More than representation: multi-scalar assemblages and the Deleuzian challenge to archaeology

Introduction

Archaeology is, without doubt, a child of the enlightenment (Thomas, 2004). Historically and conceptually it finds its roots in modes of thinking and ways of doing that emerge from this particular juncture in the development of western thought. From the way in which archaeology enters the field with the express intention of bifurcating nature and culture (Cobb et al., 2012), to the traditional separation of data and interpretation, the discipline aligns itself neatly with what Bruno Latour (1993) calls the 'modern constitution' (Jones, 2001). At the heart of this lies the critical question of representation (Arponen and Ribeiro, 2014). Our enlightenment heritage creates a perceived gap between people and the world, one that can only be bridged by an overarching structure of representations, and one that is matched by the gap between past and present. Archaeologists have struggled to develop approaches that give them the tools to transcend both these divides simultaneously (Webmoor and Witmore, 2008).

For some time, however, scholars have questioned this reliance on modes of representation (e.g. Barrett, 1988) and our dependency on dichotomies to structure our interpretations (Thomas, 1996; 2004). Divisions between nature and culture, body and mind, world and person have been shown not just to be problematic, but to actively impede our understanding of how the different historical worlds we study came into being and sustained themselves through time (from among many others see Conneller, 2011; Jones, 2012). More recently, scholars have taken another step towards developing alternative approaches to archaeology, and have begun to actively question the enlightenment-derived ontological foundations of the discipline (Alberti et al., 2011; Alberti et al., 2014; Fowler, 2013; Lucas, 2012; Olsen et al., 2012). New approaches, drawing disparately on authors such as Bruno Latour, Gilles Deleuze and Karen Barad, have emerged to suggest that we may be able to 'undercut' (Webmoor and Witmore, 2008) the divides that we have constructed for ourselves in the past, and to develop different ways of engaging with the material remains we study. This ontological turn, as Alberti *et al*. (2011) put it, is critical for archaeologists because of the manner in which material things have come to be foregrounded within it. In the past anthropologists have told archaeologists they are effectively on a fool's errand, that seeking meaning and symbolism from things is to try and reach something inaccessible from the mute, brute, materiality of objects (Leach, 1973). If we operate now in a world of multiple actants (Latour, 1999; Olsen et al., 2012), of assemblages (DeLanda, 2006; Harris, 2014a) and vibrant matter (Bennett, 2010; Harris, 2014b), however, a world in which things act back and have their own needs or even desires (Gosden, 2005), then the potential for a really new archaeology, one that is not beholden to its previous worries, but

rather embraces its potentials, appears to be in view. Representation need no longer be the dominant logic of our engagement with the past, and we can address the specific issues raised by the fractured and partial evidence we encounter (Lucas, 2012). As I shall set out below, however, I do not argue that we should abandon representation all together, rather I will draw on the important work done in Geography to suggest that we need to be *more-than-representational* (Anderson and Harrison 2010), and that we still need to make room for identity, subjectivity and meaning in our accounts. The tools we need for this lie in the critical notion of the assemblage, developed from the writings of Deleuze and Guattari (2004).

The aims of this paper are threefold. First, I want to review the relationship between archaeology and the enlightenment heritage, particularly its connection to representation. Such a review will inevitably be rather brief, but should suffice to introduce those readers less familiar with the twists and turns of specific disciplinary histories to a (probably depressingly) familiar story. Despite the development of multiple approaches, I will argue that it is only recently that different ways of engaging with the world have really offered a route out of the representationalist bind. Second, I will introduce these new approaches and set out why assemblages are potentially the most productive pathway for the discipline. Finally, I will offer a brief case-study from my own research area, Neolithic Britain (c. 4100 - 2500 BC), to outline some of the ways in which assemblages offer exceedingly fruitful ways forward towards a more-than-representationalist archaeology.

A brief history of archaeological thought

'Beginnings are always arbitrary, always imagined' (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 3)

To show how these new approaches offer an interesting challenge to the representational paradigm, however, we need to begin by setting the scene. I have no intention here of tracing the history of archaeological thought back to its very beginning (there are excellent texts that do exactly that e.g. Trigger, 2006). Nor do I intend to demonstrate beyond doubt the way in which modernist conceptions of the world have wormed their way into the nooks and crannies of archaeological thought (there are excellent books that do that too e.g. Lucas, 2012; Thomas, 2004). What I want to do instead is to provide a broad introduction to how archaeological thought has developed over the last 50 years for an interdisciplinary audience. This history will be partial (all histories are) and, due to my background, rather Anglo-centric. It will also supress much in the way of nuance and detail. It also should be recognised that there are very fruitful alternative ways one could tell this story (e.g. Olsen et al., 2012: chapter 3). Nonetheless it forms a useful background against which current developments in the discipline can be measured.

The dominant approach to archaeology in the UK for the first sixty years of the 20th century has come to be known as culture history (e.g. Childe, 1940; Piggott, 1954). This approach sought to divide the past up into multiple historical cultures, each one associated with a specific set of artefacts that formed both the expression of, and the means of identifying with, a particular 'culture'. Often these cultures were conceptualised, at least implicitly, as ethnic groups. As numerous authors have pointed out, this approach was deeply idealist (Binford, 1989). According to archaeologists of this persuasion, past people held ideas in their heads about the kinds of people they were, and therefore the kinds of things that they made, which they then expressed through making those material things (Fowler, 2010). People had ideas in their minds – their cultural identity – which they expressed by making material objects. Thus a Beaker pot, one of the forms of pottery associated with early metal work in Britain, was the representation of Beaker culture made by a Beaker person. At its heart culture history asked: how did culture bend nature to its will?

In the 1960s, like many other disciplines unsure of their place between the humanities and the natural sciences, archaeology took a positivist turn. From an idealist and particularist historical discipline, archaeology attempted to develop a scientific, positivist and anthropological epistemology (e.g. Binford, 1962; 1968). Emphasis, as one might expect, was put on hypothesis testing, systems theory and the potential for archaeology to generate testable and provable knowledge about the past processes that had resulted in the seemingly static archaeological record (Binford, 1983). This 'New' or 'Processual' Archaeology was a substantive change in many ways from the approaches that preceded it, with it came a claimed 'loss of innocence' (Clark, 1973) as the discipline became critically self-conscious. Rather than emphasise the ideal, it was the material that mattered. This was now 'man's extrasomatic means of adaptation' (White, 1959: 8), rather than an expression of a person's cultural identity. Environments were investigated for their calorific yield; the changing climate was identified as the cause of the origins of agriculture (Cohen, 1977), the world changed and people adapted to it. Yet, from a perspective that seeks out the tendrils of representation, one can see how in this approach remained very much within the traditions of the enlightenment. The gap between person and world remained intact, what had changed was that it was the role of the world that now required investigation, not that of the person. If culture history had wanted to get to the 'Indian behind the artefact' as Kent Flannery put it (1967: 120), for the New Archaeology it was about the 'system behind both the Indian and the artefact' (Flannery, 1967: 120). Archaeology became a means of representation aimed at bridging the gap between past and present, how could the static materials discovered in the present be linked to dynamic past processes[i]? How did culture adapt to nature?

From the 1980s some archaeologists became very critical of the kinds of narratives being generated by this positivist approach. Drawing on structuralism and post-structuralism to emphasise the importance and fluidity of meaning (e.g. Hodder, 1982), Marxist thought to consider power and ideology (e.g. Leone, 1984), theories of practice and agency to explore people's actions in the past (e.g. Barrett, 1988) and feminism to engage with questions of gender and identity (e.g. Gero and Conkey, 1991), this post-processual or interpretive archaeology wanted to return to the more specific histories that had predated New Archaeology. Material Culture here was not just adaptive, but rather 'meaningfully constituted' (Hodder, 1982: 13), it was like language, or better yet a text, that could potentially be read and meanings extracted once again. Whilst far more sophisticated than culture history, post-processual archaeology was in the main a return to idealism. Material culture represented different things, it could communicate meanings, it carried intentions with it. Although post-processual archaeology was never a single thing, never a coherent movement, what mattered to these archaeologists were the beliefs, religions and identities of the people who made it. The 'faceless blobs' as Ruth Tringham (1991: 94) described the people that populated the pasts of New Archaeology were replaced by active agents with sexualities, genders and intentions of their own. Needless to say representation was more central here than ever, as the question now became how did culture understand nature?

This tripartite structure of the development of archaeological thought is often presented as a series of different paradigms that transform at particular revolutionary moments. Yet such a history not only ignores the fact that one way of approaching the past never really replaces older ways, it also downplays how all of these differing approaches are fundamentally focussed on issues of representation. Rather than a real challenge to the domination of the enlightenment categories we have inherited, these different approaches amount instead to arguments about which particular side of a binary opposition we ought to focus on. All three of the major positions in Anglo-American archaeological thought accept implicitly the reality of bifurcations between nature and culture, world and person and body and mind. Time, indeed, for something different[ii].

Alternatives to representation

The damage that such enlightenment categories do to our understanding of the world has become increasingly clear in recent years, not only in archaeology but far more widely in disciplines from philosophy and anthropology to geography and physics, and I am certain it needs little rehearsal here. Three major issues spring immediately to mind. First, enlightenment thought actively impedes

us from understanding the vast range of things that can never be divided up into oppositional categories like nature and culture. The human body forms the case par excellence of this, where any attempt to see it as purely a natural outcome of biology inevitably fails to engage with its historical and cultural specificity, but claims that it is instead 'socially constructed' efface and deny its critical materiality (Robb and Harris, 2013). Second, the reliance on binary oppositions suppresses the difference and alterity of the past (Thomas, 2004). If we presume that the dominant concepts of our society (e.g. binary oppositions, issues of representation) are universal we prevent ourselves being able to understand past worlds in their own terms, to think about what it might mean if we had to translate our understandings into theirs, instead of vice versa (Henare et al., 2007). Finally, binary oppositions inevitably lead to the simplification of our understanding of the past, of the reduction of complex blurred categories to simplistic dichotomies. In so doing we turn complex colonial worlds, for example, full of multiple ethnicities, genders and sexualities into a straightforward narrative that contrasts colonial with colonised and male with female within a rubric of heteronormativity (Voss, 2010).

In the last decade, however, a new suite of approaches to archaeology have emerged that have explicitly sought to undermine the representationalist hegemony that had dominated the discipline. Drawing inspiration from a variety of sources we can broadly label these together as an ontological turn (Witmore, 2014). Why ontological? Because unlike previous approaches which have vacillated within dominant enlightenment understandings, and argued about questions of epistemology, these approaches, although in very different ways, all want to rethink the basis on which we understand archaeological materials in a much more radical manner. Archaeologists are beginning to turn, therefore, from arguing about different ways of knowing the world – a fundamentally epistemological dispute – to debating what it is the world actually is – an ontological question (Fowler and Harris, 2015; Harris and Robb, 2012).

Within the ontological turn it is possible to identify a number of different perspectives. In the space provided here I cannot do all of these approaches justice, nor set out the important ways in which they vary from each other and disagree (for broader reviews see Fowler, 2013: chapter 2; Witmore, 2014). Early attempts to challenge dichotomies came both from readings of phenomenology, especially that of Martin Heidegger (e.g. Thomas, 1996), and broadly related engagements with the critical issue of personhood (e.g. Fowler, 2004a). It can be argued that both of these approaches left humans as ontologically distinct, however, from the worlds in which they dwelt and so did not fully escape from representation (Harris, in press). More recently, some archaeologists have turned to the work of Bruno Latour (1993; 1999), and to a lesser extent the Object Orientated Philosophy of

Graham Harman and others (e.g. Harman, 2012), as an explicit means of rebalancing the scales between human and non-human, and exploring the world in ways that do not privilege human beings (Olsen, 2010; Olsen et al., 2012). These approaches, which are often identified under the banner of symmetrical archaeology, start explicitly from a position where human-world, or human-thing, relationships are not the primary target for investigation (Witmore, 2014). A critical issue with these approaches, however, tends to be their refusal to engage with representation at all, with any sense of meaning, memory or emotion exiting the field of study as remnants of an unwanted humanist legacy. As I discuss elsewhere with regard to identity, this is deeply problematic (Harris, in press). A third approach comes from those archaeologists who wish explicitly to engage with the ontologies of past people. Inspired by the new animism of anthropology, and especially the work of Viveiros de Castro (1998), these investigations seek to question the idea that whilst Western scientists know how the world works, people in the past merely had different beliefs about it[iii]. To question, in other words, the implicit notion that whilst our knowledge is ontological, their beliefs are (merely) epistemological. By making the people of the past's understanding also ontological, this creates a possibility of thinking about past worlds differently, where, for example, pots were bodies – not metaphors or symbols of bodies but *actual* bodies (Alberti and Marshall, 2009). This is clearly a substantive challenge to representational accounts, even if it may have troubling implications for the role of the material world itself, unless we recognise the potential for multiple, rather than singularly opposed, ontologies (Harris and Robb, 2012).

Each of these approaches has much to recommend it, and it would take a monograph to trace the multiple similarities and differences between them. This brief description simply acts as a place holder to indicate the richness of these new archaeological directions that are developing in contradistinction to ways of thinking rooted in representation. One final set of approaches can be termed New Materialism[iv], and I leave these to last as they most closely reflect my own views (see also Alberti and Jones, 2014). Drawing on a variety of developments in philosophy, physics, biology and critical thinking, this new materialism has sought to bring back the vibrancy and animacy of matter to our analysis. Fundamentally both relational *and realist*, it allows for things, animals, plants and places both to be fundamentally emergent out of relations and to be understood in their own right (cf. Fowler and Harris, 2015). It is from within this set of approaches, drawing specifically on the thinking of Gilles Deleuze, both alone and in conjunction with Felix Guattari, and interdisciplinary readings of this work, that the most fruitful new developments are emerging I suggest, and these focus critically around the idea of assemblage.

Assemblages

As in so many areas of the human sciences, assemblages are becoming an increasingly powerful mode of thinking in archaeology. They have been used to rethink our pedagogy (Cobb and Croucher, 2014); the nature of archaeological typologies (Fowler, 2013), field practice (Lucas, 2012) and survey (Harrison, 2011); the role of the senses in understanding the past (Hamilakis, 2014); and the vibrancy of archaeological materials themselves (Conneller, 2011; Harris, 2014b; Jones, 2012). So what are assemblages?

Assemblages, as noted above, emerge from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2004), they are a way of thinking about the world that turns our gaze from the appearance of final, fixed, forms to the multiplicity of elements that come together and sustain all the different things in the world. Assemblages can be as simple as a molecule of water, composed of oxygen and hydrogen atoms, or as complex as a whole planet with the teaming forms of life that make it up (DeLanda, 2002; 2006; 2010). This aspect lends itself particularly to archaeological thought where the past can only be understood if engaged with at a multitude of scales (cf. Robb and Harris, 2013: chapter 9). Furthermore, the assemblage theory of Deleuze and Guattari, and especially in the manner in which authors such as Jane Bennett (2010) and Manuel DeLanda (2006) have developed it, does not distinguish at its basic level between animate and inanimate things. Everything is in flow, in a process of becoming; that is it is ongoing, living, growing and developing. As a discipline of material things that often bemoans the seeming inanimacy of the material it engages with, this is clearly a critical point for archaeologists (Ingold, 2011; Harris, 2014b). Materials here are *vibrant* as Bennett (2010) puts it[v].

Another important element of assemblages is that they have four dimensions[vi], or that they are tetravalent in Deleuze and Guattari's terms (2004: 97-8, 556; Dewsbury, 2011: 150). The first axis runs between content and expression – that is between the bodies and the passions that make up the assemblage and the ways in which these express themselves in acts and statements. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, every assemblage 'is simultaneously and inseparably a machinic assemblage and an assemblage of enunciation' (2004: 555); machinic here refers to the material elements of the assemblage and the relations that form and connect them, the enunciative to expressive acts[vii]. These not solely be linguistic, but can include gestures, clothing, body language, design choices and so on (DeLanda, 2006: 12). Thus it is important to note that the machinic and the enunciative are not oppositional, they are not a dualism, but rather a form of description that allows us to tease out difference between assemblages, and any single element in an assemblage can be *both simultaneously* (DeLanda, 2006: 12). This means assemblages are material things, but also that they

include all sorts of less obviously material elements, including signs, language, symbols, utterances and indeed representations – a point I will return to below. A very simple example may help to make this theoretical jargon a little less opaque. Consider your own home. The bricks and mortar join together physically; there are material bonds here that hold the walls up and the ceiling in place. Simultaneously, those walls imply certain things – boundedness, privacy, possession and so on – within this set of associations. These are expressed through actions and statements about 'my house' and 'my home' which exist not because of the properties of the materials alone, but because these elements are caught up with the person who occupies the house (you) along with a wider society that celebrates private property, and have the capacity to be affected by these facts. The assemblage of home does not pre-exist the person living there, but rather is constantly produced through the interactions of person, house and a host of other elements (cf. Edensor, 2011).

The second set of dimensions are perhaps more famous, they certainly get more attention in some readings of assemblage theory (including some of my own e.g. Harris 2013). These emphasise that assemblages are always becoming territorial on the one hand, but also breaking down and coming apart on the other – deterriorialising (DeLanda, 2006: 12). To return to your putative house this assemblage too is both coming together and moving apart (cf. Ingold, 2013: 48). Each day (I may be being generous here) when you hoover the floor and clean the bathroom you are acting to maintain the home, to keep it tied together. More substantially, when you get the roof repaired, or have the floors treated to remove woodworm, or damp-proof your cellar, you are helping to maintain the boundaries of the house, to keep it territorialised. At the same time of course, despite your best efforts, elements keep changing. Roof tiles get blown off, the walls slowly erode away, you sell the piece of furniture that dominates the living room; each of these is an element of the assemblage breaking apart – becoming deterritorialised. The crucial thing to emphasise here is that process is the key. By concentrating on the processes by which assemblages come together and move apart we do not attribute stable characteristics or 'essences' to the things we study. Instead analysis falls on the ongoing process by which certain potential possibilities become real – or are actualised in Deleuzian terms – in the world (cf. Lucas, 2012: 127).

A final critical point about assemblages is that they are more than the sum of their parts; their capacities exceed the different elements that make them up. A home is not reducible to a pile of bricks, mortar, furniture and people. When the heterogeneous elements of an assemblage come together they create the possibilities for things to exist that were not there previously. This emphasis on 'relations of exteriority' as DeLanda (2006: 10) calls it, also means that parts of an assemblage can be detached and join other assemblages without *fundamentally* being transformed

by this process. So for example you can take a piece of furniture (which is an assemblage of wood, cushions and so on) from your house (an assemblage which it had been part of) and give it to someone else who puts it in their house. This certainly changes all the assemblages that form part of this larger gathering (which we might call an exchange network) but the furniture, the two houses and the two people are all recognisable in the aftermath of these transformations because other historical relations endure (Fowler and Harris, 2015).

Strengths of assemblage theory

Let us summarise the key strengths of assemblage theory for archaeologists. First, it allows us to embrace the vibrancy of the material world. The emphasis on becoming means that rather than presuming our objects are merely the static remains of the past, deprived of meanings, they instead become animate players in the becoming of both past and present. This, in turn, allows us to attend to the qualities and capacities of these materials revealed both through sensuous engagement and through scientific analysis, thus theory and data no longer form separate elements of archaeological engagement with the world but become enmeshed together in our research. Similarly, we no longer have to presume that human beings are the sole players in the pasts we encounter, they remain important and central to our narratives, but do not need to be ontologically privileged (Lucas, 2012). Second, assemblages are multiscalar (DeLanda, 2002; 2006; cf. Normark, 2010). Thus they draw attention to both small-scale events (like the making of a pot) and larger-scale processes like the spread of agriculture. Rather than presuming that certain scales of analysis are real, and that others are essentialising and reductionist, it approaches the past in ways that allow us to explore the emergent properties of the world at multiple different levels.

Third, and finally, assemblages are not simply non-representational; rather they are *more-than-representational*. This is an important, perhaps essential, distinction. Some recent elements of the ontological turn in archaeology have sought to reject representationalism outright, as noted above, and with it – at least implicitly – questions of identity, personhood and meaning (e.g. Olsen et al., 2012; Lucas, 2012). Such a desire is entirely understandable in the move to challenge the primacy of representation and the human/world gap that has dominated archaeological understandings up until this point. However, we are in danger of losing sight of the complexity of humanity in our rush to embrace the affective animacy of matter (Lazzari, 2014). Diverse authors have rightly called on archaeologists to attend to things, to their roles in history, to their properties and histories. Yet this need not be at the expense of human beings, of the projects they envisioned and conducted

alongside and through material things. The emphasis on enunciation with assemblages shows us that whilst representation is never primary (as it was for so many other approaches) it is nevertheless part of what it means to appreciate the complexity of the past. The sensorial qualities of things, the way they register on and with human beings, the way they stimulate memories and emotions through their affective resonance are a central part of the capacity of assemblages to affect and transform the world (Hamilakis, 2014). This cannot be divorced from their symbolic and representational aspects. The symbolic value of a cross to a Christian does not explain its affective power (you need to recognise the wider assemblage to understand that) but nor can one understand its agency *without* recognising its representational elements. Thus as the geographers Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison (2010) have shown, what is required is a more-than-representational approach, one that begins in the world of intermingling materials but explores how as assemblages become territorialised they can have symbolic as well as material effects. This embracing of a more-than-representational approach means that questions of identity, sexuality, personhood and gender can continue to play critical roles in our accounts of the past, as they must if we are not to slide back to a position where the complexity of human beings is underplayed in our narratives and so modern assumptions become essentialised and universalised. Thus we can hold on to the complexity of the human past, indeed make it richer, more varied and more complex, by embracing an approach rooted in assemblages.

How do these different strengths impact how we actually understand the past? To explore that I turn now to a particular period of space and time, the Neolithic of Britain, to explore what the kinds of areas that assemblage theory can help us with.

Assemblages in Neolithic Britain: three scales of analysis

Before we can consider the role assemblages can play in an account of the archaeological past, it may be helpful to provide some background to Neolithic Britain for those readers less familiar with this specific period of prehistory. The Neolithic of Britain represents the first period of farming in the British Isles, and begins around 4100 BC (Whittle et al., 2011)[viii]. Farming at this time involved the use of domesticated plants, notably wheat and barley, and a reliance on domesticated animals, principally cattle, but also sheep, goat and pig (Thomas, 1999; 2013). The mechanism by which farming spread to Britain, some 2500 years after it first arrived in South East Europe, is much debated, and need not detain us here (Cummings and Harris, 2011; Robb, 2013; for a New Materialist approach see Jones and Sibbesson, 2013)[ix]. The Early Neolithic (which I shall concentrate on below) can be taken to date from the start of the period through to around 3300 BC. This period is characterised not only by farming, but by the use of pottery for the first time in this region, and

the widespread making and use of axes of polished stone and flint, and other new forms of flint tools, including leaf-shaped arrowheads. Evidence of settlement is varied, with some regions showing good evidence for large houses or 'halls' being constructed shortly after the start of the Neolithic, others suggesting the existence of small villages, and yet more hinting at continued forms of mobility (Thomas, 2013). Alongside these various forms of evidence the period is most famous for its monuments. These come in various shapes and sizes from the megalithic chambered tombs where people buried (some of) their dead from around 3800 BC, through to large 'causewayed enclosures' which take the form of circuits of ditches interrupted by regular gaps (leading to the causeway part of their name), which became popular in southern Britain after 3700 BC (Whittle et al., 2011). These monuments were usually the work of more than one group and often have evidence for rituals of various kinds, from the exposure and disarticulation of human bodies through to feasting and the deliberate deposition of material artefacts. Traditional questions that archaeologists have asked of this period have focussed on the beliefs of the people involved, about the function of different elements of the material culture and about the degree to which wild (natural) or domestic (cultural) resources were relied upon by people. More recently, archaeologists have turned to questions of memory, agency and identity – in relation to the wider post-processual turn described above (e.g. from many others Barrett 1994; Fowler, 2001; Jones 2007; Thomas, 2002; Whittle, 2003). Whilst these approaches have offered enormous insights into the period, they largely remain caught up in anthropocentric and representationalist concerns[x].

How can we explore this period differently using the ideas of assemblage discussed above, and the emphasis this puts on the constant becoming of the world and the vibrancy of matter? To think about this I want to take advantage of the multiscalar nature of assemblages to think about three different, but interrelated, scales. First, I will consider the role of materials in Neolithic Britain, and how assemblages help us to focus on their morphogenetic capacities. In particular I will select a single pottery vessel to do this. Second, I will move up in scale to explore how people and animals work together to construct places through the practices of everyday life at a single, small, relatively short-lived site. This scale operates in the relationships between multiple animals and people over a more sustained period of time. Finally I will look at how communities were assembled through the process of constructing and using monuments, looking at the example of Hambledon Hill, a monument built up and used over centuries. Each of these will be brief – my aim here is to illustrate potential rather than develop comprehensive new narratives.

Materials in Neolithic Britain: vessel 36 at Ascott-under-Wychwood

As I have already stressed, one of the great advantages of assemblage thinking is the manner in which it draws our attention to the vibrancy and ongoing becoming of matter (Bennett, 2010). This in turn requires us to think of matter and materials not as inanimate and static, awaiting the enlivening touch of humanity, but as active players in the worlds of making that humans, animals and other creatures are embroiled in (Harris, 2014b). When we think of Neolithic pottery, for example, this approach opens up new understandings. Rather than discuss this generically, however, I want to work at the small-scale here and look at a specific pot, vessel 36 from Ascott-under-Wychwood in Oxfordshire.

Ascott-under-Wychwood is best known for the Neolithic chambered tomb constructed on the site, however prior to this it was a locale for occupation soon after the beginning of the Neolithic, and evidence of this occupation, between about 3950 and 3800 BC, was then preserved by the construction of the later monument (Benson and Whittle, 2007). Evidence for this occupation is found in multiple materials that were deposited including animal bone, flint tools and pottery – including vessel 36.

Vessel 36 would have had a round base and was approximately 26cm in diameter at the shoulder (Barclay and Case, 2007: 271). It was made from clay available in the local area around Ascott (Barclay and Case, 2007: 266). Clay allows itself to be shaped in certain ways – it has certain morphogenetic capacities – and thus worked with the potter to draw out a carination close to the pot's rim as clay coiled around. This carination tied vessel 36 into wider-scale assemblages that existed at this time, linking it to traditions of making pots across large parts of Britain and parts of the continent. Similarly, the softness of the clay, and its ability to gain new properties through combinations with other materials, allowed the potter to include flint within it. The flint was non-local (Barclay and Case, 2007: 266), thus territorialising other places within the body of the pot through this machinic connection, it also tied in other practices such as the flint working that may have produced this material in turn (Smith and Darvill, 1990: 145). This element of the assemblage would not have altered the functional qualities of the finished pot as temper normally does, as the clay was already rich in sand (cf. Darvill 2004). Thus the addition of flint is likely to have had specific meaning for the people involved – it was both machinic and enunciative. Once made, the pot was used for cooking, as demonstrated by the animal fats recovered from its walls (Barclay and Clay, 2007: 271). The fats it contained show how this specific assemblage tied people and animals together through the flow of substances. These fats were deterritorialised from the animals that produced them, cooked and assembled with other substances in the pot, and thus territorialised in

new ways, and then deterritorialised as they entered people in turn. A pot like this could make people taste things, and through that instantiate and actualise memories and feelings; these elements are not outside of this assemblage rather they are emergent in the relationships that the pot entwined itself with. These were all territorialised within this assemblage, connections both physical and meaningful, machinic and enunciative. At the end of its life the pot itself was deterritorialised; broken into pieces in one location, parts of it were gathered, taken to Ascott and dumped here as an element of a wider spread of material (Barclay and Case, 2007: 278). Other parts were left behind. This is an essential capacity of pottery; it can fragment (Chapman 2000), deterritorialise into multiple pieces (though never back into its constituent parts), and this allows it to move around and become parts of other assemblages through acts of exchange and deposition. The act of depositing parts of vessel 36 reterritorialised this element of the former pot in a new way, it became plugged into the wider assemblage of this site, linking this locale back to the place of the pot's making and use. This reterritorialisation also allowed some of the older relations to endure (*sensu* Fowler and Harris 2015) in the 148 pieces of the pot that survived for archaeologists to engage with in more recent times. This single pot, perhaps close to the smallest scale of assemblage archaeologists routinely engage with, thus reveals the flows of materials and substances into and out of places, into and out of people, into and out of the ground. Through this, assemblages came together and broke apart and moved through the world. Here people, clay, flint, animals, meanings and places are all part of the interweaving intersections of the becoming of the Neolithic. More than simply a material an indicator of a new cultural group (Sheridan, 2010), or solely a functional adaptation by humans to a new economy, vessel 36 takes its place in a more-than-representational history.

People, animals and places in Neolithic Britain

These intersections of people, things and animals helped to produce larger-scale assemblages, and these assemblages were in part the means by which an identity of place emerged. From the outset let us be clear what we mean by identity here. This is not the uniform emergence of single categories based on similarity, but rather the potential for difference to be explored, to think about how people and places in the past were different from us and different from each other. Thinking of identity through difference is of course a far more Deleuzian starting point (Harris, in press). Here I want to discuss how the identity of people and places emerge together through their interactions with animals. Interactions between people and animals took place in, and indeed produced,

particular kinds of spaces, and these intersections are assemblages; emergent, territorial, real, yet always breaking down as well.

Animals were undoubtedly key elements of the assemblages we today describe as Neolithic. Whilst we can trace important continuities between the preceding Mesolithic period (when people were gatherer hunters) and the Neolithic, one of the major changes was undoubtedly in relation to animals. Domestic animals in the latter period formed parts of people's lives in new and intimate ways, from the engagement between people and cows as they milked them, to the intimacy involved in killing them; these interactions offer very different possibilities (Cummings and Harris, 2011; 2014). From an assemblage perspective these animals were, in Donna Haraway's terms, companion species; animals in whose lives people were caught up in the process of becoming *with* (Haraway, 2008; Despret, 2004). The places people lived too were shaped and sculpted by these animals, these were becoming with them as well, as pigs dug into the ground, cattle and sheep required grassland and goats ate the local shrubbery. The work of animals, and the work animals demanded, shaped people and places as well as the animals themselves and not only in life. In death too, the remains of animals, productive of affective connections to feasts and acts of consumption, could texture a place with those qualities. At Rowden in Dorset in Southern England pigs bones, though not pig skulls, were repeatedly deposited in a midden before this itself was deposited in a large pit dug into the ground (Harris, 2009; Woodward, 1991). This was a place of pigs, both in the sense that this is what people ate and consumed here, but also that the bodies of pigs were territorialised here through the deposition of their remains. That other parts of the pigs, their skulls, were not deposited shows that elements of these assemblages were deterritorialised, that they went elsewhere to affect other places as part of other assemblages. Here the landscape becomes topological, as places connect through lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 98). The identity of Rowden as a place was created through difference, other Neolithic sites at this time are dominated by cattle, and in so doing the identities of people were created through their engagement as part of this assemblage. These were people who worked with, cared for, killed and ate pigs. These connections are in part symbolic, or acts of enunciation, but they are not only so – they emerge primarily from the physical acts and doings of people, places, pigs and pits.

Community in Neolithic Britain

Rather than a single pot or a small short-lived site, the final scale I want to examine is how at larger places, involving ever more heterogeneous elements over longer periods of time, particular

assemblages emerge that we can understand as communities (Harris, 2013; 2014a). Traditionally archaeology has approached the topic of community as a uniquely human institution (for a full review see Harris 2014a). Assemblage thinking provokes us though to imagine how things, animals, plants and places are not merely backdrop to these groups, but active members of these communities, as critical, and in some ways more critical, than their human elements. A particular community, in this model, is a particular arrangement of these elements, constantly produced not only through social rules and habits, but by the actions of plants and animals (and all the other elements that make up a community as well) (Kohn, 2007). This allows us to approach communities not simply as solely human-centric societies, but as multiply authored, complex, emergent, historically contingent collectives (Harris, 2013; Harris, 2014a). One of the easiest places to access the emergent becoming of these communities, their territorialisation, is at monuments. In recent years the work of archaeologists such as Lesley McFadyen (2008; 2014) and Colin Richards (e.g 2014) has taught us to focus not solely on the final form of monuments, but rather on their production, construction and emergence. Their growth, if you like. When we focus on this we can think about how they emerge through the intensive processes that become through the interweaving of people, things, animals, and materials and, as such, are critical connectors in the formation of community. Take a site like Hambledon Hill (Mercer and Healy, 2008). This is a complex of at least four Neolithic monuments, including two long barrows (linear funerary mounds) and two causewayed enclosures . There are also a whole series of outworks, cross-dykes and palisades. Of course describing the monument like this entirely supresses the processes of becoming through which it emerged, and the communities that emerged with it. The site began to emerge around 3680 BC with the construction of one of the long barrows and the central enclosure, and was added to and altered over 300 years (Healy, 2004; Mercer and Healy, 2008). Through this period the site existed not as a simple backdrop to action but as an active player, gathering people, animals and things to it from far away. Axes that had travelled from continental Europe were deposited here alongside pottery from Cornwall. People who died had their bodies exposed here and their bones deposited in the ditches. Children with matching genetic conditions were buried close to each other 170 years apart (Harris, 2010).

The construction of Hambledon Hill brought people and things together in new ways and through that process of assembly a new community emerged. This community was not permanent, or solely located in the defined – we might say striated[xi] – space of the monument (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 408), but went through regular acts of deterritorialisation as people came to the monument, added to it, buried their dead, and then moved away again. The rhythmic encounters between people and place, the flow and flux of these processes, reveal the way in which community in this period was always in the process of becoming something else. Monuments in the Neolithic tend to

be seen as outcomes of community practices – competition, trade, funerals – or as symbols representing cosmological meanings. Thinking about them as assemblages helps us see them as parts of the communities themselves, as elements through which communities emerge in tandem with monuments in an ongoing process of becoming. Materials, animals, landscapes and people are all utterly intertwined in a process of history no longer driven solely by the struggles and victories of humans alone.

Conclusion: assembling the past

When archaeologists write about the Neolithic they have followed the patterns typical of the history of archaeological thought. Thus they have variously emphasised differing roles for various cultural groups, the manner in which new economies became embedded in the landscape or the meaning and experiences that monument's generated for people. Despite their contrary claims, each of these interpretations has largely remained locked within a Cartesian world view, one in which objects do the bidding of subjects, the 'animate' members of past communities are perceived as absent in the present and the question of how to represent (both the past in the present and meaning in the past) is key. The great divide between people and the world has proliferated to sever the connections that bind everything together. These pasts are always partial, and inevitably anthropocentric.

When we turn to an approach located in assemblage theory, however, new possibilities emerge. As the case studies above begin to show, we can trace how history flows in the capacities of clay and flint temper to produce pots; in the way pigs burrow in the ground and in the taste of their flesh; and in the manner in which monuments territorialise the communities of which they are part. We no longer need humans alone to be the agents of history. The morphogenetic capacities of matter, the ongoing becoming of the world, and the processes of life that bind together these assemblages reveal the challenge to representational thought and the enlightenment heritage that archaeology can make. Our pasts can now be multiscalar from moments of making to histories lasting millennia, levels at which human decision making is key to others where it matters little. These approaches need not reduce the vibrancy, richness and heterogeneity of the past, but rather allow us to describe and understand it in new ways. The complexity of meaning and feeling need not be written out, but can rather be celebrated as no less – and no more – primary than the myriad of other ways in which the world comes into being and affects its constituent parts.

If Deleuze has much to offer archaeology, then, what might a Deleuzian archaeology offer other disciplines interested in Deleuzian, or more-than-representational approaches? What a Deleuzian archaeology embraces at its heart is the connection between history and materiality, this is a new

historical materialism, one that points to how differing forms of material relationships allow different kinds of history to emerge. Archaeology is a discipline that asks materials questions, that has ways of attending to and caring for materials and a Deleuzian approach situates these materials within the process of their own becoming, within the process of what we call history. What a Deleuzian archaeology suggests is that by attending to the world beyond humans we can learn much more about humanity itself, about the things we make and use, the things we remember and the things we forget. What people say, or write, about the world present or past, Western or non-Western, cannot be the whole picture, cannot be the whole assemblage. A Deleuzian archaeology shows us how to open up our pasts, and therefore our presents, to a richer world, but not one shorn of meaning or history, narrative or change – in critical contrast to some of the other 'ontological' approaches (cf. Harris 2013). Deleuze offers archaeology a way to be 'processual' in a manner that few of the positivists of the 1960s and 70s who first connected that term to archaeology would recognise. In turn a Deleuzian archaeology offers the wider world a potential way in to a material understanding of the morphogenesis of history itself.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[i] The principle way Lewis Binford (e.g. 1983) attempted to bridge this gap between the seemingly static record and the active processes of the past was through a concept called middle-range theory. This approach drew on strategies like ethnoarchaeology (where Binford and others would observe the active practices of non-Western groups in the present) and used these to generate hypotheses about how the archaeological record might have formed. Although less formally acknowledged, middle range theory continues to be the defacto approach for most archaeologists (cf. Lucas, 2012).

[ii] One issue which I will not address in this paper is how these approaches connect to archaeological practice, whether in the classroom, field or laboratory. A central implication of recent ontological approaches in archaeology is that archaeological practice itself is not separate from the assemblages of the past (Fowler, 2013; Jones, 2012; Lucas, 2012). I entirely agree with this point, but it would add another layer of complexity here, particularly when addressing an interdisciplinary audience.

[iii] One of the reviewers of the article rightly drew my attention to the way in which some of the bolder claims about ontology in anthropology are being recast from claims of 'multiple worlds' to ones where issues of translation and the comparison of concepts are key, particularly in regard to radical difference (e.g. Holbraad 2012; Salmond 2013; 2014; Viveiros de Castro 2013). Space prevents me from fully teasing out this interesting development, though it perhaps creates a greater separation between the kinds of discussions dominating in archaeological and anthropological debates about ontology.

[iv] Recently this term has been used as a banner for the much wider ontological approach I have outlined above, including within it approaches termed symmetrical archaeology (Witmore, 2014). To help maintain shape to the argument I am going to keep these things separate here.

[v] Here I disagree radically, therefore, with John Barrett's (2014: 72) recent argument that the distinction between living and non-living matter is 'crucial', though I find much else to sympathise with in his position.

[vi] In DeLanda's (2006: 123) version of assemblage theory he adds an extra two dimensions of coding and decoding to think through genetic and linguistic contributions to assemblages. For reasons of clarity I will stick to the origin Deleuzian tetravalent model in this article.

[vii] Although space prevents a full discussion here in no way are expressive acts limited to human beings, nor are they solely present in assemblages that include human beings (DeLanda, 2006: 14).

[viii] All dates quoted here are calibrated, which means they are calendar dates, which have been corrected against a radiocarbon calibration curve which accounts for the variable amount of radioactive carbon 14 in the atmosphere.

[ix] For those interested in a wider multi-scalar analysis of the origins of the European Neolithic, and on the relations engendered between people, places and things in this transformation, readers are strongly recommended to read the work of John Robb (2013).

[x] Once again I am glossing a multitude of different approaches here, including ones that have strongly challenged dualisms and other issues with representation when discussing the Neolithic (e.g. Thomas, 1996).

[xi] Deleuze and Guattari contrast striated and smooth space – or perhaps more accurately processes that act to make space increasingly striated or increasingly smooth (Bonta and Provetti, 2004: 151). Striated space is more ordered, with particular locations defined and territorialised, with certain patterns of practice associated with them. Thus monuments, like a long lived causewayed enclosure like Hambledon Hill with repeated patterns of practice (Harris, 2010) are more striated than other kinds of spaces at this time. Though of course within an enclosure there are more or less striated and smooth spaces – different scales of analysis produce different understandings once again.

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