Jameson, F. 1983. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London, Methuen.

DIGGING WITH THE PEN¹:
NOVEL ARCHAEOLOGIES AND LITERARY TRADITIONS

Christopher Evans

The recent influence of post-structural critique has caused archaeology to acknowledge the textuality of its discourse and has prompted questions concerning how the discipline 'writes' itself (e.g. Hodder 1989a; Shanks & Tilley 1987, 12-24; Tilley forthcoming). For a number of years archaeological texts have been liberally sprinkled with appropriate literary quotations (which can be interpreted as an admission of failure to communicate through the couched language of academia and the employment of literature to convey an indirect sensation of their too-distant subject; Evans 1985, 91). Reviews of relevant fiction have even recently been included in at least one major journal (*Antiquity*: Mulvaney 1988; Merriman 1988a; Bradley 1989). All this could suggest that archaeology is about to enter a phase of 'genre blurring' (Geertz 1983) and reflexive written experiment - territory already explored by history (e.g. Pomata 1989) and social anthropology (e.g. Clifford & Marcus 1986; Tausig 1987; cf. Kapferer 1988 and Spencer 1989).

This paper will not directly address problems of written discourse within the discipline, but rather the manner in which prehistory and 'archaeology' have been variously employed in recent novels. The higher public profile of archaeology since the Second World War has determined that the subject, its practice, and practitioners have all frequently appeared in fiction (Thomas 1976, 314). These literary archaeologies merit attention specifically because they are written without the constraints of a 'disciplinary code' (Hodder 1989a). They are also indicative of the way in which archaeological knowledge is disseminated (i.e. which of its interpretations register with broader audiences) and reflect public attitudes towards its practice.

The 'pulp' end of the publishing spectrum is in some ways the more informative. It certainly displays great diversity in its many pasts (Evans 1983). Antiquarians and archaeologists have long featured in adventure and detective fiction (e.g. Buchan, Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard; Thomas 1976, 312-313; Mann 1981). Recent years have, on one hand, seen the rise of a now flourishing 'barbaric' (sword-and-sorcery) genre in which the atmosphere of heroic, vaguely past worlds are evoked with little or no respect for academic credibility. On the other hand, academically-referential futuristic anthropological and archaeological practices (e.g. Van Vogt 1951; Le Guin 1986) have, on occasion, been the subject of science fiction². There now also exists a thriving 'realist' school in which a 'hobbyist' attention to detail is spent on the 'ethnographic' reconstruction of prehistories. Typified by Auel's *Clan of the Cave Bear* series (despite its feminist content), many of these novels are essentially 'period pieces', with literary roots in historical romance (e.g. Walter Scott) and the fiction

of time travel (e.g. H.G. Wells; see Lowenthal 1985, 22-28, 224-231). Considerable background research evidently lies behind much of this writing and, given their vast readership, such works are important, if for no other reason, than they mediate between academia and a much wider public.

This review will, however, be largely concerned with novels of greater literary ambition (i.e. Booker prize material), which often explore narrative form and consciously situate the author/subject³. By (modern) tradition the privileged role of the author in 'prestige fiction' encourages *play* with time/place and the confidence to address 'big questions'. (Pre)Historical fantasy (e.g. the works of Gunter Grass and Salman Rushdie) is, for example, now acknowledged as a strategy of post-modernist fiction inasmuch as it undermines the logic of official history (McHale 1987, 94-96). These issues have implications for academic writing and their discussion at this time is particularly relevant because this year has seen the publication of two major works of fiction that deal explicitly with the past: Raymond Williams' *People of the Black Mountains* and Peter Ackroyd's *First Light*. They are an appropriate starting point to address problems of archaeological fiction for their interests in the past vary and are complementary. Williams' novel is a *reconstruction* of prehistoric social life which focuses upon long-term interrelationships in the culture landscape, whereas in Ackroyd's the *practice of archaeology* (scientific enquiry) provokes an exploration concerning the nature of *time*.

'Knowable Communities'?⁴

Williams' posthumous novel charts the prehistory of the Black Mountains of Wales, the same 'Border Country' in which his previous novels were set. It employs a parallel narrative inasmuch as prehistory unfolds in the present during the course of a young man's night-time search for his grandfather lost in the mountains. This trek occurs over eight short chapters that are juxtaposed with 23 (unnumbered) chronologically-successive prehistoric 'stories' which span developments from later Pleistocene times through to the Roman invasion. Within the volume the impact of the 'present' eventually diminishes, becoming little more than an interjective device that punctuates the advance of prehistory and provides an opportunity for comment upon where we are now in terms of the past. A predominant theme in Williams' work was the interrelationship between past and present (Samuel 1989, 143). As it has been published this volume is essentially a cultural prehistory of the Welsh Borders. It has few ties with the present and one suspects that it misrepresents its author's intentions. ... *the Black Mountains* was to have been a trilogy which followed the history of this region through to the 20th century. The second, and apparently the concluding, volume is forthcoming next year.

Bound with maps and opening with the image of the spread hand upon stone (by which the topography of the Black Mountains can be read), this book is concerned with relationships between culture and land, specifically the communal creation of a cultural landscape. What distinguishes it from many 'prehistoric novels' is its great chronological scope (23,000 years in less than 400 pages). ... *the Black Mountains* is not a sentimental history of individuals, nor is the pace of innovation and social change condensed into a few generations.

An underlying problem in producing literature concerned with the reconstruction of the past is that of an ever-distant subject and experience. The author (nor even his/hers grandparents) has not lived what is written. Although great literature can obviously be produced solely from imagination, it rarely sustains an extended narrative. When writing fiction of distant pasts the very foundation of an author's knowledge is second-hand, deriving from such dry and skeletal sources as academic archaeology. This makes it difficult to create substantial characters and may be one reason why so much archaeological fiction focuses either upon the maimed or outcast. Physical isolation often substitutes for character, distinguishing individuals from prehistoric masses. Most novels concerning the past are, nevertheless, carried through character and not narrative. Plots tend to hinge on an individual's reactions to and passage through life's universals: puberty, sexual awareness, marriage, childbirth, illness, and death. Because authors cannot bring nuances of personal experience to distinctly prehistoric events (e.g. the hunting of mammoths, the initial encounter with bronze weapons or mounted warriors) it is past-specific phenomena which, ironically enough, often seem clichéd and stereotypic. It could be (optimistically) argued that this emphasis relates, as in archaeology itself, to a general interest in social reproduction. One is, however, more inclined to think that it reflects popular literature's apparent need to create passionate and adventurous archetypes.

... *the Black Mountains* is not such a fiction of *private lives*. Its concern is with the long-term history of communities as realised in daily life: how place and personal names pass on, how events become stories become landscape-situated myths. Given its sweeping, almost Old Testament scale, literary characterisation has, to some degree, been sacrificed; characters and chronological settings do change rapidly. While a novel of ideas not personal experience, it is a convincing and serious reconstruction of a past. A long narrative is highly appropriate to express the collective voice and archaeology of communities. Williams believed that in a "composition of voices" lay "the larger music of a longer history", the deeper humanity of collective experience (Smith 1989, 42; Samuel 1989, 148-149). Certainly this is an approach well-suited to a prehistoric subject and works more successfully than in some of the author's contemporary novels whose characters occasionally lapse into manifest-to-like utterances - prehistoric characters cannot be other than abstractions.

This is a very solid novel, firmly rooted in the specific locality of the Welsh Borders, whose prehistory (like its history) is one of cultural survival in the face of (e)migration and invasion. Williams wrote with great economy and the narrative is deceptively straight-forward. Language in ... *the Black Mountains* is, nevertheless, very carefully employed. In its words and concepts are not divorced from social context. This is most striking in the stories concerned with the Pre-Roman Iron Age when every other page seems to introduce a 'new' word: lord (p 273), slave (290), war (291), peasant (294), and king (303).

Words frame our perception of the past at any time and demand precise usage. If in the 'past present' institutions or practices did not exist then they cannot be indirectly cited without implying the existence of the phenomena named. One cannot, for example, write that a relationship in the distant past was 'slave-like', or a leader 'king-like', without alluding to a contemporary notion of slavery and kingship. The writing of *convincing* reconstructive fiction often entails a stripping down of language which potentially limits its communicative possibilities. The author's 'non-lived' experience of the past can restrict, furthermore, the usage of distinctly 'prehistoric metaphor' (i.e. one experience is like another one can't conceive of), or at least its invention requires great imagination. Any textual device can only convey an *impression* of non-present (-literate) perception, for the goal is ultimately impossible - any appreciation of past experience ultimately derives from present analogy. This is not, of course, a problem restricted to the writing of past fiction. It relates to the general question of whether the perspective of the subject/author can ever be transcended, an issue of obvious academic relevance. Yet despite the logical impossibility of the task (writing/fiction), *creativity* does occasionally permit pasts to be written with varying degrees of conviction and humanity.

Williams was a leading socialist intellectual, and one of the major themes of this book is the origins of social inequality: "At some point, through the generations, what had once been community became order and what had once been gift, tribute" (p 237). The prehistory of ... *the Black Mountains* has been written in the spirit of Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* and the project of the novel is akin to the conjectural histories of the later 18th and 19th centuries (e.g. Rousseau, Morgan, and Engels). The concern of this novel is not, however, with unilinear cultural evolution and the phased survival of variously indigenous cultural traditions looms large. It tells, on one hand, of how pan-British and -European archaeological phenomena (e.g. Stone Circles and Beakers) translate into a local context. On the other hand, the foreign is also a major source of tension and conflict: the Neolithic measuring systems of the White Lands (Wessex) or the warrior hierarchies of the Later Bronze Age. The introduction of anthrax (by "the Black Stranger with the Golden Ram") in the mid-second millennium BC results in a major break in the regional cultural sequence and the order of the Later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age is then decimated. But the 'old ways' live on among communities isolated in the inner valleys who continue to hold

their seasonal ceremonies at the Long Houses (chambered tombs). Enslaved in the Early Iron Age, these 'old' communities survive and are eventually called upon to fight beside Later Iron Age lords at the battle of Claeirion. An emphasis upon the endurance of local communities in the face of extraneous change (which has obvious 20th century parallels) is an attribute of socialist fiction and features, for example, in the modern 'peasant' novels of John Berger (Ryan 1982, 184).

Williams maintained that ... *the Black Mountains* was a work of 'sourced imagination'. Its 'past' is a body of interwoven *stories*, not as a continuous narrative nor a learned treatise. Although sources are not directly acknowledged, archaeology lies as the *base* of this novel (Williams & Barnie 1987, 8) and this is made apparent within the text. The volume is introduced with a map of local monuments, a chronology of its chapters is appended, and the 'testimony of the spade' is cited (p 325, 329). Williams remarked that he found the prehistory of the Black Mountains relatively easy to write because the information archaeology provides is of the (anonymous) common people of the past, not the upper classes named in later historical sources (Williams & Barnie 1987: 7-8). Archaeology, in other words, chronicles the 'Common Stream' (Parker 1975).

When writing reconstructive archaeological fiction, the choice of whether and how sources are admitted is crucial. If the basis of reconstruction is omitted then the role of authors is god-like and their interpretations absolute. This then begs the question - where does this knowledge come from? Yet the admission of genuine sources must, by definition, constrain fiction (as opposed to the often invented references in the post-modern fiction of, for example, Borges or Eco). While ... *the Black Mountains* is a unique and quietly great (archaeological) book, it is not a *novel* of the first order.

'Time is God'⁵

First Light is set in present-day Dorset where (in 'Pilgrim Valley') a megalithic tomb is discovered in a burnt-out ash forest. Much of the novel is concerned with the excavation of the tomb which, beguiled by a series of mishaps, progresses through blind alleys and false conclusions. The tomb, lying within a large stone circle, connects with a tunnel system that leads to a chamber in the centre of the circle, and its excavation eventually proves so 'bewildering' that any sense of conventional chronology breaks down.

In a nearby observatory astronomers study the giant red star, Aldebaran⁶. Stellar and subterranean researches interweave when it is discovered that the carvings on the portal stone of the tomb are actually a map depicting the constellations (including the aforementioned red giant) that would have aligned with its entrance during the vernal equinox in the mid-third

millennium BC. Even before reaching the main chamber, the tomb is interpreted as the burial place of a Neolithic astronomer and to have entered it one would have "literally entered a star" (p 187). While the excavation of the grave does not fulfil its expectations, in the conjoining labyrinth (where there is evidence of recent visits) a wooden coffin is found with 'Old Barren One' (cf. *Aldebaran*) engraved on its side. Before it can be thoroughly examined it is stolen by the locals who claim it contains the body of their original ancestor. In what is almost a parody of the re-burial issue, they claim the right to bury their own dead. To insure that the 'experts' don't get their hands on it they consign the coffin to flames. This (too) neatly closes a narrative cycle that began with the discovery of the tomb in the ashes of the ash forest ("ashes to ashes"), much of whose symbolism seems contrived. The main protagonists of the sciences of archaeology and astronomy are, for instance, respectively named Mark Clare and Damian Fall. This is a typically blatant allusion to the novel's theme of *Light* (order) and *Darkness* (chaos); a literary 'conceit' that promotes a symbolic reading at the expense of character.

In this novel "All sciences ... are human sciences", "stories told in the dark" and variations of 'first myths'. Theory and evidence are presented as being inextricably linked and what is studied (stars and tombs) assumes its expected shape (e.g. constellations are "Horses and fishes trapped in signs"; p 159-160, 176, 328). The two interrelated (and often portentous) tales of enquiry are deflated by a highly comic (camp) surround: an outrageous lesbian couple from the Department of the Environment (DoE), a gay antique dealer, Joey Hanover (a stand-up comedian of renown) and his wife Floey, the rustic Mint family, and a troupe of feminist druid travellers. The novel's markedly different 'voices' (the cosmic and Ealing comic) jar. This, and its format of short episodic chapters, fragment the narrative and (apart from laughter in the face of 'Divine Comedy') there is little resolution. Although both its scientific protagonists 'fall' (Mark Clare's wife commits suicide, the 'godless' astronomer has a mental breakdown) each achieves some form of *enlightenment*: in the end Damian Fall sees "Only the sky filled with light" (p 328) and in the dark of the central chamber the archaeologist comes to an understanding of (his wife's) death and time (p 289, see below). Consequently, Clare does not interfere with the Mints' cremation of the Old Barren One, conceding to the present rather than the pursuit of the past.

Rarely has the practice of excavation been so central to a novel and approximately one third of it occurs on site. Fieldwalking, grid survey, remote sensing, and even the techniques of night-time silhouette photography are mentioned. As Bradley has noted *First Light* is probably the first novel in which Grooved Ware appears (1989, 636). The text includes a long extract from a (fictional) paper in '*New Archaeology*' concerning the order of Late Neolithic astronomers, and there are amusing exchanges on theory and career advancement. While Ackroyd must have talked at length with archaeologists, it is unlikely that he has participated in excavation. The jargon is correct, but basic procedures are often misunderstood: "We

have quite a complex stratification system, you see. Bones and other organic material are not classified as finds. Not as such. They are part of a different matrix" (p 53). We read, for example, of *Early Bronze Age* leaf-shaped swords(?), DoE inspectors who haven't heard of radio-carbon dating, and what (where) are 'natural' sub-soils is not fully grasped. Few professional archaeologists will, moreover, identify with the state of semi-mystical consciousness attributed to excavation and lines to the effect that "we are getting closer to *them*" run as a refrain through the site-specific portions of the novel.

Given Ackroyd's literary track-record one would not expect strict archaeological accuracy. *Time* is the leitmotif in *First Light*; excavation is only *theatre* ("pure pantomime", p 145)! Although its 'performance' is pushed to the fore, the tomb is only one of a series of various 'digs' (fossil collection, family history) and explorations (astronomy). Most of the novel's characters are either engaged in searching for, or else hiding from, a/their past.

First Light sits in the tradition of the English rural novel. Its contemporary 'pastoral' setting is a marked departure from the dark (haunted) London settings of Ackroyd's previous works, whose divided narratives often temporally jump between history and the present. Ackroyd is a literary stylist, one known for his pastiche of other authors. The textual genealogy of *First Light* is complicated and it is difficult to distinguish relevant sources from literary posturing.⁷ Its various parts are introduced with quotations from Kipling, Wilde, Frazer, Blake, and Hardy. Pilgrin Valley certainly lies well within Hardy's Wessex, whose novels are also often referred to within the text itself. The 'attributed' surnames (e.g. the archaeologists: Owen *Chard* [shard], Julian *Hill*, Maratha *Temple*) in *First Light* and the employment of the local Mint family as a 'rustic chorus' are thoroughly Hardy-esque devices.

One source of narrative importance, from which Ackroyd quotes twice, is Hardy's tragi-comedy, *Two on a Tower* (1882). Hardy described the novel as: "the emotional history of two infinitesimal lives against the stupendous background of the stellar universe", in which 'science is the vehicle of romance'. It follows the affairs of the heart of a young astronomer, Swithan St Cleve, and the widow, Lady Viviette Constantine, ten years his senior. Its rather contrived plot charts their secret marriage which is eventually nullified upon the discovery that her first husband's suicide occurred only after the date of their wedding. The lovers are separated due to the conditions of Swithan's inheritance and an opportunity to further his budding career through travel. His sometime wife (who he unknowingly left pregnant) duly marries another for the sake of respectability and as an act of self-denial for the advancement of the young scientist. When Swithan returns he finds Lady Constantine in his tower observatory, her interim husband having died. Despite the fact that she has visibly aged, Swithan declares his intention to (re)marry. In a state of 'amazed joy' Viviette swoons, dies, and Swithan faces the prospect of raising their son, though new love flutters on the horizon.

The tower in the title of Hardy's novel refers to Swithan's observatory on Ring's-Hill Speer, an 'old camp' (hillfort):

"What events had been enacted in that earthen camp since it was first thrown up, nobody could say; but the primitive simplicity of the young man's [wedding] preparations accorded well with the prehistoric spot on which they were made. Embedded under his feet were possibly even now rude trinkets that had been worn at bridal ceremonies of the early inhabitants" (Chapter 18).

Such references to the 'deep' archaeological past complement (dimensionally) the novel's theme of the immense grandeur and terror of stellar space. Human action appears insignificant when set against "cruelty of the natural laws" and blind circumstances; tricks of fate intervene and Time takes its merciless revenge upon the older Viviette. Apart from sharing allusions to time and science, Ackroyd directly borrows from Hardy 'Swithan's Column' (the tower from which Mark Clare's wife throws herself) and the role of the scientist-astronomer (Swithan/Damian Fall).

While Ackroyd's novel occupies the literary landscape of Hardy's Wessex, its meta-physical structure largely derives from T.S. Eliot (Ackroyd has written a major biography of the poet; 1984). The influence of Eliot is directly acknowledged when a number of the novel's characters attend a (much emphasised) performance of his play, *The Family Reunion*, in Lyme Regis (among those in attendance is Joey Hanover whose own family reunion occurs when he discovers he is related to the rustic Mint family). The 'archaeology' of Eliot's (1939) Chekovesque drawing-room drama is itself complex (it is largely from Eliot that Ackroyd has developed the idea of employing other literary voices to find one's own). The family surname and Christian names of two of its main characters are, for example, from a quotation with which Browning introduced his play, *Colombe's Birthday* (1844) and derive from Hammer's *Fra Cipollo and other poems* (1834); the names also occur in a comedy of 1608, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (Coghill 1969, 179).

There is no need to describe in detail the plot of *The Family Reunion*. It basically revolves around the return of a wayward son (literature's recurrent 'native'), Lord Harry Monchensey, who is haunted by the belief he has murdered his wife. In the reunion with his family Harry learns that his father also plotted to murder his mother while having a brief affair with her sister. His family guilt is only expurgated when he resolves to leave once more, not running from the world, but to seek spiritual calling in its 'wilderness'.

The structure of the play is closely related to Aeschylus' *The Oresteia* of 485 BC (Coghill 1969, 13, 37-44). Eliot employs a contemporary Greek chorus (giving yet another dimension to Ackroyd's use of a 'rustic' chorus). The Eumenides twice appear, initially to emphasise the fate of a family curse and later to beacon towards Harry's liberation: "And whether in Argos or England/There are certain inflexible laws/Unalterable, in the nature of music" (II.i.429). This Greek dramatic facade, however, carries a distinctly Christian theme - the expiation of guilt through spiritual rebirth (Coghill 1969, 13-22). Eliot wrote *The Family Reunion* while composing *The Four Quartets* (1935 - 1942). The two works are conceptually related and share a complex imagery of time: the circular desert and the eye, the ruined house and door, the rose and rose-garden - essentially the axial tree - the repetitive wheel of life that is pierced only at its centre ("the intersection of the timeless moment"); the way of pilgrimage both in and through time.

Ackroyd's novel both begins and concludes with chapters entitled 'The Uncertainty Principle', an Eliot-like circularity (e.g. "the end of all our exploring/will be to arrive where we started"). As in much of the poet's work time resonates like a liturgy throughout the novel: "Another time/Present time/Past time" (p 30), "Hypothetical time/Real time" (p 43). It is said to both encircle and be the path/axis by which 'light' from the past (and 'stars') reaches the present where it becomes real for the *first time*. Ultimately, time is beyond comprehension:

"He knew what time was now: it was the word for that which no living thing could understand, because to understand it would be to exist outside of it. Only those who had died could comprehend time, for *time was God*. And in the house under ground he no longer felt any fear" (p 289, my emphasis).

The reason for relating at length the background sources of *First Light* - these stories behind stories - is that, rather than being about archaeology, it is a meditation on time and the nature of enquiry. Its many-layered references are literary; archaeology is simply an elaborate subterfuge. The fictional site is no more than a symbol and its sequence of excavation a series of Dantesque Chinese boxes (McHale 1987, 122 ff)⁸. Its tunnels are variously described as a labyrinth or maze (p 267), archaeological investigations within them are a "subterranean pilgrimage" (p 288), and the tomb is eventually recognised to be a monument to the *passage of time*⁹. This is the symbolic architecture of the 'axial tree' - the (tomb) pierced (stone) circle - and the end of excavation leads back to the present, to the still-venerated Old Barren One. This exploration concludes with Joey Hanover's transcendent vision upon looking within the coffin:

"The earth is still strange to us, each horizon a line of danger. Consider each man in his days; the sun behind him, the sun in front of him ... *Tied to the world*

as a dead bird is tied to a tree. This is the time of change, the strange time foretold by his death. We stare at the giant mound, at the horror of the stone and the dark world beneath it. Our despair is like a stone" (p323, my emphasis).

This echoes both Eliot (e.g. "We do not like the maze in the garden, because it too closely resembles the maze in the brain...What is happening outside of the circle? And what is the meaning of the happening? What ambush lies beyond the heather/ And behind the standing stones?", *The Family Reunion*, II.iii. 280, 301-304) and Blake¹⁰. The novel's main protagonists each descend into this primal 'abyss' where "the oldest fantasies of fear and dissolution ... [are] waiting to be excavated" (p177-178, 240). Any resolution of time and the human condition, nevertheless, lies in the present: "Red sun rising. Touching the white frost with flame...As the sun rises and floods this valley with its light. This, our home. There is no other" (p323, my emphasis)¹¹.

Ackroyd's often flamboyant style at times does prove to be exasperating. Yet despite its many faults, *First Light* is very skillfully constructed, and the coherent, if multi-faceted imagery, manages to carry its various themes. Certainly it is revealing to see archaeology used as a vehicle for such abstract and distinctly literary purposes.

Bloom and the Other

...the *Black Mountains* and *First Light* are very different works. They evoke the past for opposite purposes and belong to separate genres: respectively (anti-modern) socialist 'realism' and post-modern historical fantasy¹². These novels do, nonetheless, have attributes in common. They both, for example, employ a split-narrative: in Williams the past participates in a multi-layered present, while in Ackroyd the past resonates in a polyphonic present through myth, scientific enquiry, and cultural/literary traditions. In each the past is evoked only in relationship to the present - it does not have intrinsic value unto itself. Both authors, moreover, evidently versed themselves in current archaeological theory and interpretations before writing.

Where these books differ is their relationship to the 'present past' - is the novel self(textually)-enclosed or does it act in the 'real world'? Williams' novel clearly exists within a broader social context. In ...the *Black Mountains* the past (and time) is treated as something solid so as to address the present, and the nature of archaeological evidence is accepted in order to further its socialist theme. Ackroyd, alternatively, addresses the (post-)modern condition: objectifying nothing, all is flux and indeterminate. Where Williams' writing is 'transparent' in order to potentially reach (educate) a broad audience, Ackroyd's text is intentionally obscure and internally referential. Deciphering *First Light* is an intellectual exercise and its fragmented structure limits its powers of direct communication. In *First Light* the text is all - literally an

artifact unto itself. Its cacophonous structure may more fully approximate the experience of life, but the novel's form eventually subsumes its content. The obscurity of much modernist literary experiment has been criticised on the grounds of its intellectual elitism and the disdain in which its exponents held the democratic masses (e.g. Williams 1989b, 34-35; Carey 1990), and post-modern writing is equally open to this charge¹³. Apart from the insights of artistic (dis)order, the textual complexity of Ackroyd's novel undermines its capacity to inform. To paraphrase John Carey, 'Bloom [Joyce's everyman hero] would not read this book, just as he wouldn't have read *Ulysses*' (1990: 45).

In neither of these novels is the author directly situated; within the text itself, who is writing is not made apparent. The act of *story-telling* is, however, emphasised in both. *First Light* is punctuated by various letters, visions, and tales reiterated by its characters. Joey Hanover, for example, doesn't know from where he knows his story of the flying children of St Gabriel's (who upon landing were turned into a stone circle; Chapter 29). Its telling echoes Mark Clare's disembodied 'vision' when approaching a mound set within a stone circle while in Peru, a site oddly like that in Pilgrim Valley (Chapter 13). Although William's narrative is less disjointed, the translations of events into stories and songs figures large. Story-telling is, of course, what novelists do, but these would-be direct accounts of lived experience are deceptive. The stories Ackroyd and Williams tell do not stem from life, they are invented. By employing this device they nevertheless appreciate the role of experience; disclaim any absolute objectivity (totality) of their own work and identify it with a longer tradition: "I suppose that we could only see the pattern if we were outside it. And in that case we would have ceased to exist. So all we can do is make up our stories" (*First Light*, 264)¹⁴.

Neolithic/Early Bronze Age developments, specifically stone circles and megalithic tombs, are central to both novels. The image of the elusive astronomer priest pervades *First Light*, as does the wandering 'Measurer' in ...the *Black Mountains*. This emphasis is revealing and not uncommon: barrows and Stonehenge regularly featured in Hardy's novels, and are still prominent, for example, in Rutherford's recent 'pulp saga', *Sarum* (1987; see also Harrison & Stover 1985). The transition from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age also lies at the heart of Grace's, *The Gift of Stones* (1988; see Edmonds 1990). This focus upon the Later Neolithic must relate to a number of factors. Unlike the earlier Neolithic it encompasses many insular (non-pan-European) phenomena and its 'obvious' constructs still stand as earthworks. Society at large does not require explanations for sub-surface features, but at least from medieval times has needed stories concerning the construction of upstanding monuments in its landscape, be it by giants or druids. The Later Neolithic, therefore, potentially has direct, if distant, connections with historic/contemporary Britain. What is, however, emphasised in these works is that there then existed another order, one with different modes of knowledge and social organisation - a past that does not directly prefigure the present. The Later Neolithic represents an 'other' Britain (a ceremonial *doppelgänger*) which, despite

the Beaker phenomenon, is unique to the past and the British Isles.

The issue of past 'otherness' has been most thoroughly dealt with in novels concerning the Palaeolithic, which often address potential problems of inter-communal communication and perception. This is very difficult to tackle in writing. How does one convey a sense of cultural distance while still producing an intelligible text? The issue of cognitive difference lies at the core of Golding's *The Inheritors* (1955), the first 'modern' reconstruction of past life and certainly still among the most successful. Written in reaction to H.G. Wells' sordid depiction of Neanderthals in *Outline of History*, Golding's novel presents their community in a very sympathetic light. The carefully crafted language of *The Inheritors* conveys a strong sense of a different psyche and incomprehension when faced with a 'new people'.¹⁵ Though less sophisticatedly handled, these themes are also considered in the first of Auel's novels, *The Clan of the Cave Bear* (1980; see Evans 1983)¹⁶.

Among the more innovative past narratives of recent years is E.M. Thomas' *Reindeer Moon* (1987), a novel concerned with the Palaeolithic of Siberia. In it the kinship systems and spiritual life of the hunting group is stressed. The character who narrates this book dies when giving birth in the second of its twenty-three chapters. She continues her narration, however, from memory and her subsequent perspective as a trapped spirit looking down into the lodge from its smokehole (rather like a Palaeolithic version of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*). When on those occasions she and a kindred spirit venture forth from the lodge roof they change form and travel as animals. The events of the novel are, therefore, related by a character who is variously human, a spirit and animal. These multiple, yet inter-related, perspectives succeed in the suggestion of a quite different cognitive framework. The shape-changing narrator is sufficiently detached from life to have a sense of communal overview while still involved in affairs of the community.

Freud in the Underworld

Ackroyd's *First Light* has general affinities with Andrew Sinclair's *Albion Triptych*. Sinclair's trilogy (1967; 1972; 1988) is a rambling baroque parable of modern British history and cultural identity. Throughout these novels a scholastic anti-hero, Griffin, alias Gog (cast as the spirit of pre-machine age Britain), battles with his half-brother businessman, Magnus/Magog, for the soul of the nation. Gog's Quixote-like travels (in the final volume he walks a ley-line) take him to a number of major monuments including the Cerne Abbas giant, Stonehenge, Maiden Castle, and the causewayed enclosures at Windmill Hill and Whitesheet. The narrative of his and Magog's struggles is, however, anything but straightforward. It weaves through time and a variety of textual sources/styles (e.g. film scripts, pageants, Gog's graduate dissertation and newspaper clippings) in which key episodes in British history are related: from the legendary founding of London and the Boudiccan rebel-

lion of AD 60 through to the Luddite machine-breakers of the early 19th century, and concludes with Gog's son, Arthur, participating in the printing union battles on the Isle of Dogs in 1987. Sinclair's fantastic narrative, whose style owes much to Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and its content to Blake's prophetic works (e.g. "All Things Begin and End in Albion's Ancient Druid Rocky Shore"), is a post-industrial reworking, albeit radical, of the 'dream of Old England'. Its many references to archaeological monuments echo its call for a reawakening of deeply embedded Celtic/druidic legend and the re-interpretation of the national past.

The kaleidoscopic style of Ackroyd's and Sinclair's novels is a hallmark of contemporary writing. Their themes, nevertheless, have precursors in 'fantastic' rural literature from earlier in this century: T.H. White, Tolkien, and especially the Hardy-inspired novels of J.C. Powys. Sinclair's Gog would certainly seem related to 'Dud No-Man', the hero of Powys' 1937 romance, *Maiden Castle*¹⁷. The two authors share a similarly chaotic vision of Ancient Britain:

"the Power of the Underworld that our old Bards worshipped, *though it was always defeated*, is the Power of the Golden Age! Yes, it's the Power our race adored when they built Avebury and Maiden Castle and Stonehenge and Caer Drwyn, when there were no wars, no vivisection, no money, no ten-thousand-times accursed nations!" (p 467).

Williams referred to such fantasies, and other strands of late 19th and earlier 20th century (post-Hardy) country-based fiction, as a suburban falsification of rural life:

"that uncritical, abstracting literary anthropology, within which folktales and legends became part of an unlocalised, unhistorical past; or uncritical interest in myth, which made the land and the people a scene and characters into which anything could be projected, with or without the inclusion of scraps of classical education." (1973, 258).

Recent fantastic pasts could, however, be more charitably interpreted in the light of the failure of the modernist project. They can be seen as an attempt to re-invest (invent) meaning into the post-industrial landscape after a century of unprecedented demographic and socio-economic change has already severed many of society's traditional ties to the countryside. As a character in Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* proclaims (citing Spengler): "at a time of crisis the mercantile West turns once more to the world of the earth" (1989, 210). These extravagant pasts may be compared to the interweaving of national history, family mythology, and the everyday fantastic in the 'magic realism' of Latin American literature. It could be argued that the western past is becoming 'catholic' and drawing closer to (a caricature of) the ethno-historical present of the Third World. The problem with such a

prognosis is that its sources do not spring from shared communal experience - to what extent can literature (and archaeology) generate 'deep' meaning in the cultural landscape? At what point does literary play become socially meaningful?

It has been argued that the evocation of archaeological landscapes in the later 19th and early 20th century novel was itself a response to contemporary social change and a lack of confidence at the onset of the modern era (Girdwood 1984, 36-37). There is a long tradition of using the past, often impossibly 'golden', to berate the present. Since the later 18th century a semi-mystical British past (Albion) has been employed in contrast to industrialism's "dark Satanic mills". The prehistoric imagery in Hardy's novels is, for example, essentially negative. Its usage relates to contemporary alienation and that a "closeness of man and land" was then broken:

"in their deliberate hardness - the uncultivable heath, the bare stone relics - confirm the human negatives in what looks like a deliberate reversal of pastoral. In them the general alienation has its *characteristic monuments*, though very distant in time and space from the controlling immediate disturbance" (Williams 1973, 211, my emphasis).

What distinguishes Hardy's writings from the 'nostalgic stream' is that, while referring to the monuments of the past, the present and its conflicts are not reduced to shallow parody. In other words, tensions between the traditional and progressive, the rural and urban, are real.

Much like the ruins that haunted the romantic imagination, the employment of archaeological features in the later 19th century novel was largely metaphoric, suggesting the *spirit* of a landscape. Despite the amount of excavation undertaken at that time (which some novelists were certainly aware of; Girdwood 1984, 33) it was the *closed* monument that conveyed sympathetic association. The tumuli and stone circles which dot these novels are firmly rooted in their literary landscapes, but (unexcavated) they are not fixed in time and have a greater potential for social/literary projection.

In recent fiction, Grahame Swift comes closest to evoking past-imbedded landscapes in a 'Hardyesque' manner. In *Waterland* (1983) the "nothing landscape" of the Fens and its history anchor the tumultuous lives of its characters. References to antiquarian study and monument outings in Chatwin's *On the Black Hill* (1982) similarly emphasise that the isolated life of the rural Welsh Border community is itself a part of another era and the degree of change they have witnessed this century¹⁸. In these books a close identification is made between local communities, regional landscapes, and their past. Archaeological references participate in creating a sense of rural continuity in the face of change. These communities are, in effect, custodians of history ('deep time'). While there may be greater emphasis upon character

psychology and further narrative experiment within them, it could be argued that these novels basically fall within the tradition of the late 19th/early 20th century regional novel (Williams 1973, 248). Although the context of the novel and the countryside has markedly changed (is the writing of contemporary rural fiction necessarily a post-modern trait in reaction to the metropolitan settings of much 'modernist' literature? cf. Williams 1989b, 37-48), the obvious rural sympathies and usage of the past in these novels does not differ greatly from that of Hardy. While the intellectual conundrums of (post-)modernism may command academic attention, the human condition prevails:

"We are no longer innocent, we are no longer parishioners of the local ... Yet those primary laws of our nature are still operative. We are dwellers, we are namers, we are lovers, we make homes and search for our histories. And when we look for the history of our sensibilities ... [it is to] the land itself, that we must look for continuity" (Heaney, *A Sense of Place* [1977] 1980, 148-49)¹⁹.

The emphasis of much recent archaeological fiction has, however, changed to either producing a reconstructed narrative of prehistoric life or, as in the instance of *First Light*, a chronicle of excavation itself (the *open* monument). This development could simply be interpreted as demonstrating the dispersion of archaeological knowledge beyond the confines of the discipline. Yet in part it must also reflect the legacy of Freud's use of 'archaeology' as a basis of in-depth analysis and as a metaphor for discovery - the revelation of buried truths from out of the strata or chains of memory²⁰. Throughout this century 'archaeology' has become an increasingly powerful and popular metaphor, and 'excavation' a basis of allegory. Literary excavations are often directly comparable with underworld journeys (e.g. Dante) and metaphysical voyages (e.g. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*). This connection is made explicit in *First Light* when the excavation of the tomb continues in the exploration of the conjoining labyrinth. As in Ackroyd's novel, these 'dark travels' provide a structural framework for the archetypal descent and ascension from self/culture²¹.

Swift's *Out of this World* (1988) bridges recent regional landscape and psychological approaches. This complex (overladen and open-ended) novel concerns a family's history and reactions to the terrorist killing of its patriarchal grandfather. In almost a 19th century-like manner it is the *pattern* of Bronze Age field systems as seen from the air that eventually helps to heal his son, a photo-journalist spiritually scarred from over-exposure to *events* of modern history. Swift, however, splits the narrative so that the son's recovery in the past has its counterpart in the parallel story of his daughter's psychoanalysis - the archaeology of the self²².

Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971) also alluded to archaeology in its exploration of the psyche of Charles Watkins, sometime Professor of Classics, while interned in a hospital for the mentally ill. The novel largely consists of his 'hallucinations' which, ini-

tially lyrical, progressively darken as experimental drugs are administered. In his 'wanderings' Watkins has antique fantasies and muses on the fragmentary relativism of archaeological knowledge. His narrative is interwoven with a series of patient/doctor interviews and letters sent to aid in (re-)establishing his identity. In these exchanges the parallel case of a disturbed archaeologist is raised whose own breakdown was, in part, brought on by his recognition of the arbitrary (and accidental) nature of archaeology's conceptual framework. This is not a story of personal discovery, but psychological variability. References to archaeology (as opposed to myth) are largely negative. Its practice is analogous with the doctors' grafting of a past onto Watkins and their enforcement of normative identity.

While in Ackroyd's *First Light* the practice of archaeology is more sympathetically portrayed, its depiction is far from entirely positive and at times verges on the folly. These unflattering images of the discipline are not unique. The archaeologist in H.S. Davies novel, *Full Fathom Five* (1956), like Ackroyd's Mark Clare, is also an obsessed character, one whose appreciation of the past is at the expense of his domestic life. Similarly in O'Neill's scientific romance, *Land under England* (1935), it is the hero's semi-demented father, a classicist and antiquarian, who returns from the First World War ('the defence of Latin civilisation from the Teutonic Hun') and, driven by family custom, delves into a fantastic underworld beneath Hadrian's Wall where he succumbs to brainwashing by subterranean Romans. Set against a Sutton Hoo-like background, Wilson's *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (1956) employed a Piltdown-like forgery to critically address the issue of scholastic and personal integrity.

Archaeology is not always presented in the guise of good-natured eccentricity (the Holmesian detective; Shanks & Tilley 1987, 6-7). It also has negative connotations and is portrayed as policing thought. Throughout, for example, Powys' *Maiden Castle* (1937) it is stressed that the scientific basis of modern archaeology has replaced "all the old romantic nonsense". Wheeler's on-going excavations are described as an attempt to "overcome Nature by Science" (p166) and likened to vivisection (p167). A number of Dorchester's worthies take particular umbrage at the archaeologists' interpretation of the site's inhabitants (their ancestors) as "wretched earthburrowers" (see Evans 1989, 443-444) when compared with their prehistoric contemporaries who raised Stonehenge and Avebury:

"Mr Quirm was expatiating to his companion now on the limitations of the new methods of archaeology. No human beings, he told his son, could possibly live under the conditions 'revealed', as these new students of the past put it, by 'scientific excavation'. Mai-Dun [Maiden Castle] was a civilised polis, long before the Romans came, and it is only an impoverished imagination that sees them as living in miserable thatched holes, along with bones and cinders and potsherds" (p239)

When trying to comprehend the extraordinary iconography of a votive statue discovered on the site archaeological practice is similarly indited:

"when you talk of science you must remember that these things are like dark-finned fish embedded in ice. *They have life in them that can be revived ... it is not science which can revive them. But go on with your excavations*" (p167).

The negative portrayal of archaeology does not just relate to the fact that the discipline appropriates the past, excluding fringe practices (druidic travellers and ley-line hunters) and denies local continuities, but that it variously restricts and structures particular modes of psychological/cultural identity. This latter reaction can be partially accounted for by the ('vulgar') popularisation of Einstein's theory of Relativity (Biddiss 1977, 268-269): personal and cultural time may not be absolute, but archaeology rigourously maintains (enforces) a linear structure. It also relates to the recognition of the importance of psycho-anthropological myth in the 20th century²³. By replacing culturally relevant pasts with empiricism archaeology participates in the death both of myth (archetypal/classical) and the romantic mysticism of the countryside. In *First Light* what redeems archaeology is that its interpretations are simply a part of a long story-telling tradition that has its origins in, and is not intrinsically different from, 'first myths'.

There also exists a considerable body of post-holocaust literature ('terrestrial' science fiction) which, while not directly archaeological in content, reflects upon the role of material culture and identity. One theme of this genre as found, for example, in Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and Hoban's *Ridley Walker* (1980) is of a regression to a quasi-prehistoric tribalism and focuses upon 'new old' modes of social organisation - the Caliban within. There is also a more urbane school, as exemplified in the works of J.G. Ballard, which explores the 'inner space' of characters in catastrophic scenarios. The displaced survivors who inhabit these surreal landscapes frequently re-assemble remnant material cultures according to psychological association - artifacts housed in a projected 'attic of the mind'.

In this era of metaphysical upheaval the very solidity of things (e.g a stone axe, see Le Guin 1989) can appeal beyond the purely sentimental inasmuch as they embody time and can be personally/culturally symbolic. This appreciation has little to do with academic interpretations of the past and suggests that one reason 'archaeology' is widely valued is because of the tangibility of its traces. Accessible to an individual and/or specific communal reading, a meaningful past does not necessarily require professional intercession, either archaeological or psychiatric²⁴. In overly interpreted times it is re-assuring that *things* survive the vagaries of academic theory.

It is important that the discipline recognises that these judgments upon it do not neces-

sarily stem from ignorance (i.e. the 'if-only-the-public-knew-what-archaeology-was-really-about-then-it-would-be-universally-appreciated [funded]' ethic). In certain 'informed' discourses archaeology is quite simply tainted for what it does to the cultural past. The critical issue here, of course, is what is seen to structure ('god-less') 20th century life and culture - art/psychology or science? God-like, each privileges its self-contained 'regimes of truth':

"only the best art can order the chaotic tumble of events. Only the best can realign chaos to suggest both the chaos and order it will become. Within two years of 1066 work began on the Bayeux tapestry, Constantin the African brought Greek medicine to the Western World. The chaos and tumble of events. The first sentence of every novel should be: 'Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human'" (Ondaatje 1987: 146).

'Tall Stories'²⁵

Archaeology often envisages its potential (non-academic) audience as a unified whole, uniformly appreciative of its practices. The many uses of, and the diversity of attitudes directed towards, archaeology in 20th century literature should warn us against such simplistic, and essentially derogatory, interpretations. It should lead us to question whether the public is ever 'knowable', are their responses to the past predictable, and how is time variously appreciated? The past is so inextricably linked to the cultural present that it is absurd to think that academia has any prerogative to it.

One can similarly question whether the prehistoric novel actually exists as a literary category. The only trait that many of these novels have in common is that they are indirect variants on a *pastoral* theme (Clifford 1986, 113-119; Rosaldo 1986, 86-87, 96-97) and represent the urban trying to grasp the rural; the literate, the pre-literate - the search for lost origins in Edens and the abyss. Three main genres of archaeological fiction can, nevertheless, be tentatively identified: the *reconstructive* (ethnographic, socialist, and so on), the *fantastic* ('barbaric', country-based or post-modern) and the past-referential *regional landscape* novel. There has been much inter-genre cross-fertilisation (e.g. ... *the Black Mountains* is a prehistoric reconstruction set in a specific regional landscape) and these 'novel archaeologies' can all be written with varying degrees of psychological depth. The past can be employed either as a setting for literature or as a presence that resonates in the fictional here-and-now.

If this review was intended as a cautionary tale, it could be argued that it is the latter landscape category which has the greatest affinity with the writing of archaeology at this time, for it need not necessarily demand a transcendence of data²⁶. One doubts that there will be many archaeologists so removed from their own labours to convincingly translate their researches into literature. This subjective distance from sources is certainly necessary in the

writing of fiction. It's what gives the imaginative scope to fill the many 'holes', and provide the 'flesh' and continuity in any sourced narrative.

One suspects, nonetheless, that in the near future there will be considerable experiment with overt forms of narrative in archaeology (e.g. Flannery 1976; Tilley forthcoming) and even exploration of textual pluralism/intersubjectivity. Apart, however, from the historiography and situation of archaeological practice, any polyphonic structure will only be a variant upon the self (e.g. Hodder 1989b). Unlike ethnography, archaeology lacks a recursive subject and cannot access the multiple voices of past participants. It is caught in a pre-modern hermeneutic (subject/object dilemma) and cannot turn to voices other than its own. Yet the greater variety of sources from which anthropology and history can draw by no means transcends the role of the author (now cast as editor). One must be wary of what Rosaldo (1986) has referred to as the 'false authority of textual polyphony': what is suppressed and what is emphasised, and that which is made intimate, that which is distanced. While the juxtaposition of diverse sources can suggest the chaos of lived experience and foreign modes of thought, in the end it is only a technique. Despite claims to the contrary, textual fragmentation is not necessarily an ideological stance. It does not mark the 'death of the author', only more subtly mask him/her. Such writing requires orchestration and there is no guarantee that its voices will be representative.

This issue relates to whether, and how, *difference* - the (psycho-)anthropological other - can be portrayed. A number of the above-discussed novels do succeed in their suggestion of a 'foreign' past (e.g. Golding 1955; Thomas 1987). This is conveyed through various imaginative literary devices (e.g. deep cultural memory, visualised thought, multiple perspectives), none of which have direct material (archaeological) co-relates. In their depiction of the culturally distant, 'the best' at their craft are able to do so without seeming to deny history and humanity to those *fictional* communities. These tricks of fiction are not generally applicable to academic discourse. Its 'paper worlds' are usually much more engrossing and self-determined than academia's. There is a greater willingness on the part of the reader to suspend (escape from) themselves within the novel and, therefore, they are more readily convinced in the portrayal of 'foreignness'. Yet the fact that cultural distance can be portrayed does not imply that the dilemma of 'otherness' (its complementary duality in relation to 'us') has been resolved (Friedman 1987, 38-41). Nor are producers of archaeological fiction entirely independent of academia. It would be wrong to see them solely as middlemen between it and the public, but these authors interact with our texts and only rarely with raw data. The potential scope of their 'pasts' is thus curtailed by the discipline's interpretations.

The metaphoric 'archaeology' of the later 20th century is no longer just the Freudian discovery of a hidden truth. Through the influence of post-structuralism the critical 'field' has shifted, focusing upon how systems of knowledge and discourses are themselves constituted. Foucaultian archaeologies now explore the boundaries wherein *truths* are maintained. To wit,

literature is certainly as much an enclosed totality as the sciences. Textual formats that challenge the covert naturalism of 'official' discourses will equally undermine the transcendent power, the *fiction*, of literature. The contrast between Williams' and Ackroyd's novels reflects upon this issue - the role and 'transparency' of text. The risk that academia runs in being too self-conscious in its writing is a loss of power to inform, and the adoption of obscure literary strategies raises the question of what is the subject of our study: us (our texts) or them (the past)?

All text is, of course, 'con' - conceits, signs and deceptions. One must be conscious of the manner of their construction and recourse to 'textual innocence' cannot be justified. Literature and academia have attributes in common (e.g. narrative, rhetoric, authorial situation and reference), and archaeology will undoubtedly continue to be a basis for literature. The flourishing of the sourced-novel in itself demonstrates that there is much scope for creativity at the interface between the two. Ultimately, however, they are separate domains. Archaeology is not a personal endeavour, but rather a *communal* practice: a collective 'seeing' and 'reading' (Evans 1989, 447). The situation of its texts in relationship to its sources and audiences (i.e. its publicly sponsored responsibilities) is *seen* to be very different than literature's. There is great potential for experimentation in archaeological writing, but this must stem from the nature of its own materials and practices. Archaeological knowledge is, for example, as much structured by its graphic traditions as by its text *per se*. While potentially inspiring, literature and literary criticism hold no ready-made formulae for the social sciences (Spencer 1989, 162) - our practices and 'tall stories' are not theirs.

Notes

- 1 "But I've no spade to follow men like them. Between my finger and my thumb/The squat pen rests. I'll dig with it." S. Heaney, from 'Digging', *Death of a Naturalist* (1966; see Heaney 1980, 41-43).
- 2 Le Guin's novels are of particular interest in this context inasmuch as she is the daughter of the anthropologist, A.L. Kroeber. See also Ward & O'Leary's 'A Preliminary Investigation of an Early Man Site in the Delaware River Valley' and other stories in Stover & Harrison's extraordinary collection of anthropological science fiction, *Apeman, Spaceman* (1972). Set in a distant future, Jules Verne's posthumous tale, *The Eternal Adam*, concerns a campaign of excavations sponsored by a senior statesman in order to demonstrate the irreversibility of evolution and the continuous progress of civilisation. This theory is disproven when first 'we' (the 21st century 'present') are discovered and eventually Atlantis is unearthed in what should be primordial muds. That these once great civilisations met their ends through natural catastrophe reflects upon the ultimate failure of culture to domesticate nature (Chesneaux 1972, 193-195). See McConnell 1981 (69-105) concerning H.G. Wells' 'evolu-

tionary fables'.

- 3 Any distinction between 'pulp' and 'serious' fiction is, of course, arbitrary and often only a matter of packaging. By 'pulp' I mean those 'epic bestsellers' whose page length, rather than content, often seems the determining factor behind publication (e.g. Auel 1980; Ruth-erford 1987). In other words, books that read like television, in which the text is superficial in relationship to plot/action. Bourdieu 1986 (Table 8) demonstrates the popularity of novels and historical books in the preferred reading material of the 'dominant class'.
- 4 Williams' ironic concept of a 'knowable' (stable and 'complete') rural community in 19th century literature (in contrast to obviously 'unknowable' industrial society/cities; 1973, 165-181; 1983, 164-165) is comparable with our comprehension of prehistoric societies.
- 5 Ackroyd concerning *First Light*; 1989b; 1989a, 289.
- 6 *Alpha Tauri* or 'The Follower' in the constellation of Taurus: "The world's the thing, Mercator its false prophet/We scramble on a flat projection of it/But oh the foggy Greenlands of the soul! The monstrous malformations round the pole/Mercator, merchant, I have burned your chart/In three dimensions is my sailing art, To search a world unsimplified, and/Find the desperate North-East passage of the mind" J. McAuley, *Under Aldebaran* (1946).
- 7 'Source spotting' is something of a competitive sport among Ackroyd's reviewers. A wide spectrum of authorial voices (ranging from Jane Austen to Agatha Christie) has been detected in *First Light*, what little consensus there has been consists of Hardy, Dickens, and Eliot.
- 8 Upon entering the tunnel from the tomb an archaeologist refers to *The Inferno*: "Abandon hope all you who enter here". Ackroyd introduces Part Four of the novel (when the interior of the tomb is investigated) with a quotation from Blake's *Europe*: "Then was the serpent temple form'd, image of the infinite/Shut up in finite revolutions".
- 9 In *The Return of the Native* Hardy described the barrow on Egdon Heath as "the pole and axis of this heathery world" (see Girdwood 1984, 34).
- 10 Previously in the text (p 124) Mark Clare had recited from Blake: "Rocks piled on rocks, reaching the stars, stretching from pole to pole, The building is Natural Religion and its alters Natural Morality, A building of eternal death, whose proportions are eternal despair".
- 11 cf. Eliot's *Little Gidding*: "History is now and England".

12 Criteria have been proposed by which post-modern literature is distinguished from modernist writing (e.g. irony, fragmentation, excess; see e.g. Lodge 1979, 220-245, and McHale 1987). Yet unlike, for example, architecture (though similar to philosophy; Rorty 1988), post-World War I, 20th century literature will probably be seen as constituting a spectrum. Any distinction between modern and post-modern approaches is essentially one of degree, not 'sea change'.

13 "The principle around which modernist literature and culture fashioned themselves - the exclusion of the masses, the defeat of their power, the removal of their literacy, and denial of their humanity - this intellectual effort failed to acknowledge that the mass does not exist. The mass, that is to say, a metaphor for the *unknowable*, the invisible" (Carey 1990, 45, my emphasis; cf. note 4).

During this century a primitive mentality has been identified with the herd-like anti-individualism of totalitarian states (e.g. Koestler's *The Ghost in the Machine* 1967).

14 "The last, essential for story-telling, is the complement of the original skepticism [the rejection of any total explanation]: a tenderness for experience because it is human." (Berger 1987, 21).

15 Golding's Neanderthals do not use adjectives and their thought processes are visualised (e.g. "I have a [mental] picture of ..."). In a recent novel concerned with the Jesuit missions in 17th century Canada, *Black Robe* (Moore 1985), in contrast to the speech of Europeans, Indians swear incessantly. While it can be argued that this device reinforces traditional stereotypes concerning the manners of 'savages', it forcefully displaces their dialogue from western norms, thereby conveying linguistic and cultural difference.

16 The later novels in this seemingly interminable series unfortunately seem to have digressed to the level of Palaeolithic soap-opera. Despite their page length and enormous geographical scope, Auel's fixation upon a single individual has collapsed the pace of socio-technological change to ridiculous proportions.

17 Both characters are closely identified with the Cerne Abbas figure. Sinclair's Gog, himself an amnesic 'giant', dreams that he converses with and is kneaded into (re-)being by the chalk Giant (1988, 68-74). Powys' No-man, the 'storyless' man who walks with a great (symbolically suggestive) cudgel, only sheds his anonymity mid-way through *Maiden Castle* when he finds his father and takes on an identity (i.e. enters history; Lock 1988, 18-19); "his awkward figure with its long arm, bony countenance, and close-cropped skull might have belonged to some necrophilistic Cerne Giant, intent on playing the werewolf in a civilized graveyard, rather than to an innocent antiquarian recluse" (p 29; for unavoidable reasons page citations to Powys' 1937 novel within this paper are to the 1979 edition).

18 Chatwin studied archaeology at Edinburgh and participated in excavations. Although he often referred to his interest in the subject, none of his books were primarily concerned with archaeology.

19 In his 1976 lecture, *Englands of the Mind*, the poet argued that the post-war decline of Britain's international prestige has led to a greater appreciation of native English experience and local shire origins (Heaney 1980, 169).

20 *The Aetiology of Hysteria* (1896) and *Constructions in Analysis* (1937). See also Bernfield 1951, 107-109; and Lowenthal 1985, 16-17, 252-255.

Wilson's *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (1956) abounds in Freudian name-dropping, and O'Neill's *Land under England* (1935) has distinctly Oedipal undercurrents.

21 Since the 19th century subterranean travel has often had chronological associations (i.e. to go down is to go back), which must reflect at least a vague awareness of the principles of geological/archaeological stratification (e.g. Verne 1864, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*). One should not, however, underestimate the romanticism of underworld landscapes (e.g. the lure of the cave or the drowned city). Despite (because), moreover, that science may have evicted God from the sky, cosmic agents still reside beneath the earth (e.g. Powys' 'the Power of the Underworld'); Eco's underground 'Masters of the World' (and web of Templar networks; 1989) has similarities with O'Neill's subterranean 'Masters of Will and Knowledge' (1935).

22 A similar interplay between archaeological investigation, personal discovery and familial revelation underlies a number of the works of Penelope Lively: *Interpreting the Past* (1978) and *Treasures of Time* (1979).

23 Williams attributed both the montage-like style of modernist writing and the reappearance of the 'collective consciousness' of myth to the fragmentary isolation of 20th century urban life (1973, 242-247).

24 How widespread are beliefs in 'alternative' or 'cult' archaeologies (e.g. the Loch Ness Monster, mysterious forces associated with Stonehenge) is demonstrated by Merriman's surveys (1988b, 259-270).

25 "I'd swear that men have always lounged in myths/as Tall Stories, that their real earnest/has been to grant excuses/for ritual actions. Only in rites/can we renounce our oddities/and be truly entired." W.H. Auden, from 'Archaeology' (1973). See Snodgrass 1979 and Daniel 1982 concerning Auden and 'The Poetry of Archaeology'.

26 Mention should be made that there is a similar trend in (academic) archaeological literature: Hedges' *Tomb of the Eagles* (1982), the Coles' *Sweet Track to Glastonbury* (1986), and Fleming's *The Dartmoor Reaves* (1988). Specific landscapes bridge these texts, linking the archaeological past with the ethno-historical present.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to R. Bradley, M. Edmonds, I. Kinnes, D. Lowenthal, N. Merriman, A. Sinclair, and M.L.S. Sørensen for their insightful comments concerning this paper.

References

- Ackroyd, P. 1984. *T.S. Eliot*. London, Hamish Hamilton.
- Ackroyd, P. 1989a. *First Light*. London, Hamish Hamilton.
- Ackroyd, P. 1989b. Interviewed B.B.C. *The Late Show*. (13/4/89).
- Auel, J. 1980. *The Clan of the Cave Bear*. London, Hodder and Stoughton.
- Berger, J. 1987. A Story for Aesop. *Granta* (The Story-teller) 21, 13-19.
- Bernfeld, S.C. 1951. Freud and archaeology. *American Imago* 8, 107-128.
- Biddiss, M.D. 1977. *The Age of the Masses*. Hassocks, Harvester.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bradley, R. 1989. Review (P. Ackroyd's *First Light*). *Antiquity* 63, 636-637.
- Carey, J. 1990. Revolted by the masses. *The Times Literary Supplement* 34, 44-45.
- Chatwin, B. 1982. *On the Black Hill*. London, Jonathan Cape.
- Chesneaux, J. 1972. *The Political and Social Ideas of Jules Verne*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Clifford, J. 1986. On Ethnographic Allegory. In Clifford J. & Marcus, G.E. (eds) *Writing Culture*. London, University of California, 98-121.
- Clifford, J. & Marcus, G.E. (eds) 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. London, University of California.
- Coghill, N. 1969. Introduction and Commentary (T.S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion*). London, Faber and Faber.
- Crace, J. 1988. *The Gift of Stones*. London, Secker & Warburg.
- Daniel, G. 1982. Editorial. *Antiquity* 56, 167-168.
- Davies, H.S. 1956. *Full Fathom Five*. London, Bodley Head.
- Eco, U. 1989. *Foucault's Pendulum*. London, Secker & Warburg.
- Edmonds, M. 1990. Review (J. Crace's *The Gift of Stones*). *Lithics*.
- Evans, C. 1983. Wildmen, Pulp and Fire - Archaeology as popular fiction. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 2, 68-70.
- Evans, C. 1985. Tradition and the cultural landscape: an archaeology of place. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 4, 80-94.
- Evans, C. 1989. Archaeology and modern times: Bersu's Woodbury 1938 & 1939. *Antiquity* 63, 436-450.
- Flannery, K.V. (ed.) 1976. *The Early Mesoamerican Village*. London, Academic Press.
- Friedman, J. 1987. Prolegomena to The Adventures of Phallus in Blunderland. An anti-anti-discourse. *Culture and History* 1, 31-49.
- Geertz, C. 1983. Blurred Genres: The refiguration of social thought. *Local Knowledge*. New York, Basic Books.
- Girdwood, A. 1984. The Imaginative response to archaeology in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century literature. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 3, 29-37.
- Golding, W. 1954. *Lord of the Flies*. London, Faber and Faber.
- Golding, W. 1955. *The Inheritors*. London, Faber and Faber.
- Harrison, H. & Stover, L. 1985. *Stonehenge: where Atlantis died* (1972). London, Panther.
- Heaney, S. 1980. *Preoccupations, Selected Prose 1968-1978*. London, Faber and Faber.
- Hoban, R. 1980. *Ridley Walker*. London, Jonathan Cape.
- Hodder, I. 1989a. Writing archaeology: Site reports in context. *Antiquity* 63, 268-274.
- Hodder, I. (ed.) 1989b. *The Meanings of Things* (One World Archaeology 6). London, Unwin Hyman.
- Kapferer, B. 1988. The Anthropologist as Hero: Three exponents of post-Modernist Anthropology. *Critique of Anthropology* 8, 77-104.
- Le Guin, U.K. 1986. *Always Coming Home*. London, Victor Gollancz.
- Le Guin, U.K. 1989. The Stone Ax and the Muskoxen. *The Language of the Night*. London, Women's Press.
- Lessing, D. 1971. *Briefing for a descent into Hell*. London, Jonathan Cape.
- Lively, P. 1978. Interpreting the Past. *Nothing missing but the Samovar and other stories*. London, Heinemann.
- Lively, P. 1979. *Treasures of Time*. London, Heinemann.
- Lock, C. 1988. "To Ravage and Redeem": *Maiden Castle* and the violation of form. *The Powys Review* 21: 16-27.
- Lodge, D. 1979. *The Modes of Modern Writing*. London, Edward Arnold.
- Lowenthal, D. 1985. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge, University Press.
- Mann, J. 1981. Dons and Detection. In Evans, J.D., Cunliffe, B. & Renfrew, C. (eds) *Antiquity and Man*. London, Thames and Hudson, 203-206.
- McConnell, F. 1981. *The Science Fiction of H.G. Wells*. Oxford, University Press.
- McHale, B. 1987. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London, Methuen.
- Merriman, N. 1988a. Prehistory for kids. *Antiquity* 62, 710-713.
- Merriman, N. 1988b. *The role of the past in contemporary society, with special reference to archaeology and museums*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge.
- Moore, B. 1985. *Black Robe*. London, Jonathan Cape.

- Mulvaney, J. 1988. Review (B. Chatwin; *The Songlines*). *Antiquity* 62, 178-179.
- Ondaatje, M. 1987. *In the Skin of a Lion*. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart.
- O'Neil, J. 1935. *Land under England*. London, Victor Gollancz.
- Parker, R. 1975. *The Common Stream*. London, William Collins Sons.
- Pomata, G. 1989. Versions of narrative: overt and covert narrators in nineteenth century historiography. *History Workshop* 27, 1-17.
- Powys, J.C. 1979. *Maiden Castle* (1937). London, Picador.
- Rorty, R. 1989. Philosophy and Post-modernism. *The Cambridge Review* 110, 51-53.
- Rosaldo, R. 1986. From the Door of His Tent: The Fieldworker and the Inquisitor. In Clifford J. & Marcus G.E. (eds) *Writing Culture*. London, University of California, 77-99.
- Rutherford, E. 1987. *Sarum*. London, Century.
- Ryan, K. 1982. Socialist fiction and education of desire: Mervyn Jones, Raymond Williams, John Berger. In *The Socialist Novel in Britain*. Brighton, Harvester, 166-185.
- Samuel, R. 1989. 'Philosophy teaching by example': Past and present in Raymond Williams. *History Workshop* 27, 141-153.
- Shanks, M. & Tilley, C. 1987. *Social Theory and Archaeology*. Cambridge, Polity.
- Sinclair, A. *The Albion Triptych* (1967, *Gog*; 1972, *Magog*; 1988, *King Ludd*). London.
- Smith, D. 1989. Relating to Wales. In Eagleton T. (ed.) *Raymond Williams: Critical perspectives*. Oxford, Polity, 34-53.
- Snodgrass, A.M. 1979. Auden and archaeology. *Antiquity* 53, 134-136.
- Spencer, J. 1989. Anthropology as a kind of writing. *Man* 24, 145-164.
- Stover, L. & Harrison, H. 1972. *Apeman, Spaceman*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Strathern, M. 1987. Out of Context: The persuasive fictions of anthropology (and Comments). *Current Anthropology* 28, 251-281.
- Swift, G. 1983. *Waterland*. London, Heinemann.
- Swift, G. 1988. *Out of this World*. London, Viking.
- Taussig, M. 1987. *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*. London, University of Chicago Press.
- Thomas, C. 1976. The archaeologist in fiction. In Megaw, J.V.S. (ed.) *To Illustrate the Monuments*. London, Thames and Hudson, 309-319.
- Thomas, E.M. 1987. *Reindeer Moon*. London, Collins.
- Tilley, C. forthcoming. On modernity and archaeological discourse. In Bapty, I. and Yates, T. (eds) *Archaeology after Structuralism: Introductory readings in Post-structuralism*. London, Routledge.
- Van Vogt, A.E. 1951. *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*. London, Gollancz.
- Williams, R. 1973. *The Country and the City*. London, Chatto & Windus.
- Williams, R. 1981. *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*. London, Verso.
- Williams, R. 1989a. *People of the Black Mountains*. London, Chatto & Windus.
- Williams, R. 1989b. *The Politics of Modernism*. London, Verso.
- Williams, R. & Barnie, J. 1987. People of the Black Mountains (Interview). *Planet* 65, 3-13.

- Williams, R. & Eagleton, T. 1989. The Politics of Hope: An interview. In Eagleton T. (ed.) *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*. Oxford, Polity, 176-183.
- Wilson, A. 1956. *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*. London, Secker & Warburg.