

practice. Lucas's closing chapter also introduces some important ideas about the nature of archaeological knowledge that warrant broader consideration. There are perhaps two weaknesses to some of his arguments, however. Specifically, while I found his attempts to employ Husserl's notion of retention so as to demonstrate the multi-temporal nature of a simple artefact convincing, the practicalities of attempting a similar analysis for every context, artefact, attribute and so on would seem unattainable. For all their potential benefits, the kind of analyses Lucas proposes could only be applied in just a few cases for any particular site or major horizon. How one decides on which phenomena to subject to such exhausting temporal study we are not told, nor is it discussed as to whether this would make any difference to our assessments of the temporality of the remains we uncover. The second weakness, as I perceive it, is that Lucas has not really sought to examine or explain evolutionary time in any detail. Brief reference is made to some recent debates on the topic, but little more is offered and nothing is said about how the analytical approaches to time outlined in Chapter 4 might inform (if, indeed they can) an understanding of evolutionary processes that operate on vastly different temporal scales to anything which humans can experience. These points notwithstanding, Lucas is to be congratulated for producing such an interesting book.

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Archaeology and Modernity, by Julian Thomas, 2004.
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Mark Pluciennik

Julian Thomas has never been afraid to engage with philosophy, most obviously in *Time, Culture and Identity* (1996), where the archaeology of Neolithic Britain was read through a Heideggerian lens. In this continuation he hopes to 'identify the conditions from within

which we presently conduct our archaeology', and 'to consider whether archaeology's attachment to modernity can be transcended' (p. x). His argument is that archaeology is inextricably and inescapably bound up with modernity, defined as 'a particular philosophical outlook, and by particular ways in which human beings have operated socially' (p. 2). Indeed, he asserts that modernity has provided the necessary conditions for the practice of archaeology as we know it today, though here it is worth citing Thomas's summary assessment of contemporary archaeology as one which 'seeks clarity, objectivity, and a reduction to law-like or mathematical terms. It demands precision, unambiguous resolution, universality and the transcendence of local conditions. All of this is achieved by declaring the world to be object-like and free of meaning' hence bracketing 'out ethics, rhetoric and social relations' (p. 247). Many will have difficulty in recognizing this as a fair characterization of their archaeological practices and might rather see it as a caricature of arguments rehearsed some twenty years ago. Nevertheless, given the problems of summarising, distilling and selecting authors and trends from 500 years of Western thought, Thomas presents an impressive and coherent argument, though not without its problems. In effect, it is a lengthy prologomenon, the vast majority of which is an historical review, after which Thomas rightly dismisses as impossible either a return to pre-modern sensibilities or adoption of a non-modern approach, and outlines his own transcendental programme.

The bulk of the text comprises linked and intentionally overlapping chapters or essays, each typically considering the philosophical background before moving onto wider ramifications and then specifically those for archaeology. The benefit of this format is that it produces a sense of the variety of factors, themes and strands which have come together to produce the intellectual *milieux* of modernity, while highlighting continuities of thought and the specifically archaeological. In many ways, then, Thomas produces what he has admitted elsewhere is a fairly conventional history (meta-narrative?) of ideas, curiously asocial and full of 'great men'. In this way, he looks at a series of themes including modern rationality, ordering and classification, nature and culture, mind and matter, the concept of the individual, and models of surface versus depth (and the use of 'archaeology' as a metaphor). It should be stressed that this is a book written for archaeologists: much of the story and many of the critiques may be familiar, but these are usefully drawn together into a synthesis with an archaeological focus. One might argue that Thomas makes too much of the contrast between pre-modern and modern. For example, the divisions between myth and 'rational' history are anything but

clear-cut and certainly not subject to any chronological quarantine; linear time is far from confined to, or the sole understanding in the modern West. We might also question how homogeneous and all-embracing 'the modern' is at any specific time and place, and who is enacting it. The book also takes as given that archaeology is a professional and academic discipline, and that the philosophical ideas of modernity have 'trickled down' and become widely diffused. One might emphasize that there are still many ways of understanding the past, its importance, and 'our' role within or debt to history. Looking at philosophical *cum* scientific approaches is only part of the picture. Alternative (fringe, lay, religious, minority) understandings are hugely important socially, culturally and politically. A poll completed at around the time this book was published (November 2004) recorded that: '45 percent of Americans ... believe that God created human beings pretty much in their present form about 10,000 years ago. A third of Americans are biblical literalists who believe that the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word' (Gallup 2007). Such views are clearly antithetical to modern archaeology and attitudes to the past as characterized here, although modernism may be the stance predominantly associated with political and intellectual elites. One suspects that similar polls in many other countries would produce evidence of even more pervasive non-modern views. Nonetheless, as has been argued elsewhere (e.g. Pluciennik 2002; Barnard 2004), there are certainly ways in which a convergence of factors led to specific, 'modern', archaeological and anthropological ways of thinking, writing and acting, regarding hunter-gatherers for example. Thomas lays originary emphasis on philosophical thoughts, a traditional history of ideas; others, including myself, have argued that they are as much symptoms as causes of widespread shifts in sensibility and socio-economic practice. For rhetorical and narrative purposes, one recognizes the value of a relatively simple and coherent story-line. Nevertheless, Thomas's argument is that many (most?) aspects of modernity (*qua* 'philosophical outlook') as manifested in archaeology are ... what? Unhelpful? Constraining? Specific? Narrow? Oppressive? But then so, presumably, potentially are all culturally-specific attitudes towards the past. What is 'wrong' — a difficult term here — with archaeology as a modernist project? Thomas rightly notes it has promoted, encouraged or been complicit in: the exclusion of alterity; the reinforcement of, or collusion in, particular power relations such as racism, nationalism and colonialism; the inappropriate objectification of things as well as people; the separation of mind from matter, and other dualisms. One could, of course, also provide a list of rather more positive and emancipatory descriptors.

It is nowadays uncontroversial that all engagements with a past are from a particular position and perspective: what modernism has also encouraged by its search for 'knowledge' is reflection upon what constitutes that position, which necessarily demands an attempted partial disengagement. Perhaps the foundational issue for Thomas is the conceptual subject-object separation: for him, 'where Cartesianism goes wrong is in failing to recognise that the world of meaning, of everyday human engagement, actually has priority over the world of science' (p. 60). I am uncomfortable with the terminology here: archaeological science is also an embodied practice and relational and contextual system of knowing; archaeological objects are, epistemically, physically and analytically separated — dispersed and fragmented — but also reconstituted and recontextualized so that we may understand them differently (Jones 2002). Scientific world views may be different and involve particular methodologies and epistemologies, but it is not obvious that that makes them 'wrong' or subordinate. Indeed, a few pages later, Thomas agrees that various sorts of 'analytical investigations' and classifications 'have all proved to be useful tools in making sense of the past', though he finds it 'disturbing that the means through which we address alien cultural contexts are ones that are so intimately tied to our own historical condition' (p. 63). It is not clear to me how it could be otherwise. Thus archaeology, says Thomas, 'seeks to establish an order among the things of the past ... that would be entirely unfamiliar to past people'. Necessarily so — it is the obverse of alterity: their world is not our world, any more than ours is theirs; but surely relational analogies (and philosophies) and contextual archaeologies — neither of them exactly new, though we may want to argue for greater prominence or application — precisely attempt to address other forms of ordering, of meaning, of value. This is of course a key concern: if we accept that we do have an interest in other pasts, other histories, other people, which aspects interest us? How might we legitimately operationalize such interests? Just as importantly, who comprises those various 'we'?

The above sounds too negative for what is a committed and serious working out of the implications of modernist thought for archaeology, although I have suggested there are many ambiguities and even contradictions. The critiques of modernity have, of course, surfaced from within — been enabled by, one might as well say — modernity too. What does this say about our ability to make a meaningful difference? What could and should any counter-modern archaeology aspire to? In the final chapter, Thomas suggests that we should 'enrich' archaeology through 'new and complementary ideas and ways of working' and its 'ethical, political,

rhetorical and aesthetic dimensions' (p. 224); but the subsequent discussion is rather impoverished. Discussion of ethics in archaeology is (mis)represented by one introductory reader, and the possible implications of a Levinasian ethical imperative are only sketched out. Yet this, for example, would also have been an excellent place to grapple with the problem of epistemically competing narratives more recently discussed by Cooper (2006, 145), who tellingly suggests that there is a 'very real issue at stake, one that we should not allow to be disguised by a flaccid rhetoric of the "respect", "openness" and "inclusiveness" that archaeologists should be displaying'. Exactly how 'unconventional' attempts at evocation (or empathy — formerly strongly criticized by Thomas) might 'broaden our appreciation of the richness and unfamiliarity' of past lives (p. 235), rather than those of present-day academics, needs much more than a single paragraph. 'Evocation' or a piece of poetry arguably may be just as indiscriminating (or pointless) a tool for enriching the past as any analytical technique in the wrong circumstances — highlighting an apparent lack is not the same as proposing creatively plausible interpretations (Fleming 2006). Discussion of archaeological democracy and dialogue is limited to managing archaeologists on site. There are thus major lacunae not only in his sketch of what a dialogical and democratic excavation might be like (and which many others have tried to put into practice) — but also about how important issues such as the involvement of other people, groups or communities might be negotiated, and their relationships to 'archaeologists'. Thorny philosophical, ethical and political issues are excluded here. This is very much a professional view looking outwards (and down?). In fieldwork as elsewhere, archaeologists typically have multiple, complex, dynamic and often competing responsibilities and constituencies (Pluciennik & Drew 2000). There are plenty of counter-modern archaeologies in the sense of the exploration of dialogue (Joyce 2002), sensitivity to difference between present and past, and explicit engagements with political and ethical stances. Thomas might argue that grappling with the above is too much to expect from a book rather trying to out-line some of the consequences of archaeology's symbiotic history with other aspects of modernity. Rhetorically though, this book relies too much on exaggeration and, ironically, totalization, to make points which are partly valid but, equally, partial: the characterization of archaeology seems to stop somewhere around 1980; Cartesianism is simply 'wrong'; 'modern thought' denies 'the possibility of any other perspective' or of 'shared ethical values' (p. 229). I would argue — and I think the book suggests and is itself evidence of this too — that, insofar as 'modernity'

has a coherent meaning and structure, it has been enabling as well as constraining.

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Alison Sheridan

Neolithic Scotland sets out (p. 2) to present 'a synthesis and interpretation of countless excavations and previous interpretations of the Scottish Neolithic' to the general public, producing 'a volume that considers the entirety

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