

CREATING MATERIAL WORLDS

THE USES OF IDENTITY
IN ARCHAEOLOGY

EDITED BY
Elizabeth Pierce
Anthony Russell
Adrián Maldonado
and Louisa Campbell



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Preface

Like many archaeology projects, the genesis of *Creating Material Worlds* can be found in the pub. Throughout years of seminars, papers and conference presentations, postgraduates in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Glasgow found themselves repeatedly using various forms of identity theory in their work regardless of time period or geographic area, proving those categories to be artificial restrictions in the study of past human interactions. We felt that the resulting theoretical cohesion emerging in our work was a strength to be played upon, and eventually *Creating Material Worlds* was born.

Many of the contributors to the volume have crossed academic paths in the past, but some have more recently entered the discussion. What unites us is our clear explanation and application of theoretical concepts to archaeological data sets in the belief that, despite the ever-changing nature of identity, we can begin to understand not just the basic elements of people's everyday lives but how they perceived themselves and the world around them. From the Iroquois burial practices of northern North America to the far reaches of the Classical world, and from the flint scatters of Mesolithic Scotland to the edge of the known world in medieval Greenland, we hope to demonstrate that even old evidence can be re-evaluated to shed new light on the people who lived in the past.

Thanks to a grant from the Chancellor's Fund at the University of Glasgow, we have realised our vision of a project that not only presents a publication of our new approaches to identity, but also has brought together a network of early-career researchers in the field and supported a series of public lectures at the University of Glasgow by young scholars from around the UK. Two of the lecturers from our seminar series – Oliver Harris from the University of Leicester and John Creese from Cambridge University – have since joined us as contributors to this volume.

Early versions of the papers in this volume were presented during a workshop on 24 November 2012 under the watchful eye of Professor Bernard Knapp. Together, the volume represents the work of researchers from five different nations, representing six different institutions. Perhaps identity has played such an important role in our research because many of the contributors have lived and/or worked outside of their home nations. Having an understanding of what it is to negotiate local, national and international identities in the modern world can help to inform our ideas of how people related to one another in the past, regardless of when or where these people lived.

It is our hope that the accessibility of the ideas presented by the early-career researchers in this volume will inspire other scholars who might not otherwise incorporate identity into their work to consider the ways identity can be found in human society past and present. The ideas presented are not unique to a particular time or place, but rather reflect continuing themes within the human experience.

Contributor Biographies

LOUISA CAMPBELL received her PhD from the University of Glasgow in 2011. Her thesis, entitled *A Study in Culture Contact: the distribution, function and social meanings of Roman pottery from non-Roman contexts in southern Scotland* incorporated an extensive reassessment of all Roman material culture from across northern Britain. Her main research interests are threefold: Roman material culture, the Roman and Provincial interface and theoretical approaches to culture contact. She has taught an evening class at the University of Glasgow's Centre for Open studies and has written several papers which are currently in press, forthcoming and in prep. She is currently coordinating EAA Glasgow 2015, the largest cultural heritage event ever to be held in Europe. She is also co-editing two archaeological volumes on *The Roots of Nationhood: the Archaeology and History of Scotland* and *The Experience of Technology*.

JOHN CREESE recently completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge. His current research explores the interrelations of social power, community, and identity among ancestral Wendat societies of eastern North America. He is currently an Assistant Professor in Anthropology at North Dakota State University.

OLIVER HARRIS graduated with a BA in Archaeology from Sheffield in 2002, took an MA at Cardiff University, and stayed on to do a PhD under the supervision of Alasdair Whittle. His PhD focussed on developing new theoretical approaches to identity, emotion and memory, and applying them to the British Neolithic. Since finishing his PhD, Oliver has worked in contract archaeology and held two post-docs. The first, at Cambridge, was part of the interdisciplinary Changing Beliefs of the Human Body project. The second, at Newcastle, was a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship looking at the different kinds of community that occupied Southern Britain in the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age, and what happens when we think about communities not just as collections of people, but as assemblages of people, things, animals, places and monuments. He has just published a book on the history of the human body with John Robb, and spends his summers digging in Ardnamurchan, Western Scotland.

JEREMY HAYNE gained his PhD from Glasgow University in 2013. His thesis examined the long term effects of culture contact on Iron Age Sardinia. Based in Milan, he has excavated in the UK, Spain and Italy and he regularly does field work and research in Sardinia on Punic and Nuragic sites. His current investigations explore sacred sites and their role in identity transformations in the Nuragic communities of early Iron Age Sardinia. For many years an Associate Lecturer for the Open University, his research interests include identities, consumption practices and performance.

ADRIÁN MALDONADO received his PhD in 2011 from the University of Glasgow with a thesis entitled *Christianity and Burial in Late Iron Age Scotland, AD 400–650* and was a lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Chester in 2013–2015. With a background in Medieval History (A.B., Harvard, 2004), he is most interested in the ontological transformations that came with the conversion to Christianity and the adoption of literacy beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire.

BEATRIZ MARÍN-AGUILERA is currently working at the Department of Archaeology at Ghent University as postdoctoral researcher. She has recently completed her PhD at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain, where she was granted a four-year government scholarship. During her doctoral studies, she conducted three research stays abroad at the School of Humanities at Glasgow University (2011–2012), at the Spanish School of History and Archaeology in Rome (2012–2013), and at the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World at Brown University (2014). She has done fieldwork in Cyprus, Italy and Spain, and is currently field co-director of the research project at Peña Moñuz (Olmeda de Cobeta, Guadalajara). Her research interests include postcolonial theory, household archaeology, the anthropology of food and consumption, and the archaeology of colonialism and cultural contact.

ERIN MCGUIRE has been teaching at the University of Victoria in British Columbia since 2010. Her PhD from the University of Glasgow examined the role of migration in changing funerary practices in Scandinavia, Britain and Iceland in the Viking Age. Her research interests include the archaeologies of gender and identity, death and funerary rituals, migration, and the life course. She also takes an interest in education and teaching methods to assist students in learning.

ELIZABETH PIERCE received her PhD from the University of Glasgow in 2011. Her thesis examined identity and material culture in the North Atlantic in the period after the Viking Age. She has worked in commercial archaeology in Britain and the U.S., and taught courses on the archaeology of the Vikings and early medieval Scotland at the University of Glasgow and at the university's Centre for Open Studies. Currently she lectures about archaeology on board expedition ships in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic. Her research interests include the Middle Ages in the North Atlantic, exotic materials such as walrus ivory and jet, and recumbent monuments in medieval Scotland.

ANTHONY RUSSELL completed his PhD at the University of Glasgow in 2011. His thesis, entitled *In the Middle of the Corrupting Sea: Cultural encounters in Sicily and Sardinia between 1450–900 BC*, explored the effects of culture contact in the Middle and Late Bronze Age on the two largest islands in the Mediterranean. He earned a BA in English Literature, and an MA in Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology from the University of British Columbia, and an MLitt in Mediterranean Archaeology at Glasgow. He has participated in field work in Tuscany, the Aeolian Islands, Scotland and the Canadian prairies.

DENE WRIGHT is a lithics specialist undertaking post-doctoral research at the University of Glasgow. An advocate of symmetrical approaches in archaeology, his research focus centres on Mesolithic events and the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition in west central Scotland. He is a senior team member and site director for the Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot Project.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Creating Material Worlds

Adrián Maldonado and Anthony Russell

The debate over the relationship between archaeological finds and past identities is an enduring one in our discipline. It is also notoriously difficult terrain, but it has the benefit of lending significance to our endeavours beyond our corner of the social sciences. While creating typologies and refining chronologies are part of the stock-in-trade of archaeology – and important methodologies in their own right – the study of identity personalises the past, and makes it more accessible to those outside of the discipline. Indeed, it might be argued that for all the variety of ways of being an archaeologist, the basic task uniting them all is the study of ways of being in the past. The assemblage of sites, finds and theories which make up our field constitute the search for processes of identification.

As archaeologists we recover the material remains of the past, but always interpret and re-interpret them in the present (Shanks and Tilley 1987). We identify these things first by what we think they are and how old they might be, and then we attempt a deeper analysis. Who made this? Who used it? How far has it travelled? What significance did it have culturally? Who influenced its form or function? What other things are associated with it? At every turn we encounter implications for past identities, and at nearly every turn such interpretations are difficult to prove. Yet still we try, and it is this continued push and pull between the impossibility of proof and the desire for interpretation that requires more study. This volume represents ten scholars' meditations on identifying the mute stones, bones and sherds they encounter, but it should not be seen as a handbook to 'finding identity'. Rather, it is a survey of ten different ways of grappling with theories of identification in the past.

This introductory essay serves two purposes. First, we will argue that the pervasive search for identity through material culture, going back to the origins of archaeological thought, speaks to a deep concern at the heart of the discipline. Although it has met much criticism and many dead-ends along the way, it continues

to resurface, a phenomenon which needs to be problematised. Second, we will argue that while approaches to identity are as complex and multifarious as the term itself, it is the search that is important, and thinking about the ways in which it has been used tells us much about why we do archaeology in the first place.

Defining identity

But what is identity, and why do we need one?

Rowlands 1994, 131

We all seem to know what we are talking about when the term ‘identity’ is thrown about. Sometimes we add modifiers to specify one aspect of identity to make things easier: ethnic identity; gendered identity; political identity. In recent years, however, there has been a growing recognition that these categories cannot be so easily separated, and each is crucial for understanding the rest (Gilchrist 2007; Casella and Fowler 2005b). Despite the vast literature on the subject, much research relies upon simple pattern recognition, something which requires constant self-awareness on behalf of the researcher. Birdwatchers use the term GISS (general impression: size and shape) to describe in-the-field identification of species, when the observer intuitively ‘knows’ which bird they see without being able to say exactly how. The human brain’s pre-conscious propensity to find patterns is perhaps partly to blame for the general fuzziness of our definitions of identity: we ‘know’ what it means, but do not know how we know. This common-sense approach has led to trouble in the past, and it is why the need to deconstruct these categories grew to a fever pitch particularly within the post-processual critique (see below).

Nevertheless, it is perhaps worthwhile to attempt some sort of semantic parameters for the term. To bluntly summarise decades of theory, we accept the position that identity is not simply something we have, it is something we *experience* (Meskell and Preucel 2007, 24). Put another way, identity is not a thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on* the world (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 122). As students of time depth and long term change, studying how certain discourses of identity become materialised should be one of the core aims of archaeology. It is not enough to merely say that identity is fluid, variable, multiple, or polysemic; we need to study *why* and *how* it is made to feel fixed and timeless in spite of this (Gardner 2011, 12–13). Yet even this does not go far enough, as we still need to question why we are concerned with finding identity in the past at all.

Archaeological thinking broadly follows the concerns of the times. Early antiquarians in the eighteenth century looked to ancient sites to shed light on scripture and refine Biblical chronologies (Morse 2005; Haycock 2002). The first ‘scientific’ archaeologists of the nineteenth century had race and nationality on their minds (Díaz-Andreu 2007), later twentieth-century theorists emphasised the power of the individual (Robb 2010) and, as more and more of our lives are expressed and stored virtually, it is no surprise that the last decade has seen renewed focus on the agency of things (e.g., Olsen *et al.* 2012). In an increasingly networked age, we are now becoming more attuned to the way

in which people and things are interconnected and interwoven across both space and time, or as ‘assemblages’ rather than finished items (Harris, this volume). Yet no matter how much archaeological thought changes to suit the times, it seems that what we do is fundamentally concerned with identity. Whether the material being studied relates to settlement, economy, ritual, death or material culture itself, the perceived relevance of these studies is about what they tell us about life in the past and, often implicitly but increasingly outwardly, what this means to us in the present (Harrison 2011).

What has changed in recent times is a shift in focus from the search for *sameness*, so characteristic of cultural-historical approaches, to a greater focus on *difference* (Fowler 2010, 353; Insoll 2007b, 1–3; Meskell 2002, 280). It is again no surprise to find this shift correlates with a wider appreciation of the power of an individual to choose and act, echoing the vaunted (though not exclusive) western idealisation of the individual in society (Hall 1996, 4–5) to the point where, as Jenkins (2008b, 30) has put it, ‘[i]dentity, it seems, is the touchstone of the times’. However, it is also true that the categorization of others is not merely a communal act but inevitably part of *self*-construction (Barth 1969; Jenkins 2008a, 59–61). Since the practice of archaeology has long been about the ‘categorization of others’ – the denizens of the past – it follows that archaeology is a way of interrogating our own social structures in the present (cf. Jones 1997, 135–44). The realization that archaeological theory is as much about who we are *now* as how things were *then* revolutionized the field in the 1980s (see especially Shanks and Tilley 1987). Self-aware archaeologies of identity came into their own, exemplified by a string of publications which grappled with the concept explicitly, the legacy of which is reviewed below. These have recently been criticised for their emphasis on the western post-Enlightenment conception of self as an individual with an inherent capacity to act (Creese, this volume), but before we discard this debate as wholly misguided, we need to look at why it occurred in the first place. If the study of the past is only ever an index of the concerns of the present, then the long-lived and ongoing search for identity through archaeology reveals a fundamental insecurity at the heart of our discipline that requires explanation.

Archaeological theory and identity crisis

It is worth exploring what archaeologists do and their role within the humanities and social sciences. Archaeology has become a continuum of skills, encompassing fieldwork, specialist reports, theoretical debates and interpretation for the lay public. The public end of the spectrum has long focused on identity as a hook to interest non-specialists, whether it be local identities in the context of community engagement, or past identities such as ‘Aztec’ which can be used as a recognisable shorthand to draw attention and aid explanation. With the increasing amount of archaeology reporting in the mainstream media, there is increased pressure for scholars to positively identify sites, objects, and now with increasing use of DNA and stable isotope analysis, even named individuals like King Richard III (Buckley *et al.* 2013).

Yet on the academic side of the spectrum, there has been a recurring challenge to the hegemony of identity as a social construct too broad to be useful (Hall 1996; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Olsen 2001; Joffe 2003; Pitts 2007; Fowler 2010). How do we square the perennial search for self, in ourselves as in the past, with the academic certainty that identity is an intangible notion that we can never really pin down? This depends on whether we see such uncertainty as a problem, or as an opportunity (Buchli 2010; Olsen 2001; González-Ruibal 2008; Wright, this volume).

Advocates of materiality, memory and personhood have shifted the focus toward the relationship between people and things, and more recently the post-human critique seeks to break down the barriers between people and things entirely. Such views tend to downplay identity as too human-focused at the expense of the materials and their interrelationships (Fowler 2010, 383–85; Webmoor and Witmore 2008). Rather than removing people from the frame, this perspective focuses on their lived experience and our own continuing engagement with a past that is all around us. In the context of this critique, the papers in this volume collectively suggest that there is a particularly archaeological approach to identity, one founded on the realisation that identity is an emergent property of living in a material world (cf. Fowler 2013). Getting to this point has not been a straightforward narrative of ‘progress’ from one paradigm to the next, nor do all the papers in this volume adhere to a single theoretical model (and indeed, many authors have opposed views). Rather, the papers approach identities and processes of identification in all their complexity, from tangible materials to the abstract concepts they embody. As such, the vision of identity offered is not meant to be definitive, but rather more like a set of Lego bricks – tools with which to create new worlds. This introductory essay is part of the *ongoing process of becoming* which we argue is the answer to the question, what is identity?

Conceptualising material worlds and the process of their continual emergence through lived experience of material culture is what archaeology does best. A turn back towards the study of things and materials has characterised the current vanguard in the theoretical literature (Olsen *et al.* 2012; Olsen 2007; Gosden 2005; Webmoor 2007; Webmoor and Witmore 2008; Ingold 2012). The study of material culture is increasingly about memory, experience and affect rather than Anglo-Saxons, barrow-builders or elites. But the move away from historicising categories to ‘worlds’ in an ontological sense, or what was understood as real (Thomas 1996, 64–78; 2004b, 25–26), is not so much a paradigm shift away from identity as a continuation of the long road toward the postmodern demolition of grand narratives (cf. Fahlander 2012). It does not spell the end of identity, but rather the growth of a new way to conceptualise it through prioritising materials and material culture.

So what is the draw toward identity in archaeology? Sociologist Richard Jenkins (2008b, 25) highlights the identity politics of the post-war era, from the decolonisation and post-colonial nation-building of the 1960s and 70s (Jones 1997, 51–55) to the idealisation of pluralism since 1989, as essential to understanding our modern concern with identity. Multivocality and social critique have certainly been a core tenet of

politically-minded archaeologists from the 1980s onwards (Shanks and Tilley 1987; Rowlands 1994; Meskell 2002), and many still isolate the emancipatory potential of an alternate past as the core aim of archaeology (Hamilakis 2004; Harrison 2011). Smith (2004) argues that the purpose of theorising identity is so we do not merely study the social entities which existed in the past, but the processes by which these entities were built and used in the first place, echoing Barrett's call to treat archaeology not as 'a record of past events and processes but as *evidence for particular social practices*' (1988, 6; emphasis in original). In this view, what we are doing is not seeking static or monolithic identities, but the conditions in which those came to have meaning. The value of archaeology is that it brings us into contact with another way of looking at humanity, one which denaturalises what we think is normal and forces us to reckon with difference. Nothing we do in this respect is free from our own politics.

In an important commentary on the history of archaeology, Julian Thomas (2004a) argued that archaeology (the discipline, as opposed to a general awareness of past things, which can be termed antiquarianism) is only possible in a modern context, one in which the historicity of society is recognised. In modernity, society was seen as the product of the past, and the Enlightenment belief that the history of humanity was progressive meant that an understanding of the past could help secure a better future. As Lucas (2004, 113) puts it, the discovery of 'prehistory' was nothing less than a radical new past for a post-medieval future: 'archaeology – ironically – [is] the invention of traditions'. But the belief that the *future needed to be better* was also grounded in a certain dissatisfaction with the situation of the present; as a form of 'cultural critique and redemption, archaeology can be likened to an act of therapy on a social level' (Lucas, 119; cf. González-Ruibal 2008). In this respect, it is worth noting Michael Shanks's (1992, 49–50) view of archaeology as part of the 'counter-cultural' strain in popular thought 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 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.

While the equation of archaeology with what we might politely call New Age thinking has been criticised, Shanks here brings us closer to why the concern with identity continues to resurface, despite the cycle of critique and deconstruction. A large part of the appeal of archaeology stems from disenchantment and the search for alternatives to received histories, and will thus inevitably be bound up within political issues of identity. This impulse is not unique to archaeology and forms a distinct branch within historical writing itself (e.g., Hobsbawm 1998). However, a look at the changing emphasis of identity-led research in archaeology over time reveals what is distinctive about a material approach to the past.

Materializing identity

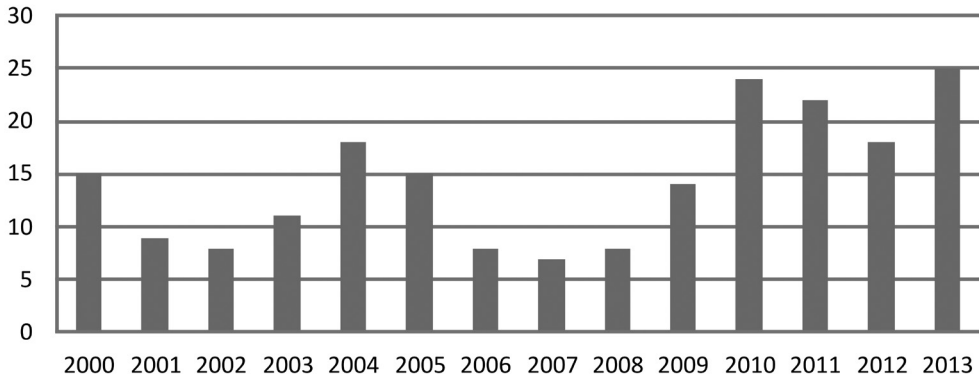


Fig. 1.1: Articles across 28 archaeological journals with 'identity' or 'identities' in the article title or abstract since 2000. Search performed on IngentaConnect online database (<http://www.ingentaconnect.com>) in January 2014.

The *Creating Material Worlds* project was born out of the realisation that many of our peers were engaged in research on the expression of past identities in some capacity. In trying to understand this shared impulse, we undertook an assessment of the state of current archaeological research on identity. This involved a critical review of recent theoretical literature, presented below, along with a wider look at views of identity across the social sciences. Over a decade ago, Meskell (2002, 282) reviewed Society of American Archaeologists meetings from 1991–2001 and showed that sessions on 'identity' and 'politics' increased dramatically from 1999 onwards. We can now extend this by querying one of the larger online research repositories, IngentaConnect, covering 28 archaeological journals. Using this sample (Fig. 1.1) shows that peer-reviewed articles on the subject have ebbed and flowed, with the current 'wave' of identity publications larger than ever before. The spike in 2004–2005 incidentally correlates with the publication of several influential handbooks on identity theory in archaeology reviewed further below. This is just the tip of the iceberg, as interest in identity has grown exponentially in recent times across the humanities and social sciences, and there are numerous reference works now attempting to synthesise this work (Elliot 2011; Schwartz *et al.* 2011; Ferguson 2009; 2008b; Jenkins 2008a). Notably, a number of journals have sprung up over the last two decades to accommodate research on this subject alone, including *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* (since 1994), *Social Identities* (since 1995), *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* (since 2001), *Identity in the Information Society* (since 2008), and *Politics, Groups and Identities* (since 2013).

Returning to archaeology, the current volume is situated in the long shadow cast by a series of dedicated studies of identity theory in archaeology which were produced

over the last decade. These include *The Archaeology of Identity* (Díaz-Andreu *et al.* 2005), *The Archaeology of Plural and Changing Identities: Beyond Identification* (Casella and Fowler 2005a), and *The Archaeology of Identities: a Reader* (Insoll 2007a). We should also include relevant sections of various handbooks from the same period (Meskell 2001; Meskell and Preucel 2007; Fowler 2010). Each of these works contains comprehensive reviews of the literature on identity which need not be repeated here; instead, what follows will serve as a meta-commentary on the practice of reviewing the literature over a ten-year period.

The aftermath of this wave of readers has been a steady stream of conferences and symposia themed on identity (Tilley 2011; Amundsen-Meyer *et al.* 2011; Ginn *et al.* 2014). Despite the vast literature on the subject, the issue remains a live one, and it is worth asking whether we are now experiencing a ‘third wave’ of identity theory, to co-opt the terminology of feminist archaeologies in the twenty-first century (cf. Spencer-Wood 2011). Most of these reviews situate the beginnings of identity theory in archaeology with the cultural-historical approach exemplified by the work of Vere Gordon Childe, wherein ethnic groups could be discerned through the co-presence of standard artefact types. Childe’s later work could be said to constitute the ‘first wave’ of identity theory, in which his target was the racial archaeologies of Gustav Kossina, but the aim was still to define the origins of European national identities (Jones 1997, 15–19; Trigger 1980). It has become axiomatic to cite the work of Barth, Bourdieu and Giddens in establishing what would become the post-processual critique of positivist ‘New Archaeology’, but the continued need to reiterate the ‘construction’ and ‘negotiation’ of ethnic identities throughout the 1980s, 1990s and even into the 2000s, belies the lingering and pervasive weight of cultural-historical and primordialist conceptions of identity (cf. Halsall 2011; Jones 1997, 65–79). This is most clearly seen in the often vitriolic debates over ‘Romanization’ (e.g., Millett 1990; Woolf 1998; James and Millett 2001; cf. Jones 1997, 29–39) and barbarian ethnicities (Pohl 1998; Brather 2002; Noble 2006). The resurgence of identity theory in the 1980s was heavily influenced by the Marxist critique of nationalism, particularly Hobsbawm’s focus on the ‘invention of tradition’ (1983) and Anderson’s idea of nations as ‘imagined communities’ (1991). Issues of ideology, power and social inequality predominated in the 1980s and ‘90s, as the debate was primarily over the *creation* of collective identity, such as the trends for state formation in the 1980s and ethnogenesis in the 1990s. The first steps toward a self-conscious archaeology of identity were taken in the mid-1990s (Shennan 1994; Rowlands 1994; Graves-Brown *et al.* 1996), but in hindsight these may still be considered ‘first wave’ due to their primary concern with issues of national origin and political affiliation. In this context, the publication of Siân Jones’s *Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (1997) was an important milestone, forcefully arguing the need to go beyond thinking of the past in terms of archaeological ‘cultures’ and emphasising the fluid rather than strictly bounded nature of identity.

However, the 1980s and ‘90s also saw a resurgence of feminist critiques which exposed the various facets of identity which make up the social persona: sex, gender,

age, class and rank. In archaeological reviews, the usual watershed moment for feminist theories is Conkey and Spector (1984), although it was not until the 1990s that they had their greatest effect. The work of Meskell (1996; 1999; 2002) and Gilchrist (1994; 1999) among many others is particularly prescient here, as they opened up the study of identity beyond the usual narratives of national or ethnic identity which tended to focus on the elites of society. This is perhaps the real ‘second wave’ of identity theory, which can broadly be said to concern issues of sensuous and somatic engagement with material culture, foregrounding the role of the bodily experience of the material world, and recursively the role of materials in creating bodies themselves (Tarlow 2000; Hamilakis *et al.* 2002; Knapp 1998). The trend was for works to discuss the way identity was maintained, or the processes of *identification* and *difference*, rather than taxonomically assigning identities to artefactual assemblages.

By the mid-2000s, a major criticism had arisen over the usefulness of the term ‘identity’ itself, which had been so thoroughly deconstructed as to have little analytic purpose. Various ways of dealing with the issue of cultural contingency have since been developed, which can only be summarised in the briefest form here. Approaches to social memory and biographical approaches to objects have emphasised the historicity of all human action and the agency of things themselves within this (Jones 2007; Williams 2003; Borić 2010). Theories of materiality and phenomenological approaches see the archaeological record in terms of how the physical world affects perception and dispatches the entrenched notion that ‘man makes himself’ (Miller 2005; Tilley 2004). Attention to non-western notions of personhood, body and self have broken down our common-sense notions of identity by asking not just ‘who was this person’ but ‘what constitutes a person’, revealing new ways of seeing the material record (Fowler 2004; Brück 2004; 2010; Willerslev 2004; Harris and Robb 2012). It even needs to be asked: should humanity or things be the central object of investigation? Is the righteous search for subaltern voices a political imposition to appease a western, liberal worldview in the present? Has the search for identity been a red herring all along?

Two crucial themes can be discerned which characterise the development of an emerging ‘third wave’ of identity theory in archaeology. First, there is the acknowledgement of the corporeal foundation of all knowledge and experience. This includes even ‘intangible’ aspects of belief, memory, emotion and affect which are produced and reproduced in the body through material practices (Tarlow 2012; Harris and Sørensen 2010; Fowler 2013, 48; Lucas 2012, 163–68). Second, there is the relationship between material culture and human agency, in which there is no longer a need for a binary distinction between people and things, as both take on characteristics of the other through their mutual construction (Webmoor and Witmore 2008; Olsen *et al.* 2012). In the so-called ‘ontological turn’ (Webmoor 2007) the focus is not on finding identity but on the processes by which this emerges through living in a material world. ‘Rather than seeing social life in terms of nodes such as people and things, the focus is shifted on to the relationships linking these

nodes' (Robb 2010, 502). If the second wave was all about constructing identities in the past as a way of deconstructing identities in the present, the third wave is more concerned with the way identity is emergent in the past *and* present in ways which feel organic and timeless to those living with them. Taking material culture seriously is what archaeology has been built to do, and that is the theme that brings together the papers in this volume. Identity is always in the process of becoming, but this is always grounded in and even effected by the inescapable material presence of the past (Lucas 2005; 2012).

If the first wave of identity theory was focused on tracing the movement of contained 'cultures' in the past, the second wave spent too long looking for the formation or genesis of identities. This approach presumes identities have a single point of origin that can be pinned down, and that doing so would tell us something about the past. Archaeology challenges these notions particularly eloquently through the study of the things themselves. What we are doing here is foregrounding the material aspect of identity and its immanence through the very act of being in a material world. Now in the third wave, we should direct our attention to the messy but perhaps more exciting drama of how identities come to feel timeless and natural to those experiencing them.

Using identity in archaeology

The question now is how to apply these ideas to real-world archaeological research. The papers in this volume do not adhere to a single theory or paradigm, yet as they are all taken from early-career researchers in archaeology from across Europe and North America, they represent a snapshot of the state of research on identification in the past. All the authors independently share the view that identity is a way of understanding the world rather than a taxonomic category. And while we all take the stance that identity continually emerges from the network of relations between humans, materials and ideas, each paper focuses on a different aspect of these complex interactions.

Before delineating further these paths to identity, it is worth noting one more theme joining these papers. Several papers deal directly with the aftermath of the deconstruction of grand narratives of acculturation, whether of Romanisation (Campbell), Hellenisation (Hayne, Marín-Aguilera), or Christianisation (Maldonado, Pierce). The way in which the contributors instead focus on the lived experience of the material worlds available to them is indicative of the state of the art in understanding processes of identification. Sensuous properties such as colour, texture and smell, and the emotions and memories these evoke, are highlighted in a number of contributions. The authors draw attention to the crosscutting variables at play at the very moment of encounter: the pouring of wine (Hayne), the serving of a meal (Marín-Aguilera), the draw on a tobacco pipe (Creese), or the strike of a flint (Wright).

Another theme running through this book recalls the primary push-pull of identity itself: the simultaneous promotion of sameness and difference. If the first wave of identity theory was about sameness, and the second wave about difference, these

current papers explore the intricate balancing act between the two (cf. Jenkins 2008b, 18–19). The focus on the local and, perhaps, the personal, is what sets the current wave apart from its predecessors, but this does not signify the denial of larger processes of political or ethnic tension and upheaval. Rather than ignoring or downplaying the conjunctures of socioeconomic change, several papers deal specifically in situations of culture contact and transformation, just from the perspective of those effecting that change. Particularly in Mediterranean contexts, a renewed sensitivity to materiality, mobility and co-presence (Knapp and van Dommelen 2010) has opened up new ways of conceptualising hybridity which go beyond choosing between assimilation and resistance. The conscious construction of foreign-ness (Russell, Pierce), the negotiation of material practices (Campbell, Marín-Aguilera), the effect of the colonised on the coloniser (Halstad McGuire). A tendency towards the agency of the subaltern across the volume is the legacy of the postcolonial critique (cf. van Dommelen 2012), but the lesson applies beyond these case studies: hybridity is everywhere and always.

Finally, many of the papers examine the complexity of identity as emergent from a variety of interlocking variables. For instance, Maldonado grapples with the intersection between ideology and cosmology; Russell, Hayne and Marín-Aguilera deal with economics and power relationships; Campbell, Pierce and McGuire examine nationalism and ethnicity; and Wright, Harris and Creese explore the relationship between materials and the ‘thingness’ of humans. Through our workshops and symposia leading up to this volume we found there was a surprising amount of common ground across the time periods and places covered by these contributions, but the approaches we have all taken are uniquely grounded in the agendas and concerns of our respective areas of specialisation.

Conclusion: identity happens

The postmodern emphasis on multi-vocality and pluralism has led us to a place where there is arguably no single paradigm, but a multiplicity of schools of thought (Pearce 2011; Fahlander 2012; Johnson 2006). The question is not whether we have ‘got it right’ – as Joffe noted over a decade ago, the initial exhilaration of discovering new approaches to identity often leads to a nearly ‘messianic’ certainty that therein lies truth and, finally, an answer (Joffe 2003, 85–87). The point of theory is now, and always has been, to challenge the settled assumptions that we bring to the table, renewing the field for the ever-shifting intellectual climate. The obvious question then is what our particular approach to identity reveals about the current climate. If we see identity as a constant state of becoming, an emergent property in a world of relationships with other entities (human or otherwise), it follows that our sense of self is inextricably bound up in what comes before and what we aspire to after. Therein lies the power of archaeology: ironically, the aim of studying the past is to reveal the ways in which the future is always up for grabs and changeable.

The papers in this volume represent ten unique voices on the uses of identity in archaeology. What they share is a belief that identity is worth studying not

despite its slippery nature, but because of it. The fact of change itself is why we are interested in the past, and difference is why the past remains so fascinating. These papers also offer a unique opportunity for comparative analysis across space and time, something our discipline is often too reluctant to attempt. Not all comparisons are fruitful, and not all of our contributors' ideas are compatible; but they all succeed in promoting the debate of the use of identity theory in archaeology. We all look forward to the next volume written on the subject, and the reactions to our interpretive attempts today.

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