2. See Reid (1992:195) for an unvarnished assessment of archaeological public relations with regard to Native Americans. See also a Harris Poll conducted in 2000 regarding public perceptions of archaeology (http://www.saa.org/pubRel/publiced-poll.html).

3. The Repatriation Committee, like many other committees in the SAA, has the authority to recommend its own members, who are then appointed by the President. The recent appointment reflects some lobbying on the part of the SAA’s Native American community.

Changing Theoretical Directions in American Archaeology

TIMOTHY R. PAUKETAT and LYNN MESKELL

While the 1980s and 1990s were marked by epistemic debates over processual or postprocessual positions, such oppositions have ebbed in the 2000s and are seen by many as irrelevant to ongoing theoretical developments in archaeology as conducted through American institutions (Hegmon 2003; Hodder 2004; Pauketat 2008; VanPool and VanPool 2003). These older divisions were often constituted around a set of bifurcations including objectivity:subjectivity, data:theory, or science:humanism. Since then, debate has given way to a new openness, with theoretical diversity seen to hold the potential for productive cross-fertilizations of thought (Hodder 2001). Such reframing of division into opportunity has occurred in tandem with developments in approach and fieldwork, in turn inextricably linked to cultural heritage concerns at a global scale.

This chapter examines the changing theoretical directions in American archaeology, and underscores the point that data collection, theory building, and heritage development are no longer discrete practices. Rather, their permeable nature has given rise to an exciting and innovative time in archaeology. American archaeologists now routinely venture into other social domains, in part because of geopolitics, not incidentally the particular North and South American histories of colonization, genocide, and indigenous movements (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2004, 2008; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Stoffle et al. 2001).

These developments have spurred on new and compelling field projects and insights that are, in turn, producing more rigorous accounts and gen
ating innovative interpretations that move the discipline forward (Edgar et al. 2007; Fine-Dare 2002, 2005; Preucel 2002; Watkins 2001). This positions American archaeology somewhat differently to our British colleagues who have not negotiated such histories and indigenous communities at home. However, recent developments in English Heritage strongly suggest a desire to emulate American practices of repatriation and collaboration, even though theirs are not indigenous claimants but pagan ones (Blain and Wallis 2007; Thackery and Payne 2008). Perhaps the realization of these rich potentials in American archaeology, derived from dialogue and collaboration across a range of communities, mark a real turning point.

To illustrate this directional change, and with the aid of some practical applications, we underline a specific series of interrelated or clustered research foci that connect past and present and theory and practice. For present purposes, we focus on notions of object biography and structured deposition and their links to landscape, phenomenology, materiality, and agency. In the end, we argue that pursuing these and other related foci is producing a more seamless practical, theoretical, and ethical archaeology that is an outgrowth of the disparate alternative archaeologies that exist today.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

In the 1990s, American archaeology remained entrenched within a social-evolutionary paradigm despite calls to the contrary (Brunnfiel 1992; Groenborn 2006; Pauketat 2007; Paynter and McGuire 1991; Yoffee and Schraat 1993). Meanwhile, the theoretical innovations that characterized British archaeology, strongly identified with what might be termed postprocessual, contextual, interpretive, or social archaeologies, have continued in the same vein for over a decade now. Topics such as landscape, phenomenology, deposition practice, agency, and embodiment, to name a selection, remain central in British archaeological theory (Bender 2001; Bradley 2000; Brück 2007; Jones 2005; Pollard 2001; Robb 2007; Thomas 1996).

Increasingly, American archaeologists have become engaged with these same issues and have applied a broad swath of theoretical approaches to complex data sets in both preliterate and historical domains (Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Dillehay 2004; Joyce 2001; Kuijt 2008; Loren 2001; Meskell and Joyce 2003; Nakamura 2005; Nassaney 2004; Pauketat 2007; Preucel 2002; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003). As recent research underscores, it is no longer the case that single-issue themes such as gender, landscape, or ethnicity are sufficient (Meskell 2002a), a shift that has prompted archaeologists to adopt multiple lines of enquiry (see chapters in Meskell and Preucel 2004). American archaeologists are increasingly undertaking studies that combine theories about, for example, gender, practice, spatiality, and households (Hendon 2009) or ritual, place, memory, and exchange (Mills 2004). One might say that this growing theoretical awareness has been well matched by the rich and sophisticated materials of the Americas and abroad, which often makes for different projects than, say, our British colleagues.

Here, the importance of cultural resource management cannot be overestimated (Moss 2005), especially as performed by university-based programs or large private firms that place history and heritage ahead of profit (e.g., Walthall et al. 1997). The extensive multilayered data sets that such programs and firms produce, coupled with the contemporary resonances and implications of fieldwork and interpretation, make for a rather different and evocative American research trajectory.

Still, if there is one thing that might be said to underlie this trajectory, linking past and present or the archaeologies of yesterday and today, it is the essential “materiality” of social life and cultural practice (see Miller 2005). Inspired by the rise of material culture studies in Britain, these current directions were shaped by scholars at University College London (e.g., Buchli 2002; Gell 1998; Miller 1987, 1998, 2001; Tilley 1990), many of whom received archaeological training, but were also informed by classic ethnographies from American anthropology (Munn 1986; Myers 2001; Weiner 1992). Another trend in material culture studies has American roots in studies of technology and modernism (Schiffer 1999; Schiffer et al. 2003). Materiality, not materialism or materialization (e.g., DeMarrais et al. 1996), is a powerful concept that views the cultural world as necessarily composed of matter in space and similarly that our practices and experiences have a material dimension. Materiality takes as its remit the exploration of the situated experiences of material life, the constitution of the object world, and concomitantly its shaping of human experience (Meskell 2004:2). Because of this material dimensionality, individual beings are not isolated or removed from social networks, since being itself entails multiple interconnected agents within larger historical settings. Moreover, because experiences engage bodies, things, and other phenomena spatially, as parts of landscapes, they...
are contingent on the beings and happenings of that outside world. Materiality implies historicity, and thus materiality makes life happen. People, places, and things are truly active (a la Hodder 1982, 1986).

Yet not so long ago, many archaeologists would have described material culture as the subject matter of archaeology, a static sort of detritus in need of a theoretical approach to infuse it with meaning (Binford 1980). But nothing is further from the truth. In fact, in the last decade, the elaboration of phenomenologically inspired, practice-theoretic, agent-centered, and otherwise historicized efforts in archaeology make such theory-data distinctions moot. It is not the case that theories are separate from the material dimension of theorizing, including fieldwork; our so-called subject matter is continuously infused with theory from the beginning (see Hodder 2001; Johnson 2006; Pauketat 2001). One always enters the archaeological process midstream just as one theorizes through one’s body with things in spaces.

Histories and Landscapes

As a discipline, archaeology is well placed to demonstrate that being a human, experiencing the world as a human, or even thinking as a human has a materiality that is not inert. Being, experiencing, and thinking necessitate bodies engaging landscapes of spaces and objects through sensory encounters where thought and action, as well as object and subject, are not usefully separated (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Thus, to understand the implications of materiality in these terms, one must understand it historically. The biographies, genealogies, and histories of people, places, and things—from the palimpsests of urban centers down to the growth patterns in one’s bones—are not simply the residuals of cultural processes; they are cultural processes (Pauketat 2001). That is, they are accumulations that inform the now as much as they record the then. Their materiality, especially considering the relative durations of things, continues to construct the experience of the present (Kubler 1962; Nakamura 2004; Olivier 2001).

There may be no better example of this than the spate of studies that highlight the biographies of things and the chains of micro-events (Dobres 2000; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Kopytoff 1986; Meskell 2004; Mills and Walker, eds. 2008). Inspired by Marcel Mauss (1990) and, later, Annette Weiner (1985), archaeologists beginning in the 1980s recognized that the ways or sequences in which people moved and did things (e.g., cooked food, manufactured tools, built houses) possessed a sort of habituated style. Along with the cultural objects associated with such bodily movements and practices, certain things implicated places and identities (and vice versa), at least as these were genealogically configured (Bradley 2000; Costin and Wright 1998; Lemonnier 1993; Mills 2004). This is not to say that every object was endowed with special qualities or agency, or indeed that every place was sacred. Rather archaeologists have become critically attuned, whether through depositional analyses or ethnohistoric evidence, to the contexts where subjects, objects, places, and people might share a suite of salient qualities. In particular societies (such as those in the American Southwest, below) and at particular times, people, places, and things—and the practices that define them all—were understood to have inalienable qualities, with matter and meaning enchainable together in larger, complex, and historically contingent webs of social experience or lifeworlds.

Even the ways in which domestic garbage is discarded, once rendered into a near biomechanical science by the original Behavioral Archaeology (Schiffer 1987), are now recognized to be recursively connected to other cultural practices and identities (Pollard 2001). In fact, the older behavioral school is actively being folded into what began as a postprocessual concern for “structured deposition” (LaMotta and Schiffer 2001; Mills and Walker 2008). From this perspective, object life histories and depositional genealogies do not merely reflect some behavioral or mental processes disconnected from depositional practices. Through repetitive depositional encounters, places and memories are instantiated and relationships of the people, places, and things within those places, or larger fields of experience, are entangled, if only momentarily. Things, it seems, make other things happen.

Such emphasis might seem diametrically opposed to other contemporary structural, evolutionary, or macrohistorical approaches in American archaeology (e.g., Beck et al. 2007; Bintliff 2004; see also Fogelin 2007; Shennan 2008). This need not be (and may not long remain) the case, especially given the common concern for understanding the importance of practical diversity, genealogies of cultural productions, and the complexity of the relational fields wherein agents derive their causal powers (see especially Ingold 2000b). Indeed, at the time of writing, intellectual differences, which sometimes boil down to a variable emphasis on fields or long-term trends versus agents or events, characterize all camps. There are those evolutionary, structural, and macrohistorical approaches that elevate agents and others that do not (contrast Beck et al. 2007; Bettinger 1991; Brown 2006; Kohler and
facture, use, and deposition of cultural objects or sediments in places, dis-

From the hand or eye, and flintknapping itself is a practice with profound

are one and the same (see case studies, below). To understand the connectiv-
ties between them, some scholars have employed theories of the "extended

mind," "distributed person," or the "extended artifact" to recognize the

The same is true of phenomenologically inspired or practice-theoretic approaches (contrast Bender et al. 1997; Joyce 2001).

So are various alternative approaches in archaeology moving toward an ever-greater productive juxtapositioning of theoretical approaches (sensu Hodder 2001)? Possibly, but one clear obstacle remains. Following various European philosophers, a few archaeologists have underlined the need to minimize Cartesian dualistic thinking (Meskell 1996; Thomas 1996). Much of this work was directed toward breaking down unhelpful bifurcations such as mind/body, structure/agency and subject/object as we have already men-
tioned and to craft a more nuanced understanding of human intentionality and sociality in the past. Debates raged around how archaeologists might access the culturally contextual understandings of the individual and person-
hood, emotion, experience of landscapes and monuments, and the nature of society in a host of ancient and recent settings. In the 1990s such debates were framed by the potentials or pitfalls of applying the work of social theo-
rists such as Bourdieu (1977, 1980) and Giddens (1984) on structuration and agency to archaeological studies or Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Heidegger (1996) on embodiment, experience, and being-in-the-world. After a
decade or more of debate, many archaeologists would argue that the analyti-
cal separation of mind and body, structure and agency, or theory and prac-
tice, obscures the simultaneity of practice or experience.

However, avoiding such analytical dualisms in archaeological practice remains difficult, and notions such as materialization, while intended to transcend the problem, often end up recapitulating it by prioritizing mind over matter (DeMarrais 2004; Malafouris 2004; Renfrew 2004). For exam-
ple, if flintknapping stimulates neural activity in ways that alter skill gener-
ally, predisposing the knapper in other ways, then the brain is not separate from the hand or eye, and flintknapping itself is a practice with profound historical and biocultural consequences (Renfrew 2004; see also Dobres 2000). Likewise, if the sensuous experience of bodies in spaces or the manufac-
ture, use, and deposition of cultural objects or sediments in places, dis-
poses those bodies, things, or places in ways that alter the futures of others, then the processes of culture change and the relational fields of experience are one and the same (see case studies, below). To understand the connectiv-
ties between them, some scholars have employed theories of the "extended

mind," "distributed person," or the "extended artifact" to recognize the

utility, and relevance across contexts" (Keane 2005:188).

The evocative potentials of these new theoretical approaches are not nec-
essarily applicable to all data sets across all time and space. Nor do they elim-
ninate the need to understand cause and effect in history (contra O'Brien and
Lyman 2004). Rather, they insist on the careful and proximate delineations of contingency. Cause and effect can only be understood historically, and then only as a potentially trans-scalar and trans-dimensional relationship. That is, we must understand the biographies, genealogies, and histories of fields in the most complex of terms. For this reason, an archaeologist's pot-
tery sequences, technological styles, and settlement palimpsests might take on whole new theoretical meaning, primarily as they are parts of such fields or landscapes. Archaeologists must be careful, however, not to treat land-
scapes as either places where meanings or memories have been fixed, ready to structure the minds of passersby alike (see Carmichael et al. 1994) or as impossible to fathom save as one's own experience (cf. Fleming 2006; Tilley 2004). Rather, landscapes are relational fields always in the process of becoming (Ashmore 2004; Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Thomas 2001). People do not merely interact with them, or move through them. They are part and parcel of them (Ingold 2000b).

Agents and Identities

One might also describe a landscape or a field as a "network" in Latour's
(1991, 2000) words or a "causal milieu" in Gell's (1998) terms. Both think-
ers understand networks to be comprised of various nodes or agents from whence change derives. To a large extent, such dynamism is a function of the materiality of networks. Following Marx (1992) and Hegel (1977), the real power and potential of the world of things is their capacity to capture so many qualities, associations, and potentials that transgress any perceived convenient boundary between material and immaterial characteris-
tics. Such qualities, associations, and potentials are always and necessarily "bundled together" in ways that "will shift in their relative salience, value,
utility, and relevance across contexts" (Keane 2005:188).

Importantly, many archaeologists today see little need to limit causal
powers to human individuals. Within the larger relational fields of human expe-
rience, objects, images, substances, places, and a host of other sensory
experiences (some ostensibly immaterial) have the capacity to affect that which people do, if not also the agency of other nonhuman entities, what Latour would include as “actants” (e.g., Joyce 2008; Kirk 2006; Walker 2008). Depending on the variously bundled or fragmented configurations of such nodes or agents within networks, they may exert more or less influence on, or “afford” a certain kind or direction of change within, the larger fields of concern (Gibson 1979; Ingold 2000a; Knappett 2004).

Given this inherent relationality, archaeologists might analyze the qualities of aspects or agents of landscapes much like one appreciates the power of a topographic feature. A mountain might evoke a memory, an identity, or a narrative (e.g., Basso 1996), but it is also directly and differentially engages the senses in ways that alter perceptions and actions, depending on the moment and the configuration of the rest of the field. It brings thunder and rain, alters the play of light and shadow, and bars movement.

Rather than a focus on individual nodes or classes of objects, archaeologists are increasingly considering wider assemblages of technologies, objects, and places in the mesh of time-space (Gosden 2005; Lazzari 2005; Pauketat and Alt 2005). In some measure this has been inspired by new modes of theorizing archaeological science (Jones 2002) that are also receptive to an integrated theorizing of personhood, place making, aesthetics, and agency (Jones 2005; Lazzari 2003). From such modes of theorizing, it has been argued that nonhuman entities have an undertow, or a pull effect on fields. They afford certain human actions and perceptions. But they also can be politically mobilized, brought to bear on social fields through coordinated action and manifested as the theatricality of smoke and mirrors (Inomata and Coben 2005). Such encounters have been productively explored by a new generation of scholars writing on colonialism, indigenous identity, and embodied agency in ways that will, we contend, absorb or historicize more traditional, social-evolutionary concerns with technology, urbanism, complexity, agricultural origins, and so on.

For example, examining lithic and faunal assemblages, Stephen Silliman (2001) suggests individuals staked a claim on their material and social worlds, casting traditional technologies into new social orders. Rather than adopt simplistic models of acculturation, he asserts such objects were materially constitutive in the active forging of native identity, rather than simply the passive vestiges. In pluralistic communities like those at the frontiers of culture contact, heterodox and orthodox practices and choices are materially revealed. Such studies necessarily move across studies of landscapes, settlements, objects, practices, bodies, and persons (Silliman 2006). Similarly, Diana Loren’s work (2001) takes agency and intimacy to this embodied level, examining status, race, and gender as it intersects with political, social, and sexual interactions in colonial Louisiana. By focusing on clothing, masculinity, indigenous agency, and colonial desire we move toward hybrid alterities, desiring stances, and embodied aesthetics rather than a unidirectional acculturation.

supernatural worlds (Bird-David 1999; Byrne 2007; Meskell 2005; Mills and Walker, eds. 2008). Moreover, that which constitutes a person or a community is contingent on the historical configurations of agents within its respective field. Personhood may not always be isomorphic with human bodies. It may be fragmented and dispersed across a landscape of beings, things, and places almost to the point of non-existence outside situated performances. It might be embodied in a monument, a bundle, or a building (Brück 2006; Joyce 2008; Kirk 2006; Zedeño 2008). And it might be virtually conterminous with community (e.g., Pauketat 2008).

The point is, whatever and wherever it is located, the construction of persons or communities can only be understood through the analysis of the complex relational webs and the specific and contingent qualities, associations, and potentials of the nodes, aspects, or agents of those networks. Fields, networks, and webs are enacted, embodied, and experienced in places and moments such that, depending on the juxtapositioning of encounters (sometimes described using concepts such as hybridity or alterity), great change can emerge (Alt 2006; Hall 2000; Loren 2000; Silliman 2005). Such encounters have been productively explored by a new generation of scholars writing on colonialism, indigenous identity, and embodied agency in ways that will, we contend, absorb or historicize more traditional, social-evolutionary concerns with technology, urbanism, complexity, agricultural origins, and so on.

As anticipated by the very idea of materiality, and stemming from earliest of ethnographic studies in anthropology, researchers have long recognized that human agency and identity are not located solely within the body or the body politic (Tyler 1977). They are extended into and thoroughly entangled with the larger relational fields of experience. Comparative ethnographic and historic studies underscore this point, as many peoples recognize putatively inorganic or inanimate objects and unseen forces as living or spiritual entities equal to people, erasing all distinctions between cultural, natural, and
Practical Applications

Such innovative directions, multilayered data sets, and contemporary resonances of American archaeology may be no better exemplified than in the Ancestral Puebloan Southwest (Kantner 2004; Lekson 2009). This is particularly true of the enigmatic Chacoan phenomenon and its historical and contemporary Puebloan descendant communities (Lekson 2006; Mills 2002; Noble 2004; Van Dyke 2007). Beginning in the ninth century A.D., and centered in the semi-arid San Juan Basin of northwestern New Mexico, sedentary maize agriculturalists living in clustered “unit pueblos” constructed, in a series of major coordinated efforts, a network of “Great Houses” in the 20-km-long Chaco Canyon (Lekson 2007; Neizel 2003). These were monumental constructions in a desolate landscape that, in their horizontal orientations, vertical layerings, and radiating roads actively cited celestial forces (Farmer 2003; Sfáer 2008). In so doing, the sky was emplaced on earth if not also, and literally, in the hands of some Chacoans. Presumably, the roads were formal processionial avenues connecting, among other things, ancestral places. Movement along them was a walk through history as well as landscape (Van Dyke 2007).

Chacoan governance, which remains an open and debated issue, was probably inseparable from the multiscaled performances of heritage, identity, religion, and community. In a series of studies, Van Dyke (2003, 2004, 2007) has argued that, in essence, great constructions—as social performances—continuously created pan-regional Chacoan community. Rejecting Cartesian bifurcations, we might assert that community did not exist apart from the great, coordinated projects (Pauketat 2003). Such projects might also be directed toward commemoration, the flipside of which are acts of “forgetting” or memory suppression. As Mills (2008) shows, these practices pervade daily life and rituality at Chaco. Bodies were clothed in cosmic referents and surrounded by animate beings and inalienable things. In great spaces and processions, or in migrations to new homelands, bodies were together personhood, community, and landscape so tightly as to be indissociable.

Movement, in fact, is part and parcel of contemporary Puebloan heritage, where “each physical movement” is “the construction of a new community” and a renewed sense of the “fluidity of life” (Naranjo 2008:261). In the ancient past, that sense was emplaced and embodied. The heritage of Chaco was remembered through the experience of Great House ruins (Begay 2004; Kuwanwiswma 2004; Ryan 2008; Snead 2008b). It was personified in its prominent descendants, such as one elderly craftsman killed in an attack on his home pueblo more than a century after Chaco’s demise (Kuckelman 2008). And such emplacements, embodiments, and movements inverted and transmogrified cultural spaces and networks. Depending on what happened where, people avoided, and continue to avoid, some ruins (Snead 2008a). Ghosts of the past inhabit the land still and shape the present (Walker 2008). Considered in the terms of cultural fields, an inclusive archaeology of the Southwest is now explaining the large-scale historical consequences of seemingly momentary moves.

Similar arguments focusing on landscape, depositional practices, and identity have been made for other parts of the world, including most recently Mesoamerica, the American Southeast, and Amazonia. Of these, Mesoamerican archaeologists, with their traditional focus on complexity, governance, and ideology, have turned to engage theories emphasizing the recursive material relationships of performance, personhood, and the body politic during the Formative and Classic periods of circa 1500 cal B.C.–A.D. 900 (e.g., Clark 2004; Gillespie 2001; A. Joyce 2004; R. A. Joyce 2000, 2008; Lucero 2008). For instance, after reanalyzing its many foundational sediments, Gillespie (Gillespie 2008:134–135) now concludes that the great Olmec site of La Venta was “a landscape built from generations of depositional practices” that resulted from “[p]erformance and the interplay of remembering and forgetting among multiple groups with both coordinated and competing agendas.” Moving earth was a particular sort of commemorative practice that simultaneously, if unintentionally, shaped the contours of Mesoamerica for millennia (see also R. A. Joyce 2004; Pauketat 2000).

Similar theorizing in the later Archaic and Woodland period Southeast (3500 cal B.C.–A.D. 600) and in the late precolombian mound landscapes of Amazonia also point out that people “inhabiting” landscapes generated long-term historical change (following Barrett 1999; Heckenberger 2005; Sassaman 2004, 2005; Wallis 2008). In both cases, such theorizing is virtually synonymous with intensive fieldwork, as archaeologists seek lived histories in ways that reveal the recursivity of identity and place in the past and present. The Amazonian research in particular reveals the “critical importance of collaborative research strategies, including archaeological and
ethnographic fieldwork, remote-sensed data analysis and geographic information systems, and most important, indigenous participation, to understand the complex interplay of ecological, historical, and political conditions" (Heckenberger et al. 2003:1713). Such research fundamentally relocates the questions archaeologists ask from evolutionary ones, where some process is assumed to have been restricted to a distant time or type of society, to historical ones, where the processes of concern are relationships between identities, experiences, and practices as relevant today as they were yesterday (Pauketat 2007:60).

That fundamental theoretical move is not distinct from archaeological practice: indeed all of our interpretations are indelibly shaped by our fieldwork strategies, international commitments, politics, ethical concerns, and subjectivities. It is simply not true, as often stated in the past, that processual archaeology was concerned with scientific field practice whereas postprocessual archaeology sought only multiple interpretations of material with marginal regard for archaeological science (see also the discussion by Zeder, Buikstra and van der Leeuw, this volume). For instance, excavations at Çatalhöyük, in Turkey, testify that such a bifurcation is both untenable and unhelpful (see Hodder 2005, 2006, 2007). At the same time, the work at Çatalhöyük reveals how political and religious differences are being negotiated through archaeological practices around excavation, reburial, and representation of the past to the public (Hodder 2009). Archaeologists may once have seen such tensions or dialogues as a nuisance that detracted from the real business of fieldwork, yet nowadays are considered a necessary and valuable ethical check or corrective on our practices and interpretations.

Future Directions

As the above examples reveal, American archaeology is being recast in theoretical and practical ways around global-historical issues, cultural resource management, heritage interests, and indigenous concerns (see chapters by Franklin and Paynter, Silliman and Ferguson, and Little and Zimmerman this volume). Such developments have been bolstered by the exigencies of globalization and realized through international field projects and practice. This makes sense; it would be fair to say that there are more American projects overseas than any other nationality and, with such a presence comes greater responsibilities to multiple theoretical and practical matters (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004; MacEachern 2007; McGuire 2008; Meskell 2002b; Meskell, ed. 2009; Scham 1998; Scham and Yahya 2003; Schmidt 1995, 1996; Schrire 1995).

Our present examination of recent research directions is made with the awareness of these responsibilities as well as the recognition of a host of other new directions that we have not discussed here: critical conservation (Hayashida 2005; Matero 2000; Meskell 2009), geographic methods (Kantner 2008), semiotics (Bauer 2002; Lele 2006; Preucel 2008), cultural property (Kersel et al. 2008; Messenger 1999) and even human rights (Schmidt 1996; Silverman and Fairchild Ruggles 2008). Regardless, American archaeology’s closest intellectual interlocutors probably still remain our anthropological colleagues, underscored by current research (Geissmar 2005; Hasinoff 2006; Lefrenz Samuels 2008) and a sustained sociocultural interest in material culture and material worlds (Edwards et al. 2006; Hoskins 1998; Keane 2003; Spyer 1998; Stoler 2008). Clearly, dialogue between subfields continues (e.g., Joyce and Gillespie 2000; Meskell, ed. 2009; Mortensen and Hollowell 2009) and archaeological studies have affected ethnographic fieldwork (Benavides 2005; Breglia 2006; van der Spek 2008; Wynn 2008). Indeed more ethnographic work is being undertaken by a younger generation of archaeologists, suggesting a more self-confident discipline and one more open to both incorporating and contributing to other fields.

In any case, since the 1990s there has been a growing trend toward social issues in American archaeology, whether one studies materiality in the past or works with descendents and other local communities on the intellectual and ethical challenges of the present. These developments can be tracked across our field research, writings, and public presentations (Meskell 2002a:281–282). In the foregoing we suggested that old dichotomous ways of thinking are being replaced by more integrated, reflexive, and hybrid epistemologies and modes of research. Transforming the classifications of material culture and space to the more active considerations of materiality and spatiality has radically altered the ways in which we approach and theorize much of the archaeological record, and not only objects and monuments, but depositions, practices, and networks of things together. Even the separations of fieldwork and interpretation have been entangled in productive ways, alongside archaeological science and archaeological theory.

In fact, American archaeology is moving from our previous single-issue focus (e.g., gender, landscape, ethnicity, etc.) to consider more numerous,
porous and mutually constitutive data sets. Likewise, questions of agency in archaeology have moved from identifying domination and resistance to interrogating places, things, beings, and people that might, in many contexts, be bearers of efficacy and causality.

Not all archaeologists will agree with such moves, and a diversity of approaches will remain into the foreseeable future. But there are signs of rapprochement between camps. In the end, more productive than the current collage of alternate archaeological approaches will be the moves to cross-cut theoretical and disciplinary lines by generating diverse and hybrid research agendas at home and abroad. American archaeology is particularly well suited to pursue these new agendas by focusing on the encounters and experiences of various kinds in the past as well as the present. The result might not be a simple re-inscription of the theoretical dividing lines as they are currently drawn, but a new kind of sensuous or radical empiricism (Jackson 1996). Certainly, the underpinning philosophies of past cultures are now being evocatively revealed by replacing some of our older positivistic models and taxonomies with more dynamic and culturally attuned ones. American archaeology is changing directions and, in so doing, opening up new fields of inquiry into the human experience.

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