stratigraphic position in the well. This basic display provides an interesting exhibit that clearly displays the most basic archaeological principle of stratigraphic superposition. Playing nearby is a video of Jamestown Rediscovery archaeologists removing a pewter flagon from the well. The juxtaposition of basic archaeological conventions and exciting moments of discovery provides the visitor with a potent, diverse archaeological experience. For more on the Archaearium, see the Historic Jamestowne website (http://www.historicjamestowne.org/visit/archaearium.php).

3 This technique involves taking multiple pictures of the same subject using different settings on the camera. It is often used outdoors when cloud cover or weather conditions create difficult or uncertain levels of light.

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Beyond Human Proportions: Archaeology of the Mega and the Nano

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ABSTRACT

It used to be the case that archaeological features and artifacts were principally on a human scale. But that familiar world is changing fast. As archaeology extends its range of focus further forward in time its subject matter is moving beyond human proportions. Developments in macro- and micro-engineering mean that artifacts are no longer limited in size by physical limitations of the body. As scale and impact of material culture extends outwards and inwards in both macroscopic and microscopic directions, the perspectives of contemporary archaeology must change in order to keep track.

Résumé: Il fut un temps où les particularités archéologiques et les artefacts étaient principalement posés à l’échelle humaine. Mais cet univers familier change rapidement. Alors que l’archéologie développe ses domaines de compétences dans le futur, son objet dépasse les limites de l’Homme. Les développements de la macro et de la micro ingénierie impliquent que les artefacts ne sont plus limités en taille par les limites physiques du corps. Tandis que l’importance et l’impact de la culture matérielle se développent dans toutes les directions, à la fois macroscopique et microscopique, les conceptions de l’archéologie contemporaine doivent changer afin de suivre les évolutions.

Resumen: En el pasado, las prestaciones arqueológicas y los instrumentos eran, en su mayoría, a escala humana. Pero ese mundo familiar está cambiando rápidamente: a medida que la arqueología amplía su rango de enfoque al avanzar en el tiempo, su objeto de estudio desborda las proporciones humanas. Los avances en macro y microingeniería han logrado que el tamaño de los instrumentos ya no estén limitados físicamente por el organismo. A medida que la escala y el impacto de la cultura material se extiende por dentro y por fuera, tanto en direcciones macroscópicas como microscópicas, las perspectivas de la arqueología contemporánea deben cambiar para seguir su estela.
Portable Artifacts on an Embodied Scale

In practice, archaeological fieldworkers are used to working on a human scale. Think of the kind of tools that are typically employed on an archaeological site. Trowels, buckets, spades, wheelbarrows, picks, and so on, all have a fundamental orientation towards the human body. Held in the hands and wielded with the weight of the body behind them, these tools have affordances which relate to embodied movements of archaeologists working on their material evidence. Much the same can be said of the ancient artifacts they discover in the ground. These, too, are usually on a scale of human proportions.

This is not to say that archaeologists do not deal with other scales in their investigation and explanation of discovered material remains, which “operates on a continuum of scale from the microscopic analysis of a single artifact to regional interpretations of cultural adaptations over thousands of years” (Lock and Molyneaux 2006:xi). But the artifacts and features archaeologists find (and use), at least during excavation, tend to be on the scale of the human body itself.

Consider, for example, a pottery vessel with handles on either side. Handles (as the word itself implies) are made to fit human hands—facilitating grasping, holding, picking up, carrying, pouring, and many other actions. Such affordances (Gibson 1979) can be perceived and experienced by archaeologists in the present; it might be assumed that the people who made and used them in the distant past experienced the artifact’s affordances too (though not necessarily the same ones). But if too big or too small these things would be of no use. Only when handles correspond to the size and shape of the hands can their affordances, and the affordances of the object of which they are a part, be activated (Costall 2006). By definition, seemingly, portable artifacts are necessarily on a human scale.

Portable Artifacts on a Mega Scale

Or so I thought. But now shift to the middle of the North Sea off the coast of Norway. It is 1996. A gas rig is being moved by ten tugs from Vats on the coast of Norway through the fiords to the Trolls Gas Field, 50 miles
NW of Bergen. The structure under tow, above and below sea-level, is 1,549 feet tall—90 feet taller than the Empire State building in New York, counting the lightning rod on top. There is enough steel in the structure to build fifteen Eiffel Towers (New York Times 1995). The sheer scale of the rig is such that it is impossible to fully grasp either in a visual or tactile sense—to see it all at once or to touch more than a tiny part of it. It was said by newspapers at the time to be the largest portable artifact in the world—the tallest and biggest man-made object ever to be picked up and moved from one place to another.

Once brought into position, most of the structure is submersed. The legs are sunk 200 feet into the seabed. The rig as portable artifact now makes the transition into fixed structure or architecture—an industrial installation as well as human habitation and workplace. The outsides of the four cylindrical legs are filled with concrete. Far from being on a human scale, now it will take eight or nine minutes for anybody to travel by elevator from the platform to the concrete floor of one of the legs (Offshore-technology website 2009). The rig spans the three zones of air (above sea-level), water (below sea-level) and rock (in the Earth’s upper crust); it is truly on a mega-scale.

**Portable Artifacts on a Nano Scale**

Now shift from mega to nano—to another portable artifact on a very different scale of analysis. It is 2007. The world’s smallest transistor measures just 10 atoms across and 1 atom in thickness. It has been carved with an electron beam microscope out of a sheet of graphene—a membrane so thin that it has to be supported by other nano materials in order for it to be manipulated. The graphene sheet is suspended from a miniscule scaffold of gold wires, which can itself only be grasped and moved around by the use of nano devices (Meyer et al. 2007; Westervelt 2008). While some archaeologists are used to dealing with microscopic traces of human action in laboratory analysis of archaeological materials, the nano transistor is literally thousands of times smaller and on a different scale entirely.

Moore’s Law states that the number of transistors that can be fitted onto an integrated circuit will roughly double every two years, making faster processing speeds possible. Inevitably, however, the speed of cramming has slowed down. The trouble is that most semi-conductors such as silicon start to oxidise and decompose at these nano scales. But graphene is a newly discovered conductive material that remains stable even below 10 nm (a nanometer is one billionth of a meter). Engineering on this nano-scale makes possible not just the creation of smaller and faster micro-components for computer technology, but also manipulation of
organic molecules and DNA, the structure of life itself—at which point our definitions as to what constitutes material culture (as opposed to the materials of nature) are fundamentally challenged. The capacity of modern and contemporary technology to transcend old oppositions between nature and culture is exemplified by proliferation of ‘cyborgs’ (Haraway 1991), which are essentially mixtures or entanglements of organism and machine, and ‘hybrids’ (Latour 1993), which combine the social, technological, political and natural. Such fusions are probably as old as human technology itself, but formerly only existed on micro, embodied and macro scales. Extended into the realm of the nano, hybrids and cyborgs could re-structure the very building blocks of matter itself.

Features on an Embodied Scale

Return once again to the more familiar space of an archaeological excavation and consider the kind of features that archaeologists normally deal with. Using the standard usage of the term by diggers on British excavations, I take ‘archaeological feature’ to denote a static configuration of contexts in the ground, usually consisting of ‘fills’ that are contained by a ‘cut’, representing the digging out of a negative shape at some time in the past. Unlike a portable artifact which can be picked up and moved around, a feature is non-portable. Typical features encountered during the course of excavation are pits, postholes, wall foundation trenches, ditches and so on.

Characteristically, like the artifacts found during excavation, these are on a human scale. They were created long ago by people using hand-held tools like picks and shovels, not dissimilar to the tools of excavation already discussed. In this sense archaeologists share with people in the past a common scale on which to encounter, shape, and otherwise interact with things and materials—the embodied scale of human proportions.

Often a digger has to actually get into the feature in order to excavate it—just as someone had to get inside it in the past when it was originally dug out (Lucas 2001:102). There is a correspondence of sorts between past and present. The material surfaces we work on surround and enclose us, as they once did to the past human agents who made the features in the first place. In Gibson’s (1979) terms, we might say that those surfaces have affordances for accommodating the body, facilitating movement in and out of the feature while it is being worked. Archaeological excavation—the central method of the discipline—takes place on this human scale. It is perhaps the most embodied of scientific methods.
Features on a Mega Scale

Shift onto the mega-scale of some contemporary material culture, however, and there are features so vast that this reference to the human body no longer applies. Consider, for example, the subterranean salt caverns that are increasingly being created to store natural gas in order to offset potential fuel shortages (Chandra 2006:67–73). These salt caverns can be hundreds of yards wide and up to half a mile high. In all likelihood, no human being is ever going to venture into these features: no human eye is ever going to see them, except as readings from geophysical soundings of the sea floor. They are made by drilling down into a salt formation, either under land or beneath the seabed and moving large amounts of water around at high pressure—thereby dissolving natural salt deposits and leaving an empty cavern once the salt solution is cycled out again. Such caverns are normally the concern of geologists and drilling engineers. Although created by human agency, they have not yet come to the attention of archaeologists as ‘archaeological’ features.

What makes the construction of these mega-features possible is a sophisticated technology which places humans at a distance from the artificial features they create. There is no direct embodied engagement with the material in question. Like the tugs that pulled the Troll gas rig into position, or the ship’s wheel and other bridge equipment operated by the helmsman of each tug, there are chains of artifacts intervening between people and things. Actions are mediated by a level and scale of technological apparatus that dwarfs the relatively simple tools like pick or shovel employed on an archaeological dig. The drillers themselves are wholly detached from the scene of excavation—interacting with a computer screen and keyboard rather than directly with the material being worked—operating their drilling equipment remotely from the surface.

Features on a Nano Scale

Now shift back onto the nano scale. Earlier we considered the example of a nano-transistor created in a sheet of graphene. The graphene transistor was created by carving channels into the material using electron beam lithography—that is, by scanning a beam of electrons across the surface in a particular pattern. Such minute channels are, in an important sense, ‘archaeological’ features just as much as the salt caverns are (though like the caverns, hardly recognized as such). The similarities between the two situations, on the nano and mega scales respectively, are worth noting. Both salt cavern and graphene channel are intentionally cut by human
beings who are acting remotely, working on materials and surfaces not directly accessible to sight or touch or any other aspect of embodied experience. They are created through highly specialised and disembodied practices. Interactions between embodied agents and materials being worked are mediated by layer upon layer of complex technological apparatus.

Nanotechnology is closely related to developments in computing and other emerging technologies. While the processing speed and power of computers have made nanotechnology possible, the opposite is also true: nano-devices in computers facilitate greater computing power. This interconnectedness is important. Actor Network Theory (ANT), with its understanding of persons as parts of interconnected networks which also include technical devices, natural objects, animals, institutions, materials, knowledge, and so on, can provide useful insights here (Callon and Law 1997; Latour 2005; Witmore 2007). This is not to say that ANT is not also relevant to the study of the past: human behaviour has always given rise to and taken place within networks of various scales (trading networks are obvious examples), going far beyond embodied encounters and interactions. But ANT was initially created to account for processes of innovation and knowledge production in Science and Technology Studies; it is particularly relevant to the study of contemporary material culture. In terms of ANT, the various scales at which networks operate can be understood to be interlinked, and a multi-scale approach can be taken to their analysis (de Cózar Escalante 2005).

**Embodied, Mega and Nano Scales Interwoven**

Consider now the most mundane yet most extraordinary item of contemporary material culture—the mobile phone. The phone has much in common with the portable artifacts of a more traditional archaeology, like flint hand-axes or pottery vessels. That is, it is an object scaled to fit the human world. It is shaped to fit the hand and fingers, and has action capabilities which are orientated towards other parts of the body too. Affordances of the mobile phone enable a user to pick it up, to press the keypad buttons, to look at the screen, to hold the phone close to the ears, to listen to the earpiece while speaking into the mouthpiece at the same time. The device engages the senses and embodied actions directly, and the active, sensual person engages directly with it.

But take off the cover and an array of composite artefacts can be discovered beneath—antenna, LCD, battery, microphone, speaker, circuit board, and so on—none of which have embodied affordances to speak of. Take just one of these multiple components—say the circuit board—and note that this in turn is made up of electronic circuits and microprocessor
chips. Take just one of those chips (which it is possible to balance on the end of a finger) and remove the silver top.

Now we are starting to move beyond the realm of human proportions, and the use of microscopes and remotely operated devices would be required in order to proceed further. The chip, though it seems flat, is actually made up of layer upon layer of tiny wires linking transistors together. Take just one of those transistors... and so on, and so on. The exercise could continue. The point is that the mobile phone has levels of highly structured artifactuality to it that go right down beyond human proportions, or the embodied scale at which it can be seen by eye or touched by hand. In that sense it is different from the kind of artifacts we are used to dealing with on an archaeological site or in a museum of antiquities.

At the same time the mobile phone is part of the mega realm too. The signals it receives and transmits go to base stations or towers linked together into a cellular network that is itself connected with other cellular networks. Linked in with the internet, the mobile phone can potentially make use of millions of miles of buried fiber-optic cables and hundreds of communication satellites orbiting the Earth. A person speaking into the mouthpiece of the phone (on an embodied scale) can almost simultaneously be interacting (on a mega scale) with someone the other side of the world, the interaction being facilitated by up to a million calculations per second made (on a micro scale) by computer processors inside the phone compressing and de-compressing the outgoing and incoming human voices.

Artifacts from the distant past were part of networks too, but these were nowhere near the same level of complexity or synchronicity. Transactions in ancient trading networks were spread out over time; in a mobile phone network, due to computer technology, millions of transactions can take place almost simultaneously. Unlike a pottery vessel or hand-axe, it is impossible to fully understand the essential functions and workings of a mobile phone on a human scale or embodied level of experience alone. We also have to take into account both the realm of the very small (the incredible complexity of the micro-components of which a mobile phone is comprised) and the realm of the very large (vast networks of which the mobile phone is but a minor component, extending ultimately around the globe and into space). Mega, nano and embodied scales, in this case at least, are inextricably interwoven.

**Transforming Archaeology**

Archaeology is not separate from the massive changes in technological development that have taken place over the last few decades. In common
with most aspects of human life, it has been swept up and carried along with those changes (no doubt in some measure contributing to them too), and has already been radically shaped by them. If, for example, we say that the mobile phone has altered the nature of the relationship between people, and between people and their environment, enabling them to act remotely upon other things and interact with others over vast distances (Horst and Miller 2006), we would have to acknowledge that this applies as much to archaeologists as anyone else. Archaeologists not only use mobile phones as part of their work, they also routinely use global positioning satellite devices out in the field and computers in the office (see Bateman 2000 for an account of how visualisation in archaeology has been transformed by the advent of digital technology). Technologies such as satellite photography, remote sensing and GIS mapping enable archaeological landscapes to be studied on a much wider scale than hitherto, just as electron beam microscopes can facilitate the study of ever tinier artifactual traces on microscopic and even nanoscopic surfaces. More and more, archaeologists act upon, perceive and measure material evidence through intermediary devices, rather than direct bodily contact. It might be predicted that excavation and other fieldwork encounters with material evidence will continue to become increasingly mediated by computer-related technologies.

It is useful to try to imagine what archaeology of the mega and the nano might look like in the future. There is no reason in principal why the range and scope of excavation could not be extended into those realms by embracing similar technologies to the ones used in the creation of very large or very small artifacts and features discussed earlier in this paper. In order to investigate the traces of human agency on nano materials, archaeologists could themselves deploy high energy beams of electrons from a scanning electron microscope or the carbon nanotube on the cantilever tip of an atomic force microscope to excavate remotely on nano scale surfaces, just as planetary geologists can use robotic machines to excavate rock samples from the surface of Mars. Similarly, huge digging machines used to dig out quarries on a vast scale today, or the drilling equipment used to create undersea salt caverns, could also be used to re-excavate those features, should they ever be seen to be of archaeological interest. This would entail archaeologists gaining greater access to the specialised tools and expertise associated with those activities, and working more closely with other scientists, though this might be at the cost of the integrity of their own discipline and a loss of the direct encounter with material evidence.
Conclusion

At the risk of precipitating vertigo, this paper has shifted rapidly between the scales of the mega and nano, relative to the embodied scale of our encounters with material evidence during excavation. The purpose has been to illustrate the great challenges posed by contemporary materials to archaeologists of the contemporary world. As archaeology extends its range of study forwards in time, it encounters artifacts and features on much larger and much smaller scales than in the study of earlier periods. There is something about these mega and nano entities that seems almost alien to us—that fascinates and appals at the same time. We are so used to dealing with homely objects like earthenware pots, toys, items in a loft, workshop tools, tablecloths, mirrors (some of the topics talked about at a recent conference on contemporary archaeology) that a part of us wants to ignore the things that lie outside of that comfortable and familiar framework. The authors of a recent book on scale in archaeology provide an interesting explanation: “Since our physical and conceptual systems have developed at this bodily scale, there is no guarantee that we can understand relationships in the larger and smaller worlds that these days technology allows us to visit or construct… we may lack the physiological capacity and experience to understand these alien worlds” (Lock and Molyneaux 2006:1–2).

An important question is whether the archaeology of contemporary materials is simply an extrapolation of established methods and perspectives into a new realm of study, or whether it is inevitably challenged and transformed by the materials it encounters in that realm. Here it is argued that significant challenges for archaeology are presented by contemporary materials. New spaces for human interactions with things have opened up (for example, in nano and digital domains) that were not even conceived of half a century ago, requiring innovative approaches and new methods and perspectives to make sense of them. It is not the purpose of this paper to predict how archaeology will restructure itself as the result of its encounters with contemporary materials; merely to state that such transformation is inevitable. An important way forward for now, suggested by ANT and Science and Technology Studies, is simply to keep track of emerging technologies (de Cózar Escalante 2005; Latour 1999). This is an especially important project for archaeology of contemporary material culture to undertake. Established notions about the difference between ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’—such an entrenched ideological distinction in archaeological interpretation up to now—are radically subverted by developing technologies which have the potential to undermine and redefine assumptions about what constitutes ‘material culture’ on a fundamental
level. Such redefinitions are surely of interest to archaeologists, for whom material culture is the primary object of study.

On the other hand, consideration of these new technologies, that implicate ever greater distances and increased instrumentation between persons and things, can make us appreciate even more (rather than less) the embodied character of everyday human experience. This is something that ANT tends to play down, with people and things seen as merely two of many kinds of participant in networks—none of which are privileged over the others since the differences between them are generated by their inter-relationships. In that scheme of things, the situated perspective derived from our embodiment in the world tends to be neglected, and the embodied scale of everyday human dealings with material things gets no priority over the many other possible scales at which analysis of networks is possible.

It should not be forgotten, however, that as links in the chains of artefacts that mediate complex human-material interactions in the realms of the mega and the nano, people work with things on a scale of human proportions. Even when sitting at computer consoles or other technological interfaces—elbows on desks, fingers pressing buttons, hands pulling levers or switching dials, the body interacting with screens and keyboards and other apparatus—people are acting and perceiving on an embodied level of experience. Like mobile phone users, or archaeologists out in the field, they deal for the most part with things which have basic affordances for the human body, its movements and actions. Whatever other scales may pertain, whatever agency may be displaced into the realms of the mega and the nano, this is still the primary scale on which human beings operate.

The pioneer of Virtual Reality (VR), Jaron Lanier, once remarked that by far the most vivid experience of VR is the experience of leaving it, taking off the bodysuit and gloves and returning once again to the world of embodied reality—making us “intensely aware of what it is to be human in the physical world” (quoted in Kelly 1989:115). The same can be said for all apparatus that devolves action and perception onto different scales of operation and into other real or virtual domains. The argument put forward here, that we should extend our theoretical perspectives to encompass the very large and the very small, does not mean that we should abandon excavation—and the embodied perspectives and standpoints that go with it—but rather that we should value it more. Lock and Molyneaux (2006:xi) put it like this: “As humans in the lived-in world, we are middle-sized objects and develop our knowledge up and down through the cosmos from this position”.

The direct contact with evidence that is facilitated by the techniques of excavation—mediated by simple tools like trowel or spade, and dealing with the emergence of human-sized artifacts and features—is central to
wider (and narrower) archaeological perspectives and scales of analysis. Excavation is almost unique among scientific engagements with the material world: few other sciences have quite such a close and tactile relationship with its object of study, firmly rooted as it is in the scale of human proportions. In the midst of multiple shifting scales and interconnecting networks, the ontological ground of archaeological excavation is something special and we lose touch with it at our peril.

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have postulated that commodity fetishism represents Marx’s theory of capitalist materiality, but the content of that theory is contested. I offer an archaeology of Marx’s material world in order to understand the development of the concept. During his time in London, Marx wrote and published *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), in which he outlined the concept of commodity fetishism. I demonstrate that he formed his analysis of commodity fetishism from daily practices including shopping, and consuming tobacco, in combination with his research at the British Museum. I take an experiential approach to archaeology that foregrounds Marx living in a world of objects, and posit a relationship between his experiences and his understanding of commodities. In so doing, I show how Marx’s “everyday life” shaped his concept of commodity fetishism, and how this concept could be useful to historical archaeologists.

Resumen: Los eruditos han postulado que el fetichismo de la mercancía representa la teoría marxista del materialismo capitalista, pero se cuestiona el contenido de esa teoría. En este trabajo, ofrezco un estudio arqueológico del mundo material de Marx para entender el desarrollo del concepto. Durante su estancia en Londres, Marx escribió y publicó *El Capital: crítica de la economía política* (1867), en el que resalta el concepto del fetichismo de la mercancía. Demuestro que elaboró su análisis del fetichismo de la mercancía a partir de prácticas diarias como las compras o el consumo de tabaco, en combinación con sus investigaciones en el Museo Británico. Adopto un enfoque experimental ante la arqueología que retrata a Marx viviendo en un mundo de objetos y planteo una relación entre sus experiencias y su comprensión de los productos. Con ello, demuestro que la vida diaria de Marx formó su concepto de fetichismo de la mercancía y cómo este concepto puede ser útil para los arqueólogos históricos.
Résumé: Les universitaires posent le postulat selon lequel le fétichisme de la marchandise représente la théorie du capitalisme de Marx. Je propose une étude archéologique du monde matériel de Marx dans le but de comprendre le développement de ce concept. Marx écrivit et publia Le Capital alors qu’il était à Londres. Il présente le concept du fétichisme de la marchandise Dans Critique de l’économie politique (1867). Je démontre qu’il a développé cette analyse du fétichisme de la marchandise à partir des expériences de la vie quotidienne, y compris le fait de faire des achats ou de consommer du tabac, en association avec ses recherches menées au British Museum. J’adopte une démarche empirique de l’archéologie qui met au premier plan le vécu de Marx dans un monde d’objets, et qui pose le principe d’une relation entre ses expériences et la compréhension qu’il se fait de la marchandise. Ce faisant, je démontre comment la vie quotidienne de Marx a forgé le concept du fétichisme de la marchandise et comment ce concept pourrait être utile aux archéologues historiques.

KEY WORDS
Karl Marx, Capitalism, GIS, Commodity fetishism

Introduction

The end of the first chapter of Karl Marx’s Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (1990 [1867]) is an extended exposition on the commodity and its role in capitalist societies, though there is still debate about exactly what Marx was trying to say (Appadurai 1986:7). Exploring Marx’s material world provides insights into why he wrote about commodities the way that he did. I will explore Marx’s relationships with commodities in two arenas. First, in shops in the neighborhood where he lived, and second in his personal consumption of tobacco. I use primary documents, maps, and Marx’s personal and scholarly writings to recreate his material world, in order to understand the impact that the objects in that world had on his thinking about commodities and commodity fetishism.

Marx argued that commodities were fetishes—objects that possessed power beyond their physical structure (Marx 1990 [1867]:163–177). The term “fetish” arose in the historical context of mercantile expansion,
when Portuguese traders encountered ritual objects as they searched for wealth and plunder along the western coast of Africa (Pietz 1985), but Marx turned this meaning around, applying a supposedly “uncivilized” behavior to the “civilized” world of his readers. The term “commodity fetishism” was, as Stallybrass notes, a sharply ironic joke (Stallybrass 1998:184). As exchange became more dominant in a society, commodities gradually took on the “characteristics of men’s labor” (1990:164), such that they could potentially be exchanged for any other commodity in a market no matter what their circumstances of production, or their final usage. Marx identified this transformation as a function of the abstraction, under capitalism, of all human labor to labor time, and suggested that the commodity, which “appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing” (1990:163), is actually an historically contingent form of materiality.

Commodity fetishism also presents a more sophisticated reading of consciousness in capitalist societies than Marx and Engels’ earlier formulations of ideology (1845:39), which disappear from Capital as Wolf noted (1999:33). Rather than a static theory of powerful classes projecting powerful ideas, commodity fetishism locates capitalist consciousness as a corollary of social practices. In essence, Marx shifted from a philosophical question about the nature of consciousness, to an anthropological question about the contingency and variation of human societies across time and space. He asked how social actors implicate themselves in capitalist social relations through the practice of exchange.

Leone (1999:16–17) introduced the concept of commodity fetishism to historical archaeology a decade ago, arguing for its centrality in any archaeology of capitalism, but it has been little discussed in favor of the more vigorous debates over ideology, agency, domination, and resistance (Leone 1984; Beaudry et al. 1991; Orser 1996; Wilkie and Bartoy 2000). Historical archaeologists interested in issues of class, capitalism, and materiality often draw on Marxian thinking to analyze and interpret the material culture of the last 500 years of European conquest and the various responses to that conquest (Patterson 2008:146–149). However, Marx’s writing on the “fetishism of the commodity” (1990:163–177) at the end of the first chapter of Capital remains one of the most “difficult, contradictory, and ambiguous parts of Marx’s corpus” (Appadurai 1986:7), and some worry that this will lead to its being marginalized or ignored (Wenning 2002:1; Hornborg 2001:476).

Why is this concept so contested? I suggest that “commodity fetishism” was a process embedded in the specific configuration of capitalism that Marx saw around him, and that the transformations of capitalism in the 20th century have shifted the terrain, and rendered the concept less clear. Since the changes over time between Marx’s era and the present day are
powerfully tied to changes in materiality, by looking at the tangible material properties of Marx’s London we may get closer to his own understanding of commodity fetishism and the processes it described.

Marx in London

Karl Marx (1818–1883) spent more than half his life in London. He first arrived in the city in 1849, recently exiled from the continent for leading revolutionary agitation in Germany and France. Marx, his wife Jenny, and their children took up residence at 28 Dean Street, in the Soho neighbor-

\[\text{Figure 1. Map of Soho neighborhood in London, circa 1850. Analyzed walking routes are highlighted. Route areas without points indicate that data for these sections was unavailable. (map by the author)}\]
hood in central London (Figure 1). They lived in this area for 6 years, mostly in poverty. After obtaining a reader’s pass to the British Museum reading room—at the time one of the largest repositories of printed information in the world—Marx put it to extremely good use, sometimes working as much as 10 h a day (Wood 1981:xxxvi) while building his analysis of the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production.

Walking from his house on Dean Street to the British Museum took Marx through one of London’s busiest commercial districts (Briggs 1982:44). He passed shops selling a wide variety of commodities, produced and manufactured around the world, and serving as reminders of the very powerful and global nature of the social relations he was studying. London was a city at the heart of the processes that Marx sought to analyze, criticize, and transform. At the time, it was one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of 2.5 million, and was a major hub for communication and transportation on a global scale (Hobsbawm 2004; Sheppard 1971:117–118). Commerce and financial consolidation were transplanting and destroying older commercial enterprises which had been subsidiaries of the British state (Sheppard 1971:47–48), and the relaxing of trade restrictions brought commodities from every corner of the world into the city (Hobsbawm 2004:50–52). London consistently imported more than it exported throughout the 19th century (Sheppard 1971:159–160), and truly embodied Marx’s description of capitalism as “an immense collection of commodities” (Marx 1990:125).

Finding Marx’s Material World

For over two decades, Marx’s family home on Dean Street has been occupied by an upscale Italian restaurant (Briggs 1982:37, 39), and the material presence of his household is otherwise gone. Records of the commodities that surrounded Marx in the shops of London, however, survive in the form of city directories, stored at the National Archives in Kew Garden, London. These directories list streets, addresses, proprietors and trades for nearly every shop in the city. Commercial city directories in London date back to the 1670s, but by the time the Marx family had moved to London in 1849, the “Post Office London Directory” published by Kelly & Co. had become the standard and remained so for decades (Goss 1932:32–33). The information available in these directories can be buttressed with analyses of Marx’s scholarly and personal writings (eg. Marx and Engels 2001), to see how Marx engaged with particular kinds of commodities available on the streets of London. In a similar fashion to Stallybrass’s (1998) analysis of Marx’s coat, Marx’s interactions with particular commodities can be traced through his voluminous correspondence and published scholarly works.
These methods form an archaeology of Marx’s “everyday life” (Beaudry et al. 1991:272), and interrogate daily practices as structured social actions (De Certeau 1984:xi).

Marx regularly walked to the British Museum. Though public and commercial transportation such as carriages and omnibuses had existed in London for quite some time, Marx, like many London residents, would not have been able to afford their fares (Briggs 1982:12–13). If we take walking to be a kind of enunciation of social life across space, as de Certeau suggests (1984:98–99), then we might ask to what extent Marx’s walks through his material world informed his analysis of the processes that acted upon that world. Did the commodities he encountered on his daily walk from Soho to the British Museum present him with ideas, inspirations, or insights that informed how he wrote about those commodities?

We do not know which exact route(s) Marx took on his way from Soho to the British Museum. Thus, I chose two relatively straightforward routes between his home on Dean Street and the British Museum (Figure 1). The first route would have taken Marx up Dean Street to Oxford street, turning east there to Tottenham Court Road, and then immediately East onto Great Russell Street, where the British Museum is located. The other route would have taken Marx down Dean Street to Old Compton, which becomes New Compton and Broad Street, then turning north following Bloomsbury street until it intersects with Great Russell Street. I transcribed the city directories for these routes for the period between 1849, when Marx arrived in London, and 1856, when he and his family moved north to the suburb of Kentish Town. As the British National Archives did not hold copies of the 1850, 1852, or 1853 directories, these volumes were excluded from this study.

I imported these data into a geodatabase created in ArcGIS and overlaid them on an outline map of central London traced from the 1863 city directory map (Kelly 1863). The map itself showed no specific addresses, only street and building outlines, so address points were added, as a point shape-file, using the number of entries per street listed in the directory as a guide. Shape file points were related to address entries, allowing for spatial queries of all city directory data. The result is a simple but robust spatial database, representing the streets, trades, tradespeople and commodities that Marx likely encountered on his walk to the British Museum.

**Marx’s Walk to Work**

Marx was quite explicit that capitalism was a social process, and not a thing (Harvey 1990:343). Mixtures of different modes of production, such as those built around kinship, or tributary relations (Wolf 1997:79–99),
existed alongside capitalism, sometimes superseding it within a given social formation, sometimes operating in interstitial or subsidiary capacities. This was particularly true after the revolutions of 1848, where feudal (i.e. tributary) social relations and surplus extraction strategies were subsumed to forces of industrialization, mercantile exchange, and global financial power (Hobsbawm 2004:38). These processes might manifest themselves in changing landscapes of proprietors, commodities, and shops.

I queried the neighborhood’s patrilineal kin relations based on the family names of shop owners. Street-level clusters of names might indicate that space was being controlled and managed by families and kinship-based allocations of labor (Wolf 1997:88–96) rather than by the alienated vagaries of the capitalist market. Note that because of English naming practices, matrilineal relationships are not visible in this analysis, and that the database may contain spatially related shared names which are not necessarily familial (e.g. multiple “Smiths”). Caveats aside, there seems to be very little relationship between family and space. Of the 494 addresses on Marx’s two hypothetical routes, only 76 (15%) were listed with a last name also listed somewhere else on the same street. This seems to indicate that there were very few instances of streets or neighborhoods where the selling of commodities was ordered around patrilineal kinship relations.

Goss suggests that prior to the Great fire of 1666, commercial areas in London were grouped around particular trades or wares, with street names sometimes being chosen based on the goods and services being offered there, (e.g. bakers on Bread Street, see Goss 1932:5–8). If this process continued into the middle 19th-century, it should have been visible to Marx as he walked through the streets.

When the database was queried for spatial clustering of particular commodities to investigate this possibility, it seems that there were streets that contained multiple shops selling the same goods or services. Oxford Street, for example, had between 2 and 6 bootmakers during the period of study. However, no street contained a majority of shops with the same trade, with Dean Street’s 8 tailors out of 100 addresses making up the highest density of any shop type on either of the routes. If trades had originally been spatially organized by street, they were not as clearly demarcated by the 1850s. This finding supports Goss’s impression that “the old centres of trade [have been] broken up in favor of fresh localities or have become mixed indiscriminantly” (Goss 1932:5). This indiscriminant mixing may be a result of capitalism’s transformations of commercial space, breaking up other trade based relations (e.g. guilds) in favor of isolated, scattered shops. Marx would likely have seen a jumble of businesses selling widely varying commodities without clear distinctions between streets.

Perhaps the starkest trend in Marx’s neighborhood concerned stability of proprietorship. There are 695 separate entries located at the 494
addresses, with the duplications indicating more than one business at a single address. Of these, only 123 (18%) contained the same business between 1849 and 1856. Conversely, 336 out of 494 (48%) businesses were listed for just 1–2 years. This indicates a high turnover rate in the ownership of businesses.

Spatializing Commodity Fetishism

The lack of kin-based spatial organization, lack of trade clustering, and minimal stability of ownership hint at how the spatial landscape of Soho was connected to larger historical and social processes. The instability of ownership and seemingly unstructured spatiality of the shops, together with the wide variety of goods available presented Marx with a problem, to which commodity fetishism was a solution.

The development of the exchange of objects on a marketplace, like the network of shops on Marx's routes, brings humans into novel kinds of social relationships. This is possible because when objects are produced to be commodities, they possess an exchange-value (Marx 1990:128), which is a ratio of equivalence to other commodities. As this development of exchange grows, due to the expansion of production for the purpose of exchange, exchange-value loses its arbitrary nature and becomes a social phenomenon, a value inherent in the object it signifies. In short, a commodity comes to be a thing which “transcends sensuousness” (1990:163) to possess qualities beyond its own structure; in other words, a fetish.

The expansion of a marketplace of commodities into more social worlds seems to push alternative relationships into the margins. As noted above, the earliest designations of streets were spatialized around particular trades, but the entrenchment of market capitalism disrupted those relations in favor of an apparently anarchic distribution of commodities. The expansion of commodities as “material relations between persons” under the fetishism of a “social relation between things” (1990:166) links commodity production and consumption in such a way that it becomes more difficult to avoid or evade. The long term instability of the proprietorship of shops on Marx’s routes points to the risk of becoming enmeshed in market relations as a means of livelihood.

For consumers the problem was less obvious, but just as powerful. As Marx himself stated, “Value… does not have its description branded on its forehead” (1990:167); thus consumption may connect individuals to larger social relations, but it does so such that consumers are not necessarily aware of those relations. The labor invested in a given commodity is usually invisible within the realm of exchange. Though the value of the object is determined by that labor, commodity fetishism locates the object itself
as the source of value. Even if consumers became conscious of the labor in their commodities, the compelling power of the market made any alternatives difficult. While consumers may often subvert or reconfigure commodities into novel symbolic and social formations (Hebdige 1979:100–112), or engage in strategic acts of political consumption (Klein 2000:340), Marx’s personal consumption and his writing about consumption suggest that in his world, such efforts were mediative of capitalist contradictions, rather than transformative.

Marx the Smoker

Marx argued that commodities must have a “use-value”. This use-value is the quality that makes an object desirable or necessary to humans, and is manifested in its physical structure (Marx 1990:125–126). Production of commodities is, therefore, the simultaneous production of use- and exchange-values in an object. But Marx was not entirely explicit about the degree to which use-value operates in the lives of consumers. He wrote that determining the uses of things was “the work of history” and that whether needs “spring from stomach or from fancy, makes no difference” (Marx 1990:125). This has led some scholars to postulate that Marx undervalued consumption (Miller 1987:48) or that his vantage point in 19th century political economy led to a lack of analysis of consumption and therefore erroneous or antiquated conclusions about capitalism (Baudrillard 1975). Though it does seem clear that Marx was somewhat opaque in his explication of consumption as a social practice, a close analysis of his personal consumption suggests that he was both writing to his immediately circumstances and seeking an analysis to transcend them.

Just two doors down from Marx’s house in Soho sat the shop of one Johann Caspar Ruttinger, a cigar importer—one of 19 tobacconists and cigar importers on Marx’s two routes. Marx was an avid smoker (McLellan 1981:35, 63). His nephew, Paul Lafargue, discussed Marx’s penchant for cigars this way: “Marx was a heavy smoker. ‘Capital,’ he said to me once, ‘will not even pay for the cigars I smoked while writing it’” (Lafargue, in McLellan 1981:68). Even at his most impoverished, Marx continued to purchase ‘cheap and nasty’ cigars (Liebknecht, quoted in McLellan 1981:65) which were often adulterated with apple peelings, sawdust, or newspaper to increase their size, as commentators at the time noted with disgust (Caven-dish 1857:52–53).

Given tobacco’s intimate ties to the rise and expansion of capitalist social relations (Gately 2001:105–109) and racial slavery (Kulikoff 1986), it seems contradictory that Marx would have actively consumed a product that bolstered what he sought to destroy and replace. Marx never wrote
about consumption as an empowering act in his political struggle against capitalism. Indeed, it is tempting to see Marx’s consumption of cigars as an attempt to appear genteel and respectable (Blumenberg 1998:109; Briggs 1982:52–65). But Marx’s consumption of tobacco was neither straightforward, nor entirely idiosyncratic, but caught up in what he himself called the “habits and expectations” of his social relations (Marx 1990:275).

Tobacco is an interesting and complicated commodity. Marx clearly recognized this when he said, “whether such a product as tobacco is really a consumer necessity from the physiological point of view… [i]t suffices that it is habitually such” (Marx 1913:467). Even though it is actively harmful to the human body when consumed, its addictive qualities, stimulant affects, and complex symbolic associations in western society have made it an important commodity in the construction of the modern world. Its role as a global commodity was noted by commentators in Marx’s day (Anonymous 1984:vi).

I searched the complete writings of Marx and Engels (2001) for several tobacco related keywords (“smoke”, “smoking”, “cigar”, “tobacco” and “pipe”). The search turned up 69 references, from various letters, notes, articles, books and other documents. A close examination reveals several themes that link Marx’s consumption of tobacco to his theories of the commodity.

Marx’s consumption of cigars located him within a middle-class intellectual tradition. Scholars of tobacco (Gately 2001:186), including historical archaeologists (Cook 1989; Reckner and Brighton 1999), have noted the relationship between tobacco consumption and the symbolic construction of class identity. Nineteenth century middle-class views on tobacco smoke were not homogeneous. Some took a moralizing view of tobacco under the banner of temperance, which rose to prominence during the 1840s and 1850s (Hilton 2000:63). This movement clashed with a Romantic movement that valorized cigar smoking as a counter-cultural act. Artists, middle-class university students, and other cultural non-conformists took up cigar smoking as a means to distance themselves from snuff consumption which was seen as refined, genteel, and associated with the enlightenment (Hilton 2000:52).

Marx first smoked cigars at university in Germany while studying Hegelian philosophy and exploring radical politics. A strong letter from Marx’s father on December 9th, 1837 hints that young Karl was rebelling. Heinrich Marx chastised his son for rejecting a respectable trade in favor of being a “scholar grown wild” in a “smoke filled room” (Marx and Engels 2001:np). Marx, in turn, often wrote romantically about the role tobacco played in expanding the scholarly mind (Kiernan 1991:184–185). He wrote letters to Engels in 1858 and 1863 in which he mentioned smoking extensively while working on Capital, maintaining that it aided his writing practice (Marx and Engels 2001:np). In addition, his single attempt at writing
fiction, Scorpion and Felix (written in 1837 but never published) included a passage where a smoking scholar is held in high esteem, because his “parchments were enveloped with holy tobacco fumes...” (Marx and Engels 2001:np). This association with tobacco as a mind-expanding substance was commonly held among middle-class Romantics in the 19th century (Hughes 2003:73).

Tobacco’s unhealthy qualities had been disseminated and discussed in Europe as early as the 17th century and by the 19th century, tobacco’s health impact was a subject of intense scientific debate (Goodman 1993:116–117). Though Marx lauded tobacco, and condemned temperance movements as a bourgeois attempt at self-preservation through reform (Marx and Engels 1984:58), he recognized its negative health effects. In a letter to his wife in 1856, he wrote that his eyes were “spoiled by lamplight and tobacco smoke” (Marx and Engels 2001:np). He was routinely ordered by physicians not to smoke, as he noted in a letter to Engels in 1861 (Marx and Engels 2001:np), and toward the end of his life he quit for good on their advice (Mehring 1962:503).

Ultimately, Marx’s personal relationship to tobacco was ambivalent, juxtaposing extremes of sentiment with the embodied realities of health and well-being. This ambivalence is part of the contradictory discourse around stimulants in capitalist societies, situating consumer desire between excess and restraint (Mintz 1986:164).

Marx’s smoking of cigars suggests that he did not locate his politics at the level of consumption. His smoking is more in line with 19th century middle-class values, rather than workers with whom he felt solidarity.

Marx did, however, have strong political associations related to tobacco, though not through its consumption. The Cigar Maker’s Union in England was one of the most politically radical and active trades unions in Britain in Marx’s time (Anonymous 1984). In one of his few newspaper interviews, Marx mentions, with pride, the Union’s assistance in strike support on the European continent (Landor 1871). Marx had long written of the importance of international solidarity between workers, and the cigar makers truly embodied that vision. When the International Workingman’s Association was founded in 1864, Marx and Engels sat on the governing council with James Cohn, the head of the Cigar Marker’s Union.

This analysis of Marx’s smoking habits would seem to suggest two things. First, Marx’s consumption of tobacco was ultimately contradictory. He needed tobacco habitually, but also utilized it to fulfill aspects of his intellectual and political work. At the same time, he recognized that tobacco was unhealthy for him, and given his interest in global commodities and history, must have recognized that the tobacco he smoked came to him through social relations of exploitation or enslavement. It was both necessary for him to live his life, and detrimental to that life and its goals.
Second, Marx never saw intervening in global commodity fetishism from the vantage point of consumption as a worthwhile goal. Changes in individual or group consumption would ultimately do little to affect the overall totality of production, exchange, and consumption that commodity fetishism described. This understanding seems to have led Marx towards political activities that sought to build solidarity in spite of commodities, rather than because of them, a sharp contrast to the consumer campaigns of today which seek to link democratic ideas about consumption with transforming more egregious corporate practices. In short, Marx felt that shopping would not lead to emancipation from existing conditions; however, rather than accepting commodity fetishism and the locating of value within commodities, he actively sought out the producers of those commodities for political ends.

## Conclusion

I have explored two practices from Marx’s everyday life—walking to the British Museum past London shops, and smoking cigars—to probe the relationship between those practices and Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism. It seems clear that Marx was writing to the world in which he lived, and also writing systemic analyses of that world, to understand larger social processes that may have transcended his own context. In writing about how commodity fetishism connected production and consumption, Marx suggested that it was the very materiality of capitalism that constituted it as a social relation. It was through objects being transformed into commodities, and moving from producers to consumers through a market that capitalism held together. But his material world suggests a dynamism that this simple abstraction smooths out.

The routes on which he walked showed an “immense collection of commodities” (Marx 1990:125) with no apparent structure or organization. In today’s world corporations provide consumers with a range of information on commodities, through ads, shop windows, and other forms of aesthetic, political, and symbolic tactics to mold sensuality (Haug 1986:45). But this revolution in the technologies of structured consumption would not emerge until after Marx’s death, with the rise of the mass consumer market (Hobsbawm 2004:48). Consumer demand, particularly that of the working classes and other laborers, was not taken into consideration in economic planning or policy during the early to mid 19th century (Hobsbawm 1968:74).

Because Marx saw commodity fetishism as an uneven process linking production and consumption, he opened up the possibility of the historical
variation of capitalism. This has been noted by Harvey, who uses the concept of differing configurations of production and consumption (“regimes of accumulation”) to chart transformations of the economy and cultural formations of the 20th century, including Fordism, and flexible accumulation (Harvey 1990:121, 125–140, 189–197). This suggests that capitalism has varied substantially through time, both internally, and as it spread and interfaced with other modes of production in the search for sources of wealth, labor, and demand (Wolf 1997:79).

Although Marx witnessed a particular configuration of capitalism in his walks in the 1850s, he repeatedly emphasized that it was a process, and not a thing, as Harvey notes (2006:20). This is perhaps why Marx did not write about consumer politics as a means of effecting change in capitalist social relations, choosing rather to align himself with producers like the cigar makers. He might have supported them in other regimes of accumulation, where a stronger link between production and consumption made such campaigns more effective.

For historical archaeologists, this variation means that we can never take capitalism as a given. As a social formation, capitalism has central tendencies and trends, built around class relationships, private property, and market exchange, but its dynamic nature means that it may look very different at different times and in different places. Building from that foundation, we have a unique vantage point from which to explore how capitalism arose, spread, and accommodated or blocked other social formations, as well as how the intricacies of social practice can allow for the negotiation of the contradictions engendered by capitalism. An archaeology of Marx’s life and material world illuminate that dialectical tension.

Marx and his family purchased commodities in the shops around their house in Soho, and Marx continued to smoke cigars despite their negative health effects and their role in exploitative labor relations. He could never completely stand outside of the world that he was critiquing. But even as his practices involved him in capitalist productive relations, they also provided a vantage point from which to examine the systemic and contradictory nature of those relations, where commodities had power over people, or at least the power to stand between them. Overcoming those contradictions meant forging new social relations of solidarity and shared recognition of circumstance. The archaeological record gives us a kind of access to that vantage point, and Marx’s insights into the peculiar materiality of commodity fetishism may prove useful to historical archaeologists seeking to understand and change the social world in which we live.
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Recording Transition in Post-Industrial England: A Future Perfect View of Oxford’s Motopolis

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ABSTRACT

Deindustrialisation is rapidly recreating Britain’s economic landscape. Heavy industry is being replaced by the built forms and landscapes needed by service industries. This paper introduces an archaeology of deindustrialisation as it occurs in the present. It examines the ways in which the Taylorist and Fordist auto-manufacturing landscapes that have defined their environments are being reshaped and commemorated.

KEY WORDS

Deindustrialisation, Post-industrialisation, Creative destruction, Industrial archaeology, Auto-manufacturing, Cowley, Oxford
Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.

TS Eliot, *Burnt Norton*,
from *The Four Quartets*, 2002, 177

Welcome to Oxford, England, an unlikely motor city. It is after all, in Oxford that Kenneth Grahame, author of *The Wind in the Willows* and creator of one of Britain’s great motorists, Mr. Toad, is buried. Perhaps it was a Morris Oxford (manufactured in various forms between 1913 and 1971) that so caught Toad’s imagination: ‘the magnificent motor-car, immense, breath-snatching, passionate’ (Grahame 1954:43). On the other side of town from the ‘dreaming spires’ of the university and the shade of Grahame’s grave, there is another Oxford. Described by former poet-laureate John Betjeman as ‘Motopolis’, ‘a modern industrial growth with rows of modern villas, arcades of chain stores, elephantine cinema and gleaming factories’ (Betjeman 1943:19–20). It was here that car manufacturing transformed the city and its populace over the 20th century. Now, in the middle of a mini-roundabout, on the edge of a business park, there stands an obelisk, a memorial to that manufacturing past.

This paper examines the transition of spaces from industrial to post-industrial with an archaeological exploration of the way that transition is recorded. It is embedded in the study of the industrial workplace, but abandons the received concept of the archaeological past in order to address the deindustrialising process as it occurs, in the place where it occurs. It is within deindustrialisation that industrial archaeology occurs. This paper presents an archaeology of deindustrialisation. I pursue, in the words of George Marcus, ‘the open-ended speculative course of constructing subjects by constructing the discontinuous contexts in which they act and are acted upon’ (Marcus 1995:99). The era of deindustrialisation and the reshaping of the industrial past and its sites for the vagaries of the service economy is situated in Marcus’ ‘world system’, dependent on fluctuation and flow on a global scale. Deindustrialisation has been unstructured and halting, a process of ‘dissolution and fragmentation’ (Marcus 1995:98).

I deliberately focus here on the fragmentary. I use as a case study Cowley, to give Motopolis its rightful name, an eastern suburb of Oxford that has been the home of a car factory for almost a century. I have selected objects in the present, a memorial to a past factory and a photographic record of that factory’s demolition, the monumental and the documentary, in order to examine two narratives of the transition from industrialisation through deindustrialisation to the postindustrial present and its uncertain future.

When Betjeman wrote Cowley off as a carbuncle on the university town, the Morris motorworks were engaged like most other heavy industrial fac-
tories in wartime armaments production. Cowley is Oxford’s ‘other’ city. It has been the site of a car works since 1912, when William Morris took his motor works out of its small city factory to a disused railway cutting at the edge of the city. Morris was knighted for his war-work and became Lord Nuffield, Oxford University’s single most generous benefactor. Through the 1940s and 1950s the factory sites expanded in size and production, and in doing so boosted Oxford’s population and prosperity considerably. By 1965, 36% of Oxford’s workforce was employed in one of Morris’ enterprises (Ward 1993:7).

As the Morris motorworks boomed, an older era of industrial growth—those remains of the industrial revolution—was being phased out, occasionally renewed. The rapidity with which this occurred marked the beginning of a new archaeological subdiscipline, that of industrial archaeology. It arose ‘out of a concern to record and even preserve some of the monuments of the British industrial revolution at a time of wholesale landscape urban redevelopment’ (Palmer and Neaverson 1998:1). Concerned that the architecture and infrastructure of the industrial revolution was passing without recognition (let alone mourning) amateur archaeologists turned their hands to recording a past more recent than academic archaeologists had dealt with. Halls of steam power, towns of textile moguls, pottery kilns, and mine-workings, obsolete and symbolic of another, dirtier, age, were cleared in the post-war reconstruction. Industrial archaeologists recorded their going by using archaeological method to document and survey their remains (for a detailed review of the development of industrial archaeology see Orange 2008).

For these witnesses of the industrial age, the focus on the machine meant the exclusion of other elements of the industrial past: failures, tail-ends, social and ancillary landscapes, and perhaps by the same token, the recent past. They were archaeologists of the industrial revolution, and little or no interest was paid to those remains of the automated age, increased mechanization and the incremental changes and endings in this phase of industry. The so-called fifty-year rule emerged. Although enshrined in law elsewhere, in Britain the fifty-year rule became the rubric by which archaeologists set the boundaries of the archaeological past. It meant that only those remains of a sufficiently ‘old’ age—that is, beyond fifty years—merited archaeological study. Although not officially sanctioned, it has proved harder to shift than the bricks and mortar of the remains themselves.

For buildings, the statutory cut-off date (beyond which a building could not be listed) was set, during the Second World War, at 1840. In the 1970s it was amended to 1939, and the 20th century society—an amenity group that lobbies for the protection of 20th century heritage—has recently won its battle for a thirty-year rule to apply in the historic buildings listings process, with a ten-year caveat for certain buildings. It continues to lobby
for a more flexible notion of ‘heritage’. In recent years a new discipline has emerged. Known as ‘recent past’ or ‘contemporary’ archaeology, it has argued that the material of the present is on such an overwhelming course of continuous reinvention that it merits study itself (see for example, Buchli and Lucas 2001; Bradley et al. 2004; Penrose 2007). It has found support and a complementary movement within industrial archaeology where simultaneously, an argument for the development of a more social and less exclusively machine-based archaeology has developed (e.g. Cranstone 2005; Horning and Palmer 2009). However, for many, if not most, in the heritage and archaeology sectors there remains a notion of a received distance between the present and the past.

The story of manufacturing, as industrial archaeologists have argued, centres on the machine. From the perspective of economic function, the machine was the main engine of innovation, and innovation was what made manufacturing competitive. The decline of industry was due to lower costs elsewhere, and the failure of ‘old’ industry to adapt to the constantly changing ‘world system’. But the machine also had enormous social impact in that it demanded that those who operated it had skills, or no skills, according to the needs of the machine. It also had an impact on social behaviour. Recent work to decentre the machine has moved to a more holistic view of industrial material, one that includes both these perspectives. Some industrial archaeologists have convincingly argued for more varied interpretation (see Gwyn 2009), and a new generation of archaeologists, which embraces cross-disciplinary studies, has begun to address the social and industrial remains of the recent past, the last 50 years. Others continue to argue that the machine in itself is the point of industrial archaeology, a point that is not entirely at odds with recent past archaeology. As Pannell and Major wrote in 1974, ‘The rate at which processes become obsolete means that industrial plant which was built only a few years ago has now been abandoned’ (Pannell and Major 1974:141).

The landscapes of deindustrialisation are as regionally and economically diverse as those production and processing landscapes that preceded them: from the fast deterioration of old industrial areas, the proclaimed no-go areas of north-western textile towns, to the glass office corridor of the M4 motorway. Industrial archaeologist Mike Nevell, in a state-of-the-discipline article in British Archaeology, wrote ‘industrial archaeology is a period discipline within its own right, with its own methodologies, theoretical framework and research agenda. Those who deny this are denying the centrality of industrialisation in Britain, and around the globe, as a social and landscape-changing force over the last 300 years’ (Nevell 2006). It might be said however, that over that same period, and especially over the 20th century, the process of deindustrialisation has wrought as aggressive and unflinching a change on the landscape, one that archaeology is, but for a
few cases, still failing to observe and record. Just as archaeologists of other periods now address transitional periods as a current focus (see for example, current regional research frameworks in Britain such as that for East Anglia (Glazebrook 1997). Archaeologists of industry are failing to address this moment of transition as it happens.

History, as Walter Benjamin noted, needs to be demythologised, read backwards from the ruins that persist in the here-and-now. Archaeology and memory, he observed, are the tools (Benjamin 2007:26; Gilloch 1996:14). By looking at the archaeology of deindustrialisation we can develop a broad snapshot of an important moment of transition. By looking at it now—by looking at the here-and-now—what is to be gained? Firstly, the landscapes are still intact, people to whom these landscapes mattered are still alive, and we are witnesses to the moment of change. Secondly, we are in the same position as everyone else: ignorant of the future. As archaeologists this may be an uncomfortable novelty but it is also a window into understanding the material around us: landscapes that do not yet know their future. We are in a unique position of insight into society in transition from one set of economic resources to another. Not only do we have around us the material remains of the resource itself, but we are involved and implicated in the changing social arena: as students we have taken advantage of the low rents of working-class areas before gentrification; as professionals we have experienced the business-park office, built on a brownfield site of phased-out industry; we have worked as archaeologists on sites turning from manufacturing or processing industries to service or technology industries. Many of us have direct family experience of industrial change. If we can let go of the idea of the objective archaeologist, or understand that this kind of objectivity demands more of the discipline through increased insight, then being close to this material is not as problematic as first seems, it is the material of our own past.

In Cowley, deindustrialisation has been incremental, and has followed the general pattern of the decline of the British car industry. There has been a threat of redundancy and closure since the 1960s. Part of Morris' factory complex survives. The original factory site, on the city-side of the Oxford by-pass, became known as North and South Works, while across the road, the former Pressed Steel Company factory operated as the body plant. It is on the latter site that car manufacturing continues to take place.

The Pressed Steel Company was founded by Morris in 1926 to manufacture car chassis. It joined the merger of Morris and other British car manufacturers in 1965 to form British Motor Holdings (BMH). The whole became British Leyland in 1968, and was nationalised in 1971 in a government rescue package, then privatised in the early 1980s to form Austin Rover, and then Rover Group (including a period of joint-venture with
Honda). Now under the control of BMW, the factory has been the site of the resurrected Mini, but in early 2009 the workforce was cut by 800 and yet again faces an uncertain future.

In 1988, in what geographer David Harvey described as ‘a sweetheart privatisation deal from the Thatcher government’ (Harvey 1996:19), the works were acquired by Arlington securities, the development arm of British Aerospace (itself the lovechild of a rationalised, nationalised and privatised aviation industry). In 1993, Arlington securities closed North and South works, and sold the body plant. With it went Rover, at the time experiencing a Honda-induced period of improvement, to BMW.

North and South works consisted of an 88-acre factory site sandwiched between the by-pass and the residential and commercial areas of Temple Cowley. It was totally dismantled and on its site, Oxford Business Park was built. These two acts—that of the destruction of the old industry, and the creation of the new—describe two different narratives of industrial history. The practice of ‘creative destruction’, innovation which pursues long-term economic growth through constant destruction and redevelopment of existing industry, also seems to require the reinvention of the past at the expense of experience of the recent past, that which is too close for comfort. According to Joseph Schumpeter, capitalist development is the ‘process of industrial mutation—if I may use that biological term—that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of creative destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to live in’ (Schumpeter 1947:83).

In the present, we look for clues, the work of the past as it continues (Benjamin 2007:28). Morris’ North and South works were entirely dismantled and little evidence of them remains; however, the remembered factory, and the factory memory are still to be found. At the entrance to the Oxford Business Park, the Nuffield Needle (Figure 1), an obelisk erected to William Morris, bears the badge of the early Morris cars, an ox fording a river: an emblem that became the Nuffield coat-of-arms. Here, the monument associates itself with the man himself, and an earlier form of motoring, that of Mr. Toad, motoring inaccessible to all but the richest, and strongly associated with leisure. A plaque on the pavement provides commentary:

The Nuffield Needle was commissioned by Arlington Securities Plc to commemorate William Morris, Lord Nuffield and the Morris Motor Works which formerly stood on this site. This plaque was unveiled by Eddie Jordan of Jordan racing on 3rd July 1995.
The Needle remembers the factory, but as Theodor Adorno wrote to Benjamin in 1940, ‘objects become thing-like in that moment in which they are captured without all their elements being present; when something of them is forgotten’ (in Gilloch 1996:64). In erecting an obelisk, a triumphal form with a catalogue of incarnations from ancient Egypt to Emperor Napoleon, Arlington securities have erected a ‘petrified myth’. ‘To break its spell, it must be critically unmasked as an historical form, embodying particular articulations of past and present’ (Gilloch 1996:72). The Needle commemorates a false history—triumphal, permanent, victorious—which serves its patrons as a talisman for success.

The business park epitomises the drive of postindustrial capitalism: the freemarket hopefulness of speculative development. Business park developers by essence of their job do not know what to design for as they are ignorant of the form of future development. The past in this case represents a potentially powerful market image: here ‘Morris’ is a signifier for an industry that to some extent remains popular, without, for example, the taint of the coal industry, or the locatedness of the ship-building industry. It is a source of national pride despite the fact that no major British car manufacturers remain British-owned. However, Morris is not used here as...
a synonym for Rover or British Leyland, BMH or Honda, but as a metonym for a mythologised industry petrified in its Mr. Toad innocence, its luxury early days. The ‘old’ participatory industry has been replaced by a ‘new’ industry where individuals work in booths, commune with computers and where community is often ‘virtual’. The obelisk marks an enormous shift in industrial practice. The new work practice has obliterated the old and consigned both the golden era of the site’s production, and the years of failure to another past: one which is not to be commemorated. In doing so, it omits to commemorate labour, the workforce, the thousands of living people for whom living in Oxford meant working for Morris, or for BMH, or for Rover.

In his ground-breaking monograph on Ford workers in the Halewood plant in Liverpool, *Working for Ford*, published in 1973, sociologist Huw Beynon explored the changing attitude of the British auto-manufacturing workforce in the face of increased mechanisation using the voices of the workers themselves:

> It’s the same thing over and over again. There’s no change in it, it wears you out. It makes you awful tired. It slows your thinking right down. There’s no need to think. It’s just a formality. You just carry on. You just endure it for the money. That’s what you’re paid for – to endure the boredom of it. If I had a chance to move I’d leave right away. It’s the conditions here. Ford class you more as machines than men. (Beynon 1973:129)

As archaeologists, we explore multi-temporal sites. Formula 1 mogul, Eddie Jordan, drove away from the Nuffield Needle in the first model of car to be manufactured on the site, a Bullnose Morris. He eschewed the unglamorous Morris Marina or Ital, the last cars to bear the Morris badge, and the ubiquitous Maestro or Montego, the mainstays of the dying Rover Group, and left behind him a half-built business park set in the mudflats of a cleared factory site.

The mudflats and desolation of the destroyed factory site did not go unrepresented however. A local photographer, John Peacock, was appointed—a little late—to record the last days of the factory (e.g. Figure 2). His photographic collection is archived at the Local Studies Centre in the city of Oxford and was probably commissioned by the County Archaeologist, though its origins are hazy and Peacock has since died, camera in hand.

If the Nuffield needle is the post-industrial management of the past—an indication of the ‘law of the place’ (de Certeau 2002:29), the productive victory of de Certeau’s ‘The Proper’: the mastery of place over time (36) how then did archaeology rise to the challenge? Peacock’s photographs record the event of destruction of the works. The images cannot help but offer a mournful glimpse of destruction. Broken infrastructure against
mudflats, with workers housing in the distance; or views across the no longer extant works to the sister factory, still standing but somehow diminished; the Nuffield Press, the first Morris factory in Cowley, housed in an old military college that has been converted into an apartment block, overlooks the former Morris site, where it once marked the end of the town and the beginning of the works; overhead conveyors; and underpasses which once unified a split site by carrying cars across civilian areas; holes where piles and foundations have been uprooted; industrial paint-shop skylines folding in on themselves as their pattern-book architecture is torn apart; the moment when the residue soot of working life creates a dirty cloud as a chimney is exploded.

In Peacock’s record there is no place either for the workforce, and whether or not he intended it, we are left with the intriguing aesthetic of ruination: another kind of problematic past, more or less contemporaneous with the Nuffield needle, and as desolate. The durability of concrete forms is shown to be fragile and temporary. If Peacock’s material record of the Morris works is, like the needle, a model of industrial history enacted in the present, then it shows the fragility that the needle attempts to deny. The present, is of course the place of the past, and the constitution of the material environment represents a material memory, archaeological memory (Olivier 2008). At the same time, as Gavin Lucas argues, this environment is not fully constituted (Lucas 2004:118). We are not necessarily left with the ‘gaps, shadows, silences, absences’ (Lucas 2004:117), rather that...
they have always been there and it is the material memory of these that eludes simplistic or totalising historical or political readings. Here archaeological memory becomes a methodology for materialising; for materialising that which escapes us.

The wider Cowley area also tells the story of deindustrialisation as Edwardian workers’ housing and converted industrial or pastoral buildings become homes for Oxford’s other resource: its students, many of whom stay and become the expanding white collar workforce; while the blue-collar estates, epitomised by Blackbird Leys, a once-notorious 1960s housing estate, are still by-words for urban decay. As historian Arthur Marwick observed, deindustrialisation was made explicit by ‘a growing mismatch between the characteristics of those seeking work and the kind of jobs which were available’ (Marwick 2003:153). The changing nature of working conditions in autofactories defined by Taylorist productivity boosting ‘scientific management’ styles (Taylor 2003; Volti 2008:xi) and the Fordist mass-production drive created a system of working that transformed the lives of workers. The decline of this kind of industry left the ancillary landscapes of industry and their occupants unbalanced and without replacement. As in periods of earlier industrial change, communities were denuded of industrial work opportunity.

Both the needle and Peacock’s photographs present narratives of loss, one monumentalising, one documenting, both potentially nihilistic in their treatment of the past, but fetishising in their presentation of a mythologised past. But if archaeology has taught us anything, it has taught us that humans have an endless capacity to live with the changes that transform life and the losses and gains that they bring. Cowley and Oxford adapt for a 21st century schema that at this stage looks set to continue the 20th century diminishment of heavy manufacturing. Neither record fully presents the vastness of Cowley’s change, the implications of its losses or the trajectory of its gains. But Cowley as a place endures, it is ‘in it for the duration’, it is not simply a landscape of events. As Laurent Olivier wrote in 2002,

The time of material culture is in fact a multi-temporal time, formed from accumulating durations, superimposed one upon the other; all of them have been created at different times, but all are present, united simultaneously at the centre of the present-today. The age which concerns the time of the material, not the age of History, is fundamentally the concept of archaeological time. Likewise, the artefacts through which we archaeologically examine these past transformations are not in themselves the past, which is dispersed, instead it is the present, the present in which we find ourselves today. (Olivier 2002:140)
Cowley’s response to creative destruction is in some ways a rehumanising of an area defined by its machines. When Betjeman rued its noise and mess and the influential post-war planner Thomas Sharp proposed splitting Cowley from Oxford proper—formerly divorcing town from gown, industry from academic—in his *Oxford Replanned* (1948), Cowley’s identity was immovably Morris. Now, BMW’s zoned, unspilling factory is matched by Oxford Business Park’s multiplicity of organisations. The post-industrial complex is lined with panel built office space. But within them multinationals sit next to charities and nurseries, indicative of the shifting needs and concerns of the British workforce.

We live with loss. The recent past is fragmented, painful, non-discursive; but it has also been a time of wealth-creation, diversification, a collapsing of strict societal norms, improvements in living standards, imbued in hope for the future and enjoyment of the present. It is also living, the reality which we as archaeologists seem to feint from dealing with until it is ‘past’. There is a need to animate the stage, not just with the machine but with the real voices of those whose lives are still embedded and imprinted in the material. In strictest terms, archaeology (archaios = ancient; logia = word or reason) may confine itself to the antiquarianism to which it originally gave itself, but in reality it has long since departed from this definition. Archaeology of the here-and-now sits in an uncertain time in which landscapes and people are still rearranging and changing. In the here-and-now, the future becomes an overbearing unknown. This unknown gives the archaeologist a cliff-edge view of the past in the present, shaped by the unknown. This is not the past qualified and understood in the context of what happened next. We see the world in its uncertain present.

Cowley is not part of a major car-building area. Unlike Coventry it is not part of an economic cluster of component and auto-factories. However, like the limited industry that provided economic impetus to small towns across Britain in the 20th century, its beginning and its decline is a typical and common story. As a hub of component assembly, Cowley’s changing fortunes directly affect a broad range of feeder factories both in Britain and abroad. As a site, its transformation from heavy manufacturing to post-industrial service is explicit. It has been suggested that this kind of site and its analysis belongs in political or sociological studies. Of course it does, but its constituent materials remain in the present, ‘their structure tirelessly rearranged and their use endlessly changed’ (Olivier 2002:140). The analysis of those remains, whatever their form, is the domain of the archaeologist. De-industrialisation is as important a moment of transition as any preceding it. As a case study Cowley illustrates the patterns of creative destruction, industrialisation, de-industrialisation and post-industrialisation that have typified heavy manufacturing in Britain. As a 20th century manufacturing site, Cowley tells a story that archaeologists ignore to the
detriment of the discipline and our current and future understanding of
the landscape, British archaeology, the way we understand it, and the way
we will understand it.

In grammatical terms we speak of the *future perfect* tense—what will
have happened—and perhaps the output of this kind of archaeology is a
departure from an archaeological past as we have known it. It is *future per-
fect* archaeology, an annotated balancing of the books: a projection into the
future of the way we have lived.

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Matter Out of Time: The Paradox of the “Contemporary Past”

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary archaeology, with its focus on the present and the very recent past, challenges the conventional definitions of archaeology that emphasize the temporal distance between the archaeologist and the subject matter being investigated. Contemporary archaeology requires different methods, forges novel interdisciplinary collaborations, and inspires new questions. In particular, contemporary archaeology reminds us that all social actors, both in the present and in the past, were uncertain of the future and could not know the outcomes of their actions.

Résumé: L’archéologie contemporaine, en se concentrant sur le présent et le passé récent, remet en question les définitions traditionnelles de l’archéologie pour souligner la distance temporelle entre l’archéologue et le sujet des recherches. L’archéologie contemporaine nécessite des méthodes différentes, elle élabore des collaborations nouvelles interdisciplinaires et pose de nouvelles questions. En particulier, elle nous rappelle que l’ensemble des acteurs sociaux, à la fois du présent et du passé, sont incertains du futur et qu’ils ne connaissent pas les résultats de leurs actions.

Resumen: La arqueología contemporánea, con su enfoque en el presente y en el pasado más reciente, desafía las definiciones convencionales de la arqueología, que enfatiza la distancia temporal entre el arqueólogo y el asunto objeto de la investigación. La arqueología contemporánea requiere métodos distintos, forja nuevas colaboraciones interdisciplinares e inspira nuevas preguntas. Concretamente, la arqueología contemporánea nos recuerda que todos los actores sociales, tanto del presente como del pasado, sentían incertidumbre por el futuro y dudaban sobre los resultados de sus acciones.
In *Purity and Danger*, Douglas (1966) famously defined dirt as “matter out of place.” Archaeologists, who also conventionally traffic in dirt, might extend Douglas’ analogy to consider the archaeological record as “matter out of time.” A sense of temporal displacement and a shared commitment to the importance of materiality are perhaps the warp and weft that give archaeology its fragile coherence as a field of study. Beyond these two intertwined concerns—attention to matter, and attention to the past—archaeology is an extraordinarily diverse discipline, one that could be described as downright promiscuous in its subject matter, its methodologies, and its allegiances.

It should not be surprising, then, that “contemporary archaeology” raises anxieties for both archaeologists and non-archaeologists alike. The archaeology of “now” troubles the boundary between the past and the present. Intellectually, archaeologists are well aware that the archaeological record exists in the present—we only need to recall Schiffer’s (1972, 1983) depositional processes and C-transforms and N-transforms to understand that everything archaeologists study is, in fact, contemporary to our own time. Yet it is archaeology’s ability to trace a material connection between now and what-has-gone-before that establishes its place in the study of the human condition. The sense of mystery, the anticipation of discovery, the joy that things once lost are found, the awe that arises from being able to “touch” the past—these are more than popular stereotypes of archaeology. They are the emotional engines that drive our discipline.

And yet, increasingly, archaeologists concern themselves with the recent past as well as the more distant past. In the British-North-American-Australian realm, historical archaeology (also known as post-medieval archaeology and industrial archaeology) has become the fastest-growing sector of the discipline, both in academia and in heritage studies/cultural resource management. Historical archaeology is also rapidly expanding in Latin America and Africa. Contemporary archaeology pushes this transformation further, arguing for the centrality of the present to a discipline that has long defined itself through its relationship with the past. Incorporating the utilitarian goals of ethnoarchaeology and the public policy objectives of garbology and forensic archaeology, contemporary archaeologists go beyond the rationales of these fields to argue that the present and the very recent past require archaeological investigation for their own sake.
In this issue of Archaeologies, Fortenberry and Myers have assembled a diverse selection of studies that together signal several of the central interventions being made by archaeologies of the contemporary past. As the editors note in their introduction, this journal issue is one of several recently released volumes that draw attention to this rapidly expanding and innovative subfield. The articles assembled here, however, stand out particularly for their international breadth, both in the roster of contributing authors, and in the regions addressed in the articles themselves. The rich heterogeneity of the contemporary past is well represented.

The Adolescence of a Subfield

In the 1980s, historical archaeology was in much the same position that contemporary archaeology is today: building on a strong but small base of dedicated professionals and avocationalists, the field was expanding rapidly as it attracted waves of new practitioners. For historical archaeology then, as for contemporary archaeology today, the growth of the field came from two very different stimuli: on one hand, historic preservation law brought increasingly recent “sites” under the professional jurisdiction of archaeologists; and on the other hand, pressing social and political issues generated widespread interest in sites and objects that had previously received little attention. In the 1980s, the rapidly approaching Columbian Quincentennial and the growing deindustrialization and de-ruralization of parts of Europe and North America spurred archaeological investigations of the 16th–19th centuries. Similarly, the acceleration of Euro-American de-industrialization, the “end” of the Cold War, and the perceived proliferation of non-statist military conflict has given rise to a nostalgic fascination with World Wars I and II, the recent industrial past, and other 20th (and early 21st) century historical formations. Contemporary archaeology has emerged within this milieu, supported not only by these interests but also by the “rolling” age criteria specified by historic preservation laws. (For example, under the National Historical Preservation Act in the United States, the “50-year rule” means that sites and deposits dating to the 1960s must now be assessed for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.)

I see strong parallels between the articles published in this volume and those presented in an 1988 issue of Historical Archaeology (22:1). There, leading figures in American historical archaeology—Charles Cleland, Kathleen Deagan, Mark Leone, Stephen Mrozowski, Robert Schuyler, and Stanley South—were asked to discuss the “questions that count” in the burgeoning subfield (Honerkamp 1988). The relationships between history and prehistory, between anthropology and archaeology, and between academic research and resource management figured prominently in their
responses. Central to this discussion, and to several publications that followed (e.g., Deagan 1991; Hall 2000; Hall and Silliman 2006; Hicks 2004; Lees and Noble 1990; Orser 1996), was the sense that historical archaeology differed from other archaeologies not because of its engagement with documentary as well as material evidence, but rather because of the distinctiveness of the historical phenomena being investigated. Global imperialism, the development of world capitalism, transformative innovations in communication and transportation technologies, industrialization, and the deep penetration of mass consumerism: these processes are argued to have qualitatively and quantitatively set the “modern world” apart from what had gone before. The archaeology of the modern world, however defined, thus requires different theories, different methodologies, and different collaborations than archaeologies of other times and places. Moreover, as the contributors to the 1988 *Historical Archaeology* issue emphasized, the archaeology of the modern world requires different questions.

The articles presented in this issue of *Archaeologies* represent a similar field-defining exploration. Contemporary archaeology, clearly, is not simply historical archaeology applied to 20th and 21st century contexts. Indeed, the rise of neo-imperialism, a radical and often violent reorganization of production and consumption, and similarly profound technological transformations require a different kind of archaeology. Thus González-Ruibal and Hernando (this volume) use archaeological survey and site recordation to expose “the crude materiality and abject violence that lurks behind the goods consumed in the West,” while Lewis (this volume) examines how Karl Marx’s shopping practices may have shaped his critique of capitalism, and Penrose (this volume) traces the losses related to deindustrialization and post-industrialism in Britain. Yazdi (this volume) and Samuels (this volume) each unearth local strategies for social and economic survival under totalitarian regimes in Iran and Italy, while Wilkie and Mosher (this volume) similarly follow individual and community responses to U.S. Prohibition. Funari and Funari (this volume) trace the rhetorical use of the past—in this case Egyptology—in current debates about Brazilian citizenship and culture, and Parno (this volume) turns a critical eye to archaeologists’ visual construction of their own past through the practice of site photography. Edgeworth calls attention to the rapid expansion of material culture into nano- and mega-scales. As these studies indicate, archaeologies of the contemporary past call into question not only the methods conventionally used on historic and prehistoric sites, but also the fundamental assumptions that archaeologists make about people’s relationships to society and to the material world.
From Ethics to Implication and Intervention

Perhaps one of the biggest differences between “other” archaeologies and contemporary archaeologies is that there is very little, if any, temporal distance between the archaeologists themselves and the phenomena they study. Lurking beneath most archaeological codes of ethics is the unspoken postulate that the past has already happened and nothing can be done about it. My own research on Spanish colonization, for example, investigates racialization, genocide, and sexual violence as it occurred hundreds of years ago (Voss 2008); I may argue for the importance of understanding and commemorating the history of such events, but I’ve never felt that I could somehow intervene in the past. Like many archaeologists, my ethical compass is oriented not towards the historical people that I study, but towards the living populations who today have a heritage relationship with the sites I investigate.

The contributors to this issue challenge this ethical orientation, and inspire archaeologists studying any epoch to re-examine the potential for archaeological research to intervene in the present. They emphasize that they themselves are fully implicated in present-day oppressions. Thus Yazdi (this volume) asks, “I am an Iranian archaeologist who works in my own country. I excavate in houses that are similar to my own house…. Why then am I excavating domestic settings and architecture which is so intimately familiar to me? What can be my motivation…?” Reflecting on the concealment of private life under Iran’s current traditions and laws, she continues, “I do this too. At work, I act as if I am a very religious person. But at home, in my own private space, I do not have to pretend, so I do not.”

The theme of implication and involvement continues in González-Ruibal and Hernando’s (this volume) archaeological study of illegal logging camps in Brazil, where they trace the “wake of materiality” that links “the comfortable Western reality of consumer choices” with the specific materiality of abjection: “the stench of rotting meat in Styrofoam boxes, the gaze of a scared peasant, and the squalor of a plastic tent in a logging camp.” As with Yazdi’s analyses of material culture from earthquake-stricken homes in Bam, Iran, González-Ruibal and Hernando’s inventories of logging camp sites uncover consistent patterns in what otherwise might appear to be rogue or individualistic endeavors. This is echoed in Wilkie and Mosher’s (this volume) research on Prohibition, in which diachronic and synchronic analysis show remarkable trends in “private” responses to alcohol regulation in early 20th century California. Finally, Lewis (this volume) considers how Karl Marx’s public critique of capitalism—in particular his analysis of commodity fetishism—may have been shaped by his
routine encounters with shops and markets. We learn from these studies that our private habits and preferences are profoundly structured by our positionality; and that these seemingly unremarkable practices may have quite remarkable, and at times devastating, effects.

**Commodities and Consumption**

The political stakes of contemporary archaeology are particularly evident in several articles that focus on commoditization and consumption. The dialogue that emerges within this volume has much to contribute to existing debates on consumption in North American historical archaeology (Cook et al. 1996; Majewski and Schiffer 2001; Wurst and McGuire 1999) and British material culture studies (e.g., Miller 1987). On one hand, Lewis (this volume) traces Marx’s contradictory consumption practices, and argues that Marx’s encounters with the consumer marketplace led him to discount political action at the point of consumption—that political activities would need “to build solidarity in spite of commodities, rather than because of them.” On the other hand, González-Ruibal and Hernando (this volume) powerfully argue that archaeology is poised to expose the genealogies behind commodities, to trace “how consumption in the West translates into destruction in what used to be known as the ‘Third World’.” Penrose (this volume) follows a similar strategy in the archaeology of deindustrialization in Cowley, England; there, Penrose chronicles the losses that lurk behind so-called “creative destruction.”

These archaeological analyses evoke the rhetorical strategies used in past decades by consumer-oriented political movements. For example, during the 3rd Table Grape Boycott led by the United Farm Workers’ Association in the United States during 1984–2000, posters and buttons of the serigraph, “Sun Mad” (Figure 1), linked grape consumption with farm worker deaths by imposing a grimacing skeleton onto the iconic “SunMaid” raisin box. Representational juxtaposition, however, was not seen as sufficient in itself—consumer–worker coalitions, direct struggle, and legislative action were the core of the boycott movement. Contemporary archaeology’s engagement with the politics of consumption would do well to forge stronger connections between representational interventions and political action.

In other articles, the politics of consumption are analyzed as subaltern tactics for social survival under oppressive or totalitarian conditions: creative adjustments to alcohol packaging, consumption, storage, and disposal in the face of U.S. Prohibition; the *latifondi* and farmers’ subversion of Fascist re-ordering of the Sicilian agricultural landscape; the private consumption practices of householders in Bam, Iran; Funari and Funari’s (this volume) observation that Brazilian students presented with a lesson on
ancient Egypt may use “the opportunity to figure out how images of the past are subjectively created.” In these examples, consumption is perhaps not a “weapon” of the weak (passim Scott 1985) but rather a set of flexible practices that enable consumers to dodge authority and “get by” under oppressive conditions.

When the stakes of consumption are so high, the ethics of archaeological investigation must shift accordingly. Unearthing recent consumption practices—and archaeological evidence of other aspects of social life—may generate substantial risk not only to those being studied but also to others who are connected to them. Of the papers presented here, only Yazdi (this volume) is explicit in the measures taken to obtain consent from, and protect the identities and privacy, of those being directly studied through archaeology. Since the research conducted in the “contemporary past” carries particular high risks to living populations, I would like to see contemporary archaeologists lead the field in identifying these risks and developing new ethical standards for archaeological research on living human subjects.
Methods and Methodologies

The articles published here also suggest that archaeologies of the contemporary past may require different methods, and different methodologies, than archaeologies of more distant times. Perhaps one of the most important methodological shifts represented in these works relates to the temporal dimension of knowledge. As Penrose (this volume) writes of British deindustrialization, “we are witnesses to the moment of change... we are in the same position as everyone else: ignorant of the future. As archaeologists this may be an uncomfortable novelty but it is also a window into understanding the material around us: landscapes that do not yet know their future.” Thus unlike archaeologies of the “past,” in which the end of the story is already known, contemporary archaeologists operate under the same temporal constraints as their research subjects. Perhaps one of the most generalizable insights of the present-orientation of contemporary archaeology is the practical empathy that it demands of archaeologists. Those of us studying more remote histories would be well advised to remember that the people we studied faced an unknown future as well, and conducted their lives without knowledge of the outcomes of their actions.

In many of the articles published here, researchers have creatively adapted tried-and-true archaeological methods and techniques to address new questions and new circumstances. Both Yazdi (this volume) and Wilkie and Mosher (this volume) present the findings of fine-grained household excavation and comparative analyses that are fundamental tools of prehistoric and historic archaeology alike. Whether the object of study is 19th century London shops, 20th century Sicilian land reform, or 21st century Brazilian rainforests, broad-scale survey and site recordation are as applicable to the archaeology of the contemporary past as they are to investigations of prehistoric settlement and subsistence patterns.

In other cases it is clear that the archaeology of the contemporary past stretches archaeological practice into new directions. This is most clearly illustrated by Edgeworth’s exploration of “Archaeology of the Mega and Nano” (this volume) which raises powerful questions about the limits of human-scale perception. In sympathy with a growing trend in archaeology towards remote sensing and computer-aided perception, Edgeworth draws attention to the epistemological tension between bodily praxis and instrumentation. Parno’s comparative study of tourist photography and archaeological photography (this volume) similarly interrogates the ways in which instrumentation—in this case, the camera—actively generates, rather than passively reflects, our perception of the past, including the archaeological record itself.
Archaeologies of the contemporary past particularly caution us to be skeptical of surface effects. Archaeological methods guide us to look carefully beneath the surface, and to bring a diachronic perspective to immediate events. As the papers by Samuels (this volume), Yazdi (this volume), and Wilkie and Mosher (this volume) powerfully illustrate, the archive and the immediately visible landscape may be quite self-consciously staged to represent the ideals of the powerful. Historically, one of archaeology’s strengths has been its use of systematic methods of observation that reveal patterns and anomalies that otherwise would not be apparent. The interventions sought by archaeologists of the contemporary past will be most successful when grounded in these rigorous methodologies.

But is Contemporary Archaeology “Really” Archaeology? Disciplinary Anxieties, Interdisciplinary Alliances

Many readers of this issue of *Archaeologies* may have been saying to themselves, “This is all very interesting, but I’m not sure I’m convinced. Are archaeologies of the contemporary past really archaeology?”

This is a question that is well worth asking. I began this commentary by postulating that archaeologists are defined primarily through our engagement with “matter out of time”—a delineation between the present and the past, and a commitment to the epistemological and ontological centrality of materiality. In other words, time matters, and matter matters. The articles published in this issue occupy a wide spectrum of positions on the time-matter matrix: some concern themselves with more distant events but provide little in the way of conventional material analysis; others are resolutely engaged with the detritus of modernity and postmodernity but focus their analyses on events that are still unfolding in the current moment.

I think it is critically important to ask the question, is archaeology the best way to investigate the questions interrogated by these articles? Archaeologists drawn to contemporary topics should ask themselves whether our disciplinary training provides the best set of tools and concepts available. Some contemporary archaeologies bear a close resemblance to media studies, material culture studies, social geography, history, international relations, political science, and ethnography. Before leaping to defend archaeology’s “unique insights” into the human condition, we would be well served to pay attention to the rigorous methodologies and theoretical innovations emerging from fields other than our own.

Archaeology has always been an interdisciplinary field of inquiry, but contemporary archaeologies are bringing forward new forms of alliances and collaborations. Wilkie and Mosher’s (this volume) collaborative research on Prohibition provides an example of best practices in these new
endeavors: keenly aware of the strengths and limitations of their respective fields, these co-authors forge a new methodology for investigating the social and legal history of alcohol in the 20th century United States. Yazdī (this volume) and González-Ruibal and Hernando (this volume) similarly chart their collaborations with ethnographers in investigations of 21st century disaster and trauma. Samuels (this volume) engages systematically and critically with Foucault’s heterotopias. I think it is no coincidence that those articles with the strongest interdisciplinary collaboration also exhibit a high degree of methodological and empirical rigor.

One of the trends evident in this collection of studies is that contemporary archaeologists seem more likely to reach towards the humanities and qualitative social sciences—history, media studies, geography, and ethnography—than towards the sciences and quantitative social sciences. For archaeologists who are more accustomed to borrowing methods and techniques from mathematics, physics, geophysics, geology, biology, materials sciences, and medicine, contemporary archaeology’s trend towards the humanities may cause some anxiety. Yet at its best, archaeology has always integrated qualitative and quantitative methodologies from both the sciences and the humanities. The post-processual critique emerged in part because archaeology’s long-standing links to the humanities were increasingly neglected under the scientism of processual archaeology. The result has been a more rigorous and more richly textured approach to investigations of the near and distant past. Similarly, the interpretive contemporary archaeologies represented in this volume might benefit from incorporating more rigorous quantitative analyses and closer collaboration with the material sciences.

In every field of study, the edges of the discipline are often fertile grounds for innovations. By embracing the paradox of the “contemporary past,” the scholars contributing to this issue have pushed past the conventional boundaries of archaeology into new temporal territory. In doing so they have challenged long-held assumptions and brought new questions to the forefront. Most powerfully, contemporary archaeologies remind all archaeologists that we cannot separate ourselves from the material we study.

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