

Review of: "One Archaeology of Knowledge Constructs"

John Carman¹

¹ University of Birmingham

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This article seeks to revisit ideas in archaeology about the nature of archaeological knowledge and consequent interpretations. In doing so it relies quite heavily on ideas presented up to four decades ago by French archaeologists and refers to the – for them, contemporary – debates between advocates of processualism and post-processualism. The article therefore comes across as somewhat dated since the debates it references are now long over. There are hints in the references to archaeological writing as a ‘game’ and a ‘symbolic’ act of language of the idea of archaeology as a ‘text’ to be read – another idea that has long had its day since it was clearly seen not to work usefully.

The work takes a long and complex route of explanation to reach what is a rather obvious conclusion: that “archaeological work is a set of mental constructions from the initial objectives of collecting data to the final production of the scientific text.... [and] it is based on the properties and attributes of materiality, that is, on what is informed to us by the object or about the object”. At that point, the current draft ends (I rather suspect because the author does not know where to go next).

The paper requires a deeper engagement with much more recent archaeological literature and debates about what archaeologists *do* and what archaeology is *for*. I recommend a look at Lucas (2000), Edgeworth (2006), Cobb et al. (2012), and Hamilakis (2013) on archaeological practices. I further recommend Smith (2004), Thomas (2004), Little (2007) and Sabloff (2008) for discussions of discussions of what archaeology is *for*. While these may not alter the overall argument of the paper – which is yet to emerge – they may help the author to see that things have moved on since the early 1990s and to construct an argument that contributes to archaeological understanding. I am sure the author can do this: but the ideas need significant work to emerge.

References

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