
Post-processual Landscape Archaeology: a Critique

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Post-processual theorists have characterized landscape archaeology as practised in the second half of the twentieth century as over-empirical. They have asserted that the discipline is sterile, in that it deals inadequately with the people of the past, and is also too preoccupied with vision-privileging and Cartesian approaches. They have argued that it is therefore necessary to 'go beyond the evidence' and to develop more experiential approaches, 'archaeologies of inhabitation'. This article argues that such a critique is misguided, notably in its rejection of long-accepted modes of fieldwork and argument and in its annexation of Cosgrove's rhetoric. 'Post-processual' landscape archaeology has involved the development of phenomenological approaches to past landscapes and the writing of hyper-interpretive texts (pioneered by Tilley and Edmonds respectively). It is argued that phenomenological fieldwork has produced highly questionable 'results'. Some of the theoretical and practical consequences of adopting post-processual landscape archaeology are discussed; it is concluded that the new approaches are more problematic than their proponents have allowed. Although new thinking should always be welcomed, it would not be advisable to abandon the heuristic, argument-grounded strengths of conventional landscape archaeology.

The term 'landscape archaeology', it seems, first came into use in Britain in the mid 1970s. In the *festschrift* for Leslie Grinsell, published in 1972, Paul Ashbee, Nicholas Thomas and Peter Fowler wrote consistently about 'field archaeology' (Fowler 1972); then, in 1974, Mick Aston & Trevor Rowley published *Landscape Archaeology*. Their reason for introducing the new concept seems clear; they wanted to 'forge a link between field archaeology ... and the infant study of landscape history' (1974, 11). 'Field archaeology' involved methods developed by O.G.S. Crawford and summarized in his *Archaeology in the Field*, which appeared in 1953. Two years later, W.G. Hoskins published his inspirational, influential *The Making of the English Landscape*, in which he implicitly recognized the critical importance of field archaeology in the production of landscape history. Broadly contemporary with this book were Beresford's *The Lost Villages of England* (1954) and *History on the Ground* (1957), as well as the volume produced in collaboration with J.K. St Joseph, *Medieval England: an Aerial Survey* (1958) and Collin Bowen's *Ancient Fields* (1961). The 1960s and 1970s saw further productive

developments in this tradition of field archaeology. Perhaps it was this record of recent achievement which encouraged Aston & Rowley to coin a new term which recognized that 'archaeology in the field' had gone beyond the recognition and recording of *sites*, and now frequently dealt with extensive, chronologically complex cultural *landscapes*.

The year 2004, in which historians of landscape started to consider how best to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Making of the English Landscape*, also saw the publication of four books which collectively present a very different version of 'landscape archaeology': in no particular order, Mark Edmonds's *The Langdales*; Christopher Tilley's *The Materiality of Stone*; a book edited by Adrian Chadwick entitled *Stories from the Landscape*; and *Places of Special Virtue: Megaliths in the Neolithic Landscapes of Wales*, by Vicki Cummings & Alasdair Whittle. Tilley's article, 'Round barrows and dykes as landscape metaphors', was also published in 2004. New readers should be given a health warning; these texts variously include poetry, extended literary evo-

cations of the remote past, uncaptioned photographs and drawings, photo-collages, unsourced vox pops and personal musings, and a good deal of rhetoric; they may contain traces of Welsh (Cummings & Whittle 2004, 76). They also exhibit a certain concern with the ethereal: to the 'beach in the sky' (Tilley 1999, ch. 6) we may now add 'coombes in the sky' (Tilley 2004b, 197) and 'stones that float in the sky' (Cummings & Whittle 2004, 72–6).

All this represents a new form of 'landscape archaeology', which has been gathering momentum since the early 1990s. Given its origins (see below), it may fairly be described as post-processual landscape archaeology. Its proponents now evidently believe that their early experimental writings have proved successful; their approaches are becoming new modes of 'research' and writing, part of a 'normal science' paradigm. As far as I am aware, post-processual landscape archaeology has encountered little or no critical response from 'traditional' or 'mainstream' landscape archaeologists. The critique developed here is offered from the perspective of an investigative landscape archaeology; it has a starting-point which differs from Brück's recent critique of phenomenological archaeology (2005) and those of others whose work she cites.

Critical origins

In the early 1980s, theorists were challenging the increasing vogue for explaining culture change in terms of totalizing or reductionist frameworks such as systems theory or social evolution as well as 'scientific' approaches to prehistory and history. Within ten years or so, they developed a much more wide-ranging critique which confronted the 'traditional', empirical archaeology of the 1950s as well as the 'processual' archaeology of the 1970s. The new movement became known as post-processualism; soon it developed what was effectively archaeology's version of post-modernism (Johnson 1999). In the early 1990s, post-processualists began to focus their attention on landscape, perhaps in the belief that, as Barbara Bender (1998, 5) put it, 'once you start to think your way into landscape you soon discover that it permeates everything'. Once the theoretical ground had been cleared, the way was open for a new and very different kind of fieldwork.

Post-processual landscape archaeology starts from the surely uncontentious idea that history (including prehistory) is written in the present and, in that sense, only exists in the present, so that it is tempting to treat the archaeological project as more about performance or 'cultural production' than investigation. Aspirations to objectivity and scientific

verification are held to be pointless: as Bender says (1998, 5), 'one cannot be objective but, rather than float on a sea of relativity, one can position oneself so as to ask questions and propose interpretations that seem *relevant* to contemporary concerns' [her italics]. She goes on to say (1998, 7): 'we *have* to go beyond the evidence': the evidence 'does not of itself deliver an understanding ... it is open to any number of interpretations' [her italics]. Julian Thomas has demanded an archaeology of place which 'can never provide the guarantees of verification which processual approaches seem to demand' — 'a plausible account produced in and for the present'. More 'scientific' archaeology (his quotation marks) 'will never succeed in producing the understandings of the past which we require' (Thomas 1996, 88–9).

Having largely freed themselves from traditional concerns with verification, post-processualists had given themselves permission to say more or less whatever they liked. At the same time, they increasingly focused their critique specifically upon contemporary modes of approaching and writing landscape history. The central complaint of Julian Thomas (1993, 26) was that in traditional landscape archaeology (in this case, as presented in Mick Aston's 1985 textbook) people are largely absent.

For Aston, the task of the landscape archaeologist appears to be to detail the titanic forces which surrounded these individuals — population levels, climate, land use patterns, technology, settlement patterns and the organisation of focal places ... The kind of ecological/systemic analysis implied sets up a huge Heath-Robinson apparatus, within which human beings have the metaphysical status of the ghosts in the machine. This is thus a 'top down' analysis ... detailing a series of constraints which between them define a space in which the missing term in the equation — the people — can one day be made to appear, stepping out of the black box. Structures, fields, climate, soils are all fitted into place, in the belief that given a totalising knowledge of all other factors ... the absent human presence, must emerge. Yet this is a vain hope: the apparatus remains so much wreckage (Thomas 1993).

Thus Thomas, and also Bender, using language which sometimes suggested that they were engaged in a form of moral (and political) crusade, demanded a more humanistic approach, and a landscape history which would foreground human agency. Bender refused to take her inspiration from W.G. Hoskins, whose 'exploration of an English landscape palimpsest', despite being 'very seductive', was 'angst-ridden, conservative ... anti-modernist, post-Imperial, and Little Englander'. Hoskins had failed to analyze his

own position, and his 'nostalgia' risked appropriation by those 'in the Heritage trade' who sought to mummify the countryside, presenting 'a history that pickles the past, negates the present, and excludes very large numbers of people [those without Hoskins's yeoman ancestry] from the story' (Bender 1998, 6, 28–30). Bender preferred the more nuanced, politically sharper writings of Raymond Williams (especially in *The Country and the City*, 1973) and the work of Giddens, Bourdieu, Ingold and Barrett.

Another part of the critique linked up with approaches developed in cultural geography. Thomas cited Cosgrove's argument (1984) that landscape painting, following upon the development of perspective in the fifteenth century, was implicated in 'a new politics of vision' which went hand in hand with the treatment of land as an alienable commodity and with the rise of capitalism. Noting that 'the distribution map, the air photo, the satellite image and the Geographical Information System are all distinctively specular', he felt able to create a link with Foucault's ideas about surveillance and control in penal establishments. This was his cue for suggesting that 'we seem to be seeking to monitor and discipline the past', that we run the risk of presenting the past in terms of the sectional interests of the powerful; 'distanced, geometrical, "outsider's" approaches to space can claim no priority over the social and the experiential' (Thomas 1993, 21–9). Post-processual commentators have frequently noted that the word 'landscape' became current in the seventeenth century, with reference to paintings, and that the concept has become inseparably associated with 'Western', post-Enlightenment views of the world, particular attitudes to landed property, a patriarchal and patrician 'male gaze', and so on. Within the tradition of Western art appreciation and the creation of designed landscapes, the visual has always been privileged, and it has assumed the same role within the practice of conventional landscape archaeology. Pre-Enlightenment humans would not have 'gazed' upon the world in the Cartesian manner of late twentieth-century landscape archaeologists. We must liberate ourselves from this mental straitjacket and develop 'an archaeology of inhabitation', or a 'dwelling perspective', and in so doing, simultaneously solve the 'absence of people' problem.

Thomas (1993, 27) did not advocate throwing away distribution maps and air photos; he simply asked us to recognize that there were other ways of thinking about landscape — in this case, by considering bodily encounter at one of the Avebury entrances. But any hopes offered by his words here — that 'Cartesian' analytical tools and a post-Enlightenment

'scientific' approach might have a role in the study of landscape history — have long since been dashed. They have fallen before the notion that 'we must go beyond the evidence', the idea that prehistorians must write about 'otherness' or the 'strangeness' of prehistoric peoples, and the perception that in order to write about pre-Enlightenment people we must somehow rid ourselves of post-Enlightenment attitudes.

Perhaps Shanks has expressed the post-processual approach to landscape most candidly. He wrote about Esgair Fraith, a ruined Welsh farm which became the setting for an historically-informed open-air performance by the theatre group *Brif Gof*. 'Old' landscape treatments were held to be 'afraid' to be 'sensual, interpretive, romantic'; apparently they 'hide' behind scientific objectivity (Pearson & Shanks 2001, 162, 158). It is not enough, according to Shanks, 'to confine [such places] to the past, to say, "this is how they were then"' (Pearson & Shanks 2001, 156). Archaeology is poised to 'reveal itself as a process of cultural production, which takes the remains of the past to make something out of them in the present'. 'These tumbled walls are equivocal, romantic, serving as a backdrop for any narrative or fantasy which might be projected onto them'. 'Mapping' the farm should not be 'some banal planning or recording of the ruined structures'. On the contrary, the visitor 'wants to put a past onto the phenomenological experience of being present' and thus needs 'quite simply' a 'deep map' (Pearson & Shanks 2001, 156–8). For Bender (1998, 40), conventional archaeological training is alien to 'the imaginative leap required to understand how prehistoric people might have conceptualised their relationship to the land'. And over the past decade or so, post-processualists have developed two main responses to their own challenge — phenomenology, as practised by Tilley (e.g. 1994; 1999; 2004a,b) and what may be termed the hyper-interpretive style of writing, pioneered by Mark Edmonds (1999; 2004; Edmonds & Seaborne 2001).

New ways of working

As a mode of fieldwork and textual production, phenomenology has been described in various ways. Talking to Barbara Bender (1998, 81), Tilley has said that it is synaesthetic, involving 'the intimacy of the body in all its senses', 'a visionscape but also a soundscape, a touchscape, even a smellscape, a multi-sensory experience'. More recently he has claimed to have replaced 'a thin and sensorily impoverished "analytical" account' by 'a richly textured carnal phenomenological "thick" description' (2004a, 28). There is also the idea

expressed by Shanks, who writes of 'archaeologists again walking the land, this time asserting the primacy of the constitutive imagination' (referring explicitly here to Tilley, Bender and Edmonds). Shanks describes a theatrical project carried out in Copenhagen which involved 'walking in the city' 'as a kind of anthropological and archaeological enquiry' (Pearson & Shanks 2001, 153, 147). Here, of course, 'walking' means more than simply doing fieldwork on foot; it is meant to be an altogether more mystical, deliberate form of symbolic or performative action, like the walking of the landscape artist Richard Long, whose work 'A line made by walking, 1965' is illustrated and discussed by Renfrew (2003, 31–6). For a phenomenologist, walking around, looking at views, checking on intervisibility and so on, apparently takes 'an incredible amount of time' and involves 'very detailed notes' as well as the use of still and video cameras (Tilley, quoted in Bender 1998, 81). This fieldwork is 'very intensive' and involves filling in forms and the use of checklists (Tilley 2004a, xv, 222–3). Attention to detail is the key to understanding, in a form of fieldwork which is 'intended to be empirical without being empiricist' (Tilley 2004a, 219). At the same time, however, this research 'is not reducible to a set of rule-book procedures which might guarantee "useful" knowledge' (Tilley 2004a, 225). In phenomenological fieldwork, many types of data are collected, and the procedures sound complicated; at least half of *The Materiality of Stone* was apparently not written at a desk (Tilley 2004a, 224–5). Tilley is dismissive of 'most academics' (including specifically Bradley, Bender and Edmonds) who, he says, 'cannot understand landscapes, except in an abstract objectified manner'. They produce 'paper landscapes'; 'bodies remain at the desk rather than in the field (with the exception of the occasional site visit)' (2004a, 27). Previous attempts at fieldwork, even when carried out by the most sophisticated of practitioners, are thus characterized as superficial; they start from inadequate or inappropriate intellectual premises.

The outcome of Tilley's fieldwork has been a series of claims that the locations, appearance and building materials of various 'monuments' relate to landscape features in ways that suggest the merging of 'nature' and 'culture' within the rich sets of metaphors which would have permeated the mythological and cosmological understandings of prehistoric people. As the latter walked the land, they walked their myths, approaching monuments from prescribed directions. These ideas are rooted in ethnography, and they form a significant part of Tilley's introductory rhetoric. For specialists in prehistory, this rhetoric seems attrac-

tive, both as a plausible word-picture of the remote past and as a starting point for new and potentially productive ways of working.

In the hyper-interpretive style, as pioneered by Mark Edmonds, interpretation takes up a much greater proportion of the text, relative to the provision of archaeological information and analysis, than would be the case in more traditional archaeological writings. Moreover, the text is distanced by various devices from involvement with archaeology as normally encountered and explained. In *Ancestral Geographies* and *Prehistory in the Peak*, there are no footnotes or references; the reader seeking more detail must tackle the bibliographies. Deliberately, it seems, the map is barely permitted to enter the discourse; the integration of maps with the text is minimal. In *Prehistory in the Peak*, a book which contains no site plans, the distribution maps are grouped at the end of the book. In *The Langdales*, the maps do little work; there is no map showing where the places named in the text are located, and no general description of Langdale. There are photographs of sites and artefacts, but there are also numerous high-quality black & white images which are evidently included mostly for artistic effect (most notably in *The Langdales*). The style is poetic; numerous archaeological readers encountering it for the first time will probably have found it refreshing, attractive, not to say seductive. Perhaps page 57 of *Prehistory in the Peak* is most representative, bringing in metaphors of social history which involve weaving and textiles, the taking of paths, and the flow of water and its consequences in terms of alluviation and sedimentation. There are characteristic references to social geographies, the flow of life, talk 'turning' around fires, biographies (of objects and livestock), tenure, genealogies, social memory, the contours of social life, the routine playing out of ties, disrespect, ancestors and ancestral pasts, deep currents and tangled threads, whispers, genealogies ... Behind the poetical lies the political. In typical post-processual fashion, Edmonds finds space to decry theories of social evolution, to promote Timothy Ingold's idea of tenure (as opposed to 'territory'), to distance himself from anything which seems like environmental determinism, or explanations which invoke population pressure, to express scepticism about the existence of any institutionalized form of hierarchy or political control in British prehistory. The archaeology of Thomas Bateman is characterized as 'a discipline forming out of the interests of a particular class. A discipline in which distance in space, succession in time and even distinctions of class held a close equivalence' (Edmonds & Seaborne 2001, 126).

If Edmonds's first step away from an 'empirico-scientific' archaeology involves the jettisoning of routine archaeological apparatus (footnotes, site plans, etc.), and the second involves the determined use of the imagination to 'go beyond the evidence', the third step — most vigorously taken in *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic* — involves the insertion of short 'narratives', vignettes from prehistoric life which might be snatches from a prehistoric novel not unlike, say, William Golding's *The Inheritors*. 'The old man leant forward and spat into the fire' and so on. This sort of writing asserts archaeology's need for new forms of cultural production. But the hyper-interpretive style shares several of the objectives of Tilley's version of phenomenology, in its attempts to evoke past mindsets, to get closer to the people of the remote past than has previously been attempted by archaeologists, and to assert the primacy of an interpretive archaeology. Tilley has recently claimed (2004a, 225) that writing the past in the present is 'a conceptual dreamwork'. The hyper-interpretive style seems to represent the creation of dreamworks by other means.

Critique I: phenomenology

It is hard to dispute the proposition (truism?) that archaeologists produce 'a present past, a narrative which is neither the way the past really was, nor a simple reflection of present-day values and interests' (Tilley 2004a, 225). Few would seek to down-grade the use of the historical imagination; many would applaud the promotion of a more 'peopled' form of landscape history, especially for periods which are not text-aided or that depend heavily on archaeology. It should certainly be conceded that past interpretive treatments of landscape prehistory in Britain have often been hesitant, unconvincing, and sometimes simply non-existent, especially the further back in time one goes, as enclosed settlements, linear boundaries and field systems give way to ceremonial monuments and then to contentious signatures on pollen diagrams. So what objection could there be to these laudable attempts to create less timid, more imaginative and adventurous forms of landscape prehistory?

In my opinion, these new approaches are seriously problematic, from both theoretical and operational points of view. Let me first re-examine an important point of departure for the post-processual version of landscape archaeology, namely the first chapter of Cosgrove's *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. For Cosgrove (1984, 27), 'perspective locates the subject *outside* the landscape and stresses the unchanging objectivity of what is observed therein' (his emphasis) and

scientific geography is the apotheosis of the outsider's view of the world. It embodies in formal rules the perspective of one who can consider spatial organisation the objective outcome of objective processes, and who can separate himself literally and theoretically from the object of study. It is the opposite of the insider's experience, of one engaged in making and living in a landscape (Cosgrove 1984, 33).

Cosgrove (1984, 33) also writes of the geographer hiding 'consciously behind his battery of surveys, maps and aerial photographs'. Thomas, Tilley *et al.* would have us see the 'traditional' landscape archaeologist as the equivalent of the scientific geographer characterized in the words quoted above. Thus, in the fight against processualism, landscape and landscape archaeology have been brought into the front line. Thanks to ammunition apparently provided by Cosgrove, critical fire may now be trained upon a group of archaeologists perhaps more numerous and influential than those few who have espoused systems theory and optimal foraging strategy.

It seems undeniable that 'scientific' geography owes a good deal of its ancestry to 'distanced' perspectives (literally as well as figuratively) developed initially in the fifteenth century. I do not question the importance of the insights gained from treating 'landscape' as not merely an aesthetic but also an ideology which had a great deal to do with the creation of the modern world. Post-processualists have encouraged us to see the traditional landscape archaeologist, like Cosgrove's geographer, as the *observer* rather than the participant: in Cosgrove's words again (1984, 19) 'we risk denying the integrity of the insider's experience, prising it apart and subjecting it to the cold blades of classification and analysis'. But is it really the case that the landscape archaeologist — or for that matter, the traditional geographer — can be so simply depicted as the 'outsider', the detached, non-participating 'observer'? Certainly, the owner or the viewer of landscape paintings may be characterized in this way; as Cosgrove points out (1984, 18), he or she always has the option of turning away. Such paintings were conventional wall decorations as well as ideology. But the landscape archaeologist does not see the landscape in two dimensions; on the contrary, as he or she struggles with time depth, trying to decipher the famous palimpsest, four dimensions are involved. Indeed, there is a fifth dimension, argument, which interpenetrates the other four. To do landscape archaeology is to *work* in the field, to practice a particular and distinctive craft in the open air. An outsider at first, the landscape archaeologist has no choice but to become engaged in the landscape, to become an insider as a consequence

of acquired knowledge; it is an involvement which may continue over many years (see e.g. Taylor's (1989) account of his changing views of the history of the village where he lived). Such an engagement is not compromised by the use of such two-dimensional representations of the landscape as maps or air photographs. It has been asserted, not demonstrated, that 'the detachment of the observer' is a problem in field archaeology. In what sense is it a problem, and how would phenomenological approaches represent a solution? No landscape archaeologist familiar with the kind of arguments developed in the field will see 'the objectivity accorded to the faculty of sight' (Cosgrove 1984, 9) as a difficulty. Landscape archaeologists are not obsessed with the attainment of hard-edged objectivity always and everywhere, and our field discourse always and necessarily involves thinking about the intentionality and mindsets of people in the past. 'Absence of people' may be a problem in the texts of prehistorians; but it is not a fieldcraft problem.

Cosgrove cites the evocative landscape descriptions of Vidal de la Blanche and Carl Sauer as evidence for, and acknowledgement of, the visual bias and 'pictorial' origins of geographical thinking. Such descriptions challenge 'the laboured distinction between the geographical and aesthetic landscapes' (1984, 33). 'Once we elect to offer an explanation of either an historical, a functional or an ecological kind we are forced to abandon the static visual model in a search for process' (1984, 32; here he is referring to his own historical contextualization of the concept of landscape). I readily concede that vision is an essential component of the landscape archaeologist's method; but this has nothing to do with 'pictorial' vision. Our own 'search for process', the quest for narratives of landscape history, is never far away. And just as vivid geographical writing has given the lie to the 'detached observer', so texts produced by some landscape historians — most notably W.G. Hoskins — have shown how permeable is the boundary between aesthetic and historical appreciation of landscape. No school of archaeological thinking holds a monopoly on the use of the imagination.

Cosgrove's rhetoric was essentially a ground-breaking exercise, clearing the way for him to write about the deep historical and ideological roots of the concept of landscape. To convert his powerful advocacy of this perspective into a critique of conventional landscape archaeology is surely perverse. The practice of landscape archaeology has no serious connection with smug aristocrats gazing over landed property, dogs and womenfolk from within gilded picture-frames, or with control freaks surveying the earth's

surface from some kind of academic Panopticon. To trade on the genesis of the concept of 'landscape' in order somehow to associate the craft of landscape archaeology with patrician, proprietorial attitudes, with a vision-privileging, post-Enlightenment, patriarchal, gendered 'gaze', is to indulge in caricature. Present-day reality is more likely to involve someone trying to make sense of certain earthworks or standing structures, a figure whose feet, shod in boots traditionally characterized as 'muddy', are very firmly on the ground. *Pace* Edmonds (2004, 197), this kind of dogged investigative empiricism has little to do with the Romantic tradition. As already noted, the gesture made by those who coined the phrase 'landscape archaeology' was towards the more 'holistic' landscape history perspectives put forward by W.G. Hoskins. Although it is always possible, from the evidence of his own writings, to charge Hoskins with various thought-crimes, those who find his work inspirational have been influenced not so much by his attitudes to history and to modernism, as by an approach which at least offered to get local history out of a rut and at best advocated a more nuanced and comprehensive landscape history.

It may be considered unfortunate that the debate started by post-processualists concentrated so much on the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity and the nature of truth claims about the past. Perhaps the stubborn and rather polemical rearguard action mounted by Lewis Binford on behalf of 'science' (e.g. 1987) was partly to blame. Though the discussion now centres on landscape rather than the past in general, much current rhetoric is still concerned with finding an intellectually defensible stance which takes account of the subjective/objective antithesis whilst claiming to have transcended it. Tilley writes, for instance, that 'phenomenology ... stands directly opposed to the empiricist or positivist (scientific) "natural attitude"' (2004a, 1). So how is it that other historical disciplines still manage to get away with believing that it is possible to investigate the past, that empiricism and positivism are useful heuristic principles, and that one may make progress with both the procurement of factual information and the production of new interpretations whilst remaining fully conscious of the circumstances in which history is written?

In dealing with truth claims, the 'natural attitude' of many archaeologists has stood the test of time; it was always a long way from Binfordian scientism. Instead of agonizing over the subjectivity/objectivity relationship in the abstract, archaeologists use a range of measures of confidence around truth

claims, from effective certainties to probabilities and possibilities, and then conjectures and speculations (further sub-divided into 'useful' and 'wild'). What leads them towards a fair measure of agreement, towards 'plausible accounts produced in the present', is neither necessarily the testing of hypotheses nor an agreement to reject 'science' but rather the strength of arguments (and in the short term, it should be readily conceded, contemporary disciplinary fashion and academic politics). These arguments are exposed to the scepticism of colleagues who need no instruction about the cussedness of archaeological data or the sketchiness and fragility of representations of the past. They are also assessed against a variety of questions, such as: 'what other explanations or interpretations might there be?'... 'could this apparent pattern or relationship have come about by chance?' or 'how thin does the evidence have to be before I abandon this proposition?'

Logically enough, these kinds of questions are largely absent from Tilley's phenomenological writing, which is intended as 'a metaphorical work of "art" for which we make no apology' (2004a, 225). Post-processualists have been right, in my view, to insist that archaeology as a 'cultural production' is performative as well as investigative; experimental forms of presentation have let in a breath of fresh air and opened up our horizons. It is a pleasant and all too rare experience to read a well-written, imaginative text written by an archaeologist, and we should feel able to applaud 'other ways of telling'. But ultimately archaeologists are not primarily artists (artistes).

There are questions to be asked about the creation of these 'conceptual dreamworks'. Could I, as one of the unenlightened, be trained in phenomenological fieldwork? What is it actually like to have freed oneself of Cartesian perceptions and useless archaeological training, and break through into this magic garden (while nevertheless carrying a camcorder, still cameras, record forms and notebooks)? How does being empirical without being empiricist work out in practice? If 'trained' phenomenologists studied the same landscapes independently, in all the intensive detail advocated by Tilley, would they achieve similar outcomes? Suppose I walked the Dorset Ridgeway as a phenomenologist and developed very different insights about landscape metaphors referred to by Neolithic bank barrows and Bronze Age burial mounds, should anyone, could anyone, try to decide on the basis of the 'evidence' which of us has produced the better account of the prehistoric past? Post-processual logic suggests that the answer should be no. This is partly because, as we have seen, we are expected to

go *beyond* the evidence. Essentially, our respective texts would have the status of artworks dealing with the same subject matter. I would be Matisse to Tilley's Picasso. At this point the reader might well comment — 'well of course you would; many interpretations are possible, especially in prehistory'. But to admit that archaeological interpretation is definitely 'an art' does not imply that it should be undertaken or treated as an unfettered artistic performance. And it makes no sense to conduct intensive, time-consuming fieldwork simply in order to demonstrate what we all know — that differing interpretations are always possible.

What is supposed to happen when a phenomenologist encounters a landscape palimpsest — Holne Moor on Dartmoor, for example, where there are prehistoric ceremonial monuments, a prehistoric field system, medieval fields, cultivation traces, tinning and stone-diggings of various ages, evidence of rabbit husbandry, and a cross-moor route marked by stone crosses? Would he or she deign to engage in the kind of chronological sequence produced by the 'thin Cartesian analysis' of conventional landscape archaeology (e.g. Fleming & Ralph 1982)? Would it really be possible to attempt a synaesthetic approach without passing through this stage? Would a phenomenologist attempt to produce a different narrative for each phase of past activity visible on the surface (and perhaps also for cases of bodily encounter deducible from documentary sources, such as the likelihood that adherents of the Sublime or the Picturesque rode across this moor in the eighteenth century)? How far can a phenomenologist produce a series of encounters which are culturally sensitive and thus differentially 'sensuous' and 'carnal', dealing with chronologically differentiated synaesthetic experiences, a distinct 'dreamwork' for a Bronze Age shaman, a medieval tin-miner, an eighteenth-century gentlewoman? And in just what sense would intensive phenomenological fieldwork here improve on the efforts of a hyper-interpretive writer who might imagine and write about these things without leaving his or her desk?

Critique II: phenomenology in action

Some years ago, I expressed serious reservations about Tilley's ideas about the megalithic tombs of southern Wales, insofar as they were intended to be read as a contribution to our understanding of the Neolithic past (Fleming 1999). More recently, in response to similar work by Cummings (Cummings & Whittle 2004), I have had to reiterate this critique (Fleming 2005b). Tilley's fieldwork methods, argument and rhetoric do not seem to have changed appreciably since 1994. The

argument in 'the beach in the sky' (Tilley 1999, ch. 6) achieves its effect by separating and isolating certain aspects of south Dorset's archaeology and landscape from comparable features elsewhere in Britain. There could have been a Neolithic 'beach in the sky' not just on the Dorset Ridgeway, but just about anywhere in southern England where water-rolled Triassic pebbles cap the chalk.

The bank barrows of south Dorset, as well as being related to a widespread northwest European tradition which has never been claimed to have anything to do with beaches, exemplify an extreme development of the long barrow tradition which also includes cursuses, very long mortuary enclosures and long barrows which have been given 'tails' and generally built according to what Bradley (1983) has called 'additive principles'. This tradition finds expression in various parts of Britain, including central England, Yorkshire (Edmonds & Seaborne 2001, 64–5; Bradley 1983) and Perthshire (Barclay & Harding 1999; Barclay & Maxwell 1998, especially 104–8). Radiocarbon determinations suggest that the dating bracket for this phenomenon of extreme monumentality is the mid to late fourth millennium cal. BC (Barclay & Bayliss 1999, 22–5), that is, the mid to later part of the earlier Neolithic. The eastern end of the Maiden Castle bank barrow is dated to 3520–3200 cal. BC (95% confidence). The likelihood that the curving shape of this barrow, on plan, is 'an almost exact representation' of Chesil Beach, with its ditches symbolizing the sea and the Fleet lagoon (Tilley 1999, 204), has to be set against the argument that, like some of its fellows in other parts of Britain, the bank barrow is likely to have been constructed in more than one phase (Bradley 1983; Sharples 1991, 56–7) and against the well known fact that all or most of these monuments have side ditches (quarries) in any case.

We also have to consider the whereabouts and appearance of Chesil Beach in the fourth millennium cal. BC. According to Bray (1992, 109), it was formed 'mainly from pre-existing gravel deposits in Lyme Bay, which were swept onshore *as the beach migrated landwards and sea level rose*. The supply must have virtually ceased 4000 to 5000 years ago, *when landward recession slowed*' [my italics in both cases]. It appears that the beach continued to be nourished subsequently by terrestrial sources immediately to the west' (1992, 109). It had formed by 7000 BP and the infilling of the Fleet lagoon with silt, sand, peat and pebbles was more or less completed by 5000 BP (Bray 1997, 1044; 1992, 109). Mean sea level in southern England, which had risen about 5 m over two and a half millennia, did not start to slow until around 5000 BP (Long *et al.* 2000, 253). During the earlier part of the fourth millennium cal.

BC, the time when Neolithic people in south Dorset might have been thinking about landscape metaphors, the sea was still rising. As I understand the literature, Chesil Beach was certainly in existence then, and had been for at least 1000 years; but it is not at all clear that its height, position and appearance — and the character of the Fleet — were recognizably the same as they are today. How far it would have looked like a bank barrow is moot, and the precision of Tilley's instructions about how to walk along the top of the Broadmayne bank barrow, rather than beside it, in order to see the coastal barrier properly, and savour the metaphor, needs to be read against this background.

In Tilley's most recent piece on the barrows and linear earthworks of the Ebbles-Nadder ridge, the basic proposition depends mostly on a couple of dubious assertions. The burial mounds turn out to be located in 'almost the full range of possible topographic positions', 'differentially referencing the significance of these places metaphorically through a combination of their specific locations', linking 'together every distinctive topographic element in the landscape into a coherent whole with possible cosmological significance in terms of a life journey' (Tilley 2004b, 194, 185, 197). It would be fairly normal practice for an archaeologist to note that the barrows were not placed just anywhere, but rather in a range of apparently carefully chosen locations; but what warranty is there for concluding that the locations of these burial mounds — which as an assemblage probably took several centuries to create — were chosen because they formed part of an elaborate regional scheme of landscape metaphors?

Tilley notes the contrast between the deep, 'interior' worlds of the coombes and the 'exterior' world of the open downs and the ridge top. He assumes that the coombes were dangerous worlds, to do with 'particular spirits, mythical forces and the underworld' (Tilley 2004b, 196). But this is an arbitrary choice. Personally, I do not see why the coombes, which are described as 'wooded' (Tilley 2004b, 196; without the citation of supporting palaeo-environmental evidence) and yet also sound-*amplifying*, could not rather have been safe and reassuring worlds, the haunts of benevolent wood-sprites, sun-traps and sporadic sources of water, places which were looked on with favour by the sun-god and the water-spirits; they might have been refuges from the domain of terrifying sky-gods like Taranis (Green 1992, 205–7) who controlled thunder and lightning on the exposed plateau. Looking down into the bottoms of the coombes is supposed to have been 'dangerous' because of the suggested underworld connotations; yet, of the ten barrows numbered 4 to 13, no less than five manage to overlook coombe

bottoms, which must seem deliberate given that the latter are 'only visible at all from short distances away' (Tilley 2004b, 196). The later linear earthworks are described as 'coombes in the sky' — ritual works which continue the coombes onto the ridge. They are not conventional land boundaries but, rather, a mode of controlling metaphors of landscape; the dykes would be perceived as 'part of an order of nature' (Tilley 2004b, 198). Here again Tilley chooses to isolate his own fieldwork zone, disregarding the fact that linear earthworks are a very widespread phenomenon in prehistoric Britain. In the Yorkshire Wolds, for instance (Stoertz 1997), the people of the Bronze and Iron Ages had evidently dug several hundred linear kilometres of landscape metaphors.

Phenomenological fieldwork has become largely a quest for landscape metaphors and cosmological allusions in the Neolithic and Bronze Age, mostly in Britain and northwest Europe. It is not clear why metaphorical perceptions of landscape should be treated as a research priority in the investigation of the prehistoric past, or why it is worthwhile to present them in almost totally decontextualized narratives. Are metaphors in isolation such a promising line of enquiry, given that, as various archaeologists have reminded us, they are notoriously slippery and polymorphous at the best of times, tending to 'run on' (Hodder 1987; Tilley 1999)? Insofar as such 'discovered' metaphors are presented as also validating the phenomenological approach, the argument risks becoming both circular and self-serving. We should be particularly careful in examining the credibility of such metaphors.

Critique III: the hyper-interpretive style

There are some similarities between the questions which need to be asked of phenomenology and those raised by the hyper-interpretive style — whether one is discussing the data-distanced interpretive format which characterizes most of Edmonds's *Ancestral Geographies*, *Prehistory in the Peak* and *The Langdales*, or the short vignettes of imagined past life also to be found in Edmonds's writings (plus some of those in Chadwick's volume and Michael Given's *The Archaeology of the Colonized*). Although an attractive mode of presentation, the hyper-interpretive style raises difficult issues. Some of these might be termed practical or operational. Should we look forward to the day when many regions of Britain (or, for that matter, planet Earth) and most periods of the past have been given this treatment? How far is it desirable that the hyper-interpretive style should be extended to most archaeology-related texts, including excavation re-

ports and accounts of palaeo-environmental work? There may be a paradox here. Consumers of archaeological texts often read in order to obtain information and to gain a rapid understanding of the relationship between evidence and basic interpretation. Much as we might hope that readers with an interest in archaeology might welcome the onset of fine, even poetic writing, one wonders how they might react if the ambience of the hyper-interpretive style, narrative vignettes included, came to pervade most forms of archaeological text.

According to Edmonds (1999, x), in-text references can make a text too exclusive. But the absence of references or footnotes surely makes a text even more exclusive, since only the archaeologically well read can claim some familiarity with the evidence for the statements made; others, even those who have ready access to the right sort of library may have considerable difficulty in finding out. Early on in *Ancestral Geographies*, a woman knaps stone (Edmonds 1999, 13). Reading this, even a comparatively well-read archaeologist must wonder whether there is literature which explicitly argues or provides evidence for females doing such a thing, or whether this passage simply signifies the author's openness to feminist perspectives. When data are referred to, the tenor of hyper-interpretive writing does not usually tell us how far the proposed reading of a site is that of its excavator or the author's own re-interpretation.

Of course, in future hyper-interpretive work, some of these problems might be solved by providing more references and footnotes; but there are more complex issues to be addressed. How are prehistorians and archaeologists expected to engage critically with a dreamwork? The more imaginative the text — the looser its connection with data and argument — the more difficult it becomes to respond to it. If one's reaction to the hyper-interpretive style is positive, one might extrapolate the picture which has been painted to other regions or time periods; but once such acts of imitation have been completed, what is there to build on? If, on the other hand, one's reaction is negative, on what basis can one argue with someone who has deliberately and consciously gone 'beyond the evidence'? To criticize such work from a positivist or 'empirico-scientific' perspective is to expose oneself to the charge of failing to understand, or wilfully rejecting, the basic post-processual philosophical position. Yet it is not clear what critique coming from within a post-processual or post-modern perspective could be based upon; in an historical discipline, it should presumably involve more than the award of points for artistic impression or literary excellence.

It may seem that, after only five or six years, criticism is premature, even unfair, given the experimental, pioneering spirit of hyper-interpretive writing; but this is where one encounters another paradox. At first sight, the hyper-interpretive style seems to mark out a distinctive and potentially productive new direction for the creation of archaeological narratives. But, in content, *Ancestral Geographies* and its two sister works mostly constitute the crystallization of post-processual ideas already in print for some time; Edmonds (1999, 158) specifically acknowledges his debt to Tilley and Barrett. These three books represent a courageous response to the frequent post-processual demands for a 'poetics' of archaeology but the primary thrust of Edmonds's works has been to go beyond the philosophical arguments for post-processualism and to respond to them by developing an operational format for writing archaeology. In that sense, the hyper-interpretive style and phenomenology complement each other. Thus post-processualists have gone beyond critical rhetoric of the early days and produced this new version of 'landscape archaeology' with its own distinctive modes of operation. It seems to constitute less an experiment, more an end-product, a form of solution to the questions asked by the post-processual critique.

This conclusion seems confirmed when one asks oneself what new directions hyper-interpretive narrative might take. A work such as *Ancestral Geographies* appears permeated by anthropological insights; so may we expect new developments in the study of a not yet convincingly cultivated field, the 'anthropology' of the British Neolithic? This can only happen, I think, if a post-processual 'anthropology of the past' develops an edge and starts to ask a few sharp questions. Over the past fifteen years or so, its main role has been to service the post-processual project; but that operation has surely now been concluded. In hyper-interpretive texts, the 'anthropology' is unexceptionable, almost of necessity. As in the case of drawing artistic reconstructions (Sorrell 1981), to write about people of the past in this style is to walk a tightrope between supplying enough concrete 'information' to escape a charge of perpetual vagueness but not so much as to transgress the limits of reasonable conjecture. In Edmonds's writing, the tightrope walking is skilfully done; but as we move from Derbyshire to the Lake District, or from the Mesolithic to the Neolithic or the Bronze Age, the people do not, perhaps cannot, change very much.

And this highlights another set of questions about the adequacy of the hyper-interpretive narrative when it becomes necessary to capture the cultural differences between peoples of different regions, the

sharpness and sense of liminality of cultural change, and the 'strangeness' or Otherness of people of the past. These are serious challenges at the best of times. It is always hard to keep Everyman within bounds, to avoid depicting the sort of all-purpose humans from the past, politically correct but culturally neutered, who would pass muster with UNESCO. People of the past have to behave themselves! Having recently characterized the past people of St Kilda as 'determined and hard-working' (Fleming 2005a, 200), I have fallen into this trap myself; but to have portrayed the islanders as 'inhabiting' their landscape in an atmosphere of resolute sentience would not obviously have represented a better choice.

Considerations of taste and the attitudes of our age impose their own constraints. Outside satire or parody, we are unlikely to find a contemporary archaeologist in the near future writing a narrative vignette like this: 'as he clubbed the odious bastard to death, he was conscious how well his skull would look in the wall-niche — something to give the wife a thrill when she did the dusting — and how good a few slices of his thigh would taste, accompanied by a dandelion salad'. Clearly, future writers might adopt a more robust attitude to the challenge of writing about Otherness but it is not hard to predict that the more 'extreme' the characterization of past people, the greater will be the demand for evidential support, and the more contentious the treatment will become. Perhaps there are good reasons why archaeologists have traditionally pussy-footed around the topic of prehistoric cannibalism — and violence in general.

It looks as if we are facing another paradox. When we try to introduce 'people' directly, we find that, despite our best efforts, they become ciphers. The new ciphers are in sharper focus than their predecessors; but arguably they have now become over-determined. Ironically, if archaeologists refrain from over-sharp characterization of past humans, if they allow their readers more imaginative freedom, if they give us the 'evidence' and garnish it with the traditional hints, conjectures, and anthropologically-based insights, we may well find that we can develop a clearer feel for the Otherness of the past, horrors and all, in the freedom of our own imaginings.

Introducing people

In part, both phenomenology and (especially) hyper-interpretive narratives were introduced to respond to a perceived problem. Archaeologists in general, and landscape archaeologists in particular, had to deal with the charge that the people in their landscapes

were non-existent, or ciphers at best. One's immediate reaction is that we should plead guilty — especially those of us who have been concerned with prehistoric landscapes; but a few moments' further reflection reveals that the situation is by no means straightforward. People of the past are not notably more 'absent' in the field of landscape archaeology than they are in other sub-disciplines of archaeology. Landscape history is not the only research area which is not primarily or initially focused on people, yet nevertheless makes a useful contribution to the greater enterprise of history. If we are really seeking to write about the experiential cores of past people's lives, all historians' enterprises — including those of biographers of the recently deceased — have to be seen as perpetually inadequate proxies for the original lived experience.

Few of us nowadays would regard Hawkes's ladder of inference (1954) as a sacred text. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, to quite a large extent, the 'inadequacy' of landscape prehistory reflects the nature of the evidence. When they reach 'text-aided' horizons, landscape historians are grateful enough to encounter and be able to write imaginatively about named individuals acting out distinctive roles, people like the euphoniously named Lettice Sweetapple (Fowler 1998). It is also the case that some investigations actually require people to be ciphers. For example, Tom Williamson has been investigating the origins of open field systems. Recently, he has been seeking to discover whether variations in the types of open field found in eastern England reflect, in part at least, the influence of different soil types on local farming practice, in terms of weather windows, labour bottle-necks and so on (Williamson 2003). Doubtless this enquiry is aided by anecdotal evidence featuring particular individuals (e.g. Williamson 2003, 121, 158); but clearly the priority here is an overview. Williamson needs to generalize about soils, regions, and a range of particular places; an evocation of what it feels like to drive a team of recalcitrant oxen along a muddy headland would simply impede the argument.

Landscape archaeology has its own priorities. Agendas are often imposed or suggested by problems or puzzles encountered in the fieldwork situation. Initially at least, these rarely involve experiential treatments of people. For example, when I was working in Swaledale (North Yorkshire), I would have liked to discover or develop a methodology for picking out the signs of 'early' mining in a landscape where the footprints of more recent mining are all too abundant. I did not attempt to do so; as far as I know, the problem still awaits solution. Attempting to solve it would probably involve many days of work, and might result

in failure. Writing a piece about what it felt like to be a Romano-British lead-miner might take only three or four hours, and it would not be too difficult; yet, as a landscape archaeologist, I know where my priorities should lie.

It might be unfair to characterize calls for the 'peopling' of narratives concerned with prehistoric landscapes as little more than affirmations of the value of 'motherhood and apple pie'. Nevertheless, some of these apparently more humanistic ways of working and writing have to face various questions. Once its rhetorical role as the alternative to earlier approaches has been exhausted, will the 'dwelling perspective' turn out to be unexpectedly banal? What new heuristic purposes might it have, given that 'cognitive' approaches have been in use for some time? In the longer term, how far can we transcend a bland, decontextualized form of anthropology, the anthropology of Everyman? Will we perhaps come to regret the short-lived, perfunctory nature of our 1980s involvement with neo-Marxist approaches (e.g. Spriggs 1984), which would at least have encouraged us to contextualize metaphors of past landscapes? Could experiential approaches turn away from exploring metaphors, and concern themselves with 'power in the land'? Will thinly contextualized approaches to past landscapes really help us to understand or explain significant changes of mindset?

Wider perspectives

It is worth reiterating the core preoccupations and objectives of post-processual landscape archaeology. Put simply, they are: 1) prehistory is written in the present; so the discipline should be re-balanced to foreground performance at the expense of investigation; 2) 'frameworks' of any sort are suspect; they are essentially Cartesian and de-humanizing and do not reflect the mindsets of pre-Enlightenment people, so should be avoided as much as possible; 3) 'landscape' is the ideal field in which to show how post-processual theory creates new ways of thinking and working.

It seems to me that it is one thing to point out the reciprocal and complex relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in archaeology, and quite another to conclude that investigation is ultimately a performance. It is even more problematic to take this notion into the field. Observation is theory-driven only up to a point. In archaeological fieldwork, there is a subtle but important distinction between knowing what one is looking for and knowing what one will find.

Put together the words 'prehistoric' and 'landscape', and one creates an arena full of opportunity

for the fantasist and the ideologue. There is plenty of tempting material to work with, and it appears easy to dismiss accumulated knowledge and argument and treat it as irrelevant to the current quest. In particular, Stonehenge and other stone circles apparently exude an aura which suggests that they encapsulate some secret to be 'de-coded', a whole area of investigation which mainstream archaeologists are apparently too cautious to deal with themselves. In Smiles's masterly survey of how the ancient British past was re-imagined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and used to create compelling iconographies furthering nationalist and imperialist objectives, 'scientific' antiquarians and proto-archaeologists are presented as dull, pedestrian figures mostly glimpsed from afar. Smiles warns today's archaeologists that they too will probably be hard pushed to develop narratives as attractive and popular as those which he has been describing; 'prehistoric Britain', he writes (Smiles 1994, 221), 'matters in a wider cultural sense than the academic desire to set the historical record straight'. In a brief post-modern aside (1994, 7), he asserts that 'the world scientifically described' is 'fundamentally as mythic a construction as any other'; we must put aside 'progressivist histories of archaeology' and 'investigate the poetics of prehistory'. Evidently specialist training and study mean little, and *zeitgeist* is all.

Yet the field where bright ideas and landscape meet is strewn with casualties, including those with established academic reputations. There was Sir Norman Lockyer, Astronomer Royal (for a summary of his 'uncritical methods', see Chippindale 1983, 140) and Alexander Thom, a former professor of engineering from the University of Oxford (Chippindale 1983, 231–5; Ruggles 1999, ch. 2). O.G.S. Crawford felt obliged to transfer his allegiance from his first mentor, Harold Peake, to J.P. Williams-Freeman (and others), on the grounds that Peake had too many wildcat ideas about landscape history (Crawford 1955, 64, 39, 58). Hadrian Allcroft's long-term reputation as a field archaeologist rests on his *Earthwork of England* (1908) but how many archaeologists have heard of his *The Circle and the Cross*? It is 700-odd pages long, contains a wealth of illustrations of archaeological sites and archaeologically-based argument, and was originally published in the *Antiquaries Journal*. Nowadays it deservedly languishes in obscurity. Yet it was a close contemporary of the still celebrated *Wessex from the Air* (Crawford & Keiller 1928). And just when Hoskins, Crawford, and Beresford were writing their influential books, the reputation of that talented Cambridge scholar T.C. Lethbridge was starting to dive in the aftermath of his self-deluding attempts to re-discover the Gog

& Magog chalk-cut hill figures (Daniel 1986, 399–405). Lethbridge's subsequent intellectual voyage is disturbing (Graves & Houlton 1980). In the field of landscape, the questionable may be hard to recognize at first. Some truth claims may supplant or out-compete others; there have been crass failures of archaeological common sense; some seemingly plausible lines of enquiry have turned out to be dead-ends.

I am sceptical about the notion that the re-creation of pre-Enlightenment mentalities, or the Otherness of past people, is best approached by attempting to re-create some kind of pre-Enlightenment form of investigative fieldwork. It is a fallacy to imply that 'experiential' modes of writing or fieldwork somehow provide the antidote to the ideas of prehistorians who have, for instance, used clusters of ceremonial monuments to argue for the past existence of chiefdoms, or patterns of land boundaries to suggest 'territories'. The pointed exclusion of political geography and institutionalised power structures from post-processualists' accounts of later British prehistory raises some interesting questions (Fleming 2004). Prehistorians who do not exclude such topics from consideration (partly because they are aware of their importance in the post-prehistoric world) certainly would not claim that prehistoric people's thoughts about the world were dominated by social hierarchy or the notion of territoriality.

By all means, let us experiment with new forms of written narrative. In our investigations, however, we should surely be as Cartesian as we need to be; even Tilley, with his camcorder and still camera, has to work with two-dimensional images at times. To use basic archaeological common sense — to ask oneself 'what if I'm wrong?', 'are there other ways of thinking about this which are just as valid?', 'am I attempting the impossible here?' — does not constitute a sell-out to scientism or myopic empiricism.

We have been led to believe that 'landscape' is the field in which post-processual theory is best put into practice. That may be so; but these two conceptual areas do not 'need' each other for purposes of self-validation. Prehistorians will accept post-processual ideas, to a great or lesser extent, on the basis of how much sense they make philosophically and how far they seem ideologically satisfactory. Fundamentally, these ideas are about history, politics and humanity; they do not require validation by the invention of forms of fieldwork which traduce the norms of critical judgement. The suspension of these norms is not a price worth paying for making illusory progress with 'the people agenda'.

It is good that landscape historians who work in prehistoric periods are exploring the potential of cog-

nitive approaches, experimenting with new ways of writing, and have been reminded of the ever-present issues around 'the dearth of people'. But landscape history has its own long-standing tradition of empiricism, a record of cumulative achievement based on good ideas eventually driving out the bad. The great strengths of 'traditional' landscape archaeology have been its immense heuristic potential and its preference for sustained argument rather than rhetoric and the uncritical acceptance of the output of sometimes fevered imaginations. There is no need for us to feel pressurised into 'going beyond the evidence'.

In conclusion

Because it does not adequately address the 'people' agenda, and because it objectifies its subject matter, post-processual theorists have suggested that conventional landscape archaeology has somehow been discredited, and they have sought to supplant it by the production of 'experiential' forms of fieldwork and writing which explicitly seek to go 'beyond the evidence'. I have argued that conventional landscape archaeology has not been discredited by such arguments, and that these new archaeologies of landscape are problematic in operational terms. It may be that the 'the dwelling perspective' will take us beyond rhetoric and the creation of 'experiential' texts, and show us productive new areas and modes of investigation which will better withstand critical scrutiny. I hope so. I realize that post-processual landscape archaeology has been driven by the idea that theory and interpretation, investigation and performance, are inextricably entangled. It is also said that observation itself is theory-driven. What will happen to field archaeology if most of its practitioners come to regard these half-truths as holy writ can only be imagined; time will tell. In my view, field archaeologists would do well to retain their critical faculties, and their instinct for weighing evidence dispassionately. As Terence Kealey (2005, 46) has recently noted, 'we live with the post-modern insights by ignoring them in practice while acknowledging them in theory'.

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