

Part 2

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERESTS

DESIRE AND METAPHOR

An archaeological erotics

Part 1 considered some of the answers archaeologists might be expected to give in answering the question of what archaeologists do. I want to stay with the question but delve deeper and present some images which are suggested when thinking of archaeology and its practices. These contain for me some of the aspirations, feelings and desires which may take us to archaeology. They are a field of erotic reference, where by erotic I mean the play of desire and attachment, energies and figurations which condense and displace the archaeological into other fields and arenas. These are root metaphors which barbed and snagging bind archaeology within its cultural medium. Teasing out mythologies. It is a wider field than archaeology the discipline; I am trying to get to some of what makes archaeology popular with more than those for whom it is a line of work. It will be clear that this is a personal pallet.

I again bracket and omit certain aspects. For some archaeology may mean simply academic labour without specific reference to subject matter. For someone delivering a lecture the experience of encountering and having to teach a group of students may override more archaeological aspects of its subject content. The politics of an institutional committee meeting may nullify its archaeological purpose. I will not be considering directly these valid aspects of what archaeologists do. I will not directly consider archaeology abstractly as a discipline or discourse, or as a forum and technology of power, My focus is on archaeology as a relationship with the (anthropological) object from the past.

THE DETECTIVE

The private dick. Philip Marlowe. Smart, and owing nothing to anyone; individual. He's on the edge, poking into the darker and grubbier corners of society and the psyche. Not knowing sometimes quite where he stands, on which side of the law. Sometimes he has to bend the rules;

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sometimes he has to be tough. Piecing the scraps together, following a line, tailing a scent. And then he has it; it fits into place. Marlowe always comes out clean.

Sherlock Holmes. Unique and eccentric. His eye for significant fact and his pure deductive logic brings enlightenment and clears mysteries when all others fail. Ready with his ingenious and intriguing forensic gadgetry, always probing with his magnifying glass. He too is at the edge with his singular abilities. He is not a member of Scotland Yard, something of a mystery himself. Sometimes you don't recognize him in his remarkable disguises. Didn't he use drugs? And just what was his relationship with Watson?

To see archaeology as a form of detective work is to refer to the fascination of following a scent, solving a puzzle, piecing together the fragments of the past, living with mystery. It also draws in all the ambiguities, the interplay of law and criminality, light and dark, morality and corruption, turpitude and clean respectability. The archaeologist as detective is perhaps a bit of a rebel. It might not be quite certain where they fit in the academic and professional community. Then there are the individuals, the characters, Mortimer Wheeler, Lewis Binford.

The criminal is brought to justice.

THE LAW COURT

Archaeology is a judiciary. The archaeologist is judge and clerk of court. The past is accused. The finds are witnesses. As in Kafka we do not really know the charge. There is plenty of mystery. Archaeology follows the process of the law: inquiry (the accused and witnesses are observed and questioned, tortured with spades and trowels); adjudication (the archaeologist reflects on the mystery and gives a verdict); inscription (the archaeologist records trial and sentence, publishes for record of precedence).

What is the law in this court? Is it the law of reason, rules of logic and reason? But this surely is not enough - abstract reason has no form or content. It might also be wondered whether reason is a natural law which archaeologists follow when questioning the past. If it is, how do archaeologists know what their law of reason is? How do they know what to do? Do they follow intuition? Archaeologists as judges put themselves beneath an obligation or imperative to act in certain ways to be archaeologists, to make certain judgements which are considered legal. There is also a negative aspect of the law. The accused, the past, is being brought to order with prohibitions on certain things. You hope you are only accused and brought to court when you have done something wrong. But in archaeological terms this bringing to order

implies censorship and an imposition of order and uniformity. Is this a distortion of the past? What are these obligations to act in certain ways to be a (legal) archaeologist? To what is the archaeologist-judge and the past subjected? Is the answer not the *discipline* of archaeology?

By what right does the archaeologist pass judgement? The archaeologist is seen as having expertise. They have the ability to make archaeological inquiries, speak verdicts and write them down as record. Where does this agency, the power to act as an archaeologist come from? Why does society sanction such activities? Archaeology is hardly a natural custom. Do people really believe that archaeology is a natural thing to do? Is archaeology really gathering knowledge for the sake of knowledge? The law is supposedly based on values and morality (or is it morally correct to keep to the law?). Where do archaeological values come from? (Values concerning what it is better and worse to do in archaeology.) Is it not that the power to adjudicate the past comes from being an archaeologist, being a member of the community of archaeologists?

There is a darker side too. There may be the desire simply to exercise power, ordering the past, acting as authority. There is gratification perhaps in the destruction which excavation inevitably entails, the irreplaceable loss, and the significance this confers on the destroyer.

If we begin with the dichotomy of archaeologist as subjectivity and the accused past as objectivity, we can follow through another set of dichotomies - antinomies of the law.¹⁶

law	its power
legality	morality
structure	action
subjection	agency
rights	things
necessity	freedom

It comes down to a relationship between subjectivity and the law. We have a responsibility to ourselves in front of the law and can act as we wish; at the same time we are subject to the law. Archaeologists act in doing what they will with the past; they are also responsible to the discipline of archaeology. It is all about power: the discipline of archaeology and the community of archaeologists. I think it has to be accepted that archaeology has no inherent values, no particular or necessary activities or methods. Otherwise we are led to believe that archaeologists directly receive the imperatives of reason through intuition, perceiving the force of objectivity, or simply they must base what archaeologists do on what has been done by archaeologists, following customs and traditions. How and why did these begin? If the question is not answered, archaeologists become subject to history.

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What **is** this archaeology which is all about power? It need not be about **the** sadistic mutilation of the past. In the courtroom the law exists only in interpretation, in the act of applying principles to a concrete situation. These principles are precedents and have no force of their own which makes them rigid and unchangeable. There is no necessity to do archaeology in any particular way.

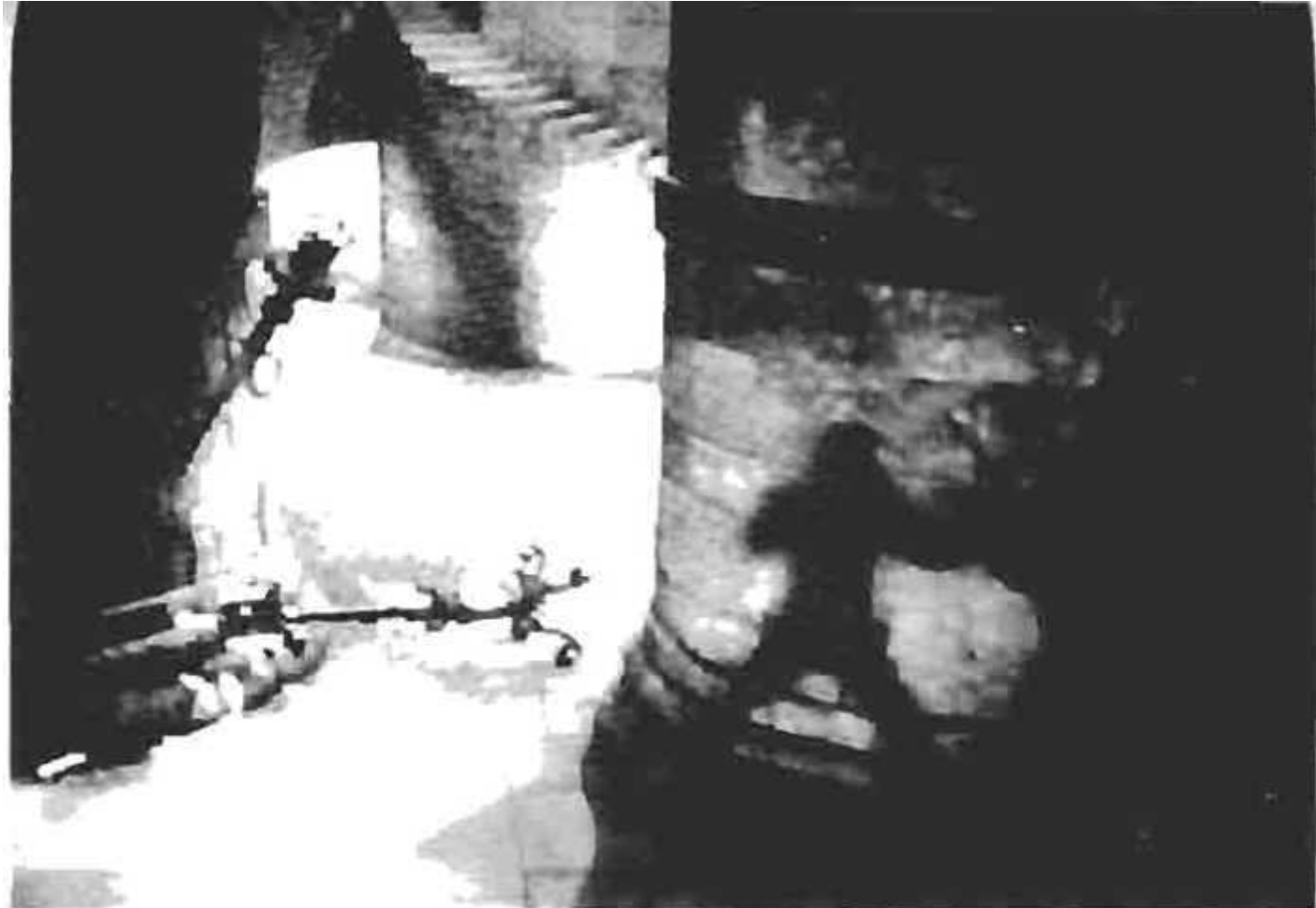
And as in another sort of law court. In Homer's *Iliad*, on the shield of Achilles, we read of the archaic Greek *istor* (from **which** is ultimately derived our word history). These judges were arbitrators to whom disputes were brought. Often judging on panels, they gave interpretations of the dispute which could be accepted or disregarded by the disputants; they judged and in turn were judged themselves. The particular event of the dispute **illuminated** the ambiguity of the law. Both judges and disputants were subjects of the law which was **recreated** in the event of **arbitration**. The law was simply the way of **life** and all the cultural, political and psychological baggage it carried.

In archaeology this takes me to the hermeneutic circle of a 'dialogue' between archaeology and the object past in which alternate interpretation and 'response' of the past. Not subjecting the past to order through the structures of a predefined archaeological method. We might also see archaeologists as arbitrators to whom are brought disputes by others who are not archaeologists. No laws of archaeological reasoning or inherent archaeological values applied to the past, but **a** circle of dialogue which **relates** to how archaeology suits **a** way of living and which involves a responsibility to the partner in dialogue rather than to the 'law'.

I immediately think of the disputes which have arisen over the remains of Native American communities in the United States (Native Americans have been disputing absolute archaeological rights to their past). Here are arguments of different types of values (scientific as opposed to religious), rights (the use and ownership of the past), and obligations (to allow anthropologists access to Native American remains, or to return bodies and things which have been collected by archaeologists). These are rooted in different ways of life. They seem wrapped in the antinomies I have outlined.

ADVENTURE

The archaeologist could be a bit of a rebel. And of course their work could lead to wild places. The romantic image of the archaeologist as explorer of the unknown is still a real one. In the United States archaeologists may still appear as the cowboys of science.



Keaton in Nottingham Castle

TOURISM

The visa of the past for entry into the future . . . is stamped with exoticism and folklore.

(Dorfman and Mattelart 1975, p.86)

There is an escapist attraction to archaeology (and anthropology) with the exotic and mysterious taking us away from the commonplace. Archaeology can appropriately accompany the tourist: journeys to landscapes steeped in history, archaeological sites marking the cultural form and significance of the land. There is a journalism to this archaeology: its writings are not specialist, but popular and anecdotal, and great reliance is placed on myths and the mysterious, folklore and fascination. These supply the attraction, something that makes somewhere worth visiting. The site or object almost has to speak directly to the visitor, of great artistic skill, of knowledge, religious devotion, of wealth and power, or war and brutality. It may speak through myth and folklore - labyrinth of Knossos, Arthur's Britain; or it may reference popular philosophies of history - the fall of the great, progress and decline, cycles of civilization. Like Stonehenge and Nasca Peru it may attest to a gulf of incomprehension, a loss of knowledge. The fascination, the attraction is spell-binding; it is an entry into myth and magic. I shall expand on this.

DISCOVERY, COLLECTION AND IMMEDIACY

Archaeology hooks us with discovery. Finding something, however apparently insignificant, which was previously not known. Everyone on an excavation can do this, and all the apparently trivial finds can add up to something significant. Discovery asserts our autonomy; it means the past in some sense belongs to us because we found it; it thus asserts our significance.

Discovery is also about immediacy. To find something is to have immediate contact of a sort with its original owner; and this is as close as we can get. It is the power of the edge between ourselves and the past, or rather an other; it is both proximity and distance. Is this not part of the affective significance of archaeology's layers, with their edges being so important in establishing sequence and meaning?

I think that treasure hunters using metal detectors may not be deliberately setting out to wreck the past, the crucial layers, in search of material gain. Using metal detectors is a hunt, a search for discovery and an undisputed ownership of something which originates beyond us. And what immediately seems a trivial find may be the more significant if it belonged to someone and meant something to them, even just simply

in its use. This brings contact. Those using metal detectors may not only be after treasure; rich and grand finds do not really belong to anyone, their human significance is less than the incidental.

Collecting old things is another channelling of desire to make some part of the world one's own. Knowing the details of each collected item in its similarities and differences to others, or in a fetishism which fixes on the individual item itself, the collector knows the uniqueness of the collection. And it belongs to the collector through the autonomous act of collecting and through the consequent uniqueness. There is also something of an act of saving, of some sort of life which would otherwise not be. The collected things are 'saved'. They would otherwise be dead. This is a religious allegory of redemption: the past is dead but brought to life in its redeeming collection.

Passers-by looking through the fence around an excavation in a town seemed often to ask if any bodies had been found, or gold. The earth holds treasure and death. I used to dismiss such inquiries as a morbidity which had little to do with archaeology. But archaeology is so much about death and not just immediately in terms of dealing with the remains of the dead and mortuary rituals. Again, there is an element of contact with the other, and an edge - between life and death. I shall return to the theme of death.

NOSTALGIA, FANTASY AND THE NEW AGE

Every year from 1974 there was the Stonehenge People's Free Festival, held around the time of the summer solstice and at the prehistoric monument in Wiltshire. All sorts of people attended: travellers, free-thinkers, people of a 'counter-culture', those simply interested. Up to 35,000 may have been at the larger meetings. The festival was suppressed in 1984, violently prevented from gathering in 1985, abolished since in the name of archaeology.

The Ancient Order of Druids was formed in the late eighteenth century, a mystical and at first secret society. Taking its image from the ancient Celtic druids described in Caesar, the order harks back to an antique era of initiated knowledge. Since 1905 Druids have also held summer meetings at Stonehenge {Chippendale *et al.* 1990).

Stonehenge signifies. The monument, with its astronomical alignments, with theories of its relation to esoteric knowledges of earth and heavens, an order of archaeo-astronomy, and being the grandest of so many stone circles, alignments and tombs of its prehistoric age, speaks to some as testament to the inadequacies of the present's understanding. The aura and ambience of such sites, their mystery (not so much now at Stonehenge, walking with the crowds from the car park), cannot be captured by science. They are experienced as having a sacred power.



The touch of the past. Rock carvings at Namforsen, Sweden: pecked-out figures thousands of years old. At a dramatic river rapids. Gustav Hallstrom spent decades clinging to rocks, shining lights at night, watching *at* different seasons, feeling to find the carvings, to trace them (1960). Chris Tilley has written an interpretation of the elks, boats and people (1991).

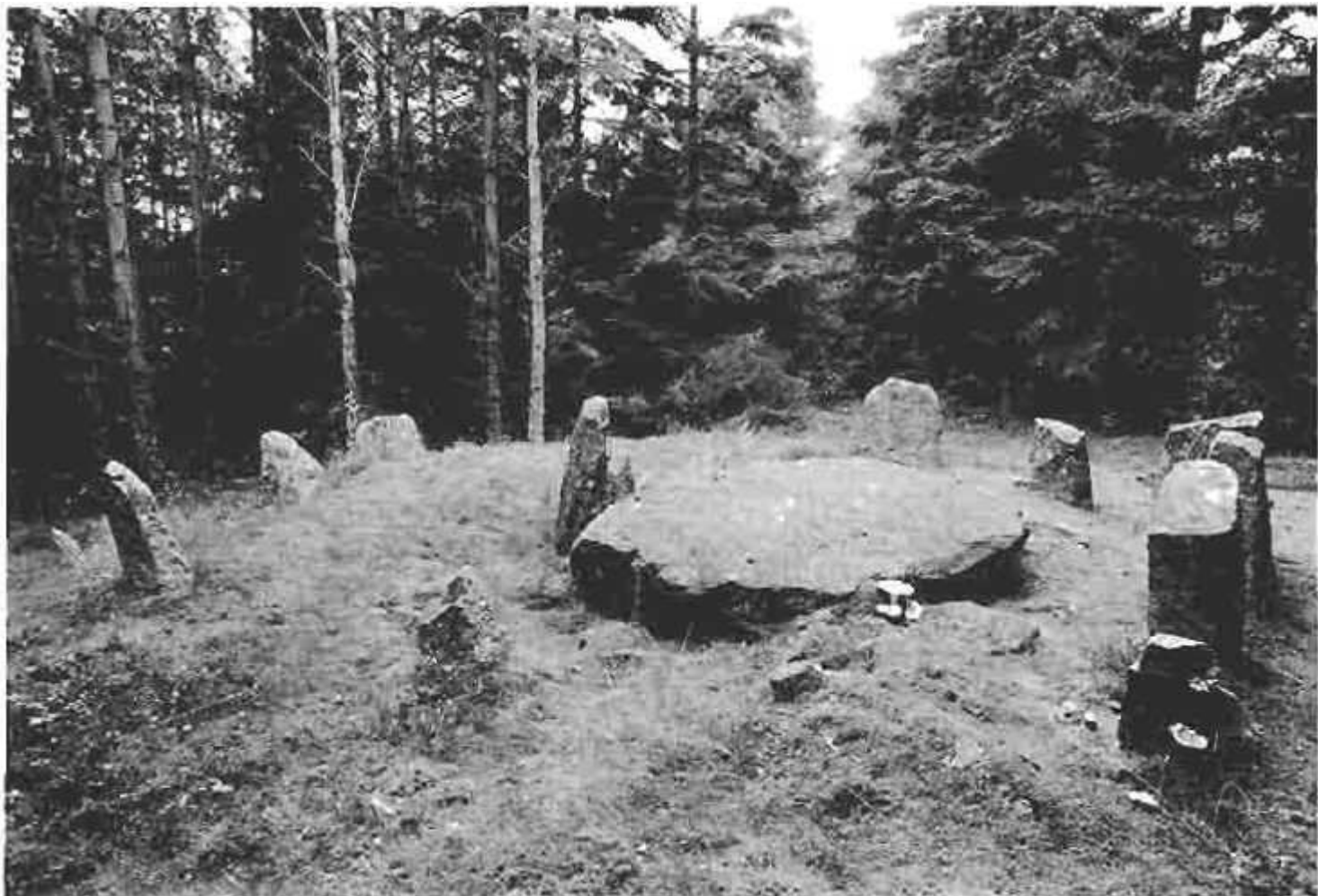
Dowsing, the idea that a pendulum or other indicator can allow energies or powers to manifest themselves through the unconscious medium of the body, may be a way of gaining contact with these forgotten sacred powers; so some believe. A sort of synaesthesia, dowsing allows them, like the ancients, to be 'in touch'. And the stones speak. Of such sentience almost lost, of an age of primaeval ecologists erecting sacred networks of monuments in harmony with the earth. The past gains new significance. Alive with contemporary sacred power, it is no longer the dead and dry stuff of science, but moist and of the earth.

Ancient sites are sometimes rich in folklore, magical stories which tell of the power of the monuments, distorted oral memories more human than official written record. The human factor is sometimes taken to be more important than empirical fact. (I refer the reader to Peter Ackroyd's 1989 novel *First Light*.)

The theme of contemporary loss and of the past as a qualitatively different realm, as advanced, but in a different way, relates with the alternative worlds of Faery Fantasy whose seminal works include those of J.R.R. Tolkien. Here we enter worlds of other beings, fairy-tale creatures but enacting familiar stories of battles between good and evil, journeys, the rise and fall of kingdoms. Swords and sorcery, role-playing games of dungeons and dragons draw on similar images as do fantasy movies like *Labyrinth* and *Dark Crystal*, children's TV cartoons like *Masters of the Universe*. It is also a science-fiction genre. This is a major cultural industry; bookshelves are crammed with such work: witches, goblins, heroes, magic, mystical kingdoms. I do not wish to reduce such a quantity of material to a formula, but many are wholesome allegories, consolations of lost or parallel worlds where individuality and character mattered; romantic nostalgias for a pre industrial order.

'New Age' is a collective term for cultural phenomena which together are meant to herald a new age (almost coinciding with the millennium) - the Age of Aquarius. In astrological history this is a dawn of harmony, understanding and spiritual growth. Its concerns are with esoteric and spiritual traditions, health through self-help therapy, environmental balance. Science, technology and standard of living are considered false idols; we have much to learn from knowledges hitherto hidden and occult (Campbell and Brennan 1990).

This is all a powerful and emotive 'counter-cultural' mix of the developed west since the 1960s. Oriental spirituality, wisdom found in drug use, martial arts, magic, tarot, astrology, comic-book art, science-fiction, a valuation of the body and sensuality, popular anthropology and a valuation of the way of life of other cultures and times (especially North American Indians); also art movements, far-left politics, Marxism and feminism. It is not, I believe, stretching the point to string these all



Nasserod round dolmen, Sweden

together with an archaeological site Here are deeply felt convictions and faiths that conventional thinking is not enough, that missing is a crucial human or subjective factor, an embodied knowledge The perceived mystery and fascination of aspects of the archaeological past can be allied with mysticism and primitivism, but however facile and academically discredited, key aspects of archaeological experience are foregrounded contact, recovery or gain and loss, the otherness of the past

EXCAVATION AND GENEALOGY

The idea that we may dig deep to find authentic meaning and truth is so much a part of what we are Root metaphor Freud's layered psyche comes to mind, psychoanalysis as excavation Genealogy also implies the vertical, lines of descent, that deep family roots confer some sense of cultural authenticity Lineage, familial depth, has been a powerful mode of justification The weight of the past¹⁷

But I have also indicated a way in which meaning is not something hidden beneath the surface We do not get to the past simply by digging deep There is a way in which understanding involves *projection* We are expectant We always pre-understand what we have found as something This involves situating it within our way of reasoning and understanding of our world It is not getting down to the original meaning it had before it was buried Understanding something I have found is to take up its proposals, the things evoked but not actually present in it, following its references Exploring the variations which the object undergoes through the action of our imagination is to trace an emergent meaning in front of the object and sideways, this following of chains of association is not vertical

Now I do not wish to deny the evocations of digging The things we find take us back to dig down for others to which they seem to allude This is the research and exploration, empirical and often scientific, which we may undertake in reactivating the meaning of the object for ourselves What I wish to avoid is the notion that the authentic and objective past is down there with ourselves in the present above The past is as much an extension of ourselves here as it is down there And we are digging down not just to the past but to ourselves We find ourselves in that deep otherness

On the emotive power of the idea of excavation I wish to end with something Walter Benjamin wrote It is from his 'Berlin Chronicle'

Language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie

interred. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. This confers the tone and bearing of genuine reminiscences. He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed from all earlier associations, that stand - like precious fragments or torsos in a collector's gallery - in the prosaic rooms of our later understanding. True, for successful excavations a plan is needed. Yet no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam, and it is to cheat oneself of the richest prize to preserve as a record merely the inventory of one's discoveries, and not this dark joy of the place of the finding itself. Fruitless searching is as much a part of this as succeeding, and consequently remembrance must not proceed in the manner *of a* narrative or still less that *of a* report, but must, in the strictest epic and rhapsodic manner, assay its spade in ever-new places, and in the old ones delve to ever-deeper layers.

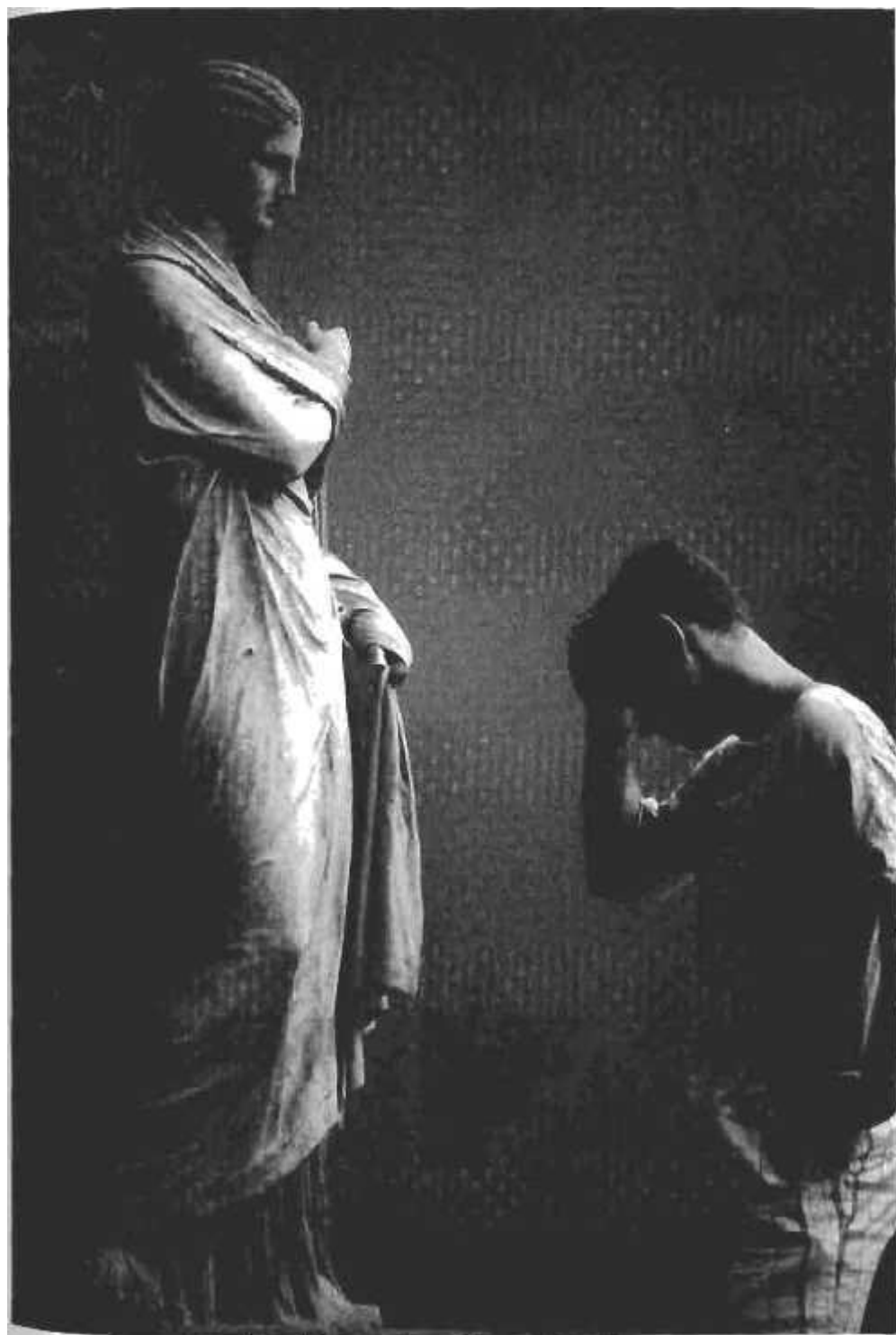
(Benjamin 1979, p.314)

THE LOOK

As an archaeologist I look at the past, what's left. I am constantly observing. Does the past look back? It seems a silly question. My look seems to be one of surveillance. This one-way watching means I am free to do what I wish, even if objectivity (that quality the past is meant to have) is supposed to guide me, even if I am told what to do according to archaeological method. The past isn't watching. Of course not. I'm free to have an archaeological adventure.

I take a measured section of the site and a plan, put them together and do a perspective drawing. This is an objective rendering of the past, what's left; isn't it? But through its vanishing points a perspective drawing is centred on the eye of the observer. A perspective is not just another way of looking, as in the measured plan and section. Observing the past is meant to provide me with an objective base from which I can work. A way of looking at things (formulated as archaeological method) is for many archaeologists a standard of objectivity. Is a way of looking not subjective, however? Because looking implies no necessary responsibility towards what is being looked at. The past doesn't come into it.

The past doesn't kick up a fuss at being looked at. (But what of all the troubles and hitches of excavation?) The past is found, it seems, ready to behold, and ready to be acted upon — dug up. And what is left is the fundamental separation of the archaeologist and the past. The past is



National Museum, Athens, July 1989

dead and blind. The archaeological task is to know it, to trace its form. How is this to be done? Is a replica of the past to be produced? Simple demonstration? But this would be meaningless and impossible. The past is to be explained - but how? How is the material past to be inserted into our minds without it all depending on the look of subjective experience? These are all the problems of method I discussed in Part 1.

The one-way look confirms our self-coherence, command and confidence in acting as we do. But what would it be if the past did look back?

The separation of the archaeologist from the past contained in that one-way look is related to an aged separation of the holy and the lucky, as discussed by John Dewey (see Rorty 1982). The holy was that which endured and was the concern of religion and philosophy. The lucky was day-to-day matters, the concern of technology and workers. A social division is involved between free-person and slave; the free-person contemplating the enduring, and giving orders to the slave who worked at producing things. Thinking was what the free-person did because thought was of things that did not change; knowledge was a task of uncovering and representing the real in the mind. Slaves got on with practical jobs of material production, experience in the object-world. This division of labour is argued by Dewey to be the root of the problems of relating thinking and practice, knowledge and experience.

TOOLS

While I am on about thinking and doing in the minds of philosophers and in the hands of slaves, a few words about tools.

Archaeologists use tools and gadgets. Mathematics and statistics are often referred to as tools, as method is the instrument for producing knowledge. These real and metaphorical tools knock the past into shape, bring it to order so that it can be known or explained. This is instrumental reason.

But there is another way of thinking of tools and the past. Martin Heidegger (1962) contended that science operated on objects from a particular viewpoint. In science objects are treated as things simply at hand. This is not so much a privileged viewpoint as a specialized one. More generally we are practically engaged with the things we deal with. We are always pre-occupied and inserted into the world. We might want to stand back and take a look, as in science, but this 'standing back' is from first being 'thrown' into the world. This is a condition not of ourselves being in a world of things separate from us, but of being-in-the-world. Our self is being engaged and occupied, concerned with the things around us. The things around us are thus in a condition of being ready-to-hand. They are like tools. In this condition of being *ready-to-hand* the objects of the past are like tools for creating something else.

They are ready to be used in our archaeology. But this does not mean that we can make anything with them. Tools have particular purposes and uses. We can use tools in the wrong way or have a poor design in mind, or a pointless project. In the same way we can make poor archaeologies with the things we find and not think very well about what sort of projects we want to undertake. Our craft skills can be poor.

OUTER EXPERIENCE AND THE PURITAN ARCHAEOLOGIST

Poor craft skills because the experience of the contemplating free philosopher is not a very wide or practised one. This philosopher thinks that knowledge means direct familiarity with the object-world, getting acquainted with an outer domain of reality which is opposed to an inner domain of impressions. The problem of knowing becomes one of justifying how our ideas correspond with reality. So the philosopher-archaeologist is bothered about how to keep to the past out there, down there. And it is quite a worry because if we do not get our pictures of the past right, there is nothing left down there to correct them; the past is being dug away as we look at it.

As an archaeologist I'm looking at what I'm finding. With my trained and scientific eye, seeing what is relevant to the research plan, checking that what I see coming up doesn't require a change of plan. But I'm not there. I'm drinking in the bar with friends, enjoying the slippy clay after rain, helping out a hedgehog trapped overnight in a deep trench. My eyes are to be transparent, pure signs of the reality dug. Disembodied eyes, disembodied hands working the site. This is a horror show. This is outer experience.

I have to note what is being dug. It all has to be put into words so it can be properly written up later. It's difficult trying to get it as objective as possible, copying down what has been found. Computers help (lots of storage), and pictures, and numbers. Writing-up, we are told, should be as transparent as possible. The ideal would probably be a direct injection into your mind, if you wanted to know about the past discovered in the excavation. In this spectator-based knowledge what is wanted is exhibition, gazing at the world, not the problems of representing and writing it. Like a visit to the site I should be able to show and tell about what has been found, face to face.

Writing-up is a translation of archaeology's outer experience. Outer experience is experience in which my self was absent or denied. This denial of self is about purifying and making virtuous our faculties of perception and sensibility; it is about being ascetic, a negative obsession with the body. (Theodor Adorno came up with something which makes me think of this ascetic outer experience: 'the best magnifying glass is a

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splinter in the eye'.) And in doing archaeology in this outer experience I worry. That I might *slip* up and get it wrong, failing in those scholarly virtues to which it is my duty to conform. About letting myself and the present spoil the past. About letting reason be tainted. These are worries about conforming with what other archaeologists are doing, with the authority of archaeology the discipline. They are worries about what the Father requires of us.

You can be neurotic, believing you suffer from diseases (not rigorous enough, not enough evidence, too much distracting theory, too subjective) and these are symptoms of the problem. Illusions of grandeur (great schemes which explain all prehistory, the past entirely within your hands) because of a basic inability to come to terms with the past. And repetition (going through the same outer experiences, copying down list after list of facts) because of the uncured condition.

What is the character of the puritan archaeologist? Hard and serious man of action and science. Demonstrating and showing the past with authority. He doesn't let feelings and emotions get in the way. He's straight - in every sense. He's not some perverse deviant; he's into good clean reproductive sex - reproducing the past.

STRIPTease

Excavation is striptease. The layers are peeled off slowly; eyes of intent scrutiny. The pleasure is in seeing more, but it lies also in the edges: the edge of stocking-top and thigh. There is the allure of transgression - the margin of decorum and lewdness, modesty and display. The hidden past brought into the stage-light of the present. Audience keeps its distance; the stage is for performer only. The split heightens the enticement. Just as the gap between past and present draws us to wonder in fascination. Discovery is a little release of gratification. A pleasure comes from interruption, costume tossed to the side little by little; or the smooth line of breast punctuated by nipple bared. Perhaps above all is the excitement of not seeing, of anticipation of human form outlined in dance, costume and dim lights, but kept from full view.

The energies of striptease and the dance can be peculiarly masculine and saturated with a patriarchal power. But they are not simply this. The energy or force of the allure of striptease is not the performer alone but the *process* of laying bare. It is the performance, the medium of discovery, how we come to see and know. This performance can involve a different sort of looking to the penetrating and one-way gaze of surveillance which sees everything. It colludes in a game of tease. This pleasure of coming to know is not about taking and raping. This is a pleasure existing in the interplay of performer and audience.

Excavation as striptease is about edges. Margins and limits: these are

prohibitions. In striptease they are to do with modesty, decorum and eroticism. In excavation and archaeology these limits and prohibitions are on the object-world and ourselves (keeping object and self, past and present apart) and on our practices (maintaining the propriety of archaeology the discipline). I ask again the best way of thinking about these prohibitions on what archaeologists may do. If these are external limits (edges imposed from the outside in the form of definitions of what the object past is, of what reason is, defining our bodies as self-contained with an inside and an outside, the present as not being the past) then we are led into problems and metaphysics. Questions of what constitutes our self in its essence, of what the past is and where it ends. On the other hand these limits can be viewed as internal. This is to say that prohibitions imply their transgression. Order implies disruption; reason implies irrationality, sensibility intelligibility, past present. This is how we know: in the discovery of one in the other. We experience the meaning of the objective past in the transgression of its limits, in it becoming something other, in it changing.

Transgressions are implied by prohibitions. Is this not the origin of the thrill?

This takes me to something I have already mentioned - the vitality of absence. Things can be thought as defined not by what they are but by what they are not, absence. And we collude in this process of becoming, laying down those defining absences which are decided meaningful. In this connection Nietzsche has a variation on the analogy of striptease. He talks of truth becoming woman. Truth no longer comes from the Father whose absolute authority of presence gives us truth and enlightenment, the Father who prohibits. Truth instead is a playful dance of veils, revealed in concealment. But we should add that the woman as performer knows that this is no truth of hers. She is not revealing herself but an other in the costume of striptease and dance, a character for an audience. The dance is performance and the audience collude in a play of revelation (see Derrida's discussion in *Spurs* 1978, pp.51f.).

In true striptease there is always more. The performance ends not with seeing and knowing all, but with desire.

We get to know as much about the past from what we do with what remains and its pleasures, as from fixing a hope of scrutinizing the past itself.

EXCREMENT

Good archaeologists may want pure clean eyes, but there is an excremental element to archaeology. Archaeology and scatology. Archaeologists grub around in the remains of past societies and a lot of the remains are the 'garbage' of those societies, But I do not just mean this. There is

often not much remaining of many past societies and because of this it might be thought that archaeology is about scarcity. In another way though it is about excess. There is in archaeology an unceasing demand for more facts, more documentation, more detail, more approaches. And although I hesitate to say it, a lot of this is waste matter; it is redundant.

Here are two anecdotes. Some years ago I was researching the earthen and stone-chambered tombs built in the Wessex region of England by the people who first practised farming. There are many of these tombs and a significant proportion have been excavated in the last century and since. I searched all the publications for material with which I could work; I was looking for information about their strange burial practices. It is a common experience to find that work done in the past is of little use to archaeology now; the excavators did not look for or record the things archaeologists have come to value. And this is indeed what I found. There were only three tombs in my region which I could use for statistical analysis. But what surprised me was the proportion of reports I consulted which clearly had never been read. Older periodicals were often issued with their pages untrimmed and still joined at the edge. I had to slit pages in many, and this was in the Haddon Library in Cambridge, one of the main archaeological research libraries. Archaeologists get very concerned about saving and publishing the past so that it can be used in the future. I wonder how much will be read.

In April 1990 I attended a public conference at Hunter College, Manhattan, a gathering of Native Americans, anthropologists and archaeologists as well as others who were interested. The subject was conflicting claims to cultural property; whether the cultural remains of Native Americans were public property or still belonged to contemporary Native American groups. I have already mentioned this issue. The Smithsonian Institution in Washington has a considerable collection of skulls and bones collected particularly in the last century. Many want these reburied. Something Walter Echo-Hawk, a Native American attorney, said has stuck in my mind. 'What are you doing with all those bones?' he asked. A valid question.

This argument of waste does not just apply to the past I fear. But neither is it an argument for abandoning archaeology.

There is a nervous and neurotic feel to some archaeology; of researchers working on compiling complete inventories of sites and finds. A fixation on the past as somehow complete in itself. We only need, or rather are obliged, to copy. And there is a feeling of retention. Holding back on oneself. Not committing oneself (reasonably perhaps) until all the facts have been gathered. But also retention in the sense of not letting go. The feeling that we cannot let go of the past but must preserve and conserve. Robert Hewison identifies this retention in Britain with a cultural and commercial complex he calls the 'heritage





Pot washing, Back Swinegate, York: excavations February 1990

industry' and which proffers a consoling and spurious preserved past in a society in decline (1987).

It seems difficult to find fault with an ethic of conservation - the code of conserving things from the past considered valuable in some way. Conservation is a powerful seductive logic. And the gratification or satisfaction which comes from conserving the past is a significant impulse to carry out archaeological work. It is a little sickening to think of the loss of so much of the past due to contemporary development and neglect. There is gratification in ridding oneself of this nausea. Conservation stems loss and decay, and I would connect it with a series of drives: ridding oneself of nausea, of decay; there is a sense of illness, and holding off death. The past is gone, its absence marked by decayed and disordered remnants. Perhaps archaeology can fill the gaping hole of the absent past. But with what? Scientific archaeology purifies the past with clean reason; order is brought to the disorder of decay which putrefies. The past is cleaned up; dirt and decay removed or transformed into knowledge. A conserved past contributes to the health of the present; it is wholesome and nourishing. But the sanitation operates against another disorder, that of irrationality which is associated with magic, emotion and sentiment. In archaeology it is thought that these may lead to problems; they have to be controlled. The body is dirt. Archaeology achieves its ends partly through a sacrifice of the body (I almost say flesh) of the archaeologist. The movement of our life-cycles, the personal, subjectivity, feeling seem irrelevant to archaeological discipline. This sacrifice is weighed against saving the past.

In Britain many ancient sites, usually architectural, are in the care of the state and are open to the public. There is a very distinctive style to most of these sites. Many are ruins, but consolidated. Loose stones are mortared in position. Walls are cleaned and repointed. Paths tended or created. Fine timber walkways constructed. The ground is firm with neatly trimmed lawns. Park benches are provided. This is all justified in terms of health (stopping the further decay of the monument) and safety (of the visiting public). However reasonable such a justification, it creates a distinctive experience of the visit to such an ancient monument. Masonry, grass and sky; such monuments are almost interchangeable, if it were not for their setting.

I think of the contrast of much archaeological excavation. Excavating in the North East of England, particularly on inner-city sites in Newcastle upon Tyne, firmly reinforced my fascination for archaeology. Thick disturbed deposits, complex and indeterminate; there were several metres of remains from pre-Roman to twentieth century. Damp earthiness and the never ending succession of interpretive decisions, deciding on what to make of the flows of clay, silts, sands, rubbles, interruptions of later insertions, drains, constructions. At the castle,



Norham, Northumberland



Haga dolmen, Bohuslan, Sweden

DESIRE AND METAPHOR

work was beneath a Victorian railway viaduct only metres away from the still-standing keep of the thirteenth century Complex experiences

The excremental culture of archaeology, which may wish to avoid the nausea of loss and an absent past, finds gratification in a purifying, but perhaps neurotic, desire to hold on and to order It is allied with the marginalization of feeling and of heterogeneity, the irreducible otherness of the past And there is the failure (for me conspicuous) to theorize death and decay These are tamed in archaeology as mortuary analysis,¹⁸ or understood as obstacles to a clearer (cleaner) knowledge of the past

scarcity	excess
conservation	loss
order	disruption
static things	cycles of life and death
clean (spiritual) knowledge	dirty fleshy earthiness
nutrition	excretion

My argument is not to find fault with conservation so much as to point out its dynamic, its other side In the tension between the two, in realizing one within the other, I find the energy and attraction of archaeology

ALCHEMY AND PHARMACOLOGY

Archaeology can be seen as a motion upwards from past to present, from a base and material fundament to knowledge which is of the mind There are archaeological alchemists Obsessed with the problem of matter, the alchemist seeks a method of transmuting one kind, base metal, into another kind, gold Moving from the real and mundane to the shining and enduring gold of truth

There are also archaeological pharmacologists, white-coated, bunging purity and health from dirt and illness In the cycle of archaeological method I described in Part 1 an approach to the past is criticized and a solution to its problems proposed, perhaps a new method These illnesses are usually of method and knowledge, the remedies are to cure weaknesses in the sorts of knowledge produced of the past, weaknesses such as bias, subjectivity or simply faulty reasoning

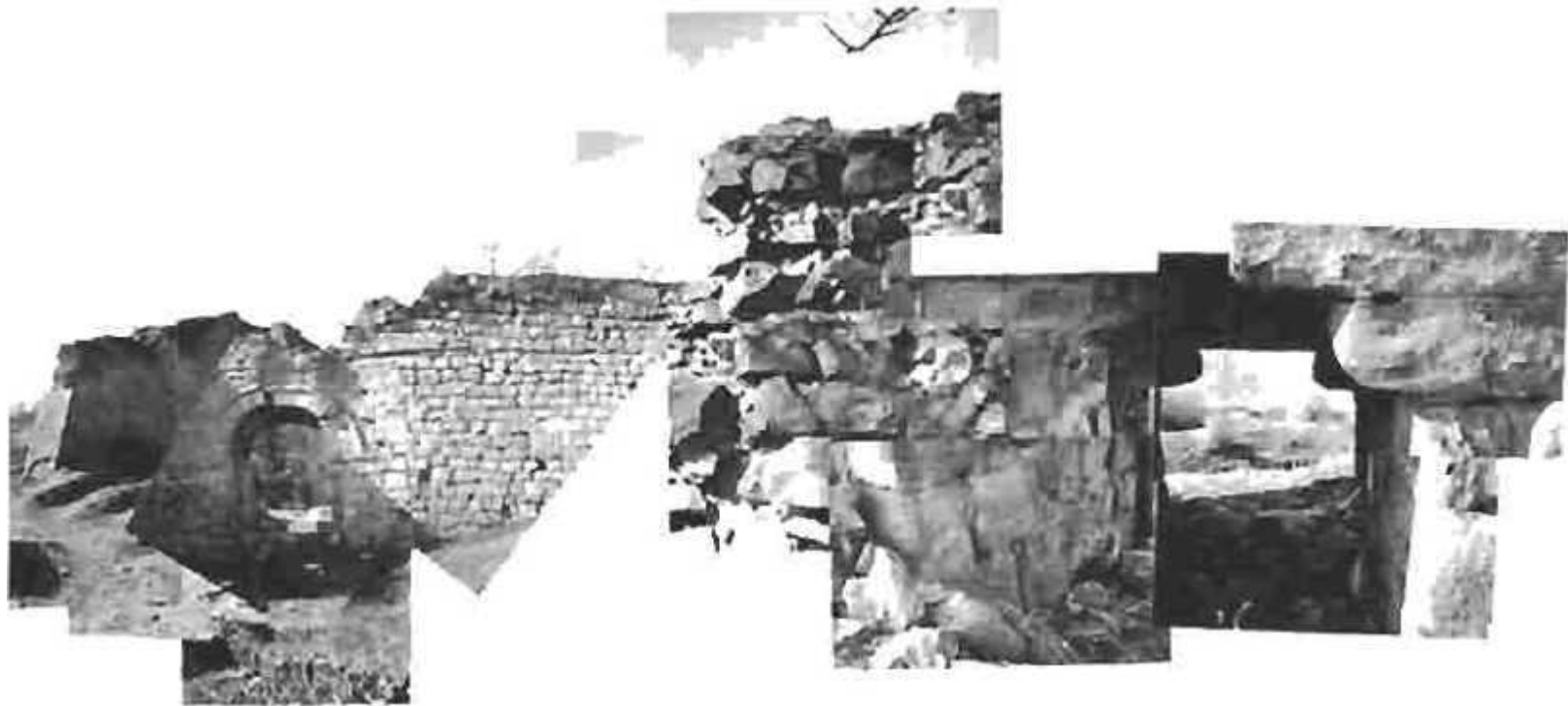
So there is a therapeutic dimension to archaeology But the therapy need not be pharmaceutical

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Psychotherapy involves a relationship, hopefully a productive one, in which the therapist listens to what someone says and considers what they have done, and in a dialogue aims to make sense of these Neurotic



Mitford, Northumberland



Mittford Northumberland

or pathological expression and behaviour are treated as symptoms of traumatic or otherwise disturbing experience, perhaps in a childhood past. For the patients this experience has been repressed and withdrawn from what is meaningful to them. Their behaviour seems to them partly out of control. The aim of psychotherapy is to restore some understanding and sense to the patient; it is not just to explain what the causes of their neurotic and pathological behaviour are. The point is to help patients reflect about themselves and sort out the relation between their past experience and present behaviour. This is not just thinking but may involve an acting out, combining an affective and emotional understanding as well as intellectual. The relation between past and present is a symbolic one with the pathological behaviour repeating in condensed or displaced form the originating experience.

Meaning is a key in psychotherapy. The therapist is concerned not only with the patient's competence in social action (the ability to carry on normal behaviour), but also with the content or quality of the patient's behaviour, its meaning or significance. Psychoanalysis has developed theories of the qualities and meanings of human experiences, what it is to grow up and enter society, through clinical encounters. The acceptability of these theories is not so much their predictive power, their ability to predict certain types of pathological behaviour occurring after certain childhood experiences. It is their persuasive power in the therapeutic relationship, how they bring about changes in behaviour, understanding and relationships, their consistency and usefulness in interpretation. The symbolic and internal relation between traumatic experience and symptomatic behaviour, the emphasis on meaning and persuasive power in a relation between two particular people means there is no one correct analysis of the meaning of an action or expression. There are many psychoanalytical theories.

The vitality of psychoanalysis must surely be that it questions ideas of what it is to be someone, breaking up the idea of the self, unravelling its components and investigating the nature of personal experience. It is critical of the idea of a central self which has a category of experience, a self which is the origin of personal meanings. Instead the self only becomes fixed through the workings of society (necessarily historical) and desire.

Because of the distortions present within the patient, the relationship with the therapist is not a balanced one. A key aspect is transference, in which the patient invests the therapist with positive and negative qualities according to the repressed memories of the significant experiences. The circumstances of the traumatic experience are transferred to the clinical encounter. The therapist is not an equal partner and may adopt a strategic attitude to allow symptoms to be revealed and traumatic experience to be re-encountered through transference. This

analytic stance attempts to expose contradictions and defences in the patient, but leaves it up to them to act.

Psychotherapy is understanding through dialogue. I have already had a good deal to say about interpretation which makes a dialogue of the relation between interpreter and that interpreted. The analogy of psychotherapy adds and clarifies. Archaeology in this model knows no unitary past, just as there is no self-contained self. Indeed the category in question is subjectivity - attempting to understand our feelings and experiences of the material past, as well as interpreting the past in terms of meaning. Meaning involves significance and quality as well as what we observe and is a move beyond or accompanying explanation of the mechanics and functioning of the past. Such significance and quality is less about representing the past object than following its symbolic displacement, its translation and transference through different contexts, practices and experiences. This means that there is no one necessarily correct interpretation of the past. Past and present are partners in dialogue; the dialogue is the means of creating meaning. It is an active making of sense, producing a meaning which was not there in the beginning. One aim of the encounter is to bring about a release, of meanings of the past which will prove to be of use. This is a practical reasoning.¹⁹

TRANSLATING THE PAST

The proposition that human phenomena are structured like language has had a tremendous impact on what the social sciences are today. It has also affected archaeology. The idea is that material culture is like a text, with individual objects or parts of objects words in a language (albeit simpler and more ambiguous). Some have looked for grammars, formal logics which lie behind decorative patterns for example, rules which when applied can generate the patterning observed in the past. Others have gone for meaning with the idea that objects are connected in systems which speak the structure of society or human life; cemeteries have been treated as transformations of society, revealing and distorting (there may be interests working to misrepresent the structure of society). Others again have looked at the use of material objects in different contexts, at how the meaning may change with different use. A pot in a house may mean one thing, something very different at a tomb.²⁰

With material culture conceived as sharing some of the structure and characteristics of language it is appropriate to think of translation as a metaphor of interpretation. What does it involve? A poor translation is produced if we try to create and use a set of fixed rules for exchanging an item in one language for an item in the translator's. The equivalence between translation and original is not a direct one. Translation is to say

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERESTS

in the words of one language what one finds in the words of another - another language, another person. Translation involves a translator who makes sense and this requires reference to the translator's social experience and context. Translation is embodied interpretation (see Benjamin 1970b).

GAMES

Post-structuralists often write of the play of meaning, the meaning of something shifting with its context and associations. Games are played. In what sense might archaeology be a game?

Games have rules which the players follow. But the game really exists only through being played. There may be a rule book and equipment but what really matters is its playing. The rules guide, but every game is different. Soccer players apply their understanding of the game, and skills, to the particular circumstances of each new match. Indeed games exist 'only in being different' (Gadamer). Games also take us out of our ordinary experience; they may be played in a special ground or arena.

If the past sets the rules (we should want this surely), as archaeologist [am the player and archaeology is a particular strategy or option I use in playing the game of interpretation. The rules take me out of ordinary experience, and exert an authority over me. But at the same time the past takes on concrete existence only in being played; in this I am essential to the past. Archaeology the discipline is only one strategy adapted to each 'playing', each particular project. There can be good and bad matches, good and bad archaeological approaches and projects. These are judged not just according to how closely the rules are followed, but also according to how much the players (archaeologists) get out of the game, and how it looks to an audience.

Some questions are raised. How do I know the rules of the game? How does the past guide me in my archaeological interpretation? And is archaeology simply entertainment for players and audience? It helps to shift from playing games to theatre performance.

THEATRE, FILM AND INTERPRETATION

A play is performed. Like a game, a play has priority over its actors, but it only takes on concrete existence in performance. Performances differ, so much so that the idea of there being one definitive performance goes against the nature of the creative arts. The understanding of director, actors and designer, as well as their skill, comes between a play and its performance. It can also be argued that performance is not about defining and following an author's intentions at all. The play is independent of author and open to reading and interpretation in the light of performers'

abilities and aims. And a good performance is one which reveals meanings for an audience. The audience is final judge of the worth of a performance, judging critically how it speaks to them, how it enlarges their understanding. A play may have a story which makes sense (or denies that there is sense) and we may try to understand this sense which is internal to the play. But the story has also a dimension of reference; it tells of the world and what it is like; it evokes things not directly present in the play. The skills of the actors as well as the quality of the interpretation are involved in another interplay of presence and absence. The good actor is not taken literally (as actor) but through their performance is evoked a character or part; the absent character appears as a magical presence. This transference takes place as the work of the audience's imagination on the skilled performance of the actor.

In watching a movie we may first be taken in and absorbed by the spectacle, effects, movement, realism. But sooner or later comes realization that this is just a movie; we're in a cinema and this is a business product to get money out of us. We may still follow the story but the fascination, and with it a lot of the pleasure, is gone. There's something missing. *Suture* is a term which has been used to describe how spectators, as coherent subjects, are brought into movies (and other discourses) to create its meanings. Suture is a set of effects which mean the spectator recognizes themselves in the movie as its subject; they recognize the images as their own. These effects are to do with composition and editing, how the viewer's look is identified with a character's. Suturing draws in the spectator as an element bringing coherence or meaning, getting rid of that feeling of absence, bringing one of recognition. But suture may assume a coherent self for the effects to work, for recognition, satisfaction and pleasure to ensue. It may thus structure and encourage certain types of subjectivity. And we may not agree with these; we may not like what the film makes of our selves. It may be ideological (Heath 1981).

All forms of discourse including archaeology have these suturing effects which draw us in as coherent subjects of the discourse. These effects are often specific to the discourse, be it drama, film or photography. These are not natural effects but functions of their medium. For example in viewing a photograph we often identify with the camera position; it makes sense if we do this and in turn the sense confirms a conception of the self (regarding such things as what is involved in the look) (Burgin 1982).

In the archaeological theatre the discovered past is the play and archaeologists the actors who work on the text producing a performance, releasing some meanings of the past for an audience. Much is relevant to the performance. Reference may be made to commentaries in giving the text a close reading, attempting to understand its sense. For

archaeologists these may be explanatory analyses of archaeological materials, scientific and specialist reports. Reference may be made to other performances for comparison, to other archaeologies. And there are essential considerations of audience in connection with the aims and interests of the archaeologist-performers (see also Tilley 1989). And archaeology as (dramatic) discourse has suturing effects drawing us within.

This is the work of interpretation: explanation, the decipherment and communication of meaning and significance. As in prophecy it involves reading for significance and inferring courses of action. It may involve translation. It is the performance of a work, acting out to bestow intelligible life. Performance involves choice of how to perform, to enact certain meanings, and this choice implies a commitment (to those social, political, and personal stands taken in the performance). It is also answerable to the source and to the critique of other interpretations and audience. It is itself both analytic (of its source) and critical in its choice of some meanings and not others, in its reference to other interpretations. Interpretation is an active apprehension which makes of something produced in the past a presence to us now (see Sterner 1989).

For me archaeology is the skill of interpreting the past.

ANALOGY AND EMBODIMENT

I have presented a series of analogies and metaphors which might be applied to archaeology, mapping similarities and differences to other things we do and know. The point of these images and reflections is not really to illustrate archaeology. There have been some specialized discussions of what archaeology may be. In Part I I referred to notions of relational thinking, deferred meaning and chains of signifiers, and materialist sublation as parts of the current debate in archaeology. A lot of archaeologists justifiably would like to get beyond the often abstract argument to see what these ideas really mean and look like in practice. In one way the images are meant to clarify, and not just the difficult newer ideas of what archaeologists may do. But there is more.

I want to avoid an opposition between an abstract logical systematizing of archaeology (abstract definitions of what archaeology is or should be, based on ideas of logic and reasoning - definitions which can be taken and applied to the real world) and the expression of such ideas in concrete and so understandable terms. There can be suspicion of the use of analogies, it may be thought that they say what something is like or what it is similar to, but this doesn't get down to what something really is. Archaeologists have been very sceptical of the use of analogy in interpreting the past because analogies come from present understanding and so may confuse what the past really is. A collection of

stone tools associated with a hunting and gathering lifestyle in a present community does not mean that a similar collection of stone tools found by archaeologists belonged to a similar prehistoric community (see also Wylie 1985, 1988)

In our understanding of what archaeologists do I argue that analogies are not illustrations or aids to understanding, heuristics or supplements to what is really going on. They are essential and integral parts of what archaeology is and can be. In drawing on widely understood and felt meanings, analogies make what archaeologists are and may be doing intelligible. In this they perform a communicative role of presentation or illustration. But analogy and metaphor are also essential to knowledge-in-the-world, practical reasoning engaged with the world we live, allowing the abstract to be integrated into a world of lived experience. Archaeology can produce knowledges of the form 'we know that this happened there and then'. Such knowing-that is a valid part of archaeology. But also valid is know-how, the skills of archaeological reasoning and interpretation which relate to the quality of our lives now. Analogy and metaphor are of this knowledge.

What I have tried to do is follow the process of archaeology and its object becoming something else, be it theatre, striptease or neurosis. These different experiences and conditions make of archaeology what it is, and archaeology makes them too¹. Perhaps I should add, for me at least. This is a necessarily personal exploration, depending on my experiences. It depends on my social and cultural background and belonging, but neither of these are 'accidental'.

Here is an argument for archaeology having an embodied dimension which is not cognitive and of the mind alone but also of the body. To say this is not very exceptional. I have had cause several times to remind that the past arouses powerful feelings. But I have tried to indicate that archaeological knowledge cannot be isolated as neutral cognition. This has been one of the main thrusts of the critique of archaeology I discussed in Part 1. Archaeology is also immediately emotive, sentimental. Not so much a method or set of procedures, archaeology is its experiences - the past in the present and what is done with it. It includes how archaeologists and others see themselves. This is another major feature of changes that have occurred in the discipline. The changes are as much to do with archaeologists' images of themselves and the nature of archaeological experience as they are to do with traditional archaeology losing to the arguments of scientific rationality which in turn has been assaulted by ideology critique.

So analogy is central to a description of what archaeology is. It is allegorical. In the same way allegory (stories in which the people, things and events have different levels of meaning) is a vital part of our understanding of the past. Just as there is no simple, neutral and

cognitive description of archaeological method, so too there is no direct experience of the past. I shall move to this in Part 3.

Here then are some of the attractions and characteristics of archaeology. Dynamics of individuality, power and agency (in acquisition of knowledge, acting on the past, subjection to rules and values of discipline and propriety), of discovery and loss, past and present, absence and presence. Mysteries and nostalgias in the movement between self and other. There has been particular focus on the nature of the relationship between the subjective self and the object found, and I have picked out features of what can be called an understanding of the past through dialogue.

This is what I hope for. An archaeology wider than the acquisition of knowledge of the past through the application of rational method. An archaeology of concrete and sensuous practice for and in the present. There is clearly a valid place for a scientific and explanatory attitude. That this is so is one argument against the fear that an archaeology of the present loses the past. I do not think that an embodied archaeology is an unrealistic hope for a 'new' discipline or cultural field. That this chapter could be written shows that all the aspects of such an archaeology are with us already. They may be put to one side in much academic work, but the tools are around. They are at work in very recent archaeology, in interpretive anthropology.²¹ Historical writing has many rich interpretive textures. There has always been a vital current of critical alternative thought from pre-Socratic Herakleitos through Diogenes and represented by relational and dialectical philosophies; Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida are more recent figures in this stream. But we need only look to our experience.