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ABSTRACT

Irene Garcia Rovira
Re-thinking diffusion ‘in-between’: Cultural encounters, time and the formation of hybrid identities.

For some time now, social scientists, literary critics and others who have examined socio-political developments characterised by intercultural interaction (e.g. colonialism or globalisation), have emphasised the creative, transformative and hybrid character of the space ‘in-between’ (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Young 1995). Even though ‘hybridity discourses’ have principally explored spheres of intercultural interaction in order to dismantle traditional binary oppositions used in colonial studies, or to describe the subtleties of our contemporary globalised environment, they have also raised awareness of the need to integrate such insights into accounts that explore and theorise a range of social phenomena (e.g. Nederveen Pieterse 2009).

Whilst this integration has taken place in the wider context of the social sciences, scant attention has been given within the reflective arena of post-processualism to devising theoretical approaches which allow for analyses either of the space ‘in-between’ or the ‘multivoicedness’ (Bakhtin 1981) of material culture (for an exception see Fahlander 2007). This thesis seeks to define the theoretical as well as methodological strategies needed to incorporate the notion of ‘hybridity’ into the post-processual discourse.

Although the effects of hybridity can take various forms (e.g. linguistics, culture, politics, religion) (Ashcroft et al. 1998), our possibilities for exploring this concept in archaeology amount to identifying the effects of hybridity on the realm of material culture. This research focuses on developing a theoretical and methodological approach that allows intercultural interaction to be examined through the identification of material patterning. To do so, the notion of ‘diffusion’ is reconsidered as an analytical concept in archaeology.

This thesis then draws upon this approach to explore developments within the Orcadian Neolithic during the later fourth millennium BC. As a period of structural change in the islands, it has been the breeding ground for the development of various differing approaches to interpretation (e.g. Renfrew 1979b, Hodder 1982a; Sharples 1985). On this occasion, I will argue that this period represented a classic example of the formation of hybrid identities. Whilst a self-unified image of society was sought in these islands during this period, it is suggested that the cultural expressions used to depict identity reflected intercultural interaction with the Boyne Valley (Ireland).
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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PART ONE:
CONTEXTUALISATION OF RESEARCH
CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction.

‘In a similar vein, as archaeologists for the last twenty years have struggled to develop alternative discourses and epistemologies to dislocate their practices from constraining empiricist philosophies, we are now faced with the challenge of discussing new socio-political agendas that go beyond narrow histories of identity. To start thinking that against the ‘absolutism of the pure’ (Rushdie 1982), the well-proven solution of returning to an ethnic and/or national primordialism, ‘there is another more difficult option: the theoreatisation of creolisation, [...] mestisaje and hybridity’ (Gilroy 1993: 2).’

(Olsen 2001: 53-54).

Despite claims for the development of approaches that embrace the significance of the human senses in the interpretation of past contexts (e.g. Gosden 2001; Ouzman 2001; Hamilakis 2002b), archaeological knowledge has been – and still is – predominantly produced through the medium of sight. Be it through the physicality of material remains (Ray 2009) or through the visual character of the method which classifies and categorises material culture (Thomas 2009), the archaeological record is characterised as an ‘arena of enquiry’ which distinctively allows inspection into ‘geographical breadth and historical depth’ (Barrett 2001: 143). Even though this ‘arena’ is constructed through arranging cumulative data in space and time rather than being a representation of the past itself, it is a fundamental tool by which archaeologists define both examples of material patterning and episodes of material change.

From the many interpretive options available, material patterning has continually made archaeologists suspect that some of the contexts that they identify might reflect the effects of intercultural contact. More importantly, for the subject of this research, this idea has remained central to interpretive enquiries in some traditions of research. Specifically, I refer to a strand of investigation which emerged related to the growth of ‘megalithic studies’ at the turn of the 1980’s and which, in many ways, has persevered to date (e.g. Shee Twohig 1981; Eogan 1989, 1999; Scarre 1998; Burenhult 2001; Sheridan 2003). Although these authors have in some respects continued to present scenarios of diffusion, they have been quick to distance themselves from the discourses characteristic of the first half of the twentieth century. Hence, those working within
this area of research have removed the term ‘diffusion’ from their lexicon and have maintained that there is no ‘wish to resurrect the idea of a single megalithic religion spread by missionaries [...]’, nor that of a widely disseminated funerary goddess cult [...]’ (Scarre 1998: 177). As such, they claim to have moved away from ‘bold assertions and grandly sweeping assumptions’ (Sheridan 2000: 1), by employing a strategy that seeks to demonstrate the viability of particular scenarios through means of empirical detail.

In effect, these approaches have rightly underscored that intercultural interaction can give rise to a series of effects which can be manifested through the ‘homogenisation’ of material repertoires. They have also sought to define contexts in which the effects of intercultural interaction can potentially be inferred through strategies which, in contrast to early approaches to diffusion (e.g. Cartailhac 1889; Montelius 1905; Déchelette 1912; Crawford 1957), meticulously seek to provide the viability of their inferences by critically considering phenomena such as chronological and spatial relatedness amongst the assemblages compared. However, in ruling out the possibility of going deeper in their interpretive analyses (for example, by developing more sophisticated understandings of the nature and character of the social mechanisms that produce the scenarios they aim to discuss, and by exploring the relationships between human beings and their material environments), such approaches offer comparative descriptions of little interpretive value.

On the other hand, approaches that have emerged within the post-processual discourse have distinctively emphasised the need to theorise about human and social phenomena in order to shed light upon the relationship between human beings and material culture. In fact, this approach is considered central and a priori to the development of interpretive accounts which break with the limits posed by the very nature of the discipline. Even though a homogeneous post-processual approach can hardly be said to exist, due to the multiplicity of themes and approximations to the past developed since the 1980s, it is possible to suggest a return to understandings which focus upon the socio-historical situatedness of human experience. This development, which was necessary in order to overcome paradigms that conceived human affairs through the guise of the biological sciences (New Archaeology), crystallised initially through the development of structural approaches to archaeology. These sought to understand material culture in relation to its ‘wholeness’ (Hodder 1982a); that is, within the symbolic structures characteristic of specific socio-cultural contexts. This initial attitude has matured with the adoption of insights which characteristically draw upon
the theoretical frameworks posited in Bourdieu’s ‘theory of practice’ (1977, 1990) and Giddens’ ‘structuration theory’ (1979, 1984). The influence exerted by these approaches as well as by insights developed within Heidegger’s ‘existential phenomenology’ (1962) helped set the tone for the development of influential archaeological approaches such as ‘agency theory’ (see Dobres & Robb 2000) or Barrett’s ‘archaeologies of inhabitation’ (1988; 2000). Moreover, the influence of these theoretical frameworks can be seen in the numerous interpretive studies during recent years that have focused on the examination of social practice (e.g. Richards 2005; Jones 2007).

Whilst the insights developed within ‘structuration theories’ have in many ways resulted in more sophisticated accounts of the contexts we seek to study, they have done so through the application of insights that were initially elaborated to discuss social phenomena occurring within social systems. The translation of these insights to archaeology has led to a situation that, contrary to the tradition of research presented above, has characteristically expunged the effects of intercultural interaction from accounts of social phenomena, and failed to recognize or explore the historical contexts within which these encounters occurred. Consequently, the possibility of relating material patterning to the effects of intercultural interaction has not been widely considered within the post-processual discourse.

Although this scenario will be thoroughly examined in the chapters to come, it is here necessary to point out that the trajectories developed by the two strands of research described above can be further problematized by arguments that have emerged within other fields of the social sciences. Post-colonial and globalisation studies have stressed the need to abandon paradigms which either define cultures as bounded entities or which see the interaction taking place in our contemporary globalised world as creating a panorama which is increasingly uniform (see Ritzer 2004). Instead, globalisation and hybridisation studies call attention to the fact that intercultural interaction produces new combinations; that it creates new forms. In addition, it is argued that this situation in not one exclusively characteristic of today’s world, it is something which has always happened (see e.g. Bhabha 1994; García Canclini et al. 2005; Neverdeen Pietersen 2009). Following on from this reflection, it appears that such developments can and should be sought in prehistoric contexts, and that the theoretical approaches through which interpretation emerges should consider the effects of cultural encounters.
Drawing on the situation described to this point, this doctoral thesis explores the theoretical and methodological challenges presented in the application of the new ‘socio-political’ agenda (Olsen 2001), as it has emerged in other fields of the social sciences, to archaeological matters. Specifically, this research seeks to overcome some of the limitations of the approaches, described above, and to bring into play new understandings which allow episodes of material patterning to be discussed as the result of intercultural interaction.

In particular, this research explores the following questions:

(1) Can the theoretical polarisation described above be reconciled in the light of new understandings which take into consideration the experience ‘in-between’ (Bhabha 1994) without retreating from the sophisticated understandings developed in archaeology regarding human experience and dynamics and their relation to a socio-historical milieu?

(2) Is it possible to discuss episodes of material patterning as one of the many effects that can take place in episodes of intercultural interaction without falling into an oversimplistic contemplation of ‘assimilation’ or ‘homogenisation’ of cultural traits?

(3) How can an alternative approach to studying these characteristics illuminate our narratives of the prehistoric past?

1.1 Research directions.

Literature produced on the topic of cultural hybridity has demonstrated that the effects of intercultural interaction can affect all social domains, including languages (Bakhtin 1981), music (Bennet et al. 2006) and religious belief (Insoll 2007a). In prehistoric archaeology, our possibilities for tackling these scenarios are limited to a primary identification of contexts of material patterning, and perhaps to a lesser extent, to the detection of similar social practices taking place in distinctive socio-cultural milieus. Whilst some might find this situation excessively fragmentary and, therefore, not worth examining, I suggest that in considering these events, we are not only nourishing interpretation but we are also acknowledging that the creative forces of society do not exclusively emerge from ‘within’ but also in situations ‘in-between’.

Following from this realisation, this doctoral thesis focuses on the development of a framework which allows enquiries into intercultural interaction to be integrated into
prehistoric studies. It does so, however, through a research path which might need a degree of clarification – one that seeks to re-assess the concept of ‘diffusion’ in archaeology. Before the reader misjudges the nature of this selection, it is necessary to make clear that this research is not comparable to or sympathetic with what might be termed the traditional models of diffusion of the early twentieth century. Instead, the term ‘diffusion’ is used here simply to account for those examples of material patterning which might potentially refer to the effects produced by the encounter of different social groups. Following this line of thought, this research explores both how diffusion can be conceptualised in the social domain, and how can it be explored within the limits of materiality.

Whilst an approach of this nature has proven to have positive outcomes, it has been, at times, difficult to place within the theoretical climate characteristic of the discipline today. As has been pointed out (and will be discussed to a greater extent in Chapter Two), neither the issue of interaction amongst different social groups nor the engagement of studies which necessarily have to draw inferences from large scale analyses appear to be ‘in vogue’ within the post-processual discourse. Therefore, this research places a great deal of effort in assessing the ways in which a new theoretical framework, focused on the issue of intercultural interaction, can be matched to some of the fundamental understandings of current archaeological theory. In some cases, this examination has brought to the fore a series of problematic understandings deeply embedded within archaeological thought. Drawing on Heidegger’s (1962) philosophical understanding of ‘being-in-the-world’, characteristic of many contemporary theoretical approaches in archaeology, this research moves beyond the limits of the world to enquire into what kind of experiences are triggered when situated human beings experience Others.

Any attempt at re-conceptualising diffusion has to necessarily frame this phenomenon within a context of interaction; a context which is characterised, primarily, by the experience of Otherness. This framework, as well as the answer to the question ‘what is diffusion?’, is constructed from a movement which integrates a series of insights emanating from both hermeneutical philosophy and post-colonial theory. This allows for a definition of the complexities that take place in situations of diffusion, and it also helps characterise the ways in which ‘new forms’ are integrated and re-shaped within the internal dynamics of specific societies through time. This discussion lends support to a break with the portrayal of social dynamics in prehistory as internally constituted, and it also reveals a series of insights which bring novel interpretative dimensions to
the study of contexts that might potentially be discussed within the sphere of interaction.

The second question central to this research – ‘how can processes of diffusion be discussed in relation to materiality?’ – is tackled through an attempt to recapture the kind of insights which can be deciphered through undertaking large-scale observations, and, specifically, in contexts of material patterning. Although current archaeological practice has become sceptical about the uses of large scale observations, it is argued that in order to assess its interpretive value, a difference has to be posited between the large-scale and large-scale inferences. The large-scale *per se*, is configured through a method which is ultimately historically contingent. It classifies and categorises archaeological evidence in terms of similarity and difference. This realisation has led a number of researchers to disclaim the information that this method sustains for it homogenises past social action, and it makes social dynamism difficult to assess. Faced with this situation, researchers have moved to the other extreme and have claimed to be able to assess variability as a means of social practice. However, this ignores the fact that in doing so, they remain locked into an archaeological language that emanates from the large-scale. It also overlooks the fact that the dynamics of society, understood within the theoretical approaches from which they operate (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Giddens 1979, 1984), do not only occur through social action but through *routinised* social action. Through this discussion I contend that, once having come to terms with the historical contingency of the method from which the large-scale emanates, it is possible to use this method to obtain information which is symptomatic of past social action, rather than a means of reflecting upon it. This argument takes us directly to the last topic of research, namely that of style.

The issue of style has been discussed in many ways in archaeology. It has been used as a means by which to reflect upon the boundaries of ethnic groups (e.g. Sackett 1982; 1986; 1990), interpreted as a means of communication (e.g. Wobst 1977; Wiessner 1983) and as the effects of structurated action (e.g. Hodder 1990b; Shanks & Tilley 1987a). Some have claimed that style is a meaningless category which should therefore be removed from archaeological interpretation (e.g. Boast 1997). However, the majority of these approaches are based on an understanding which contends – implicitly or explicitly – that style is contained within the material and that, therefore, it can be studied synchronically. Rejecting the latter stance, this research aims to prove that style can only be examined insofar as it is characterised diachronically. Style is not
in the material. It is ‘written up’ and it can surpass the limits of specific socio-cultural units. Style can be said to be symptomatic of the diffusion of certain elements through time; of integration, reproduction and translation. It is always an effect of historical circumstances, whether the latter is defined as a single process, or as the outcome of the interaction of different social groups in space and time. Having come to terms with the uses of the large-scale, this theoretical examination illustrates how a multi-scalar approach which, rather than being decentered, focuses upon the ways in which the cosmologies and therefore the social practices of specific social groups are affected and transformed through interaction, allows the issue of diffusion to be reinstated in archaeology. As a way of concluding the research, the insights obtained are put into practice through the development of a case study.

1.1.1 Cultural encounters, time and the formation of hybrid identities. Exploring the Orcadian later Neolithic: a case study.

The context of the Orcadian later Neolithic has been selected to explore the amalgam of insights obtained in the present doctoral research. The study of this socio-historical context not only represents a unique opportunity to discuss the effects of intercultural interaction but it is also exceptional in the sense that the two traditions of research discussed at the beginning of this chapter have previously examined this archaeological assemblage, but without reconciling the insights obtained into a cohesive approach.

On the one hand, on numerous occasions researchers have pointed to the degree of similarity between archaeological assemblages being produced in the context of the Orcadian Neolithic and others emerging in the Boyne Valley (Ireland) contemporarily (e.g. Eogan 1997; Brindley 1999; Bradley 2007). On the other hand, traditions of research encapsulated by the work of Richards and his colleagues in the islands have prompted interpretations which, drawing theoretically from a concern with social practice and spatial order (e.g. Richards 1990a; 1991a; 1998; 2005) have emphasised the lived environments of the inhabitants of these islands. This has been achieved, however, to the detriment of the conceptualisation of the effects of interaction with other social groups.

Drawing on the situation just described, an attempt is made to reconcile these approaches through an interpretive exercise which focuses on the structural changes that took place in the islands enduring the later fourth millennium BC. Although this
particular context has often been addressed during the development of interpretive models discussing the emergence of Grooved Ware and associated assemblages in different regions of the British Isles and Ireland during the third millennium BC (e.g. Bradley 1984a; Bradley & Chapman 1986; Sheridan 2004a; Thomas 2005, 2010), scant attention has been given to focusing specifically upon the relationship between the Orkney Islands and the Boyne Valley. This relationship not only existed centuries before Grooved Ware became a British phenomenon but featured assemblages associated with a distinctive *domestic*, rather than a *ceremonial*, domain.

Unfortunately, the only interpretive models devised for explaining the changes occurring in this socio-historical context to date have concentrated upon the portrayal of increasing social complexity (Renfrew 1979b; Hodder 1982a; Sharples 1985). Moving away from these models, I suggest that the changes which took place in the Orkney archipelago at the end of the fourth millennium BC can be better understood through a process of formation of what has, in the field of post-colonial theory, been designated a 'hybrid identity'. In this sense, it is suggested that the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands did not simply acquire material forms and symbolic devices in the course of interaction with the Boyne Valley. In contrast, it is suggested that those who visited the Boyne Valley would have been placed in a position which, through a process of self-conceptualisation and transformation characteristic of the meeting of alterity, would have produced 'new understandings'. These would have then been reproduced in the context of the Orkney Islands, not only prompting an alteration in their cosmologies as reflected in their material environments, but occasioning the development of a unified self-image of society which was initially formulated through the creative forces of intercultural interaction.

In order to unfold this interpretive scenario, the study begins with a re-assessment of the earlier Orcadian Neolithic in the light of newly-available evidence. Through examining this context it appears possible to suggest that, although changes in the cosmologies of the inhabitants of the islands occurred at different points during the Neolithic, a central element in the cosmological world – as reflected in the relationship between the tomb and the house – remained constant throughout this period. The construction of an identity which originally drew upon a series of elements found in the tombs of the Boyne Valley only serves to further suggest this relationship. Lastly, this case study briefly links these occurrences to the context of the British Isles in later chronologies. If, as Thomas (2010) suggests, 'communal feasting, monumental structures and pit deposition' occurring in other regions of Britain and Ireland in the
subsequent centuries and relating to Grooved Ware ‘all drew upon the imagery of the house and the household to provide a new means of social integration’ (ibid. 1), what role did the events which occurred centuries earlier in the Orkneys have in the emergence of this scenario?

1.2 Overall structure.

In order to reveal the narrative path developed in this research, it is necessary to outline its overall structure. This thesis is organised into four blocks of discussion:

**Part One: contextualisation of research.**

This section is presented in Chapter Two through an examination of the main episodes of research concerning both the development of ‘interaction models’ in prehistory, and of those discussions which contended that similarities among different sets of evidence could be used as indicators of historical relatedness between different social groups. This inquiry seeks to obtain a picture of the general state of debate of this topic, and it is used to define the main thrust of the present research. Likewise, this chapter places the aims and requirements of this research into the context of the current theoretical underpinnings of British prehistory. This discussion helps define the major methodological and theoretical challenges of this doctoral thesis.

**Part Two: thinking about diffusion.**

This section consists of Chapter Three and Chapter Four. The former is principally concerned with the issue of tradition. On the one hand, much theoretical discussion has embraced an ontological understanding of tradition which emanates from Heidegger's ‘being-in-the-world’, and that has impregnated archaeological practice mainly through the incorporation of insights from Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and Giddens (1979; 1984) into discussions. Whilst the application of these approaches has contributed to a growing maturity in active debate, it has entailed the development of archaeological approaches – e.g. Barrett’s ‘archaeologies of inhabitation’ (2000; 2001) - which, through an exclusive emphasis upon phenomena occurring within social systems, has portrayed social dynamics as exclusively internally constituted. Whilst this scenario has been triggered by the above mentioned developments, it is argued that it is possible to move away from this situation, and to portray the dynamics of the ‘in-between’ through expanding the enquiry based upon being-in-the-world to
experiencing Otherness. This discussion sets the basic parameters of enquiry which are pursued in Chapter Four.

Even though tradition is considered ontologically, it is possible to indicate that this understanding has not yet reached the entire spectrum of the social sciences. Through a brief inspection of the history of Western thought, I argue that the contemporary division between 'traditional' and 'modern' societies is embedded in the foundations of the social sciences. This understanding is not only found in the culture-historical models of diffusion but has also constrained the development of alternative approaches within post-processual archaeologies. The 'modern-traditional' opposition has repressed the possibilities of applying ground-breaking insights from the fields of post-colonial and globalisation studies to prehistory. Following on from this discussion, Chapter Four focuses upon the development of a theoretical framework through which diffusion is finally reconceptualised. To achieve this, the discussion combines Gadamer's 'hermeneutical conversation' (1975) with Bhabha's 'Third Space of Enunciation' (1994). In setting diffusion within this framework, I consider the kind of insights that it offers for the interpretation of contexts which in archaeology have traditionally been defined as ones of diffusion.

**Part Three: diffusion and material culture.**

Chapter Five and Chapter Six make up this section. Chapter Five reflects upon the interpretive value of large-scale analyses. It examines the nature and the centrality of the large-scale for archaeological practice. A series of research projects, which mainly developed from the application of hermeneutics and phenomenological insights in our discipline, have cast doubt upon the value of archaeological categorisation, for the latter is formed through an historically contingent method which privileges vision over the other human senses. Drawing on this discussion, a reflection upon the large scale follows. This chapter ends by highlighting some paradoxes within current archaeological practice. The demand for archaeological interpretations which focus upon the variability of the archaeological record has not only led archaeologists to eschew the kind of insights that can be obtained through examining material patterning, it has also also led to the development of accounts which, while moving away from the homogenising effects of conceptual categories, interpret the past by means of a language which is still conceived upon the large scale.

Finally, Chapter Six is devoted to an analysis of the uses of style in archaeology. Whilst this issue has been placed at the centre of the debate for more than two decades of
archaeological practice, it has yet not produced a comprehensive account which not only defines the phenomenon but its importance for archaeological interpretation. In this chapter, I argue that a re-assessment of the notion of style has to take place through emphasising its temporal and referential value and its capacity to surpass specific socio-cultural boundaries. In order to achieve this, I combine a series of insights developed from Wilk's (1995; 2004) frameworks of 'common difference' and the definition of style developed by Davis (1990) which is characterised by the recognition that style is not within the material itself, but is an act of interpretation by the writer. This discussion comes to an end by highlighting the peculiarities of a multi-scalar approach to contexts of diffusion.

**Part Four: case study and conclusions.**

Chapter Seven explores the theoretical and methodological insights obtained throughout the research via a case study focused on the interpretation of the structural changes that took place in the Orkney Islands during the final centuries of the fourth millennium BC. An explicit attempt is made at reconciling one tradition of research, focused on the description of similarities between the Orkney Islands and the Boyne Valley during the later Neolithic, with a more situated approach developed since the 1990's in the context of the Orcadian later Neolithic.

This doctoral research concludes by assessing the applicability of this approach to other instances characterised by the meeting of different social groups in prehistory (e.g. the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition). This final discussion also outlines some areas of research which might be explored by the author in future. A final section is devoted to the definition of key concepts used throughout this research.
CHAPTER TWO:

ARCHAEOLOGY AS HISTORY

2. Introduction.

Whilst it would be mistaken to state that diffusion as a concept has disappeared from the archaeological literature with the passing of twentieth century approaches, the concept has not become incorporated into accepted frames of reference within post-processual discourse. Within the latter realm, diffusion has become a prejudiced term, in part due to varied associations generated since the critique of culture-history, and because diffusion demands a theoretical and methodological background that is perhaps unfashionable or questionable within contemporary archaeological practice. In order to further understand this situation, and to find grounds from which to develop the present research aims, this chapter offers a context by responding to the following enquiries:

(1) How has the relationship between different cultural groups and material patterning been discussed in the different stages of archaeological thought?

(2) Taking into consideration the current theoretical climate in British archaeology, what challenges does research into this relationship have to confront?

(3) What fundamental steps are to be taken in order to establish a viable possibility for conducting the present research?

An important objective of this chapter is the identification of three core problems that require consideration if the above enquires are to be seriously explored. Firstly, if a critical re-assessment of diffusion is to be attempted it can only occur through the recognition of 'diffusion' as a social phenomenon, and through the examination of the ways in which these contexts can be identified and explored in archaeology. Secondly, each line of enquiry demands scales of analyses that are arguably larger than those approached throughout much of contemporary archaeology. Thirdly, understanding of the temporality of diffusion requires analyses that surpass the characterisation of specific 'historical horizons' (Gadamer 1975).
2.1 Cultural encounters in prehistory.

Similarities observed between the material culture of different regions have frequently raised the possibility of possible contacts amongst social groups, even when archaeological thought has explicitly illustrated the risks of conducting such interpretations. In this section, the emphasis is placed on describing those episodes throughout the history of archaeological thought in which material patterning has been discussed in relation to interaction between different social units. Of particular interest here is the elucidation of the mechanisms through which these interpretive scenarios have been generated within different theoretical frameworks and their influence upon subsequent interpretative strategies.

Rather than focusing upon the narratives produced for the Orcadian later Neolithic – a task which will be undertaken within the case study presented in Chapter Seven – at this point the enquiry is centred on the discussion of some of the most influential ‘interaction models’ that have emerged within the context of prehistoric archaeology. In this sense, this is not an exhaustive review, and some of the themes integrated in this narrative will be further elaborated in proceeding chapters.

2.1.1 The birth of an archaeological theme.

Undoubtedly the account must begin with examination of the archaeological paradigms during the first half of the twentieth century, for this period is defined by the coalescence of (1) an interest in ‘social interaction’ emerging out of new theories of cultural change, combined with (2) an understanding of the archaeological record as a direct reflection of past realities. The roots of this conjuncture can be found within shifting perspectives concerning the nature of humanity, prompted by the economic and social difficulties experienced in Western Europe during the last decades of the nineteenth century (Trigger 2006: 217). These new understandings were directly reflected in the theoretical frameworks devised by the German schools of ethnicity and, in turn, were influential in archaeological thought across Europe.

Within these frameworks, human beings were no longer considered innovators, as had maintained by earlier evolutionary thinking and, in turn, the progressive outlook of a universal culture was now rejected (Palerm 1997). Gradually, Herder’s definition of ‘human diversity [being] a result of particular histories rather than stages on an evolutionary scale’ (Penny 2008: 82) was encouraged, triggering an understanding of
culture defined as distinct ways of life characteristic of bounded social groups, whose existence through time directly related to the way in which traditions were handed down from one generation to another (Trigger 2006). With the rejection of the premises of social evolution, new answers had to be provided to the issue of cultural change. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, numerous positions emerged in relation to the topic of ‘tradition’. However, these mostly contended that if cultures are conservative entities, change has to be understood as a consequence of processes of diffusion and migration (ibid. 217).

During this time, archaeology and ethnology developed a close relationship in which ethnologists made use of archaeological data to trace the histories of cultures (Tringham 1983: 91), whereas archaeologists adopted the varied theoretical underpinnings of the culture-historic schools of ethnology. Both disciplines were animated by the growing demand for historical justification on the part of the emerging nation states (see e.g. Trigger 1989: 150; Jones 1997). Within this context, material artefacts were considered of central importance for reconstructing the past (Kuklick 2008) through the identification of patterns and shared cultural traits.

These new ways of thinking about humanity and about the past crystallized in archaeology in the work of Kossinna, a German philologist who immersed himself into the study of the origin of the German people (Trigger 1989: 163). Within his ‘settlement archaeology’, he postulated that ‘artefact types could be used to identify cultures and that clearly distinguishable cultural provinces reflect the settlement areas of past tribes or ethnic groups’ (Jones 1997: 2). In addition, Kossinna adopted Klemm’s distinction between ‘culturally creative people’ and ‘culturally passive people’ (Trigger 1989: 165). This view could, on the one hand, be paralleled with the belief in ‘areas of innovation’ (in contrast to peripheries) among those who suggested that certain cultural features were only invented in a single point of origin, and spread to other geographical locations (see e.g. Montelius 1905; Childe 1925; Almagro & Arribas 1963) (see 3.3.1 for discussion). On the other hand, this distinction favoured migration models to explain cultural change, implying the existence of dominant populations.

This new way of examining archaeological evidence spread to British archaeology as a result of Childe’s adaption of the notion of ‘archaeological cultures’ which was already present in his early publications (e.g. 1929). Notwithstanding, it is interesting to note that the use of ‘archaeological cultures’ as particular to specific groups of people was ‘commonplace in the [British] literature of the early 1920’s’ (see Jones 1997: 17).
Whilst Childe’s work is considered as key to the spread of culture-historical theories and methodologies into British archaeology, it is necessary to highlight the way in which he distanced himself from some of the most influential postulates put forward by the German ethnographers and by Kossinna. In later publications, Childe indicated how cultural change could be result of many factors, such as migration, acculturation or diffusion (see Childe 1956: 148). Most importantly, he saw the possibility for different traditions to blend (see Childe 1942: 28). In contrast to Kossinna, Childe indicated that ‘progressive societies’ do not owe their richness to their purity but, instead, to the incorporation of innovative elements of different cultures (*ibid*).

In any case, the application of this theoretical background in archaeology gave rise to innumerable studies focused on the identification of scenarios of diffusion, of migration, and therefore, of contact. These ranged from moderate to extreme diffusionist models. However, these studies were linked by the will to locate the origins of certain cultures, cultural traits and the paths taken through time. For instance, Smith’s (1911) celebrated ‘hyper-diffusionist’ models were based upon the conviction that the Egyptian civilisation was the origin of a number of innovations within European prehistory. He depicted this ancient civilisation as one which travelled to distant areas in search of raw materials (Trigger 1989: 153). For instance, he identified at the Egyptian ‘mastaba’ as the origin of the European ‘dolmens’ (Peake & Fleure 1927: 25). Similarly, however, but not to such an extreme extent, Montelius had contended that certain European advances originated within the Near East (Montelius 1905; Daniel 1975: 180; Trigger 2006). Although many researchers of the time positioned themselves within his model (see e.g. Peake & Fleure 1927), a debate emerged amongst those who believed that the ‘Oriente Lux’ model ‘overrated eastern elements’ (Daniel 1975: 180).

A key element of this diffusionist debate was concerned with the ‘megalithic phenomenon’. As will be discussed in Chapter Five in relation to the constitution of archaeological categories, these monuments were understood as pertaining to a specific population (Gallay 2007) whose customs had spread into Atlantic Europe through migration and diffusion. For example, an intense debate existed with regards to the origin of the Iberian megaliths. Whilst, following Montelius, some Iberian researchers conceived the location of these structures resulting from migrations carried out by eastern Mediterranean populations who were portrayed as aristocratic seafarers (e.g. Almagro Basch 1960: 663), others postulated the origin of the ‘megalithic phenomenon’ in Portugal, from which new burial and architectural
traditions were spread to other geographical locations (e.g. Bosch Gimpera 1932). Similarly, Childe indicated that the Irish and Orcadian passage tombs were copies of Mediterranean prototypes (see Childe 1956; Bradley & Chapman 1986: 129).

### 2.1.2 Breaking with tradition.

Whilst the notion of ‘archaeological cultures’ and the models of cultural change prevailing during the first half of the twentieth century allowed the development of studies focused on prehistoric contact, by the late 1950’s interest had begun to wane. This decline in prominence was due, in part, to questions concerning the validity of the traditional culture-historical framework (e.g. Hawkes 1954; Piggott 1959: 9-12). It was argued that its theoretical premises were incapable of showing how cultures operate (Trigger 2006: 314). This theoretical awakening did not prompt the generation of new models to discuss prehistoric contact as such; instead, the traditional relationship between ‘culture’, ‘archaeological evidence’ and ‘social change’ diverged into three main topics of discussion.

First, in re-establishing the possibility of explaining the dynamics of culture in evolutionary terms, material patterns, often observed amongst the record of different areas, were interpreted as resulting from societies that were at similar stages of evolution and undergoing comparable processes. Therefore, whilst culture-historians had insatiably produced narratives relating to, for instance, the origin and spread of the ‘megalithic phenomenon’, this could now be reconsidered in the light of new theoretical paradigms based upon evolutionary premises. For instance, Renfrew (e.g. 1973a; 1973b; 1976) challenged the traditional accounts that had been given for the ‘megalithic phenomenon’, showing that radiocarbon dates placed the Mediterranean structures later than their Atlantic counterparts. In particular, he rejected the traditional links between Wessex and Mycenae (Renfrew 1979a: 353; Bradley & Chapman 1986: 129), producing a new account of the origin and development of the ‘megalithic phenomenon’ in which these structures would have worked as territorial markers in times of population pressure (see e.g. Renfrew 1973a). Renfrew postulated that the scale and complexity of monuments could be ‘taken as an index of that of the society which created them’ (Thomas 1999: 34). This model, as will be discussed within the case studies (Chapter Seven), was later applied to the context of the later Neolithic in Orkney (see Renfrew 1979b).
Second, and equal in importance, but with lesser impact within the framework of the New Archaeology, some archaeologists denounced the dangers of establishing direct relationships between archaeological assemblages and the definition of cultures. Within British processualism, Peacock (1968) published the results of a series of petrological analyses of Iron Age pottery of the Herefordshire - Cotswold region, indicating how the clustering observed by means of classification was, in fact, the result of the trade and exchange of pottery. In similar fashion, Hodder's early writings (e.g. Hodder & Orton 1976) pointed out that the distribution maps generated by archaeologists could not simply be conceived as mapping the extent of specific cultures as had been argued by culture-historians (see section 2.2).

In any case, the possibility of documenting intercultural contacts within contexts of material patterning continued through the development of new understandings of material culture itself. As will be discussed in Chapter Six with an examination of archaeological approaches to style, by defining culture in adaptive terms Binford regarded material culture entirely within a functional framework, where the primary function of an artefact related to its position within given subsystems (1962: 220-221; Shanks & Tilley 2007: 81). However, as Binford noted, 'cross-cutting all these general classes of artefacts are formal characteristics which can be termed stylistic' (ibid. 120). Style was then perceived as 'promoting group solidarity, awareness and identity' (ibid.). Whilst this new understanding gave rise to a heated debate concerning the nature and character of stylistic attributes, various arguments were presented for a direct correspondence between style and ethnic identity. Stylistic similarity began to be conceived as a direct reflection of the degree of interaction between social units (see Hodder 1982a; Shanks & Tilley 1992). This equation worked as the fundamental tenet of 'ceramic sociology' (e.g. Deetz 1965; Hill 1970; Whallon 1968) which, as discussed in the following section, allowed the maintenance of 'social interaction models'. This new understanding not only echoed some of the underlying frameworks through which culture-historians synthesised prehistoric worlds, but also played an influential role in the proceeding studies that delineated 'interaction models'.

2.1.3 Between two worlds.

‘Social interaction models’ of the 1960s and 1970s were characterised by a theoretical edge which, for the most part, emerged out of pervasive debates on the notion of ‘style’. Although the latter was re-considered in the light of positions which emphasised its
communicative character (see Chapter Six for discussion), style continued to be considered by some archaeologists as a passive indicator of ethnic affiliation during the 1980's (e.g. Sackett 1982; 1986). Nonetheless, this outlook was finally deposed by the critical edge of emerging approaches (e.g. Hodder 1977c) which, from the later 1970's had focused into the examination of the ‘social processes which lie behind the distribution and mutual association of artefact types’ (Barker 1999: 456).

These studies were later elaborated through the production of a series of essays developed from ethno-archaeological examination (see Hodder 1982a). In studies conducted with the Baringo tribes of Western Kenya, Hodder was able to demonstrate how, for instance, lack of intertribal movement of traits cannot be simply understood as the lack of interaction amongst different groups. More to the point, this approach allowed Hodder to discern a rather more complex scenario in which material homogenisation between different groups depended upon ‘the strategies and intentions of the interacting groups and how they use, manipulate and negotiate material symbols’ (ibid. 185). Within these contexts, material culture began to be considered as an active element of cultural worlds, rather than merely a passive indicator of cultural groups and social change.

As we shall see in the next section, Hodder’s work prompted new ways of approaching material culture in archaeology. However, his conclusive statements did not bring about the cessation of studies in which material patterning was interpreted as a potential indicator of social interaction (e.g. Sackett 1982). In its place, and of particular relevance to this project, the 1980’s and 1990’s were characterised by the emergence of a series of studies on the Atlantic Neolithic which often based their arguments on the existence of contacts amongst distant areas; contacts which were predominantly deciphered through the recognition of material similarities in the archaeological record of different regions. Although it is impossible to illustrate the totality of these works here, it is interesting to highlight illustrative examples.

On a number of occasions, Eogan (1979; 1989; 1992; 1999) suggested evidence for contact between Irish Late Neolithic populations and those of the Copper Age of Iberia based upon the identification of material correlations between these regions. These parallels, he has argued, ‘go beyond the identification of similar tomb structures’ (1989: 113). For instance, he turned his attention to a sandstone object found outside the entrance of the Western tomb at Knowth I (Co. Meath) (see Eogan 1979: 276; 1989: 118) that can be paralleled with the ‘Baetyl Idols’ defined by Almagro Gorbea in his
publication *Los Idolos del Bronze Hispánico I* (1973). On a more general note, it appears significant to highlight how, during the 1980’s and 1990’s, researchers working within the confines of the European Atlantic focussed their attention on the identification of patterns both on megalithic structures and on the graphic expressions found within them. As an example, during the ‘Megalithic Art Symposium’ held in 1992 at the University of Dublin, C. T. Le Roux compared the later graphic expressions of the chambered tombs of Les Gavrinis (Morbihan) with the depictions recovered at Newgrange (Co. Meath) (Muñoz Amilíibia 1993: 453) (see Chapter Seven, Fig. 7.1).

These examples are amongst many others that describe the way in which these studies have developed, emerging predominantly from studies of focused on Atlantic Europe during the Neolithic. Moreover, these have persistenly defended the existence of relationships that gave rise to processes of enculturation between different prehistoric societies. Despite recognising the interpretive potential of some of their claims, it has to be noted that their analytical strategy derives directly from both culture-historical approaches and from the models put forward by the supporters of ‘ceramic sociology’. Although moving away from the traditional definition of culture or the processual emphasis upon ‘indices of interaction’ (see e.g. Scarre 1998; Sheridan 2000), these researchers followed a very specific analytical path that supports the idea that the higher the number of material similarities observed, the higher the possibilities are to entertain the possibility of contexts of contact. This is noteworthy for these interpretive models permeate the statistical correspondence that gave rise to the identification of ‘archaeological cultures’ (see Childe 1956: 34) during the early twentieth century, and establish a direct parallel with the processual models on ‘social interaction’ for they only envisage contacts in the light of contexts of material patterning. The dangers of establishing these correlations have been discussed elsewhere. As a matter of illustration, Robb (2001) has demonstrated how social interaction does not necessarily convey the assimilation of cultural elements amongst different societies. Through an interpretive examination of the Neolithic Maltese temples, he argued that social identity can be enhanced by strategically producing distinct forms of material culture even though social groups might interact with others on a regular basis.

In a rather sophisticated account, Bradley and Chapman (1986) discussed that, despite the fact that the later Neolithic of the British Isles and Ireland was characterised by marked regionalisation, a series of material culture elements were nonetheless identified amongst the sequences of five distinct regions (Fig. 2.1). This led them to
contemplate the existence of contacts amongst the communities inhabiting these areas. For example, a high level of similarity between the chambered cairns of the Boyne Valley (Ireland) and the Orkney Islands were identified. The significance of these similarities was complemented by the observation that some engravings found within and outside the tombs of the Boyne Valley could be compared with the decoration of Orcadian Groove Ware assemblages.

Despite drawing from methodological strategies developed by those studies in the tradition discussed above, Bradley and Chapman succeed in superseding these accounts through developing the following inference. The gradual convergence of material assemblages occurring towards the end of the third millennium BC reflected the progressive intensification of exchange networks (ibid. 135). The latter, Bradley and Chapman argue, was correlated with increasing socio-political complexity, which had a profound effect on the later prehistory of Western Europe. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, Bradley and Chapman interpreted these shared symbols and structures as the effects of spheres of interaction emerging amongst the elites of different geographic areas within the British Isles and Ireland (see Bradley 1984a; Bradley & Chapman 1986).

Figure 2.1 Regions discussed by Bradley and Chapman in 1986. (1) Wessex, (2) east Yorkshire, (3) east Scotland, (4) Orkneys, (5) Boyne Valley (After Bradley & Chapman 1986).
2.1.4 Summary.

First and foremost, a history of research into diffusion demonstrates that whilst material patterns have repeatedly advocated the possibility for inference relating to contacts amongst different social groups (even where archaeological theory has pointed out the dangers of doing so), the issue of ‘diffusion’ per se has only explicitly been considered within the boundaries of a culture-historic framework. This becomes clearer in pointing out that ‘diffusion’ can be examined both as the outcome of a social phenomenon and as an occurrence which can be deciphered in specific material contexts. The delineation of these two analytical paths is revealing, for it can be stated that the most recent all-encompassing study of this phenomenon is located within the archaeology practiced in the early twentieth century. In this case, diffusion was not only implicitly accounted for in the delineation of material patterns but was considered a central phenomenon, giving rise to cultural change.

Conceivably culture-historians – with the exception of Boas and Childe (see Chapter Three) – did not go deeper into defining the nature and the character of the phenomenon. However, the mechanisms that trigger diffusion were described through the portrayal of the character of humankind, sociality, and of tradition, and its consequences were often depicted as central to cultural change. In addition, this social phenomenon was identified in archaeology through the definition of contexts of material patterning as - with few exceptions (e.g. Colton 1932; Taylor 1948) (see section 5.2.1 for discussion) - ‘archaeological cultures’ which were perceived as plotting actual ‘cultural units’.

Whilst culture-history developed an all-encompassing account in which both analytical branches were taken into consideration, whether the same might be said for the subsequent ‘interaction models’ developed in archaeology to date is questionable. The nearest conceptualisation of the aforementioned characteristics are found only within ‘ceramic sociology’ in which similarities amongst the stylistic attributes of ceramic assemblages were perceived to reflect ‘shared production and learning contexts’ (Eckert 2008: 59). However, whilst these ‘interaction models’ aim to describe the processes that give rise to the sharing of stylistic traits amongst different social groups, they are also largely focused upon justifying stylistic similarities as passive indicators of the intensity of interaction amongst different groups.

In contrast to the models presented by traditions of culture-history and ‘ceramic sociology’, the ‘interaction models’ generated for the context of the Atlantic Neolithic
during the 1980’s and 1990’s largely obliterated the need to re-address two important theoretical questions. First, if material patterns could be interpreted as resulting from episodes of contact, is it possible to indicate that material culture is a direct reflection of past social patterns? Second, if different societies share cultural assemblages resulting from interaction, what is the nature of social phenomena behind these processes? Even though research has been focused towards placing contexts of material patterning within defined spatial and temporal limits, the logic underpinning these interpretive scenarios is questionable, for it draws from assumptions of theories that have been altogether discarded. If, for instance, contacts between different social groups cannot be directly inferred from the degree of similarity of one individual cultural assemblage to that of another, then how can processes of diffusion be discussed in archaeology?

In current archaeological discourse, thinking into processes of diffusion not only demands a major movement of theorisation but we must also ‘wrestle’ with historical prejudice. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this is one of the most contested topics ever generated in the discipline and it has often been the case that it is a theme directly linked to the major flaws of culture-historical archaeology. However, in the remainder of this chapter I want to suggest that there are important additional factors that are constraining re-assessment of this topic. To understand the difficulties at hand, it is equally imperative to examine the character of the main trends in current archaeological debate in the context of British academia. In so doing, it is possible to argue that post-processual reaction to previous theoretical paradigms has developed into a context which limits the possibilities for the development of studies that, as shall be demonstrated, can only proceed by a dialogical relationship between different scales of analysis.

2.2 Setting the scene.

‘Observing the archaeological record, as the record of regularities of behaviour which extended widely in space and deeply through time, archaeologists appear to be presented with an unambiguous ‘object of study’, namely the characterisation and understanding of normative behaviour. But there is another way to understand the archaeological program, and it is this alternative which I intend to explore here’.

(Barrett 2001: 143).

The last section highlighted a need to assess the possibilities for conducting the present research within the contemporary theoretical climate. However, I do not wish to
eradicate today's diversity of approaches through the definition of a unified agenda (see Shanks & Hodder 1997: 5). Instead, in this section I draw attention to a number of commonalities that have emerged since the interpretive turn of the 1980's in the British Isles. Firstly, it can be suggested that these approaches frame their work within reduced temporal and spatial scales of analysis that favour the interpretation of local contexts. Secondly, explicitly due to the application of Heidegger's conceptualisation of being-in-the-world (1962), and implicitly through the adoption of bodies of social theory (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Giddens 1979, 1984) which, to a great extent, sustain their frameworks through the application of Heidegger's ontological premises (see Chapter Three), it can be argued that archaeological thought has gradually moved to the characterisation of the internal dynamics of society and the portrayal of cultural horizons which override the temporal breath distinctive of the discipline. As will be demonstrated, the force of these positions set restrictions into the development of the present research.

The origins of this context may be explored through an overview of two main theoretical strands of archaeology. In the first, attention is placed at the nuances occurring within the application of agency theory and the development of contextual archaeology. By extension, Barrett's archaeologies of inhabitation (2000; 2001) are foregrounded. In the second, a similar methodological and theoretical scenario is portrayed through the development of new approaches to spatial analyses in archaeology. This examination is aimed at presenting a better picture of the propositions aforementioned and to delineate the main challenges faced by the present research.

2.2.1 Human agency, contextual archaeology and the rise of social practice in archaeology.

In section 2.1.3, it was pointed out that Hodder's early concerns with the traditional relationship established between material and human patterns were superseded by a series of new understandings emerging from the results of fieldwork in Sub-Saharan Africa. His empirical results aimed at questioning some of the most embedded understandings in archaeology, and they became the starting point for the emergence of a series of theoretical insights which proved groundbreaking for archaeological practice.
Resting at the core of his theoretical enterprise was a forceful critique of works that had portrayed cultures as dependent upon external factors (e.g. ecological approaches) and as law-like structures governing societies and individuals (e.g. classic structural models) (see Hodder 1982b). By contrast, he noted that material culture is meaningfully constituted, and hence active within human agency, therefore making it necessary to account for 'individual creativity and intentionality' (ibid. 5). This concern led the archaeological community to recognise previous positions as having been largely ahistorical.

Although some have rightly pointed out the fine line Hodder drew between the 'human agent' and the 'individual' (see Barrett 2000; Thomas 2002), a concern with the relationship between human agency and social structure is depicted early in Hodder's writing (e.g. Hodder 1986), and owes its origin to the application of bodies of theory developed within the fields of sociology (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Giddens 1979, 1984). By shedding light into the relationship between the 'internal social dynamics and structuring principles' (Thomas 2004c: 21), it was not only possible to move away from divergent accounts which had portrayed the individual either as a wholly free agent or determined by the social structure, but also to provide with a framework which proved universally applicable (ibid.). Agency theory proved influential to a number of researchers coming from a variety of theoretical angles. As Dobres and Robb (2000) have noted: 'it was amongst an 'odd mixture' of 'post'-processualists [...] that an explicit concern with agents and agency began to coalesce' (ibid. 23).

It is important to emphasise the means by which the application of agency theory fostered a radical change in the themes and scope of analysis in archaeological interpretation. As a number of authors have noted (e.g. Orser 2003; Pauketat 2010), human agency was often paralleled to the individual, and structure to society. This relationship triggered the production of studies focused upon the identification of individual events. Interestingly, traditional and processual archaeologies focused upon longer temporal scales of analysis when compared to the development of studies focused upon the shorter scales that characterise the influence of influences of approaches to agency (Thomas 2004a: 122).

In addition to the recognition of human intentionality and the development of new understandings on the relationship between agency and structure, this framework also gave rise to an increasing archaeological interest in the relationship between humanity and the (material) world. Trigger (2006) has suggested that Hodder placed a major
importance upon the way material culture had been so far envisaged, emphasising the fact that it cannot be understood as a mere reflection of human patterns, but that it can be used to ‘disguise, invert and distort social relationships’ (ibid. 453). In effect, Hodder was calling for a new understanding which would enhance the symbolic dimensions of material culture; an element which finally crystallised with the development of ‘contextual archaeology’ (see Hodder 1987b). As he posited: ‘understanding the object comes about and through placing it in relation to the larger functioning whole’ (ibid. 2). This understanding fully developed with the indirect adoption of the early hermeneutic tradition in archaeology (see Johnsen & Olsen 1992). By creating analogy between the archaeological record and a text, it became possible to argue that in order to interpret the evidence it was necessary to understand the language and the context of the author (ibid.). Interest grew in the study of the relationship between objects and the context of their reception. The latter was characterised as ‘the totality of relevant environment’ and a ‘trait, a site, a culture’ (Hodder 1992: 14). Hodder recognised how the context of an object can transcend the temporal and spatial barriers of the place in which it is found (see 1987b: 2), but his interpretive manoeuvres and its influence in subsequent works often failed to move away from the consideration of the local context. As has been noted for the case of ‘agency theory’, the development of ‘contextual’ approaches also prompted the reduction of the scales of analysis used in archaeological interpretation.

A similar setting was reproduced with Barrett’s plea for ‘archaeologies of inhabitation’ (1988; 2000; 2001). This developed from a re-consideration of the nature of archaeological evidence – an issue which had been explored by Patrick in 1985 and through which it had been possible to discern two main positions in the history of the discipline. As Patrick noted, the archaeological evidence had been conceived as a reflection of past human patterns, and as a ‘text’ which could be translated into meaning. Whilst critical of the former position, Barrett also indicated that the analogy of the text is problematic. He questioned the possibility of the extraction of meaning since the ‘text’ was produced under socio-historical circumstances too distant to that of the archaeologist ‘reader’ in the present (Barrett 1988; 2000). By considering the possibility of access to the meaning of past ‘texts’, he argued, a quasi-structural approach was implicitly at work, making it impossible to represent the ‘creative forces which bring social systems into being’ (2000: 24). But how could material culture be understood otherwise?
Drawing from Bourdieu’s (1979) concern upon the structural dimensions attached to the material world and linking these insights to Giddens (1979; 1984) concerns upon the significance of ‘locales’ (understood as settings of interaction), Barrett was able to argue that within a social system, the ‘material world’ can be understood as the material and, hence historical, conditions in which social action take place, simultaneously constructing and sustaining particular discourses (see Barrett 2000: 26). The aim of archaeologists, Barrett argued, should be a concern with the examination of past social practices. However, whilst his theoretical approach challenged the analogy of the text, and foregrounded the role of material culture as a structuring principle, it also perpetuated the analysis of local contexts. In calling for a study of the social practices stemming from particular material conditions, Barrett was drawing directly from a series of theoretical approaches – ‘structuration theories’ – which, as shall be noted in Chapter Three, limited their accounts of the internal dynamics of societies.

### 2.2.2 Space and landscape phenomenology.

Approaches to the archaeological record that favoured the study of local contexts crystallised during the late 1980s and 1990s with the incorporation of a series of new themes in archaeology: space, landscape and monumentality. Working in combination with literacy theory and Bourdieu’s (1979) interpretation of the Kabyle house, Moore (1986) and Hodder (1990) not only emphasised the cultural properties of space but also argued that past contexts could be brought forth by reading the way in which space was formulated in prehistoric architecture. Whilst not without criticism (e.g. Brück 2005), this approach gained acceptance in archaeology (e.g. Richards 1991a; Parker Pearson & Richards 1994), and matured with the incorporation of phenomenological insight.

Tilley and Thomas, whilst lecturing at the University of Lampeter in the early 1990s and sharing department with geography (Thomas per. comm.), became interested in the advances of the New Cultural Geographers, who not only tackled the flaws of positivistic approaches to space (Gosden 1999), but also provided new interpretive avenues from which to examine landscapes from alternative perspectives. For instance, in ‘New Directions in Cultural Geography’ (1987), Cosgrove and Jackson established a new agenda emphasising the need for re-theorisation on both the concept of ‘culture’ and that of ‘landscape’. Whereas previous accounts had foreseen the impact of cultures over their surrounding landscapes, the new approaches emphasised a more dynamic
scenario in which the landscape also acted as agent, indicating how ‘the spatial structure is an active part of their historical constitution’ (Cosgrove & Jackson 1987: 99). Moreover, J. Duncan and N. Duncan (1988) suggested the usefulness of studying landscapes whilst applying insights taken from literacy theory. Again, the instability of meaning was constrained, demonstrating that in specific social and historical contexts, ‘plurality is finite’ (ibid. 121).

This episode of research can be briefly illustrated with Thomas’s (1991) interpretation of the rise of monumentality during the British Neolithic. He noted that monumental structures should be analysed ‘less as objects in themselves and more as the transformation of space through objects’ (Hillier & Hanson 1984, as quoted by Thomas 1991). Therefore, if monuments were characteristic of the British Neolithic, it could be said that their erection and survival through time would have entailed a different understanding of how space is interpreted and experienced by the populations living in those landscapes. These new insights allowed archaeologists to ‘re-humanise’ studies that had previously decentred space from the significance of agency and meaning (Tilley 1994: 9).

Archaeology’s early immersion into theoretical frameworks originated within the New Cultural Geography soon gave rise to ‘landscape phenomenology’. Following from an increasing interest in studies of space, and working from the bodies of theory so far used to challenge positivistic approaches, Tilley found phenomenological insights of central importance as they directly ‘approached the manner in which people understand and experience the world’ (ibid. 11).

Tilley’s approach entwined insights located within different theoretical frameworks. Whilst notions of dwelling were adopted from the work of Heidegger (1975) and insights on power and ideology were kept from his early immersion into Marxist thought and into New Culture Geography (Cosgrove & Jackson 1987), a great deal of attention was placed on the body, regarding it ‘as vantage point from which the world is apprehended’ (Tilley 1994: 131). Accordingly, it was therefore possible to indicate that movement through space provides a series of experiences that could have been potentially analogous for those who lived in the past. In practical terms, Tilley’s complex theoretical setting was reduced to ‘embodied experience’ in his interpretive scenarios. The reinterpretation of the early Neolithic long cairns of the Black Mountain group can be used here to illustrate the manner in which he puts phenomenology into practice. As he noted (ibid.), archaeologists, in their search for monument orientation,
have traditionally relied heavily on the ‘eight major orientational axes of the compass’ (ibid. 123). However, moving away from such a scenario and conducting an interpretive exercise on the sites itself, made it possible to indicate that these monuments were, in fact, orientated towards three main landscape features (see ibid: 121).

Following from Tilley’s work, several British archaeologists adopted this approach as an interpretive device; on many occasions, his approach has been expanded by focussing attention less on visual aspects of interpretation and more on the kind of insights that could be provided by other senses traditionally inhibited in archaeological interpretation (see section 5.2.2 for discussion). For instance, Hamilton and Whitehouse (2006) have stressed how phenomenological studies have traditionally focused on vision, leaving aside the importance of other senses on the conception of dwelling. In similar lines, Watson and Keating (1999) have stressed the need to take into consideration the acoustic properties of monuments and other architectural places. Although they denote the impossibility of knowing which type of instruments or sounds might have been used within the confines of prehistoric structures, they emphasises that through experimental archaeology it is possible to conceive a series of significant elements that cannot be extracted at a methodological level.

As has been noted with the application of structuration theory in archaeology, the development of studies on landscape and monumentality have also been accompanied by a severe reduction in the scale of analyses. By reading the landscape as a text, the former was, by contrast to the latter, conceived as a horizontal and bounded entity. Although the theoretical approaches from which these insights developed had challenged cultural determinism by indicating the mechanisms through which internal dynamics take place within specific social systems, its application into archaeology was translated into a-temporal accounts in which the multiple voices forming the text were completely obliterated. Similar difficulties can be identified with the development of ‘landscape phenomenology’. Not only were these approaches also focused upon the interpretation of small scale contexts, but the way in which phenomenology was implemented in this case gave a primordial position of experience over understanding. As the following section elucidates, this is problematic.
2.2.3 Implications.

It was noted in the first section of this chapter that although social processes of diffusion - described widely as the results of specific instances of social interaction in which different social units integrate elements of foreign origin - are recognised in current archaeological practice at a descriptive level, little emphasis has been placed (since early twentieth century approaches) on understanding how and why these processes occur. In effect, this phenomenon has been largely under-theorised and rendered as one of the major taboos of the discipline. For these reasons, and in order to be able to move beyond current narratives about the Orcadian later Neolithic, this research is largely confined both to generating understandings about this social phenomenon and setting up the methodological framework by which these processes can be discussed in archaeology. In order to address the former, it has been necessary to obtain a picture of the current theoretical climate in British prehistory. Far from presenting an exhaustive account on the developments of archaeological thought that have arisen in the last decades, representative examples have been selected. In both instances, it has been possible to denote how these new themes and approaches have provoked archaeological interpretation in favour of small scale examination, particularly of local contexts. But how does this scenario complicate the development of the present research?

At a methodological level, within these scopes of analysis it is not possible to tackle archaeological contexts that may potentially be reflecting upon the effects of events of social interaction amongst different social groups. Likewise, in focusing exclusively upon the interpretation of local contexts it becomes virtually impossible to assess as to whether the meaning of objects (material record as text) or the discourses maintained and reproduced under specific material conditions (archaeologies of inhabitation) can be said to originate within specific groups or resulting from episodes of interaction amongst different social units.

At a more theoretical level, the determinism of the former possibility has conveyed the portrayal of prehistoric contexts in which social systems are intrinsically internally constituted. This situation can, however, be said to be triggered not only by the scales of analysis favoured in current archaeological discourse, but also by the nature of the bodies of theory that began to be fashioned in the 1980s. As has been discussed, the influence that the structuration theories played in the development of, for instance agency theory and practice theory in archaeology cannot be underestimated. Despite having allowed the development of more sophisticated views regarding both material
As has been pointed out, the development of theoretical approaches such as agency theory has prompted the emergence of new themes in archaeology which have, for the most part, benefited the study of local contexts. This reduction of scale has not only occurred at a spatial level but also at a temporal one. Despite the fact that in their work, Hodder emphasised the need to account for the historical contexts of the societies examined, and Barrett challenged the understanding as text purely to be able to devise an approach in which ‘the creative forces, which constantly brings the social system into being’ (2000: 25), their interpretive exercises have largely concluded with the definition of ‘historical horizons’. This can be widely defined as a world-view, or a perspective of the world at a given time (Lawn 2006: 66). This situation is taken to an extreme within the studies of ‘embodied experience’, for in this case, not only these studies have focused upon the definition of specific horizons but have also prioritised experience over meaningful perception. As Brück (2005) stresses in relation to notions of the human body:

‘[...] the body is a product of social relations and cultural values (e.g. Feher, Nadaff and Tazi 1980, Featherstone, Hepworth and Turner 1991; Shilling 1993; Douglas 1996), [...] the body is not simply a neutral entity on which symbolic significance is inscribed. Rather, embodied experience is shaped by cultural principles and in turn sustains particular interpretations of the world (Tarlow 2000: 719).’

(ibid. 55).

In this case, Brück denounces Tilley’s use of ‘embodied experience’ for it reflects upon a universal body which does not exist. Instead, she stresses the way in which different
individuals might experience space in a number of different ways according to their position in a particular socio-historical context. What she is in fact stating is that understanding precedes perception. Similar concerns have been raised, within philosophical spheres by Ako (2005) who stresses that the shared referential context in which human beings inherit, reproduce and alter ‘is already there prior to bodily perception. It is the condition of possibility for any meaningful perception whatsoever’ (ibid. 4). Whilst this insight is effectively recognised by Tilley (1994), indicating how historical situatedness is a quality of space itself, this insight is completely overridden in his interpretative exercises. Tilley’s approach is fundamentally sustained in practice through the use of Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) notion of the ‘body-subject’ which indicated the role of the body in any act of perception.

Whichever the case, it is contended here that the portrayal of ‘historical horizons’ reduces the possibilities of unfolding the nuances of diffusion as this phenomenon does not only require taking into consideration spatial scales of analysis which surpass the local context but also demand the consideration of the following predicates. If better understandings of this phenomenon which surpass the simplistic acquisition of certain traits are pursued, then it is necessary to (1) understand how the same mechanisms that trigger the internal dynamics of societies are at play in episodes of cultural translation and (2) how the elements diffused are integrated, reproduced and altered through social practice and, therefore, through time. Whilst this theoretical movement is unfolded in Chapter Three through reconciling with the temporal dimensions inherent in the structuration theories of Bourdieu and Giddens and, ultimately, in Heidegger’s being-in-the-world, the reconceptualisation of diffusion within these new understandings takes place in Chapter Four, by means of expanding from these approaches and linking the insights obtained to recent discussions held within the domains of post-colonial and globalization studies.

Methodologically speaking, the aims of the present research require the development of studies in which inferences developed within different scales of analysis interplay. However, whilst sophisticated accounts on the character of what could be defined as the small-scale have developed in recent times through much theoretical discussion, the large-scale has not only been left undertheorised but its validity has been put into question, mostly due to reactionary attitudes which developed, resulting from the flaws of previous archaeological paradigms. Concerns over the need to take into consideration the creating forces of human agency have helped crystallise a view which considers the large-scale as incapable of providing anything other than accounts on
'normative behaviour' (Barrett 2001) and by disassociating the relationship between the micro and the macro scale (see Hodder 2000). The macro scale was suggested to represent a construct of the analyst in the present and to therefore be of little representational value in relation to past phenomena. Bearing this situation in mind, Chapter Five opens an enquiry exclusively based upon the possible uses of large-scale observations; a discussion which culminates in Chapter Six by re-addressing the topic of style as symptomatic of historical relatedness of one kind or another.

2.3 Conclusions.

This chapter has aimed to respond to three main questions. The first was concerned with revealing the main episodes of research identified within the history of archaeological practice. The second aimed towards an assessment of the theoretical settings in which this research into diffusion has taken place. And the third required the definition of the main steps to be taken in the fulfilment of the current research aims.

Through discussing these questions, it has been possible to point out, not only that the issue of diffusion has not been placed within the frames of reference of post-processual thought, but that by the very nature of the approaches developed in the last thirty years or so of archaeological practice, the development of this topic demands both expanding current theoretical approaches focused within towards the conceptualisation of the in-between, and requires recapturing the interpretive possibilities offered by the large-scale.

To achieve these aims, the forthcoming chapters are placed within two larger blocks. Part Two is exclusively focused upon the characterisation of diffusion as a social phenomenon. Whilst Chapter Three establishes the grounds for the reconceptualisation of diffusion, the latter is fully developed in Chapter Four through developing an account which incorporates insights of hermeneutical philosophy with approaches developed within post-colonial and globalisation studies. Part Three is directed to the assessment of the possibilities of inferring contexts of diffusion in materiality. In this occasion, special attention is given to the re-assessment of the large-scale (Chapter Five) and to the possibilities and character of the latter to shed light into the historical relatedness of assemblages which belong to different regions (Chapter
Six). The results of this examination will be finally explored through means of a case study in Chapter Seven.
PART TWO: THINKING ABOUT DIFFUSION
3. Introduction.

The last chapter concluded by indicating that the re-evaluation of diffusion in archaeology must begin in the development of a study that focuses upon the nature and character of diffusion, followed by an examination of the ways in which this phenomenon can be identified and discussed within the limits of past materiality. As previously noted, a comprehensive study of these characteristics does not exist outside of culture-historic archaeology since subsequent work has either focused upon discerning the character of material culture, or has been limited to the interpretation of contexts of material patterning without placing concern over a need for theorisation. Neither of these propositions has successfully demonstrated (1) the meaning of diffusion as an analytical category, (2) the processes or mechanisms that generate diffusion, and (3) the role diffusion plays within the definition of notions central to archaeology, such as culture or identity. This has given rise to over-simplistic definitions of diffusion, such as that by Renfrew and Bahn who denote diffusion as ‘a concept that describes the transfer of material traits from one culture to another’ (Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 75).

Even though diffusion has never been unambiguously defined in archaeology, a shared consensus exists that it is a phenomenon occurring through interaction amongst different social groups, giving rise to what, at first sight, appears as the ‘homogenisation’ of cultural elements (see section 2.1.3). However, whilst diffusion is considered a by-product of interaction – meaning that its examination should be framed within a theoretical approach which takes into consideration social relations between different groups – our present understanding of the space ‘in-between’ is rather narrow. In contrast to the sophisticated approaches developed in archaeology in the last few decades regarding the internal dynamics of social systems, no effort has been placed at taking into consideration both the examination of the kind of phenomena triggered at the ‘in-between’, and the ways in which the latter affects the traditions of specific social systems. Therefore, in order to set the ground from which to reconceptualise diffusion, it is necessary to set the framework within which it
occurs. However, this does not rule out those approaches which ultimately emanate from Heidegger’s conceptualisation of understanding in-the-world (Heidegger 1962). To the contrary, in the first part of this chapter, I suggest that a comprehensive examination of the space ‘in-between’ has to necessarily place the experience ‘in-the-world’ as the *a priori* condition from which the experience of Otherness shows itself.

It is interesting to note that a similar analytical strategy to the one just suggested was employed in the first half of the twentieth century at the heyday of culture-historical discourse. In this case, culture units – in contrast to social systems – were conceived as resulting from the sharing of a tradition, understood as a shared set of prescribed behavioural (and material) norms amongst those belonging to specific groups (for discussion see 2.1.1 and 3.3.1). This conceptualisation was pivotal to describe the processes by which diffusion takes place. Whilst the flaws of this definition have been discussed elsewhere by drawing attention either to the descriptive nature of these models (e.g. Binford 1962) or to the normative view of culture (e.g. Binford 1965; Jones 1997), in this chapter I suggest that in order to understand the complex mechanisms that trigger diffusion and its effects, it is necessary to reinstate the central role that tradition plays in the configuration of social systems. The grounds of this conceptualisation are defined here by pursuing an ontological understanding of tradition. Whist this position may not be new to archaeological theory, it has yet to be exploited for the purposes of a research centred on exploring the ways in which social systems are affected by the encounter of Otherness. As shall be demonstrated, this exploration allows the definition of the main paths to be taken to re-address the topic of diffusion in Chapter Four.

Once an ontological understanding of tradition has been outlined it will be possible to turn discussion to another issue which, it is thought, has to precede the analysis of diffusion. It is argued that whilst much social theory has moved away from the portrayal of tradition as a conservative and deterministic element, the modern characterisation of tradition can still be found embedded in the foundations of the social sciences. This influence can be observed in the way ‘Otherness’ has thus far been portrayed both in archaeology and within other disciplines of the social sciences. Specifically, the discussion is centred on the implications that have arisen from distinguishing ‘modern’ from ‘traditional’ societies. Whilst some effort is spent on discerning the historical trajectory that gave rise to this dichotomisation and, therefore, to the connotations attached to the concept, its implications are assessed
against archaeological practice. Here the examination highlights the repercussions of relating to the 'past-as-Other', and on the association of Otherness with tradition.

The implications of this relationship are exemplified within two different scenarios. First, the influence of the modern characterisation of tradition is illustrated with some of the theoretical strategies selected by the culture-historical models of diffusion. Second, and most importantly, the perseverance of this relationship is discussed in relation to the kinds of methodological resources used within current theoretical and interpretive discussions that deal with issues related to social interaction. As will be discussed, the 'modern-traditional' opposition has given rise to the development of social theory aimed at describing the complexities of our contemporary world. As shall be demonstrated in Chapter Four, despite being of central significance to the present research aims, social theory has yet not fully been embraced in the context of prehistoric archaeology.

3.1 Tradition as ontology.

In Chapter Two, I suggested that amongst the heterogeneous spectrum of approaches that have been applied to archaeological practice since the early 1980s, there is shared agreement that human understanding is fundamentally rooted in the socio-historical circumstances in which it takes place. This conception infiltrated archaeological thought initially through positions influenced by structuralist undertones (e.g. Hodder 1982b). However, more sophisticated accounts soon emerged through the application of insights that originated from, amongst others, Bourdieu's (1977; 1984) and Giddens's (1974; 1984) celebrated structuration theories. The incorporation of these new bodies of theory brought forth new ways of confronting the archaeological record (e.g. Hodder 1991a; Barrett 2000) as well as the development of new archaeological themes (see section 2.2). In both cases, archaeologists began to favour the development of synchronic studies characterised by the interpretation of local contexts. This was a situation that not only constrained the development of studies focused upon issues relating to social interaction but which has also intrinsically opened a situation in which the dynamics of tradition are portrayed as internally constituted.

Whereas the application of these bodies of theory has so far given rise to the aforementioned contexts, there is no reason to suppose that the same approaches cannot be used to recreate scenarios characterised by interaction between different
groups. Indeed, Heidegger’s ontology and subsequent structuration theories focused exclusively upon the analysis of the internal dynamics of social systems or worlds, referring again to Heideggerian terminology. Nevertheless, their accounts can be used to produce primary understandings regarding the effects that take place when human beings dwelling within social systems are confronted with alterity. This is an appreciation that, as has been noted in the introduction of this chapter, is of central importance for the reconceptualisation of processes of diffusion since they occur primarily through the recognition of interaction between different groups.

Other insights regarding this social phenomenon can also be formulated by expanding upon these bodies of theory. However, it is essential to move away from the use of these theories to simply portray ‘historical horizons’ (Gadamer 1975) in order to embrace the dynamic nature indented in their characterisation. To recapture the temporal dimensions of these approaches, a brief examination of experience in-the-world and of the structuration theories of Bourdieu and Giddens are presented in section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2. This examination will conclude by demonstrating the ways in which these approaches will be used to reveal the main analytical paths undertaken to reconsider the issue of diffusion.

3.1.1 Human understanding, tradition and temporality.

‘World exists – that is, it is – only if Dasein exists, only if there is Dasein. Only if world is there, if Dasein exists as being-in-the-world, is there understanding of being, and only if this understanding exists are intraworldly beings unveiled as extant and handy. World-understanding as Dasein-understanding is self-understanding. Self and world belong together, in the single entity, the Dasein’.

(Heidegger 1988: 297).

An account that seeks to unfold the mechanisms through which tradition gives rise to both human understanding and social dynamics has to necessarily begin by briefly presenting Heidegger’s questioning of the ‘metaphysics of presence’ – a thesis which has been placed at the core of much theoretical discussion developed under post-structural thought.

Heidegger’s masterpiece Being and Time (1962) has on numerous occasions been defined as a work of rupture (e.g. Gadamer 1975), and a text which dismantled some of the central tenets of Western philosophy. His revisionist view towards Western metaphysics begins by indicating the necessity to re-address the question of Being.
This, according to Heidegger, had been long forgotten, either because Being had been considered an impalpable notion or an obvious one (1962: 23). Instead Heidegger argued that the latest explicit speculations on the question of Being could be found within classical philosophy. For instance, Aristotle considered ‘being’ as that which is real. That is to say, ‘it is and it is something’ (Sheenan 2005: 194). It is an essence that lies outside of any human involvement, and its source is perfection or, in other words, the divine (ibid.). This response was altogether rejected by Heidegger and reformulated, indicating that what had to be enquired is not ‘being’ but the ‘meaning of being’, since the latter rests on the ‘meaningfulness of the meaningful’ (ibid. 195).

Following from this position, Heidegger indicated that the source of being is not an extra worldly essence but is instead contended in human beings. This required an understanding of the way structures of meaning take place, for which Heidegger pointed towards the necessity to describe Dasein’s existence in-the-world. It is within this context that it is possible to discuss ‘the conditions for the possibility of having any understanding whatsoever’ (Heidegger 1962: 231).

Heidegger’s examination of the experience of Dasein is tied up with his definition of the world. The latter is an environment in which Dasein dwells and carries out the routines of everyday life. Through the examination of Dasein’s everyday dealings alongside others with whom Dasein coexists (Brandom 2005), his ultimate goal is to demonstrate the ‘common structures of those worlds’ (ibid. 216). This examination takes him to indicate that Dasein is the source of world insomuch as world is ‘a constitutive structure of Dasein’ (Philipse 1998: 25).

The world is not only a ‘place where beings live out their interests’ (Sheenan 2005: 199) it is also the condition for disclosure. World can be defined as a meaningful structure of mutually referring elements. Dasein is therefore from the outset of existence thrown into a ‘symbolically structured world in which everything it encounters is already understood as something or other’ (Lafont 2005: 266). In this sense, Dasein is considered as the only entity whose ‘world ‘shows up’ in a meaningful way’ (Thomas 1996: 17). This meaningfulness does not exist externally to the world of meaningfulness but is a by-product of Dasein’s social and historical character. In this way, Dasein’s most basic understanding derives from knowledge that has been handed down from preceding generations. Dasein, therefore, is essentially traditional. However, Heidegger’s account does not stop here, for if Dasein is purely traditional through a linear passage of historical exchange, then tradition would give rise to static societies in which change could only be envisaged externally. Therefore, if tradition cannot simply
be defined as knowledge handed down from the past to the present, how can it be otherwise conceived?

One result of the way in which Dasein is thrown into the world is an apprehension of reality as an 'instrumental assemblage' used according to a series of purposes and intentions. This totality is perceived by Dasein as 'ready-to-hand' (Heidegger 1962: 77), that is, as a pre-theoretical mode of being. Moreover, the structures of meaning acquired are not determinative for human action but, in contrast, they are the conditions of possibility from which Dasein projects into the future. In thinking about humans as the 'temporal unfolding of a life course' (Guignon 1983: 7), as has been noted, Dasein engages in activities with others, and in this sense is 'futural' since it projects forwards, but it is also 'factual' for, in projecting forwards, it carries the past with it (Werkmeister 1996: 59). Understanding this double movement is essential in order to describe tradition for it ceases to be a conservative entity to instead become the indispensable condition for human dynamics to take place. These dynamics of tradition can be illustrated through indicating how change occurs. In recognising that our understanding of things is always one of 'a thing as something' (something1), when this understanding changes, it is not a movement back to the thing in its essence but is a movement from 'something 1' to 'something 2' (see Brandom 2005). The dynamism that Heidegger regards as historical is 'never static, but is constantly re-invented and re-negotiated, even without people being aware that they are being involved at all' (Marcus & Fisher 1986: 24; Thomas 1996: 20).

3.1.2 Tradition within structuration theories.

Whilst a lot more could be said about Heidegger's ontology, I have limited the account to those traits which proved fundamental for the development of social models that emerged primarily through a firm decision to overcome social doctrines which had either subjected human action to the determinism of the social structure or that had considered it to proceed freed from social constrains of any kind (Dornan 2002). This was precisely the case with both the development of Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' (1977; 1984) and Giddens's 'structuration theory' (1974; 1984).

Drawing similar connotations to Heidegger's description of the ready-to-hand, understood as being a product of the internalisation of the structures of meaning inherited from the world, Bourdieu referred to 'habitus' as 'individually internalised
schema of unconsciously internalised dispositions' (Dornan 2002: 305), inculcated through the immersion of human beings into a specific socio-cultural milieu in early childhood (Reed-Donahay 2005). Like the tradition inherited by Dasein, Bourdieu did not conceive the 'habitus' as determinative of human conduct and behaviour, but rather as the conditions of possibility from which situated action takes place. Following from the dynamics of tradition described in the last section, the French sociologist indicated how social structures are constantly renewed for people engaged in strategic actions (Sewell 1992). In this way, the 'habitus' is conceived as both ‘structuring structures’ and 'structured structures; they shape and are shaped by social practice’ (Postone et al. 1993: 4).

Similarly, Giddens referred to the human agent as 'neither passive [...] nor wholly free' (1979: 150-1). Human agents draw on previous knowledge; however, in contrast to Bourdieu, he did not consider it totally unconscious action. Giddens defined three spheres of human agency which were categorised independently for heuristic purposes, but that could not be appreciated in their isolation. Influenced by the triadic distinction defined by Freud in relation to the human mind (Id, ego and superego), Giddens distinguished from a 'discursive mode', a 'practical mode' and an 'unconscious mode' (Loyal 2003). Given the recurrence of events happening in-the-world, Giddens emphasised how human action tends to be concentrated within the sphere of practice – the 'know-how'.

With the purpose of overcoming the then powerfully constituted structural theses regarding the individual relation to social structures which had ignored historical change and human action (Jameison 2000: 14), these sociologists considered it pivotal to cease directing their inquiry towards either the agent or the structure to focus it within the realm of everyday action (Silliman 2001). As has already been noted, such structures were thought to be both sustained and altered through action. The routines of everyday action create specific ‘rhythms of living’ (Epstein 1978: 140) and are precisely those which constitutes a sense of structure. Moreover, ‘it is because individuals inculcate particular cultural dispositions that their actions are, by and large, carried out in a fashion that appears spontaneous yet structured, unregulated yet regular’ (Elliott 2009: 144). In similar lines, Giddens described ‘habitual practices’ as ‘the social glue that holds together the flow of daily life’ (ibid. 123).
3.1.3 Alterity and being-in-the-world.

Through this brief exploration of the positions developed by these social theorists it has been noted that, despite a number of subtleties, their theoretical frameworks develop from a common theme rooted in the way Heidegger depicted Dasein's existence in-the-world. At a fundamental level, this characterisation emphasises that human understanding is necessarily traditional for, in the process of socialisation, human beings experience entities as already something or other. However, this circumstance is not determinative, but rather sets the conditions of possibility from which human action takes place. Taken to the social level, it can be stated that ‘the structural properties [traditions] of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices they recursively organise’ (Giddens 1986: 25). Within this framework, tradition ceases to be a static phenomenon. However, in coming to this conclusion, neither Heidegger, Bourdieu nor Giddens are portraying tradition as purely dynamic. Instead, it is argued that tradition is sustained and altered through social action, understanding the latter within the limits of the everyday dealings in-the-world; a context which is characterised by routinized action. This theoretical framework takes the premise that, due to their familiarity with their environment (world, social systems), for each of the three approaches human beings experience entities within the world in a pre-theoretical and naturalised manner, unless something unexpected occurs.

Whereas these approaches, on the whole, can be used as the basis from which to build a theoretical framework on social interaction, the ‘ready-to-hand’ has to be in a central position for it allows us to develop the following question: If the experience of being-in-the-world is largely atheoretical, and this mode of being is only disturbed when something unexpected takes place, could it be said that the experience of Otherness sparks off the ‘present-at-hand’? In an attempt to challenge current understandings regarding interaction between different social groups in archaeology, this question is central for it allows moving away from the simplistic recognition that we see the Other through our own ‘eyes’ and, therefore, any understanding of the Other is one of interpretation. Whilst this position is central, other more subtle transformations take place, and they all relate to the way in which we are in-the-world. In Chapter Four, this movement of theorisation is unravelled through examination of the following stances:

(1) If experiencing Otherness induces a situation of ‘present-at-hand’, Otherness cannot be regarded as an objectification but as an interpretation.
(2) The conceptualisation of Otherness brings forward a process of self-conceptualisation which can be transformative.

(3) This situation implicates a scenario of transformation that can no longer be defined solely within the internal dynamics of social systems.

(4) This implies that elements are not simply ‘diffused’ from one social group to another but that social interaction can bring forward hybrid forms which are constituted into specific social systems through practice. In turn, the reproduction of these forms through time can bring forward contexts in which what was first a hybrid form is considered as pure and as an element which belong to the world.

If better understandings surrounding the notion of diffusion are pursued, then it is necessary to set this phenomenon within a theoretical framework that takes into consideration the effects that social interaction brings forward in the dynamics of society. However, this account should not be restricted to the level of abstraction. Therefore, in order to move beyond this level, it is suggested that the account can be benefited through the incorporation of a series of insights which have emerged from those disciplines that centre analysis upon the examination of the space ‘in-between’; for instance, post-colonial theory and globalisation studies. However, before doing so, it is necessary to engage into a further discussion. In the second section of this chapter, I argue that whilst an ontological understanding of tradition has been widely accepted and applied in approaches directed to the interpretation of past contexts, a spectrum of activities and discourses within the social sciences has not challenged understanding of tradition viewed as a conservative element. Drawing from this discussion, it is suggested that the unwillingness of applying insights obtained within our contemporary world to the prehistoric past emerged from the distinction of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies. This is a distinction which, in many cases, pervades the modern discourses which archaeology currently seeks to abandon, and that has taken our understanding on inter-regional interaction to the degree of naïveté which I hope to demonstrate in the chapters to come.
3.2 The trouble with tradition.

In the first part of this chapter, it has been pointed out that tradition is a rather more complex phenomenon than generally conceived. Defining ‘tradition’ as that which is passed down from one generation to another is too simplistic for it neglects that it is the a priori condition for human understanding. It also overlooks the fact that tradition is a twofold phenomenon – stable and dynamic – as it is sustained, reproduced and altered by human action. In any case, however limiting the current definition is, the main problem with the notion is not so much sought in the definition itself but on the ways in which it is used within the social sciences and within everyday speech. At this level, it is possible to highlight ‘tradition’ as a notion which has been, and continues to be, used to refer to a quality that reflects upon a number of connotations of historical origin.

Few publications have focused upon the notion of tradition outside ‘hermeneutical philosophy’ (Jacobs 2007). In fact, as Shils points out in his publication Tradition (1981), the common ground and character of tradition have not been considered thoroughly, even though numerous studies have focused on describing the particularities of specific traditions (e.g. Islamic tradition). The lack of attentiveness given to the phenomenon as a whole has limited the development of a concern on the uses of the notion. However, in analysing the different contexts in which we use the term, we can begin to identify the asymmetrical relationship existing between the way in which it is understood.

As has already been noted, outside hermeneutical philosophy a large consensus exists that tradition is ‘anything which is transmitted and handed down from the past to the present’ (Shils 1981: 12). Nevertheless, it is not difficult to suppose that if our use of the concept would follow according to its definition then many practices not considered part of a tradition would subsequently become traditional. In effect, ‘tradition’ – as applied in everyday speech – refers to a quality. It is an adjective and, therefore, is applied selectively. This statement can be clarified with the following example.

In some households and restaurants of the Catalan region of Spain, it is still possible today to find clay cooking pots (cassoles de fang) (Fig. 3.1) used to prepare a number of rice dishes. These pots and the different recipes prepared with such utensils are each considered to be traditional. In fact, they are considered traditional primarily since they are ‘old-fashioned’ kitchen appliances that, having been superseded by metal ware, are now rarely in use. Interestingly, metal ware has been used by many
generations but has not yet been regarded traditional. Through this example, it becomes clear that the use of the notion in many ways defies its definition. In this sense, what is actually meant when a line is drawn between what is traditional and what is not?

As will be clarified below, the connotations attached to this term are multidimensional, and yet what is primarily implied by defining something as ‘traditional’ is that it is an element that has its provenance in the past and has been handed down to the present without undergoing major change. Its ‘pastness’ is always defined in relation to what we consider to be appropriate modern practices. Therefore, the latter are not considered traditional even though they may have been reproduced by many successive generations. In the example of the cassoles de fang, ‘clay pots’ are considered traditional, creating a contrast with modern kitchen appliances. The existing dichotomy between that which is regarded as traditional and that which is not can be re-formulated, indicating an opposition between the modern and the traditional.

Figure 3.1 Traditional clay pot (Cassola de Fang) (© Teresa Rovira Mercadé).
In the previous section, the relationship between Heidegger’s conceptualisation of the world and its constitution within specific traditions was outlined. This relationship has crystallised the incorporation of these insights into sociological analysis. In effect, what has been highlighted by these accounts is that structures of meaning absorbed in the process of socialisation finds its roots in the relationships established by people who coexist in the world, a social system or a specific community. Together, they conform a world-view understood as a horizon of intelligibility within a specific tradition. Whilst this might be the case, the relation between tradition and specific communities differs in everyday speech with that described within the realms of hermeneutic philosophy. In the former, only specific elements within the full spectrum of activities carried out by a community are regarded as part of their traditions. In this case, traditions become closely related to the definition and reproduction of specific identities. They are often given the status of heritage, and are considered remains of the past that should be re-enacted and preserved. As illustration of this point, Castellers (human towers) are central to the configuration of Catalan culture, in a performance frequently identified with a number of festivities in which groups form human towers following specific rules that are commonly shared by the participants. Whilst the origin of this performance remains puzzling, its condition as intangible heritage has led the Catalan government to present this performance to UNESCO as candidacy for world heritage status. This highlights that the notion of ‘tradition’ is, in its most basic sense, in clear opposition with that which is considered to be non-traditional or, to be more precise, with that considered to be modern.

The notion of ‘tradition’ is used to define those elements that hold their origins in the past and that have survived without major changes into the present. In this sense, tradition is conceived as a conservative element resistant to change. At times, this notion can be related to that which is out-dated, antithetical and superstitious. In other instances, it is used to refer to those elements that demand preservation for they are generally used as key elements in the composition of particular identities. Whatever the case, it is essential to question how and when this notion became attached to such connotations for, as shall be discussed in section 3.3, the modern conceptualisation of tradition has constrained the possibilities of conducting research directed to the effects of social interaction in prehistory.
3.2.1 The position of tradition in Western epistemology.

‘Fundamental shifts in the mental world of Western civilisation no doubt originate in vast social forces and a multiple of cultural influences’.  

(Israel 2001: 160).

‘The Enlightenment furnishes the basis for the dominant epistemological framework’.

(Loyal 2003: 16).

In order to find the answers as to why and how tradition developed into a term filled with the connotations described in the previous section, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the notion has been used and perceived throughout the history of Western thought and, in particular, within the context of the Enlightenment. The historical trajectory that ultimately led tradition into being conceived as a conservative phenomenon was described during the first half of the twentieth century by a series of authors who, reflecting upon the atrocious events that occurred in the West at the time, began to question the beneficial prospects that the modern project had once assured. In so doing, many of these authors (e.g. Adorno & Horkheimer 2002) inquiring on the foundational elements that gave rise to modernity were able to establish the moment in which the West turned against tradition, proposing an understanding of the concept that has remained almost intact to date.

The modern opposition of reason and tradition was also addressed by Gadamer (e.g. 1975). In contrast to preceding researchers, he directly focused upon the notion of tradition, noting that not only was the notion re-formulated during the Enlightenment reaction against 'prejudice', but that this also preoccupied research throughout the Romantic revival of tradition. In asserting that 'tradition has a justification outside the arguments of reason' (Müller-Vollmer 1988: 267), Romantics, Gadamer argued, perpetuated the opposition for they failed to indicate that any argument based upon reason is also traditional in its essence.

This realisation has given rise to a series of debates which have focused upon the contemporary inheritance of the Enlightenment opposition of reason to tradition. Amongst these discussions, many researchers (e.g. Gray 1995) have drawn attention to the central role that this opposition played on the configuration of Western epistemology. The influence of this opposition is clearly denounced by Foucault (1970) in stating that the ‘modern episteme’ is still determinative in contemporary discourse since it works as the conditions of possibility for the creation of knowledge, placing a major concern upon discourse and method. Thomas (2004a) has rightly drawn
attention to the influence of the modern discourse upon the discipline of archaeology, stating that archaeology is a product of the modern project.

Whereas a concern about the nature of archaeological categorisation and classification and its relation to modern epistemology will be discussed in Chapter Five, in the sections to follow I hope to demonstrate how the 'modern-traditional' dichotomy has been fundamental for the portrayal of Otherness within the social sciences. To do so, a brief account on the emergence of modern thought is developed, indicating not only how the modern opposition took place but also how it was determinative for the development of the different disciplines that comprise the social sciences. Attention is then focused upon discerning the influence that categorisation of 'modern' and 'traditional' societies has had upon archaeology and, more specifically, upon the development of studies focused on the effects of social interaction. On the one hand, it is argued that the aforementioned opposition proved fundamental for the development of models of diffusion in the first half of the twentieth century. On the other hand, and arguably of greater importance, it is suggested that the perseverance of this social dichotomy has been fundamental to the portrayal of Otherness within the post-processual archaeology and for the methodological and interpretive strategies used to characterise context of inter-social interaction. This discussion then concludes by questioning the reasons why archaeologists have not used contemporary social theory to discuss issues such as diffusion.

### 3.2.2 The love of wisdom.

‘Philosophy, it is commonly thought, proceeds within the limits, or on the basis, or by the light, of reason alone’. This does not preclude the same person’s having faith and doing philosophy, but it does entail that philosophising and believing are distinct activities’.

(McGrade 2003: 5).

‘What happens with Descartes, and with modern thought generally, is therefore only the working out in a more radical fashion of what was prepared in earlier metaphysics’.

(Linge 2008: XLIX).

Despite having been argued on numerous occasions that the root of the ‘modern-traditional’ opposition is found in modernity, it must not be forgotten that the origins of this separation go far back into the history of Western thought, with the persistent differentiation, amongst intellectuals, between mundane knowledge and higher classes of knowledge (philosophy). In fact, this issue had always been central within metaphysics
and within philosophy in general, and its origins are found beyond the limits of classical Greek philosophy. Throughout the history of Western thought, philosophy has often regarded reason as 'the force not only in the individual mind but also in the objective world' (Horkheimer 1974: 3). Importantly for this discussion, higher levels of knowledge were sought to fight the superstition and prejudiced nature of mundane tradition.

Given that this is not the central argument pursued in this section, I will only demonstrate this position through a single example. In the 'Allegory of the Cave', Plato's central argument revolves around the differentiation of enlightened individuals from unenlightened ones (Pritchard 1974). Enlightenment occurs through the ascension to 'good': the source that illuminates the path which helps deciphering everything else. The 'good' is perceived as the universal element; it is the indivisible and unquestionable. Interestingly, in describing the ascending to the 'good', Plato describes how unenlightened individuals experience reality. The prisoners of the cave have been chained since childhood and, therefore, 'to them [...] the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images' (ibid. 24). In other words, what they have learnt since childhood is nothing other than a set of beliefs that, due to their condition as prisoners, have been regarded as truth. Their view of reality is deceptive.

As will be demonstrated, the modern opposition of reason and tradition is fundamentally related to a series of views already present in early Western thought. However, it is important to highlight that, whilst during the history of the West, this view was only discussed within intellectual boundaries, and this perception became universalised during the Enlightenment with a series of thinkers who not only aimed to explain the world but also to change it. Moreover, as will be argued in the following section, the modern turn was not only a culmination of previous positions. Historically, modernity reacted to the way in which knowledge had been portrayed during medieval times, in a period characterised by the approximation of philosophy to theology. Here the Christian tradition was regarded as a source of authority in the creation and maintenance of knowledge.
3.2.3 Faith and reason.

The dichotomy based upon the existence of two modes of thinking – enlightened and unenlightened – illustrated through Plato’s allegory above, developed into a more complex web of relationships with the emergence of medieval philosophy and through the incorporation of Christian doctrine. Discussion on the relationship between faith and reason remained constant throughout this historical period, albeit peaking with the more systematic translation of classic texts and by the growth of cultural activity occurring with the foundation of universities at the beginning of the thirteen century (see McGrade 2003).

In the same way that classical philosophy cannot be regarded as a unified entity, medieval thought likewise changed in character through time. In the grand scheme of things, it is possible to discern two main periods characterised by a distinct positioning regarding the relationship of faith and reason. Prior to the thirteen century, medieval philosophy was largely influenced by the conception of faith as the *a priori* condition for the exercise of reason. By contrast, the emergence of scholasticism coincided with the displacement of reason from the supreme authority of Christian tradition. This transformation is briefly illustrated through the writings of Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

Indeed for the most part of the Middle Ages, philosophical reasoning was thought to only occur *a posteriori*. This position was accentuated with the patristic movement, deeply influenced by Plato’s thought. In the same way Plato indicated the need to become enlightened – to reach the light – as *a priori* condition to exercise reason, the patristic movement indicated the need of faith as a precondition for the acquisition of reason that would shed light unto truth (*ibid.*). The most significant works of this period are those of Saint Augustine.

Augustine’s philosophy is centred upon two basic questions regarding human beings and God (Peguerolos 1972: 13). In keeping with authors before him, he was very specific on his perception of the notion of ‘reason’. He did not reject the human possibility of attaining knowledge through sensory experience. However, this type of knowledge was limited (Rist 2006). He differentiated this type of reason from that occurring through ‘participated light shining in the mind’ (Clark 2005: 18). Similar to Plato seeking ascension to the ‘good’, Augustine indicated how reason could be obtained by ascending to God by means of faith. He noted that departure from reason is irrational because of God’s authority (Peguerolos 1972: 15). Nonetheless, he accepted that a
rational movement existed before faith. In any case, he indicated that that wisdom was obtained through a belief of truth and a belief of the authority of God (ibid. 18). However, in contrast to Plato, he rejected the possibility to reach God during life, primarily as a result of Adam’s sin (Rist 2006). Most importantly, the authority of reason alone was displaced, being relocated in the Holy Scriptures. This is significant for justice ceased to be a duty of reason alone, and became an ethical code encrypted in the Bible as the main principle to follow. Again, reason was freed from other sources of authority with the emergence of the Enlightenment, creating a fatal vision of tradition as superstitious and ultimately as irrational.

As noted above, the thirteenth century was marked by a series of changes directly affecting intellectual circles. Higher education was institutionalised through the founding of the universities (McGrade 2003), and classical texts became available through translation. It is in this context that we shall locate Thomas Aquinas, an author who modified some of the most characteristic features of medieval thought, recognising a different status to reason.

Aquinas defended his position that both faith and reason were capable to extrapolate truth (Forment 2008). For instance, whilst through faith it could be possible to assert that God is triune, through reason it was possible to infer the existence of God (see Kretzmann & Stump 1993). Although Aquinas, as well as many other thinkers of that period, stressed the superiority of faith over reason, his ideas were novel in that he indicated that faith and reason work in harmony because they are both creations of God (Forment 2008: 13). He insisted that imbalances between exertions developed under reason or faith were the result either of a bad use of reason or a misunderstanding of faith.

In order to understand Aquinas's thought, it is important to bear in mind Aristotle’s influence. For instance, following Aristotle, Aquinas indicated the non-existence of innate ideas in the human mind. In contrast, Aquinas stressed humanity's desire for knowledge; this desire is characterised by a constant movement towards perfection (see Kretzmann & Stump 1993). Equally, Aquinas stressed the existence of two types of reason: (1) natural reason (practical reason) obtained through the senses and characterised by its attainment of 'good' (Lisska 1997), and (2) theoretical reason which was defined by its search for truths (Forment 2008). A significant characteristic of Aquinas' thought is that the exercise of reason was not directly related to illumination.
As has already been noted, Aquinas indicated the human desire towards perfection or, in other words, God. Since God was considered to be the source of everything, Aquinas indicated that this movement was a circular one in which the end was the movement back to the principle. ‘Only the rational nature has the capacity to return expressly’ (Aertsen 1993: 31), however, it is only possible through faith since certain truths must be known through revelation. It is here that Aquinas indicates the need for the *Sacra Doctrina*; one that comes from God himself (Pesch 1992: 59).

### 3.2.4 Re-centring the human.

Scholasticism within the parameters of the Christian church continued for many centuries after its foundation. Nevertheless, it was systematically questioned by a number of intellectual movements that flourished in the time span traditionally designated as the Renaissance (Hankins 2007: 341). It is not intended here to work through the details of this period, but it is interesting to focus on a common attitude that came to its peak within the ideals of the Enlightenment period. As we will demonstrate, the intellectual history of this period is characterised by the replacement of the authority of Christian doctrine by reason (Parkinson 1993: 4). This movement did not convey the loss of faith in religion. Instead, reason ceased to be determined by faith; they became two distinct entities (Thomas 2004a).

As has been noted, Renaissance philosophy reacted against scholasticism (Parkinson 1993). This response can be clearly illustrated by the emergence of Italian humanism. Its supporters struggled to emancipate the human sciences from the determinist influence of the Christian church, which portrayed the universities as institutions devoted to obscure intellectualism (Jodl 1951). Moreover, humanist thinkers such as Petrarch and Pico de la Mirandolla retrieved the dignity and privileged place of man in the universe (Kristeller 1979); a view that was opposed to the scholastic belief regarding the limited capacity of humanity as the result of Adam's fall (*ibid.*). Similarly, the Scientific Revolution emerged through the work of individuals such as Copernicus with his discovery of the relation of the earth within the universe, taking the sciences and their (human) creator to a hegemonic position (Jodl 1951: 63). The implication of this change was that ‘effectively science was proposing an alternative to the Church’s exclusive position as interpreter of God’ (Thomas 2004a: 11). This change in attitude against the old sources of authority is epitomised by a group of foundationalist thinkers who not only rejected tradition but foresaw the possibility of creating a
knowledge that was both universal and context-free (ibid. 18). As will be
demonstrated below, Bacon and Descartes represent key figures on the development
of such philosophical attitudes that have become, in many ways, the most characteristic
features of the modern West (Cassirer 1951; Thomas 2004a). This influence will be
discussed further in the next section, as it is important to first clarify the main
characteristics of their positions.

Bacon, in his masterpiece *Novum Organum*, presented himself as a revolutionary
(Parkinson 1993: 5) through a refusal to adopt traditional sources understood as keys
for obtaining knowledge. Thus, he rejected everything that was received (Jodl 1951:
109), not because past positions were invalid but because their authority disallowed the
creation of new knowledge (Parkinson 1993). Consequently, in the first part of the
treatise, Bacon characterised the imperfect nature of human disposition to knowledge
by using the concept of the ‘idols’ (Thomas 2004a: 12). The deceitful nature of the
human mind was found within a series of misconceptions acquired through life, and
through tradition, imperfect education and so forth (ibid.). In addition, Bacon pointed to
the imperfect character of the senses which, he argued, are often limited by their
laziness. This is one of the reasons why he insisted on the need to experiment (Jodl
1951: 113).

Bacon’s views on the misleading character of the mind were developed through a
comparison with those of Aristotle. The latter imagined the mind to be an empty
container in which reality was reflected. Bacon questioned this by suggesting that the
mind is like an irregularly shaped mirror that creates a series of views which are
contaminated by presumptions and prejudice (Garcia Estébanez 2006: 34). It is
interesting to note how Bacon is presenting a view closely related to Plato’s
unenlightened minds (see section 3.2.2). His objections to Aristotle were primarily
centred on the authority that his text held for the scholastics rather than on his own
thought. Although he did not reject religion, Bacon rejected the idea that absolute truths
were encrypted in the Bible (ibid.). Instead he prompted a different reading in which
the Sacred Scriptures were encouraging human beings to improve the human condition
by means of the progress of science. Bacon regarded scholasticism as a restraint upon
innovation and progress, both of which they perceived as dangerous (Jodl 1951: 110).
In contrast, Bacon’s main premise was that the objective of science was to progress in
order to improve the human condition (Garcia Estébanez 2006: 35).

As Bacon questioned the validity of the traditional sources of knowledge, so Descartes
argued that ‘despite being cultivated for many centuries by the best minds,
[scholasticism] contained no point that was discussed and hence doubtful' (Cottingham 1992: 3). Additionally, Descartes presented a foundationalist line of thought, seeking to find the grounds of knowledge rejecting external authority (Jodl 1951: 142). He indicated that true knowledge cannot be obtained by either the wisdom of the past or by the senses. Instead, it must be located within the resources of the human mind itself (Cottingham 1992: 6). Whilst identifying the mind as the source of knowledge, Descartes specified that there is a difference between mind and reason, for only the latter is capable of differing between truth and falsity (Morillo Valverde 2001). Therefore, reason was heralded as the essence of humanity (Thomas 2004a), and an essence placed in the human mind by God (ibid.). Descartes, rejecting the usefulness of seeking knowledge empirically, pointed out that philosophy should be like a universal mathematic obtained through means of abstraction (Jodl 1951: 143). In reaching this point, Descartes indicated the need for radical doubt (Jodl 1951; Cottingham 1992; Thomas 2004a).

3.2.5 Primary conclusions.

Three fundamental issues intrinsic to the trajectory through which 'tradition' formed its current signification have been highlighted throughout this analysis. First, it has been possible to discern the antique origins of philosophical debates concerning the epistemological nature of knowledge. Second, it has shed light on the traditional character of Western thought – a trait that gains special significance when considering the foundationalist outlook that emerged in early modern times. Third, and most important, it has been possible to tackle the origin of the historical process characterised by a reaction against the authoritative character of medieval philosophy and, consequently, of tradition. As we shall see, this phenomenon has irreversibly transformed Western cultures (Gray 1995: 147). This reaction helps us not only to decipher the moment in which the West turned against tradition, but it also stresses the mechanisms by which reason would become a universal concept used to justify ethical, political and intellectual action.

In reacting against the authority of the ancient texts and in particular the Bible, Bacon and Descartes, amongst others, were actually reacting against intellectualist traditions. These acted as the source of authority which was transmitted from one generation to another and that, according to them, limited the development of new forms of knowledge. In its place, these authors committed to a new way of understanding the human capacity to approach wisdom that was in turn supported by the flourishing of
scientific endeavour. Through this it became possible to support the objectification of knowledge, be it through rationalisation and abstraction, or through experimentation. As will be demonstrated, these premises played crucial roles in the development of the Enlightenment and for the consolidation of the guiding rules of the Western tradition.

3.2.6 The Enlightenment and the rise of the social sciences.

‘Superstition sets the whole world in flames; philosophy extinguishes them’.

(Voltaire as quoted in Schmidt 1996: 361).

‘The fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its power’.

(Gadamer 1975: 239-240).

The Enlightenment ‘is a topic of enormous significance commanding the attention of many disciplines’ (Withers 2007: xi), ranging from history to philosophy, critical theory and politics. As a result, numerous interpretative positions regarding this historical period have emerged; some of these are difficult to reconcile, but it is generally agreed that the Enlightenment played a central role in the configuration of the political and epistemological discourses which are still prevalent in the West and in other regions affected by its historical supremacy. And yet this is not a period of rupture for, as has been demonstrated, it owes most of its intellectual outlook to attitudes which had emerged centuries earlier. By recognising the historical roots of the ideas, attitudes and values of the Enlightenment, it appears necessary to question the ways in which it superseded the intellectual outlook already defined with the emergence of modernity.

The Enlightenment project can be defined by a specific attitude (see Foucault 1984) that culminated in a representation of a ‘shared existential stance towards reality’ (Bronner 2004: 91). The philosophes (as the thinkers of the time called themselves) not only wanted to seek further understandings about the world, they also wanted to change it (Porter 2001). Resulting from the will to fight for a better world, the foundationalist opposition to tradition which had been primarily directed to the generation of knowledge within intellectual circles, found its reflection at the social level by the advent of this historical period. During this time, reason was not only conceived as a tool to fight old epistemological stances, but it was also understood as a source of authority for all human understanding (Cassirer 1951; Thomas 2004a). However, this new perception came at a cost, as it necessitated an ‘abolition of
previous prejudices amongst individuals and entire peoples’ (Knudsen 1996: 270). This movement was considered to be progressive, for it was aimed at the improvement of the human condition (Israel 2001; Porter 2001; Withers 2007). The Enlightenment became a project focused on liberating humanity from fear and superstition (Horkheimer & Adorno 1994). Its supporters claimed to fight arbitrary power, prejudice, mythology of all forms, prevailing errors and the force of custom and tradition (Gadamer 1993; Horkheimer 1986; Taylor 2004; Bronner 2004; Withers 2007). Warranting universal application, reason became the tool by which everything could be questioned (Gadamer 1975; Ulin 2001: 119). Even though this attitude was, to a greater or lesser degree, shared amongst the supporters of the Enlightenment, substantial differences existed in the positions emerging in different European countries at different times (Withers 2007). To illustrate this, the fundamental question of the German Enlightenment, ‘What is the Enlightenment?’ (published in the ‘Berliniche Monatsschrift’ in 1783) was debated in response to different issues affecting the intellectual inquiry over time (see Outram 1995; Schmidt 1996). The first debate drawn out from this question, for example, queried just how much enlightenment it could allow to the citizenry. In response, Kant and Mendelssohn considered that giving excessive permission for citizens to exercise reason within the social spheres would incite political chaos (ibid.). Instead, they encouraged members of society to become enlightened whilst offering the respect and obedience appropriate to their position in society (ibid.). A second strand of debate was triggered by the issue concerning the position of faith in relation to reason. Whilst religion was not altogether discarded, the discussants questioned the validity of the historical narrations of the Bible. For this reason, the scriptures were put under the scrutiny of reason. The difficult relationship between the authority of reason and religion was brought to a conclusion, according to Gadamer (1993), through the ‘third wave of enlightenment’ entailing the progressive laicisation of different countries in Europe.

Although more could be said about the Enlightenment, for the purposes of the present discussion, it is necessary to focus upon the profound changes that the Enlightenment brought forward regarding the nature of humankind. This is a theme that cannot be envisaged from outside of the attitude against tradition, and it is one that, as shall be discussed, has had deep consequences on the constitution of the social sciences. Universalisation of reason prompted the development of a profound change in the perception of humankind. In stating that reason is an innate human faculty, a unified view of humanity developed. As was stated by Honingmann, ‘mankind, according to the
philosophes, is one anatomically, physiologically and psychologically. All people, savage or civilised possess the same faculties, natural abilities and basic needs’ (1976: 230). This positive outlook towards human capacity precipitated two major consequences: the first is situated within the spheres of politics, and the second was found within the constitution of the social sciences.

With regards to politics, Locke characterised the human mind as a blank slate at birth by arguing that difference amongst people exists only because they undergo individual experiences (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001). Moreover, in considering reason as universal, it was possible to argue for the development of a ‘natural law’. This can be considered to be the precedent through which emerged the Western declaration of human rights, and therefore has had direct implications for the constitution of modern politics. The impact of the human capacity upon politics was mirrored in importance by its impact upon the constitution of the social sciences. In recognising the unified nature of humanity, an answer had to be given for the qualitative differences observed between human groups. This was at a time when social evolution was conceived, reflecting upon a series of contemporary developments in the biological sciences (see Foucault 1970: 64). Effectively, societies were categorised by a scale of forms of ‘primitivism’ to that of ‘civilisation’. However, by considering civilised societies as ruled by reason, the ‘West’ effectively moved away from both its past and from the societies placed outside the limits of Western influence. ‘It begun to be recognised that the past was unlike the present and that in some respects the people of the past would be distinguished with that of the present’ (Thomas 2004a: 225).

In contrast to modern Western civilisation, non-European societies were portrayed as primitive systems bound by custom and tradition (Horkheimer 1986). This portrayal of Otherness had profound implications for, as shall be discussed, the ‘modern–traditional’ divide, triggering a sharp differentiation amongst different types (modern and traditional) of societies. The effects of this dichotomisation were profound, and can be identified with the development of the social sciences (Withers 2007), or, more specifically, with the institutionalisation of the different disciplines composing the social sciences during the nineteenth century (Wallerstein 1996). Interestingly, this was the moment in which sociology and anthropology emerged as disciplines each claiming to focus on a different object of study (Bottomore 1968). For example, anthropology, in contrast to sociology, claimed to focus on the study of small societies, mainly differentiated from other types of society by their slow rate of change (ibid.).
The parallelisation of Otherness and tradition has persevered to date. The effects of this division will be discussed in the next section in relation to both the way in which archaeologists depict the prehistoric past and the consequences that this divide has brought forward in the development of theoretical frameworks focused upon themes relating to 'social interaction' and 'diffusion'.

3.3 Tradition, Otherness and the portrayal of prehistory.

In this chapter, it has been argued that before assembling a comprehensive account of the social phenomenon of diffusion, it was necessary to (1) define the hermeneutical mechanisms that trigger the experience of alterity, and (2) critically assess the way in which Otherness has been portrayed in the social sciences. Interestingly, both analyses have placed tradition at the core of the enquiry. However, whereas it has been possible to define the former simply by expanding upon approaches that emphasise an ontological understanding of tradition, it has been noted that the latter has been historically formulated through a series of understandings which, as shall be discussed below, are problematic.

In the previous section I delineated the major circumstances which generated not only the opposition of reason to tradition but through which emerged an understanding of tradition which has remained virtually intact to date. Importantly, I have drawn attention to the ways in which Enlightenment thought was crucial for the development of the social sciences and, subsequently, to the institutionalisation of its different disciplines. A concern with method combined with the possibility of classifying and categorising human societies in evolutionary terms helped to crystallise the polarised view of the West and the Other, in which the Other was characterised by societies established upon custom and tradition.

Whilst evolutionary classifications were dismantled by the emergence of new understandings regarding human nature, the West-Other characterisation remained embedded within the social sciences. I would like to suggest that this divide – or at least the conceptualisation of Otherness – is still influential today, not only in the wider context of the social sciences but also in archaeology. In this section, therefore, it is argued that the portrayal of Otherness proved influential within the traditional models of diffusion. In presenting this argument I will discuss three core elements: (1) the conceptualisation of tradition; (2) the categorisation of distinct social groups in
prehistory; and (3) Durkheim's influence upon Childe's characterisation of the relationship existing between social groups and traditions.

Most important for the matters of the present research, the discussion draws attention to the ways in which the modern opposition still plays a central role within the context of post-processual archaeologies. The discussion is focused on the characterisation of Otherness and upon demonstrating that the parallelisation of the past with the Other has determined the kind of methodological and interpretive resources used in archaeology to discuss contexts of social interaction. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, the conceptualisation of diffusion can be deeply enhanced by taking into consideration a series of insights that have developed from fields of study such as post-colonial theory and globalisation studies.

3.3.1 Tradition and culture-history.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, during the first decades of twentieth century the social sciences gradually rejected evolutionary premises that had postulated the unified nature of humankind. Within ethnology and archaeology it began to be recognised that 'demonstrating change occurring from within rather than as a consequence of external forces beyond society was thought to be less theoretically pretentious and more empirically demonstrable' (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001: 56). This new positioning had to respond to similarities in material patterns between different regions as it could no longer be argued that these contexts were a result of parallel invention (Honingmann 1976). Increasingly these contexts were found to reflect processes of diffusion and migration, as models sustained by the crystallisation of new perceptions of the nature of human understanding. Human beings were no longer defined as innovators for it was argued that their lives were determined by a tradition of bounded cultural units shared amongst the members of a given social group, and reluctant to change.

Each of these theoretical premises were unfolded for the first time by the German school of ethnology that suggested the uniqueness of human heritage and defined social change as a process occurring largely through migration and diffusion (*ibid*.). As a leading figure within this school of thought, Ratzel developed some of the most influential ideas that were applied to archaeology, particularly by Kossinna and Childe during the earlier decades of the twentieth century. Resulting from the rejection of Bastian's concept of physic unity (Trigger 2006), Ratzel defined culture as, 'distinct ways
of life transmitted by peoples from one generation to another' (ibid. 219), thereby creating a distinction from the 'slowly changing ways of life ascribed to tribal groups,' to 'cosmopolitan, rapid changing urban centres' (Trigger 1989: 162). In order to prove the significance of migration, he indicated how in its origins, the human occupation of the world was limited to specific regions; by noting the widespread presence of humanity throughout the globe, Ratzel defended the importance of migration (Palerm 1997).

Following from this position, for example, he indicated that the similarities between bows in Africa and New Guinea had to be explained through the existence of a common source (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001; Trigger 2006).

Shortly after Ratzel presented his views, a group of ethnologists adopted this theoretical premise, and developed new methodological and interpretative positions with regards to what they designated as Kulturkreise (culture areas) and Kultureschicheten (cultural layers) (Penny 2008). If cultures were characterised as bounded entities reluctant to change, the perception of similar traits amongst cultures could be understood as indicators of migration or diffusion and, therefore, it was possible to trace the histories of particular cultures. These ethnological approximations were adopted by authors such as Graebner, who stressed that if similarities amongst materials of different areas could not be regarded as determined by their function then they had to be understood as a consequence of diffusion (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001). Similarly Schmidt made use of the concept of 'culture circles' to develop a hypothesis based on the hierarchical level of evolution at which distinct cultures could be placed at a given point in time (ibid.).

There was, however, an exception to this stance. Although initially belonging to the German school of ethnicity, Boas explicitly distanced himself from the radical postulates put forward by traditional diffusionism. In The limitations of the comparative method in archaeology (1896), Boas openly rejected the existence of superior and inferior cultures (Stocking 1982). Moreover, he stated that similarities in the records of different regions do not always reflect scenarios of diffusion and migration. Instead he argued for specific instances of diffusion between neighbouring groups, for, as he noted, traits can be shared between different neighbouring cultures, but these traits cannot be understood as having the same meaning as the cultures from which they originate. Instead, they have to be understood in relation to the cultural whole (ibid.). Boas's positioning represents a real rupture within the theoretical frameworks at this time, not only in his rejection of the definition of inferior cultures, but in that his framework is based upon an understanding of cultures that cannot be conceived without the parameters of
tradition. Neighbouring cultures could therefore not be conceived as pure entities, but as entities sharing elements from a foreign origin.

With the exception of Boas, culture-historical models of cultural change were in agreement that its causes lay in either diffusion or migration. These were social models that, in general, were developed in relation to a specific way of understanding the relationship between cultural groups and traditions. It is therefore clear that the culture-historical conceptualisation of tradition shares a number of connotations that had already been defined by the modern opposition of reason to tradition, and the characterisation of 'traditional societies'. Tradition was considered a conservative and bounded phenomenon. Although the culture-historic conceptualisation of tradition is influenced by the aforementioned modern characterisation, the influence of the modern opposition is crystallised with the recognition of two kinds of societies. As Ratzel explicitly stated, the elements diffused may have originated from more 'cosmopolitan' groups that could be contrasted to traditional communities. This understanding clearly reflects upon the West-Other dichotomy grounded in Enlightenment thought. As has been noted in Chapter Two, the characterisation of two kinds of societies was fundamental to culture-historic approaches, which is evident by the number of authors who pointed at the Middle East as a centre from which a series of cultural elements spread to other regions (e.g. Montelius 1905).

3.3.1.1 Thinking about social tradition through the eyes of V. G. Childe.

'Culture is a social heritage; it corresponds to a community sharing common traditions, common institutions and a common way of life'.

\[\text{(Childe 1935: 198-9).}\]

'The round pebbles on the ground do not in themselves suggest knives'.

\[\text{(Childe 1942: 121).}\]

To reiterate, the pervasiveness of the 'modern-traditional' debate and the connotations attached to both 'tradition' and 'traditional societies' was present within the archaeology practiced in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, its reflection of the theoretical background of the time is best evidenced in the work of Childe since his writings were not limited to archaeological interpretation, but touched upon a variety of themes related to the social sciences in general. Childe foresaw the discipline as gulfed between the fields of humanistic and scientific endeavour (see Childe...
1956: 13), coming to a vision 'of archaeology as a social science' (Harris 1994: 6). Resulting from his interest into the insights on humanity given by other disciplines, he was able to portray the dynamics of society through ideas taken from his inspections of sociology, philosophy and anthropology, amongst others. In the light of this view, it is worth investigating Childe's understanding of tradition.

Childe's theoretical enterprise fundamentally drew upon the perception of human beings as essentially social beings. According to Childe, human beings, for a long time after birth, and in contrast to other animals, are determined by their entering into the social sphere. He considered this movement to be decisive for survival, and he noted that, 'Man's capacity for survival is learned in the last resort by trial and error but in almost every actual case from society through cumulative social tradition' (1956: 8). Because human beings grow within specific socio-cultural contexts, therein acquiring a social tradition, they become individuals within specific cultures. This characteristic is significant because, as will be demonstrated, Childe is implying that cultures are bounded entities in which the same traditions are reproduced over multiple generations. Therefore, Childe argued, 'parents and elders will teach [kin] how to make and use equipment in accordance with experience gathered by ancestral generations' (1942: 16). Similar to those who developed accounts about tradition within phenomenological hermeneutics (e.g. Gadamer 1975), he regarded language not only as the vehicle for transmission of social heritage, but as the medium affecting that which is transmitted (ibid. 18).

In portraying cultures as conservative and persisting unchanged over generations, how did Childe argue the existence of social evolution? This is an important question to answer as it is on this issue that Childe surpassed the powerful mainstream theories of the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that it is through such analysis that Childe's views changed from time to time. He applied theories of diffusion to explain the phenomenon of social change, yet foregrounded two fundamental criticisms. Whilst he was deeply influenced by Montefial's interpretative account that favoured the Middle East as the centre from which innovations were spread to distant regions, he rejected those views that had portrayed certain cultures as biologically superior. His statements on this subject were severe. For example: 'in the 20th century the doctrines of creation and the fall have been revived under the guise of diffusionism' (Childe 1951: 12). In contrast to Kossinna's belief in purity as a necessary factor in the characterisation of superior societies, Childe insisted that the progressive character of societies was owed largely to diffusion (see Childe 1942). Here he
advocated the mixing of cultures and the appropriation of those traits which are considered beneficial as the base from which to guarantee progress (Harris 1994). Following with this logic, Childe considered the opposition between diffusionism and evolutionism to be fictitious (1942: 13).

Childe complicated the scene by adding further complexity to his analyses of cultural change. First, as will be discussed in Chapter Six, he distinguished two types of diffusion that could be identified by material traits. Whilst tombs, ornaments and pottery were more likely to reflect ethnic peculiarities and had a slower rate of change, tools and weapons were considered functional and were therefore rapidly spread to different regions as a consequence of the benefits of their adoption (Lucas 2001). Second, he noted how similar archaeological assemblages from different regions can be interpreted as evidence for migrations, colonisation, diffusion of ideas or even acculturation through intermarriage (see Childe 1942). Given the diverse nature in which the spread of specific traits can occur, he called for a detailed analysis of the archaeological record. Finally, it should be remembered how Childe gradually accepted the view by which cultures are adaptations to the environment. By combining this view with that of diffusion, Childe indicated how those cultures that spread or migrate to new habitats might adopt new technological implements to adapt to the area, whilst at the same time acting reluctant to abandon their customs (1956: 137).

In a reading of Childe's major works, it becomes apparent that the notion of 'social tradition' is at the foundations of his theoretical enterprise. Social tradition is indispensable for survival and, in turn, is the central element that prefigures cultures. Whilst acknowledging the significance of this account, it is important to highlight some fundamental flaws. By indicating how the individual enters the social sphere through the learning of the social tradition, Childe implied that the set of rules and customs was equally shared by all the inhabitants of a given cultural unit. This view can be deconstructed, showing how, on the one hand, Childe was influenced by the perception of cultures as bounded entities prevailing at the time. On the other hand, his views reflect the influence he received from sociology, and in particular from the work of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim.

One of the most celebrated positions developed by Durkheim was his delineation of two types of society that he characterised by different forms of solidarity (Lukes 1984: 138). He referred to traditional societies as small groups defined 'mechanical solidarity' (Raymond 2004). In this type of society individual consciousness is almost parallel to
collective consciousness as a result of a high degree of homogeneity between individuals. People therefore support the existing social order as a consequence of sharing the same set of everyday experiences (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001). In effect, these societies share the same social tradition. In contrast, modern societies are linked together by ‘organic solidarity’ in which individuals perform different tasks and have different interests, thus giving rise to individuality, hence freeing societies from the tyranny of custom and tradition (Durkheim 1960 [1893]; Trigger 2006). In this kind of society the individual has more room for initiative and reflection (Raymond 2004).

Taking into account Durkheim’s reflections on society, it is possible to discern how Childe adopted some of these views to characterise prehistoric societies not only in theory, but also in his interpretation of European prehistory. It is important to highlight how Durkheim’s categorisation of societies derives from the perception of a historical differentiation between modern society and the ‘Other’. Whilst in societies organised through ‘organic solidarity’ we can see the existence of conflicts of interest and individualism that prompts reflection and change, traditional societies remain static entities determined by the sovereignty of tradition. The effects of this divide cannot be exclusively regarded to the theoretical enterprise prevalent at the time. In contrast, as will be shown in the following section, the dichotomy between traditional and modern societies remains still prevalent in much of the discourse developed by the so-called post-processual archaeologies.

3.3.2 Traditional societies and the ambiguity of the post-processual debate.

‘In an increasingly homogenised ‘Western’ world, there is a danger that we eradicate all contemporary ‘Others’.

(Hodder 1995: 239).

The ‘modern-traditional’ dichotomy that emerged with the advent of modernity, and crystallised through the Enlightenment, had direct effects on the way archaeologists and ethnologists depicted their objects of study during culture-historical times. As has been demonstrated, the backwardness of humankind was portrayed by subjecting human action to the conservativeness of tradition. Likewise, in their models of diffusion, archaeologists distinguished between progressive societies capable of innovation and traditional societies that only changed through elements diffused from a central origin.
Even though these theoretical frameworks have been deeply challenged, in this section, I suggest that the relationship established between tradition – understood as a conservative and slow phenomenon – and the so-called Other has persevered up to the present in archaeology, and that this can be seen in the way 'post-processual archaeologies' have both made use of ethnographic analogies and have depicted the past in theoretical discussions. During this examination, it is argued that in order to get closer to the social mechanisms that give rise to the phenomenon of 'diffusion', and to understand the complexities of diffusion, some aspects of the 'modern-traditional' dichotomy have to be put into question.

Ethnographic analogies have been widely used throughout the history of archaeology to either build new interpretive settings or to help sustain the validity of particular theoretical approaches in archaeology. This has also been the case with 'post-processual' archaeologies in which researchers have used this resource to aid interpretation. For instance, as has been discussed in Chapter Two, Hodder's (1982a) theoretical framework owes its existence largely to a series of observations developed in conducting fieldwork in East Africa. Partly through this study, he was as able to prove that in order to understand past patterns it was 'necessary to refer to people's attitudes and beliefs' (Johnson 1999: 65), and to do so it was indispensable to pay attention to the cultural context (Lane 2006: 411). In effect, Hodder highlighted the uniqueness of cultural contexts and, in turn, questioned the validity of cross-cultural generalisations as used and defined by processual archaeology (see Hodder 1982b; 1988). This practice could only be envisaged within evolutionary frameworks.

In questioning the possibility of comparing social units placed at similar stages of evolution and undergoing analogous processes, debate surrounding the validity of analogies sprung out. These discussions accentuated the 'Otherness' of the past, drawing a difference between 'our present experience of life and both the ethnographic and archaeological contexts we encounter' (Thomas 2004a: 214; Spriggs 2008: 541). The imposition of Western values upon past societies became a growing concern in archaeology (*ibid*), and crystallised through denouncing the dangers of categorising the past according to our modern standpoints (e.g. gender, individual) (Rowlands 1986) (see discussion in Chapter Five). The differentiation of the West and the Other was necessary to overcome the generation of sweeping assumptions. In doing so, ever since the 1980s, there has been a tendency to shed light into prehistoric contexts characterised by, for instance, exchange systems, values, practices and so forth,
through the establishment of comparisons between past societies and the so-called Other.

In whichever case, the application of ethnographic data in archaeology has prompted a number of critiques. For instance, some researchers have rightly pointed out that archaeologists’ limited knowledge on ethnographic studies has resulted with the portrayal of past contexts through the perseverance of particular examples. For instance, it has been noted that Tilley's (1996) interpretation of Neolithic Sweden has a characteristic 'Melanesian taste' (see e.g. Gosden 1999; Jones 2005; Spriggs 2008).

More importantly, Spriggs (2008) has underlined that, despite having rejected evolutionary premises, it is possible to indicate that the ethnographic analogies nowadays used to aid interpretation are ultimately selected according to a series of parameters (e.g. subsistence practices) which permeate the old proposition developed under evolutionary grounds. This is a methodological manoeuvre which defies the understandings on the subject developed within the spheres of archaeological theory. Spriggs illustrates this practice as follows:

‘One sees a denial of social evolution, but then for Mesolithic cultures we find that all the analogies come from recent hunting and gathering societies. Particular ethnographic parallels are eschewed but the alternative is a kind of grab-bag, so that the Mesolithic peoples of Scandinavia must have been like Australian Aborigines in investing landscape with meaning, but must have been like the Canadian Cree Indians in the way they conceptualized animals’.

(ibid. 542).

Sprigs's evaluation regarding the use ethnographic analogies in contemporary archaeological practice is revealing for it demonstrates an asymmetrical correspondence between contemporary archaeological theory and practice. A similar situation can be identified in selecting ethnographic sources whilst denouncing the dangers of creating inferences between the West and the Other. In enhancing the uniqueness of cultural contexts, it is important to ask ourselves in which terms we are creating a distinction between our contemporary world and the past/Other. Of course, qualitative differences exist between our world and the past. However, are these enough to assert that ‘a recognition that the past is Other is essential for any interpretation in archaeology’ (Hodder 1991a as quoted in Hill 2000: 433)?

At this point, I would like to suggest that this distinction ultimately permeates the modern classification between ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ societies. This can be discerned not so much in the way the Other has been defined but in the way the
understanding of the Other has materialised by setting it against our globalised world. Indeed, our world is ‘vastly more dynamic than previous social institutions’ (Giddens & Pierson 1998: 94), and it has given rise to nuances that did not exist in the past. However, in conceptualising our world as such we in are danger of conceiving the West as less traditional than the Other; a position which has to be put into question if we are to accept that tradition forms part of the conditions of our existence, and it is, therefore, a common structure of all societies.

The reluctance to develop inferences between the West and the Other, and ultimately the indirect portrayal of the Other, has led us into a situation in which diverging bodies of social theory have been devised to examine and/or describe social phenomena amongst modern and non-modern societies. Consequently, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, whilst post-colonial and globalisation studies have pointed towards the need to account for the effects of social interaction in any account that seeks to describe the dynamics of societies, the latter have only been described in relation to internal dynamics in prehistory.

In Chapter Four, the sharp divide between the past and our present day condition is blurred by indicating that some of the effects that social interaction have triggered in our contemporary world are, in fact, not unique to our globalised environment. To the contrary, these effects can be said to be pervasive in every society and not only because all societies are placed in situations of interaction, but also since these effects – e.g. hybridity – spring out of the very conditions of our existence. This understanding is pursued by combining contemporary social theory with a series of insights developed from hermeneutical philosophy in the hope to set an appropriate theoretical environment from which an examination of the nature and character of diffusion may be revealed.

3.4 Conclusions.

In this chapter, it has been argued that in order to supersede current understanding regarding the phenomenon of diffusion in archaeology we need to locate the enquiry upon situations in which social groups or, more concisely, situated beings, experience alterity either as result of interaction or through the observation of Otherness. As such, during the first part of this chapter, I defined the common structures at play that are triggered when experiencing Otherness. In the same way that Heidegger announces
that the pragmatic atheoretical character of everyday experience in-the-world is disturbed when something unexpected occurs, it can be said that in experiencing Otherness a movement of reflection also takes place. It is within this context that diffusion may occur, and it is, therefore, fundamental to shed light upon this relationship before we move on to discuss the ways in which these contexts can be assessed in materiality.

Alternatively, it has been noted that the perseverance of the ‘modern-traditional’ divide has created a situation in which it appears unsafe to apply theoretical frameworks devised within contemporary social theory in order to shed light upon the prehistoric past. This situation has not only lead to the portrayal of a prehistoric past which is characteristically lacking in narratives that take into consideration contexts of social interaction amongst different groups, but has also given rise to the development of interpretive studies which permeate the depiction of the dynamics of social systems internally. However, if the experience of alterity is said to bring about a series of effects which are universally applicable due the way in which we are in-the-world, it appears possible to indicate that insights from the fields of post-colonial theory and globalization studies can inform us about the kinds of effects that inter-social interaction triggers and, in turn, can be used to translate a series of insights developed within the spheres of ‘hermeneutic philosophy to the social domain. Having reached this point, we can now focus to build a theoretical framework within which the complexities of what we call diffusion can be unravelled.
CHAPTER FOUR:

THINKING ‘IN-BETWEEN’

4. Introduction.

Having shed light on the fundamentals necessary for research of this nature in Chapter Three, it is now possible to examine the question central to the first part of this doctoral thesis: what are the common structures at play in episodes of diffusion? Moreover, how can a better understanding of these structures aid interpretation of these contexts in archaeology? This chapter reconceptualises diffusion by examining it within a framework that highlights the common structures at play in episodes of intercultural interaction. As has been noted, post-processual discourse has demonstrated the importance of developing a better understanding of social phenomena occurring within social systems. Whilst this examination will shift the attention from ‘within’ to the ‘in-between’, the intention is not to displace current understandings, but rather expand upon them. As pointed out in Chapter Three, it is only through a consideration of the ‘worldly’ conditions of our existence that we can begin to address the kind of phenomena that occur when social groups experience alterity and, in turn, challenge traditional, over simplistic accounts of diffusion.

In order to achieve this, this chapter will outline a theoretical framework that highlights the common structures at play within the context of experiences of alterity, utilising insights that originated within hermeneutical philosophy and which are developed on the social level by work carried out in both post-colonial theory and globalisation studies. As will be demonstrated, the reconceptualisation of diffusion, not only brings about new interpretive dimensions for contexts of material patterning, but it also permits the development of new methodological strategies to reconsider archaeological contexts that have traditionally been envisaged as the outcome of contact between different social groups in prehistory.
4.1 Towards an understanding of diffusion within a world of mixture.

‘If practices of mixing are as old as the hills, the thematization of mixing as a discourse and perspective is fairly new’.


Two important points were made in the discussions presented in Chapter Three. In the first examination, I argued that approaches which recognise the ontological status of tradition have developed sophisticated accounts concerning the character of human understanding and on the dynamics of social systems. However, they have limited their discussions to either experience in-the-world (Heidegger 1962) or to the characterization of social dynamics occurring within specific social systems (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Giddens 1979; 1984). In translating these insights to archaeological practice, attention has been drawn to the fact that, by the very nature of the bodies of social theory employed, social dynamics/change has exclusively been sought within the parameters of specific ‘cultures’ through means of human agency and therefore, social practice. In doing so, the kind of narratives produced have not only disregarded intercultural interaction, but have failed to recognise the mechanisms by which these events can also bring about transformation and social change. As a result, archaeological discourses influenced by the aforementioned bodies of social theory have tended to produce narratives in which social dynamics are fundamentally conceived as internally constituted and as a consequence, have implicitly depicted cultural phenomena in terms of purity; emanating from within social systems. In the previous chapter, it was suggested that while this might be the case, it is not necessary to disclaim these approaches in order to overcome this tendency; conversely, it has been argued that an acknowledgment of human experience ‘in-the-world’ is fundamental to an elucidation of the common structures triggered in meeting alterity. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the theorisation of the in-between is imperative, if one is attempting to achieve a better understanding of the processes of diffusion.

Secondly, it was suggested that the ‘modern-traditional’ divide configured within the context of the Enlightenment has persevered to date and is embedded in a number of understandings that rest at the foundations of the social sciences. The influence of this divide has also affected archaeological practice; comparisons of the past to the Other, and the contrasting of this with the modern West are permeated by the view that the West is conceived as less traditional than the Other, bringing forward an essentialist
division which downplays the possibility of developing a common framework in which social interaction is taken into consideration. Consequentially, whilst our contemporary world has been defined as a world of movement and mixture, the significance that social relations played within the prehistoric contexts we study are often undermined. This situation has not only proved influential in what we say about prehistoric contexts but it has also affected the interpretation of material culture. Moreover, the conceptualisation of the past as Other has taken archaeologists to favour the use of ethnographic resources as a method of inference, obliterating the kind of insights that, for instance, globalisation studies have brought to the examination of social phenomena.

Although the above can be highlighted as a marked archaeological tendency, it has to be recognised that a similar situation is reflected within the wider context of the social sciences. Studies surrounding mixture, blending and migration have not only emerged through the examination of historical contexts of colonialism, decolonisation and processes derived from globalising tendencies – e.g. tourism, migration or communication media – but have also been characterised as social phenomena which, first and foremost, relate to these kinds of contexts. This situation has resulted in the conceptualisation of differential bodies of theory. Whilst social theory orientated towards the pre-modern past is still built in relation to the kind of elements (e.g. community-based, locales, organic) which have been defined by sociology as belonging to the characterization of 'territorial cultures', social theory focused upon the contemporary world has enduringly worked upon the portrayal of 'translocal cultures', specifically discussing borders, migrations, diffusion, translation and so forth (see e.g. Yamashita 2003; Nederveen Pieterse 2009). These theoretical paradigms have attempted to portray the 'in-between-ness' of present day experience (Shami 2001) and their concern is placed firmly upon an enquiry directed towards the future. They seek to describe how 'we now live in an almost/not yet world' (Thrift 1996: 257).

Even though it has been noted that the pre-modern past has been fundamentally represented through a series of elements that emanate from a 'territorial' conception of culture, it is not my intention to suggest that this situation has yet to be challenged. On the contrary, it should be noted that some of the elements that constitute the 'territorial' view have often been displaced by applying insights which emanate from the definition of 'translocal cultures'. A good example of this theoretical movement is
found in archaeology, as we shall see in section 4.2.1, with Jones' (1997) ‘multidimensional’ approach to ethnic identity.

Nevertheless, the development of differing bodies of theory that focus on different periods not only demonstrates the determinism of the ‘modern-traditional’ divide but it also creates a sharp distinction in which the pre-modern past is still marked, to a greater or lesser degree, by the modern discourse that gave rise to the nation-state; a process which, as has been argued elsewhere, is historically constituted (e.g. Trigger 2006, Díaz-Andreu 2007). As a consequence, notions such as ‘fuzziness’ and ‘melange’ that are so prevalent in discussions of the contemporary globalised world, are persistently overlooked during the construction of accounts concerning the pre-modern past. The differentiation from ‘high modernity’ (Nederveen Pieterse 2009) and previous historical contexts ‘tacitly assumes that mixing is something that occurred recently’ (ibid. 91).

This is thought to be problematic, for, as I shall demonstrate, the dynamics of social systems are affected by social interaction amongst different groups. In this sense, not only should it be recognised that ‘each epoch has its boundaries and fluidity’ and that ‘intermingling and mixing are of all times’ (ibid.) but that social phenomena cannot be successfully characterised without taking into consideration the phenomenon of hybridity. The latter cannot be simply regarded as distinct to our environment of ‘accelerated globalisation’ (Clark 1997: 16) but it is an element to be found in all times. This, I suggest, emanates from the hermeneutical character of human understanding. As Nederveen Pieterse states:

‘Hybridity thinking also concerns existing or, so to speak, old hybridity, and thus involves different ways of looking at historical and existing cultural and institutional arrangements. [This] suggests not only that things are no longer the way they used to be but were never really the way they use to be, or used to be viewed (emphasis added)’.


This recognition is fundamental for this research, as it indicates that the study of diffusion has to depart from defining social groups, less as pure entities and more as hybrid forms, and, as we shall see, has to regard diffusion less as transportation of elements from one group to another and more as a hybrid outcome which occurs in hybridising spaces. Whilst it is the task of this chapter to unravel this complex proposition, it is necessary to begin by providing a critical analysis of the notion of
‘hybridity’. To do so, a brief overview of the main theories of hybridisation within the context of the social sciences is presented in the following section.

4.1.1 On the character of hybridity.

What do we mean by hybridity and why is it central to take this phenomenon as an a priori condition for the re-examination of diffusion? Whilst these are precisely the principal enquiries discussed in this chapter, it is necessary to begin with an outline of the history of ‘hybridity studies’. A brief examination of the main positions on the topic demonstrate that the notion of ‘hybridity’ has been discussed in several, and often contradictory ways. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion, it is important to begin this account by indicating what hybridity is not. It is also essential to warn the reader that, although a better understanding of this phenomenon is sought here, the notion itself defies clear-cut definition.

As has already been pointed out, owing to the ambiguous nature of the concept, hybridity has not only sparked off long-lasting debates but has been approached by social theorists in a plethora of ways. The only common agreement on the concept rests on the recognition that its usage shakes the theoretical edifice by which culture has been traditionally conceptualized (see e.g. García Caclini 1990; Said 1993; Bhabha 1994; Young 1995). This is because the incorporation of hybridity in the discourses of the social sciences has ultimately drawn attention to the fact that social interaction can produce the ‘mixing’, ‘blending’ or ‘assimilation‘ of cultural phenomena amongst social groups (see section 4.3 for discussion).

Originally, the notion was borrowed from the terminology used in the biological sciences, where it was used to characterise the end product of mixing two species (Stross 1999; Eriksson Baaz & Palmberg 2001). In this sense, the resulting entity was considered hybrid, describing it in opposition to original purities. A concept that emerged from the lexicon of the biological sciences, the term entered the social sciences primarily as a negative term. ‘Colonial ideologies of race emphasised the alleged purity of white colonisers’ (Kuortti & Nyman 2007: 4) by portraying the Other as a hybrid, that is, as an impurity (Vásquez & Marquardt 2003: 59).

Whereas the negative connotations associated with the notion have vanished from current conceptualisations, hybridity, within the post-colonial environment, still draws
criticism. For instance, Gilroy (1994: 54-5; 2000) has become sceptical towards the use of the term for, as he points out, in the same way biological hybridity occurs from the mixing of purities, to actually suggest the existence of cultural hybridity presupposes the existence of cultural purities. In order to avoid such connotation, some researchers have opted for using terms such as ‘melting pot’, ‘borrowing’, ‘creolisation’ or ‘bricolage’ (see Burke 2009: 34 for discussion) to define the character and outcome of social relationships amongst different groups. However, despite the movement of these terms away from the biological associations aforementioned, they fail to expose the complex subtleties at play in episodes of intercultural interaction. As shall be discussed in section 4.2.3, the effects of intercultural interaction cannot be resumed through the simple transposition of cultural phenomena, nor a phenomenon that carries forward the assimilation of culture, for the latter threatens to dissolve difference into a pool of homogenisation (see Kapchan & Turner 1999). In the light of this situation, how can hybridisation be defined?

‘A theory of hybridity would be attractive. We are so used to theories that are concerned with establishing boundaries and demarcations amongst phenomena – units or processes that are as neatly as possible set apart from other units or processes – that a theory that would instead focus on fuzziness and melange, cut’n’mix, crisscross and crossover, might well be a relief in itself. Yet, ironically, of course, it would have to prove itself by giving as neat as possible a version of messiness, or a hybrid categorisation of hybridities’.

(Nederveen Pieterse 2006: 668).

As Nederveen Pietersee notes above, hybridity defies clear-cut definitions. Yet, this realisation does not preclude researchers from aspiring to get a better grasp on the character of this phenomenon. This incessant desire for its conceptualisation, Young (1995) suggests, takes us to the realisation that ‘we are still locked [...] into ideological an ideological network of a culture that we think and presume that we have surpassed’ (ibid. 27). Despite acquiescence with Young’s thoughts on the subject and on the unfeasibility of producing an unambiguous definition of hybridity, in this chapter, I suggest that we can begin to grasp the phenomenon by taking into consideration two fundamental positions:

(1) Hybridity is not just a characteristic of our globalised world. Instead, it is something that occurs in ‘traditional’ as well as in ‘modern’ societies (Vásquez & Marquardt 2003: 59).
The effects of hybridisation can only be fully comprehended by examining the historical circumstances in which they occur (see Kraidy 2005). As will be discussed in section 4.3, the latter can be unravelled, in the case of archaeology, by shedding light onto the character of this phenomenon.

Whilst the latter stance tells us that ultimately the nuances of this phenomenon depend upon the circumstances in which it is triggered, the first stance suggests that a better understanding of the notion can be pursued by examining the common structures at play that give rise to the phenomenon. An investigation of these characteristics, it is thought, can be revealed by integrating the subject – as has been conceived in contemporary social theory – with a series of insights developed under the rubric of hermeneutical philosophy. This is the aim of the following sections. In particular, attention is focused on the examination of (1) hybrid spaces, (2) hybrid outcomes and (3) the assimilation of hybridity within the context of the social system through time.

Whilst a full picture of the phenomenon of hybridity is provided through the discussion, the following sections are directed to answer the following enquiry: what is the position of diffusion within this new characterisation of social phenomena?

4.2 Self and Other: experiencing alterity.

‘Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live’.

(Gadamer 1975: 278).

If diffusion is, first and foremost, a consequence of social interaction amongst different social groups, or at least the observation of Otherness, then its examination has to be framed within the experience of alterity. In Chapter Three, I discussed the idea that human understanding is intrinsically related to the world that one inhabits, and to the pre-theoretical mode of being that emerges out of the familiarity of its environment. In this sense, human beings experience the entities in the world pragmatically, unless something unexpected occurs, in which case there is a movement of reflection, understood, not as an objectification but as a hermeneutical mode which projects from previous understandings. Despite the fact that a similar situation can be discerned in experiencing alterity, as was pointed out, Heidegger left this discussion unresolved; a question which was taken on board by Gadamer in his approach to hermeneutics.
Expanding upon Heidegger’s indication regarding the factual throwness of Dasein, Gadamer began his hermeneutical exploration emphasising the impossibility of moving away from what he termed ‘prejudices’ (Caputo 2000: 44). On the contrary, prejudices were regarded as necessary pre-condition for human understanding (Pickering 1999; Lawn 2006; Catoggio 2008). Nonetheless, Gadamer insisted on the importance of conceiving tradition ontologically, for rather than being an ‘unreflective action, mindlessly repeated from father to son’ (Lawn 2006: 33), tradition ‘is constantly re-worked and interpreted’ (ibid.) from the moment one inherits it. Bearing in mind this conceptualisation, Gadamer opened an enquiry based on experiencing alterity; a question explored through a discussion of the experience of reading a historical text, an investigation that looked beyond the limits of textual interpretation (Catoggio 2008).

In departing from the recognition that prejudices bring the conditions of possibility for any understanding whatsoever, Gadamer enquired into what takes place when different ‘horizons’ are confronted. The notion of ‘horizon’ can symbolically be envisaged as ‘a range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a specific vantage point’ (Gadamer 1975: 269). Whereas Habermas has criticised the use of such metaphor, indicating the determinism of ‘seeing within a specific perspective’ (see Vessey 2009), it is significant to note how Gadamer defines ‘horizon’ using a very specific understanding already present in the work of Husserl who notes:

‘Perceptions have horizons made up of other possibilities of perception, as perceptions we could have, if we actively directed the course of a perception otherwise: if, for example, we turned our eyes that way instead of this, or if we were to step forward to one side, and so forth’.

(Husserl 1960 [1931]: 19).

In this case, ‘horizon’ specifically defines a given perspective at a particular moment of time and within a specific context, which is necessarily historical for it draws from what was there before and it conditions what will be there in the future. All understanding is embedded within a horizon which is ‘ubiquitously interconnected with the past’ (Lawn 2006: 69) and it is intrinsically temporal, that is, ‘bound up with its temporal dimensions of being in the world’ (Pickering 1999: 181). However, if our understanding is influenced by a particular horizon, how does our horizon transform itself? Central to his thesis rests the conviction that ‘hermeneutical understanding [necessarily] requires difference’ (Davey 2006: 5). This statement is illustrated by Karczmarczyk (2007) through the creation of an analogy with Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. As he notes, it would be impossible for the prisoners of the platonic cave to
conceptualise the shadows when they have not been able to see anything else (ibid. 39). The transformative character of tradition is, therefore, characterised by Gadamer as response to the meeting of difference.

In reading a past text, we are faced with another horizon. Therefore, it becomes impossible to envisage the possibility of experiencing a historical text as it appeared to its contemporaries. Understanding a text is ‘always projecting’ (Gadamer 1975: 269). Whereas, due to our own ‘horizon of intelligibility’ our initial projection is always that of an expectation of the text, by the very hermeneutical character of human understanding, ‘fore-conceptions are replaced by more suitable ones’ (ibid.) in the act of reading. In this sense, Gadamer indicates that ‘this constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation’ (ibid.). As follows, the understanding of a historical text emerges through a dialogic relationship, by ‘permitting the horizon of the text to fuse with the horizon of the reader in such a way that the reader is affected by the encounter with the text’ (Lawn 2006: 69).

Understanding a historical text reveals what Gadamer defined as ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer 2004: 390). However, by using the word ‘fusion’, Gadamer did not imply the merging of horizons neither was it to ‘seek to assimilate the historical other within its own horizon’ (Davey 2006: 7), or ‘to become fully immersed in the others ‘form of life’ (ibid.). Contrarily, ‘understanding requires and perpetuates a mode of differentiation which sustains understanding as an enduring task’ (ibid. 5). As Gadamer elegantly stated in one of his many published interviews, the ‘fusion of horizons’ occurs continually ‘as horizons are not fixed’ (Dutt 1998: 73).

While Gadamer’s approach will continue to be discussed in following sections, it is important to stop at this point to highlight the kind of analogies that can be extrapolated from his examination of past texts and the interaction amongst social groups which consider themselves as Self and the other as Other. The first projection established when meeting other groups is obviously one of alterity. In this sense, it is possible to indicate that ‘they’ do not belong to ‘my-world’. However, because horizons are not fixed, the Other begins to reveal itself, and in the process of interpretation, not only an understanding of the Other emerges but a ‘level of self-awareness’ (Lawn 2006: 65) takes place. This is important for it is telling us that the experience of alterity triggers a movement of self-interpretation and of transformation. This movement and its implications are discussed in the following section through translating these insights to the social domain.
4.2.1 Self and Other. Towards a social approach.

In the last section, it has been pointed out that Gadamer's approach, although being circumscribed to literary hermeneutics, was devised as a unanimously applicable phenomenon as it seeks to exhibit the common structures at play when specific traditions are confronted with others, within a framework that prioritises the conditions of our experience in-the-world. Therefore, whilst he chose to explore this issue at a diachronic level (experiencing the past), his approach can be applied to delve into what happens when different social groups interact with each other. Although Gadamer already anticipated this analytical move in his *Truth and Method* (1975: 366-67), he only touched upon this issue briefly, indicating that the meeting of different social groups unfolds a twofold fusion that affects both horizons (Catoggio 2008).

In order to explore the potential that his approach has for a discussion on the effects of inter-social interaction, it is necessary to divert the account from the level of philosophical abstraction. In order to do so, this thesis will draw upon Jones' multidimensional approach (1997) to ethnic identity as a way to channel a series of insights into social domains. The reasons for selecting this approach are manifold; the most salient of which will be outlined below. Similarly to Gadamer's hermeneutics, Jones' (1997) approach takes as its point of departure both the recognition of the worldly conditions of our existence, which she adopts from the work of Bourdieu (e.g. 1977) and from the identification of a movement of self-reflection that occurs in meeting alterity. In addition, as we shall see in section 4.3, Jones' (1997) approach highlights a series of social mechanisms which elucidate the relationship between identity and material culture. The latter discussion will be explored at a later stage in this chapter and its significance in relation to the issue of diffusion will be clarified in Chapter Seven through the examination of a particular archaeological context.

In order to understand the way in which Jones (1997) directed her approach, it is necessary to draw attention to the kind of inferences that had been developed surrounding the issue of ethnic identity formation. However, for reasons of length and priority, only Bentley's model (see e.g. 1987) is taken into consideration. His approach marked a watershed into the ways in which ethnic identity had traditionally been envisaged (see e.g. Narroll 1964; Moerman 1965; Barth 1969; Hechter 1971; Geertz 1973). It aimed at identifying the 'locus of ethnic identification' (Banks 1996: 44), and, to do so, Bentley drew upon Bourdieu's characterisation of the habitus, which, as has already been discussed in Chapter Three and is defined as:
‘A system of long-lasting, transposable dispositions, which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to the analogical transformation of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems’.

(Bourdieu 1977: 83).

In recognising that the habitus stems from the ‘conditions of existence’ (Jones 1997: 91) – being-in-the-world- and that the latter is primarily social, it can argued that the habitus, ‘engenders feelings of identification among people similarly endowed’ (Bentley 1987: 173 as quoted in Jones 1997: 91). In this sense, the habitus is central for the definition of ethnic affiliation as it provides a sense of familiarity and therefore, of belonging (Jones 1997). Equally important, Bentley (1987) drew attention to the need of differentiating between cultural phenomena, which spring from the practices that take place within a social system and those practices/elements that help sustain the representation of ethnic identities. As Jones (1997) notes, Bentley’s approach makes possible ‘a separation between surface cultural expressions and deep structural dispositions and as a result he is able to accommodate disjunctions between ethnic boundaries and the distribution of objective cultural traits’ (ibid. 92).

Even though Bentley’s positioning challenged previous accounts on ethnicity, his approach placed exceeding emphasis upon the characterisation of this phenomenon as resulting from the sense of commonality engendered by the internal dynamics of specific social groups. As a result, it completely obliterated the significant role that experiencing difference plays upon social/ethnic identification. This situation was not only highlighted by Jones (see 1997: 93) but was superseded by an account which essentially enquired upon the kind of phenomena triggered when situated beings – drawing from the habitus – interact with social groups defined by their Otherness.

Comparable to the Heidegger’s portrayal of the ready-to-hand (see section 3.1.1), Bourdieu pointed out that within everyday dealings, the habitus triggers an experience which is basically pragmatic, and it results with the ‘misrecognition and naturalization of the real divisions of the social order leading to the reproduction of that order and consequently the modes of domination inherent in it’ (Bourdieu 1977: 164–5). Again, emanating from Heidegger’s ontology, he indicated that a level of self-reflection emerges when a ‘particular mode of living is brought into question practically’ (Jones 1997: 94). However, in contrast to Heidegger, Bourdieu noted that this occurrence can happen through cultural contact and that it entails a series of transformations (ibid 94). As Jones notes, ‘social interaction between agents of
different cultural traditions engenders a reflexive mode of perception which contributes to a break with doxic forms of knowledge’ (*ibid.* 95). This realisation can be compared to, on the one hand, Heidegger’s present-at-hand and, on the other hand, to the movement of self-reflection which is pointed out by Gadamer in describing the experience of reading a text. In the three cases, it is suggested that self-interpretation partly emanates from experiencing Otherness.

If social interaction amongst different social groups brings forward a movement of self-reflection, then, it can be said that it also triggers processes in which identities are defined. This perception is used by Jones as a preamble for a new conceptualisation of ethnic identity. In this sense, she argues that the ‘representations of ethnicity involve the dialectical opposition of situationally relevant cultural practices and historical experiences associated with different cultural traditions’ (*ibid.* 100). Moreover, Jones asserts that ethnic identity cannot be characterised as a fixed phenomenon but as a situational one. Moreover, as she points out, ‘there is rarely a one-to-one relationship between representations of ethnicity and the entire range of cultural practices and social conditions associated with a particular group’ (*ibid.*).

**4.2.2 Implications.**

In the light of the above discussion, what is the relationship between Gadamer’s hermeneutics and Jones ‘multidimensional’ approach to ethnic identity? More to the point, why are these approaches considered to be essential to overcome the internal definition of social dynamics already discussed in Chapter Three? Despite acknowledging that these approaches develop from different interests and are aimed at examining dissimilar enquiries, they simultaneously show that intercultural interaction (or the meeting of different horizons) triggers a movement of self-reflection which has to take into consideration the conditions of our experience in-the-world. Moreover, as Jones rightly points out, this hermeneutical movement sparks off the re-definition of identity. Since the latter is not a fixed phenomenon, but rather situational and context dependent, it can be said that intercultural interaction brings forth transformation. Through an acknowledgement of this situation, it is possible to begin questioning those approaches which have merely contemplated social dynamics from *within.*
Although this movement of self-conceptualisation (reinterpretation) brings about change, as it is not a fixed phenomenon, I would like to further explore the effects of intercultural interaction expanding upon the framework outlined above. As will be discussed in the forthcoming sections, the movement of self-conceptualisation and transformation in relation to the experience of alterity is further complicated by acknowledging that new cultural forms are also a product of the 'in-between'. Once the nuances of this phenomenon have been explored, it will finally be possible to re-think diffusion in light of the theoretical framework constructed throughout this chapter.

4.2.3 'In-between': the characterisation of hybrid spaces.

'The importance of hybridity is a sadly neglected issue in archaeological analyses. On the contrary, the basic element of departure is normally generalised fictions of homogeneous cultures'.

(Fahlander 2007: 19).

In section 4.2, Gadamer’s hermeneutical approach has been presented, elaborating upon a series of insights developed through the experience of reading past texts. From the many insights produced, it has been pointed out that the movement of interpretation is not simply one in which different horizons are confronted. On the contrary, it is characterised by a dynamic flux in which initial projections are replaced by more suitable ones during the process of interpretation. This process not only brings about a level of self-reflection, but also culminates with what Gadamer defines as the ‘fusion of horizons’. However, as pointed out above, the fusion does not occur through the assimilation of the horizon of the text or the mere fusion of two horizons but it is characterised by the development of what Gadamer defines as a ‘common language’ (1975: 388). As he notes:

'To reach understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were. [...] A common language can only emerge or be ‘worked out’ in conversation'.


For the present discussion, it is pertinent to note that the ‘common language’ is created in the process of conversation. This insight is fundamental, as it implies that, not only the meeting of alterity triggers the dynamics of tradition but that it alters the latter
through the integration of elements which, are not taken from the other horizon but which are constructed through the experience of ‘hermeneutical conversations’ (Wachterhauser 1986: 202). In light of this argument it is necessary to enquire how this space can be translated to the social domain of interaction amongst different groups. Only then, will it be possible to assess the repercussions that this space has upon the composition of social phenomena.

Approaches remarkably similar to the one developed by Gadamer emerged within the field of post-colonial studies and were gradually popularised by their application within other areas of research, such as globalisation studies (e.g. Nederveen Pieterse 2009). Ostensibly, post-colonial studies emerged as a reaction to the traditional narratives that portrayed the colonised as a ‘passive victim of colonisation’ (Fahlander 2007: 17). It was thought to be the case that the coloniser simply imposed new values, customs and so forth upon the colonised, resulting in the latter completely losing its identity (ibid.). However, following from similar insights already highlighted regarding the force of alterity in the constitution of identity, the ‘active-passive’ relationship traditionally portrayed, began to be denounced; instead it was noted that the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised was better understood as an ‘interactive, dialogic, two way, phenomenon’ (Trivedi 1993: 15 as quoted in Gandhi 1998: 125). More to the point, this relationship not only produced ‘the mutual contagion of subtle intimacies’ (Appadurai 1990 as quoted in Gandhi 1998: 129), but was also necessary for an understanding of issues relating to hybridity (e.g. Said 1993; Bhabha 1994; Young 1995).

Having arrived at this point, it is necessary to recall the initial question posed in section 4.1.1, that is, what do we mean by hybridity? In many instances, hybridity has been conceptualised as those contexts in which interaction between different social groups leads to the ‘assimilation’, ‘mixing’ or ‘blending’ of cultural phenomena (e.g. Barañano et al. 2007). However, at the beginning of this chapter, it has already been noted that this characterisation is a rather simplistic one. The character of hybridity can only be conceived by taking into consideration the ‘in-between space’ that Gadamer defines as the ‘hermeneutical conversation’ (1989: 388), and that finds its parallels in the social domain with what Bhabha (1994) characterised as the ‘Third Space of Enunciation’.

The space that Bhabha refers to is not a physical space but a metaphor used to describe the kind of phenomena that arises when different social groups enter into ‘conversation’; Bhabha, highlights that, above all, it is a productive space, one that is
interrogative and enunciative (Bhabha 1994). It is a space where boundaries ‘dissolve’. Therefore, rather than being a place where mixing happens, the ‘Third Space of Enunciation’ is essentially hybrid. It is a space in which ‘elements of diverse origin encounter each other and mutual transformation occurs’ (Hussain 2005: 12). As Bhabha describes it:

‘[The] Third Space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom (emphasis added)’.

(Bhabha 1990a: 211).

‘Social encounters turn ‘difference into sameness and sameness into difference but in a way that makes the same no longer the same and the different no longer simply different’ (Young 1995: 26; Ashcroft et al. 1998: 158). It follows that, social interaction brings about new cultural forms even when what was initially intended was to impose cultural forms from one culture to another. Before the wider implications of this insight are discussed, I would like to bring this section to an end by presenting a historical situation that Bhabha (1994) used to illustrate his theoretical postulates.

The first story discussed by Bhabha, Signs taken for Wonders, narrates the encounter of Anund Messeh, one of the earliest Indian catechists, with a group of people who came to be reading a translated version of the Bible. In his surprise, Anund asked them about the provenance of the book. They told him that it was given to them by an Angel. In the light of the response, Anund indicated to them that the Book had been introduced by the Europeans. Anund’s suggestion was immediately rejected by these people, as they considered it could not be possible as Europeans eat meat. Likewise, after a lengthy conversation, Anund invited them to be Christianised. Although they accepted his invitation, they exclaimed that they would do so but that they would not take part in the practices surrounding the Sacrament as they thought was unthinkable to drink the blood of God (see Bhabha 1994: 102-22).

Through this story, Bhabha is pointing at the hybrid effects of the interaction between different cultures. In this case, Bhabha demonstrates that the colonial discourse of supremacy and the Christianising mission were disempowered by processes of ‘displacement, distortion, dislocation and repetition’ (ibid. 105). In pointing out this situation, Bhabha worked upon the notion of ‘resistance’, and demonstrated that, despite being traditionally conceived as an act of opposition, it was better defined as ‘the effect of ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating
discourses' (*ibid.* 106). These insights will be discussed later in this chapter, however, it is first important to direct attention to the wider implications that Bhabha’s ‘Third Space of Enunciation’ has on the portrayal of social phenomena.

4.3 Implications: setting up the context of diffusion.

‘The very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or ‘organic’ ethnic communities [...] are in a profound process of redefinition’.

(Bhabha 1994: 7).

If hybridity is that which occurs when different social groups interact, what sort of effects are carried forward through the configuration of internal social phenomena? As previously stated, the definition of ‘hybrid spaces’ as ‘spaces’ of transformation have provided a fundamental challenge to the way in which ‘colonial power worked to divide the world into self and other’ (García Canclini & Chiappari 2005: xxvii). Under these historical circumstances, it is no longer possible to think that the coloniser is simply imposing upon the colonised, but that a two-way transformation occurs through the interaction amongst the different parties involved. What is more, theoretical approaches emanating from the study of post-colonial contexts (e.g. García Canclini 1990; Bhabha 1994) contend that processes of hybridisation are not unique to highly asymmetrical circumstances but they are thought to arise whenever social interaction amongst different groups takes place. In this sense, this insight (1) challenges modern discourses of ‘cultural identity, authenticity, and purity’ (*ibid.*), and (2) calls for a new conceptualisation of social phenomena in which the effects of social interactions have to be taken into consideration.

Indeed, intense processes of hybridisation are thought to occur in instances characterised by the imposition or suppression of cultural phenomena. However, in considering that, ultimately, these contexts arise from the very character of our experience in-the-world, it is possible to postulate that, not only can social groups undergo processes of hybridisation but that, by their very nature, they are all hybrid. Experiencing alterity carries forward a movement of transformation and reconfiguration, whether we are aware of it or not; interaction carries forward elements that could never be simply conceived by the internal transformation of traditions.
Whilst the present account is aimed at the reconceptualisation of diffusion, it is important not to neglect questions concerning the conceptualisation of social phenomena and what they contribute to current archaeological practice. Even though it still can be recognised that tradition is sustained and altered through social practice, it can no longer be disregarded that traditions can be altered through new forms of practice, and that these can be the effect of interaction with other groups. Failing to do so not only develops an understanding of social dynamics as only constituted internally, which is not desired, but it also leads to the projection of a past in which discovery, war, colonisation, migration, interaction through trade, intermarriage and so forth are largely obliterated. This situation can induce paradoxical scenarios (see Chapter Five) in which, although at an inter-regional and temporal level material assemblages are can be said to be symptomatic of scenarios such as the ones listed above, archaeologists are still reluctant to reconsider the value of the large scale and continue to work within the boundaries of so-called local contexts. However, whereas these and other related discussions will be developed in the following chapters, it is important to indicate now how this new theoretical framework permits better insights into what we customarily define as diffusion.

At various points through this research it has been noted that to define diffusion as the assimilation of traits from one culture to another was a facile endeavour. Instead, it has been argued that, in order to reconceptualise the phenomenon, it has to be set within the parameters of inter-social interaction and to do so, it is necessary to build a theoretical framework which considers the effects of social interaction in the conceptualisation of social dynamics. Having consolidated this scenario, one further point of consideration needs to be demarcated before the reconceptualisation can take place.

In the course of this chapter, I have pointed out that hybridisation is not to be understood as ‘mixing’ or ‘assimilation’ of cultural elements from one social group to another. Whilst on the one hand, this appreciation relates to the necessity of envisaging hybridity as the character of the ‘hermeneutical conversations’ occurring in what has been termed as the ‘in-between’, on the other hand it points out that, although these spaces are spaces of transformation and translation, they do not necessarily result in situations where the new forms maintain certain elements which can be traced back to their origin. In relating hybridity to assimilation we are effectively suggesting that hybridity entails taking elements from one social group and incorporating them within
the limits of one’s world. Likewise, by indicating that hybridity leads to mixing, we are stating that this phenomenon is characterised by the combination of elements that belong to different ‘worlds’. What characterises both instances is that the results of hybridity are visible and that are the effects of hybridity are recognisable. It is, therefore, possible to indicate that X or Y is found in one context but that its provenance is located in another context. In considering that hybridity can give rise to other outcomes, I would like to suggest that, in instances in which the effects of social interaction are perceivable, these can be defined, in order to distinguish them from other hybrid outcomes, as diffusion. If this is the case, diffusion can be defined as the outcome of a hybridising effect which is the product of interaction - or the experience of alterity - and can only be defined insofar as it is observable, be it by the parties involved or by third parties at the moment it occurs, or, as in the case of archaeology, through its definition within temporal and spatial values.

This definition raises fundamental questions. Can diffusion - as has been described at different stages throughout this research - be contemplated as a social phenomenon per se, or should it, otherwise, be defined as a manifestation/index of social interaction? Further, and more importantly, in which ways can this new conceptualisation aid archaeological interpretation?

The first question is a rather complicated one to assess. In stating that diffusion only exists insofar as it can be said that different social groups share, what at first sight appear to be, common cultural elements, we could say that diffusion is not a social phenomenon as such but a particular outcome of social interaction which necessarily has to be conceived within the context of hybridisation and has to take into consideration its effects through time (see section 4.3.1). Whilst this might be the case, the contexts of diffusion might cease to be considered mere reflections of social processes whenever specific social groups react to the way in which other social groups have adapted a series of elements from their cultural repertoire. This situation has been characterised by Bhabha (1994) in his definition of the destabilising effects of what he defines as ‘mimicry’. As he notes, there might be a point in which the colonised begins to dress, talk and behave like the coloniser. However, the colonised do not take the identity of the coloniser but it develops into sameness which is not quite the same and produces a context of ambivalence in which the power is not subverted but ‘begins to vacillate’ (Young 1989: 147). Fahlander (2007) indicated that this situation could be considered in the interpretation of contexts of diffusion in archaeology. As a matter of
illustration, he indicates how in Australia, Aboriginal people knap traditional artefacts making use of modern materials. In his view, these groups are not simply assimilating old forms to new materials. Instead, their practices can be interpreted as acts of mocking and resistance (ibid.).

Moving towards the second question posed in this account, it is important to consider the ways in which this new conceptualisation, not only of diffusion but of the context in which diffusion takes place, can aid the interpretation of archaeological contexts of material patterning which are thought to be result of interaction. As has been noted in Chapter Three, outside culture-historical frameworks, diffusion has been interpreted as the mere integration of elements of foreign origin and contexts of material patterning have given rise to axiomatic interpretations that do not move far beyond the indication of possible contact amongst different social groups.

Although we could simply make use of analogical inferences to nourish the interpretation of these contexts, in doing so, without taking into consideration the re-theorisation of the theme, we would be at the risk of simply translating known historical circumstances to the past based upon the characterisation of a number of formal parallels. In order to be able to build new interpretative dimensions into these contexts, it has been necessary to point out the common processes whereby diffusion can take place in the event/s of interaction. So far, in developing a model of these characteristics, it has been possible underscore the following:

(1) The experience of Otherness brings about self-conceptualisation and transformation.

(2) Transformation does not occur simply by taking elements from the Other but by a process of translation which develops ‘in-between’. Therefore, new forms cannot be said to be assimilated or adopted. This is particularly relevant to assess contexts of diffusion.

(3) Since these processes are thought to emanate from our conditions of existence, diffusion can occur in any instance of interaction.

(4) It is, therefore, important to enquire as to whether the contexts we analyse correspond to the effect of politicised environments or not.
Diffusion can occur through learning, copying, mimicking and so forth. In this case, it is important to take into consideration the possibility of pointing out these mechanisms, as they can be indicative of the historical circumstances under which interaction takes place.

Everything can be diffused, however, in archaeology our possibilities are limited to those aspects which emanate from materiality.

Even though it has been demonstrated that these insights can aid interpretation, it is important not to overlook the fact that the new circumstances triggered through contexts of interaction after generations might be conceived differently. These insights are of particular value for archaeology, as it has to be recognised that the contexts of material patterning that we define as diffusion contemplate both the direct effects of specific historical processes and change of value through time. Therefore, before we move to examine diffusion within the limits of materiality, and the application of these insights to unfold interpretive scenarios of this kind, it is important to discuss two further elements. On the one hand, I would like to draw attention to Bakhtin's (1981) differentiation of ‘organic’ and ‘intentional’ hybridisation, as these insights can help us gain understanding of the context in which diffusion occurred in the first place. On the other hand, in response to the demand for an examination that recognises the changing value of new forms through time, I draw attention upon what Stross (1999) has defined as the ‘hybrid cycle’.

4.3.1 From hybridising spaces to hybridised outcomes.

If we consider diffusion to be a particular effect that is triggered from experiences of Otherness, which in turn entails the reproduction of new forms within a specific social group through time, then we have to account for the ways in which ‘new forms’ are reconceptualised and shaped through social practice; in the latter of these, one has to take into consideration the issue of time. As has been pointed out, this is particularly important in archaeology, for our definition of material contexts of diffusion can go well beyond the limits of the historical circumstances that established them in the first place.

In order to assess this situation, it is worth differentiating between those instances in which interaction gives rise to the diffusion of elements which pass understated, or
even when its effects go unnoticed and instances in which new forms emanating from the experience of Otherness are strategically employed to, for instance, define specific identities. To further illuminate this distinction it is worth drawing attention to the way in which Bakhtin (1981) differentiated amongst 'organic' and 'intentional' hybridity in his analysis of the multi-voicedness of the novel.

Similar to the way that Gadamer had indicated 'hermeneutical conversations' occur through the confrontation of different horizons, Bakhtin expressed that hybrid situations could be triggered by the 'the encounter of two registers of language and consciousness' (Scott 2006: 211). As he noted:

‘What is a hybridisation? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor'.

(Bakhtin 1981: 358).

However – and this is where Bakthin’s contribution differs from those previously exposed in this chapter – in the arena of language, it is possible to indicate that hybridity can either occur organically or can be said to be a result of a conscious act, in which case, it can be described as ‘intentional hybridity’ (ibid.). He defined hybridity as intrinsic to all languages (Sinnewe 2001: 38); it is a central aspect of their evolution. He contended that the dynamics of languages, namely the way in which they are transformed and give rise to new forms, occurs mainly through unreflective borrowing (Werbner et al. 1997). As follows:

‘Unintentional, unconscious hybridisation is one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages. We might even say that language and languages change historically primarily by hybridisation, by means of mixing of various languages co-existing within the boundaries of a single dialect, a single national language, a single branch, a single group of different branches, in the historical as well as paleontological past of languages’.  

(Bakhtin 1981: 358).

In the same way ‘unreflective borrowings’ occur in language, this can occur in instances characterised by the interaction of different groups or individuals within groups. These situations are more likely to occur in contexts of frequent interaction. A good example of this situation can be found in contexts where people of different cultural backgrounds carry out the routines of everyday life in the same locales or settings of interaction. In these situations it is likely that certain elements are translated from one
individual to another, and this does not signify that, in doing so, individuals lose their identities. At a wider level, it can be postulated that neighbouring groups might share a series of cultural phenomena, however, this situation does not preclude that these different social groups can no longer define themselves in contrast to an Other. This situation can also be exemplified with the reading of Moerman (e.g. 1965) and Narroll's (1968) discussion over the identity of the 'Lue'. This debate began at the point in which Moerman asked himself who were the people that called themselves the 'Lue' (Gibernau & Rex 2010). This question arose by the fact that the 'Lue' – living in close interaction with other groups – did not have definite cultural elements to define them as a bounded unit. Responding from this observation Moerman concluded stating that ‘someone is Lue by virtue of believing and calling himself Lue and acting in ways that validate his Lueness’ (Moerman 1965: 1219). Contrastingly, Narroll argued that the ‘Lue’ are part of a broader unit described as the ‘Northern Tai’ (Jones 1997). In establishing a relation between culture elements and ethnicity, Narroll concluded stating that ‘the Lue are the Lue. But for us, for global comparative purposes, perhaps they are not the real Lue’ (Narroll 1964: 78 as quoted by Jones 1997).

Moving back to Bakhtin's portrayal of hybridity, he defined ‘intentional’ hybidity to refer to those instances in which ‘the important activity is not only [...] the mixing of linguistic forms – the markers of two language styles – as it is the collision between different points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms’ (1981: 360). In the social level, ‘intentional hybridity’ has been used to refer to situations characterised by politicised environments in which ‘differences set against each other dialogically’ (Young 1995: 22).

Although it is important to take into consideration the latter approach – intentional hybridity – to discuss some contexts of diffusion (see Chapter Seven), we must not fail to remember that the immediate effects of interaction amongst different groups, namely the ‘short-term’ effects occurring within a specific historical circumstance, can, with the passing of time, be reconfigured through social practice, to the point that, for instance, the foreign nature of the new forms acquired through diffusion. This can occur through the loss of social memory, or by other social mechanisms. Within ‘hybridity discourses’ this diachronic process has been defined as the ‘cycle of hybridity’ (see Stross 1999). Clear examples of this situation can be attested through music styles. For instance, Stross discusses that, while jazz originally emerged through the confluence of European and African influences, it is now considered a genre on its
own (ibid.). More to the point, jazz is not only a genre but also one that defines and gives identity to certain social/musical circles (ibid. 256).

4.4 Conclusions.

Since the dawn of culture-history, little has been said about the possibility of interpreting some contexts of material patterning as resulting from episodes of interaction amongst different groups (at least, within British prehistoric circles). In fact, this possibility has been discouraged in archaeology, resulting from both the difficulty of demonstrating the validity of these propositions empirically, and from the kind of prejudice that developed with the rejection of the traditional models of the first half of the twentieth century. However, through a brief inspection of the literature produced in the fields of post-colonial and globalization studies, and by pointing out the possibility that these scenarios can arise from the very conditions of our experience, it has been demonstrated that these situations can emerge and that they can inform us about past social events and processes which should not be excluded from prehistoric narratives. More importantly, this examination has triggered the development of new interpretive possibilities and new ways of directing our enquiry to these contexts within material culture. We can no longer limit our account to the identification of contacts that are deciphered through contexts of material patterning. On the contrary, it is now possible to move beyond simplistic a definition of this phenomenon.

Whilst new interpretive possibilities emerge as a result of this new conceptualisation, it is important to highlight that, ultimately, in order to interpret these contexts, we have to develop a multi-scalar approach and, therefore, we have to reopen the possibility of working at the large-scale and of recapturing the kind of information that can be obtained through material patterning. As has been noted in Chapter Two, neither of these instances are generally considered within current archaeological practice. For these reasons, and in order to further our understandings of the ways in which contexts of diffusion can be deciphered and assessed with recourse to materiality, the second part of this thesis is devoted to the examination of the large-scale (Chapter Five) and the re-evaluation of the notion of style in archaeology (Chapter Six).
PART THREE: DIFFUSION AND MATERIAL CULTURE
5. Introduction.

'[...] What is that book?' 'The book of God!' - 'Let me look at it, if you please.' Anund, on opening the book, perceived it to be the Gospel of our Lord, translated into the Hindoostanee Tongue, many copies of which seemed to be in the possession of the party: some were PRINTED, others WRITTEN by themselves from the printed ones. Anund pointed to the name of Jesus, and asked, 'Who is that? is God! He gave us this book.' - 'Where did you obtain it? 'An Angel from heaven gave it us, at Hurdwar fair.' - 'An Angel? 'Yes, to us he was God’s Angel: but he was a man, a learned Pandit.' (Doubtless these translated Gospels must have been the books distributed, five or six years ago, at Hurdwar by the Missionary). 'The written copies we write ourselves, having no other means of obtaining more of this blessed word.' - 'These books,' said Anund, 'teach the religion of the European Sahibs. It is THEIR book; and they printed it in our language, for our use.' 'Ah! no,' replied the stranger, 'that cannot be, for they eat flesh.' - 'Jesus Christ,' said Anund, 'teaches that it does not signify what a man eats or drinks. EATING is nothing before God [...]'

(Chabha 1985: 145).

The narration of Anund’s encounter with the group of people reading the Bible outside Delhi was of significant importance for Bhabha’s later revisionist appraisal of ‘culture’ and ‘hybridity’. His interpretation of the story was facilitated by the fact that he knew about the historical context which had led these people to read the Bible in the first instance. Furthermore, through reading the story, he was able to understand not only the way in which the colonised had translated and reconfigured the Book within the contexts of their cosmologies but also how the implementation of the Book had transformed the cosmologies of the colonised. He was also able to point out the level of disruption that the colonised interpretation of the Bible caused for Anund, who was the person that distributed printed copies of the Bible.

In stating that similar situations to the one exposed by Bhabha could be envisioned in the archaeological contexts we study this appreciation is interesting in itself, as it underscores the fact that, unlike the situation just exposed, we do not always know the historical circumstances that gave rise to the contexts we aim to study. We do not always know about the ways in which new forms transformed the cosmologies of the people we study, and we do not always know the processes whereby these elements were absorbed and shaped through practice. All we have is situations of material
patterning whose limits have been defined by us and that characteristically transcend particular spatial and temporal barriers defying clear-cut definitions.

The last chapter ended by indicating that, faced with this situation, we can begin to shed light upon the complexities of these socio-historical and archaeological contexts by developing a better understanding of what we commonly define as diffusion. This movement not only provides us with new interpretive dimensions but also helps us to make sense of the material contexts we wish to confront. At least three elements have to be contemplated. Firstly, we need to frame diffusion within a setting of interaction amongst different groups. Secondly, wherever possible, we need to account for the immediate effects of contact, and thirdly, we need to recognise that our contexts of material patterning might well contain the long-term effects of these events. What these insights tell us is that this kind of study necessarily requires the development of a multi-scalar approach.

Even though, at first sight, it could be said that this requirement can be met through a simple methodological readjustment, it becomes a problem when we recognise that this interpretive endeavour has to integrate information extracted from the large-scale and it has to recapture the possibility of making inferences within contexts of material patterning, as current archaeological practice has cast doubt on the interpretive potential of both methodological strategies. Bearing this situation in mind, it appears necessary to re-assess the possibilities of research of this nature to take place within the current theoretical climate. To do so, Part Three of this doctoral thesis is devoted to an examination of the characterisation of the interpretative value of the large-scale (Chapter Five) and of style (Chapter Six). Whilst the details of the latter theme will be unfolded in the following chapter, it is time to shed light upon the aims of this chapter.

In delimiting the kind of constraints research of this kind has to confront, at the beginning of this doctoral thesis, it was pointed out that the development of an interpretive framework on diffusion had to necessarily be framed within a multi-scalar study. However, the 'interpretive turn' of the 1980s has led archaeology to favour the analysis of local contexts, and so a shared sense of scepticism over the interpretive value of the large-scale has developed. This situation was partly triggered through a reaction against the processual tendency to examine contexts which go far beyond the individual (Shanks & Tilley 1987a: 61).

Barrett can be said to be amongst those who objected to the value of large-scale observations. On numerous occasions (e.g. Barrett 1994; 2000; 2001), the author has
expressed the view that working within these scales of analysis can only take us to the
definition of normative behaviour (see 2.2.1). This position is instigated through
contending that, despite the fact that we could develop interpretive scenarios using
these scales of analysis, we would be writing accounts which underestimate the
creating forces of agency. As he notes:

'It is possible to write narratives which mark the passing of time but without reference to
agency. Such narratives work at a level of abstraction – economic processes operate without
labour, ideologies arise without the struggle to maintain belief – and the reasons for choosing
such abstractions must be explicitly understood'.

(Barrett 2000: 63).

Likewise, he contends that the large-scale is one too large to have been experienced by
individuals. Hence, it is a scale of analysis that does not have specific interpretive value
(see Barrett 1994). Whereas Barrett arrives at these conclusions by indicating that
archaeology’s aim is to interpret the social practices occurring within specific material
(historical) conditions (see section 2.4), it is important to point out that what he is
discussing is the validity of *large-scale inferences* within his setting of interpretation. In
this case, he is obliterating the fact that, before any sort of discourse is developed
within the large-scale, the latter is already a product of a discourse which is instigated
through the application of a particular method. Barrett is not the only one to discuss
the interpretive value of the large-scale within these parameters.

Although having expressed different views over the large-scale through time (e.g.
1987a; 1987b; 1990; 1999; 2000), Hodder has approached this issue by defining two
major characteristics of what he defines as the ‘long-term’. In work comparable to
Barrett’s approach, Hodder argues that archaeological interpretation has to ‘grasp the
intentions, values and organisational structures within human action’ (1987b: 2).
However, drawing upon his concern for contextuality, he notes that the long-term can
be used to discern the temporal/historical contexts of the situations interpreted. This
discussion is drawn from the application of a number of insights developed by Braudel
(e.g. 1995), promoting the historical long-term over the ahistorical *longue durée*
declared by the French historian. Almost twenty years later from the publication of
*Archaeology as long term history* (Hodder 1987a), Hodder has maintained the need to
explore ‘intention’ and ‘agency’ through a major focus on social practice. However, on
this occasion he has noted that the long-term can be characterised as a picture which is
built up through small events (see Hodder 2000). Other similar approaches can be
found with the work of Dobres and Hoffman (1994) as they indicate that the large-scale
is a scale in which some past social action takes place. What characterises these approaches, as has been noted with Barrett’s case, is that their theoretical concerns are focused upon large-scale inferences.

Contrasting this tendency to discuss the interpretive value of large-scale inferences, in this chapter, I contend that, if better understandings of it are to be pursued, it is essential to draw attention to the character and centrality of the archaeological method which categorises and classifies data in space and time in the first place. To do so, the interpretive possibilities that can be obtained through the large-scale are discussed in relation to an examination in which the large-scale is taken primarily as a by-product of a method. This discussion is enriched by an approximation of the main critiques on the topic which have developed in recent archaeological practice. It also brings to the surface what I consider to be a paradox of recent archaeological procedure. Firstly, the “interpretive turn” of the 1980s has not only triggered the analysis of local contexts but has also involved a general sense of dissatisfaction of the kind of interpretive value that can be obtained through the observation of material patterning. Therefore, whilst emphasising variability, the vocabulary of archaeology still conforms to conceptual categories that are the result of assembling archaeological evidence within parameters of physical similarity. Secondly, despite sharing a major concern over the risks of taking similarity as an indicator of historical relation, it is possible to observe that the views about archaeological categories are rather asymmetrical. As an example, Grooved Ware has never been rarely questioned as a meaningful category and yet has given rise to interpretive scenarios that relate Grooved Ware assemblages historically in space and time (e.g. Thomas 2010). Other categories however, such as ‘megalith’, that were formed within the same parameters, have, for some time, been questioned and deconstructed (e.g. Tilley 1998; 1999). In this sense, whilst the interpretive possibilities that arise from material patterning have been questioned, at the level of practice, understandings which relate to old ways of doing archaeology are still prevalent in the discipline. Through these and other discussions, the aim of this chapter is to respond to the following enquiries: (1) does the large-scale have interpretive value? (2) Is it possible to find alternative approaches which do not require large-scale observations but that yet inform interpretation from contexts of intercultural interaction? (3) Can a more critical approach to the large-scale be developed in order to maintain its interpretive value? This reflection will take us directly to the discussion of style in Chapter Six.
5.1 Re-thinking the large-scale.

In the introduction to this chapter, I have suggested that we have to differentiate between the large-scale, and the inferences that we make based upon it. By this, I want to draw attention to the fact that what we define as the large-scale is, ultimately, the result of a method, and that this method is already affecting archaeological evidence before it is rendered meaningful and used to infer past socio-historical phenomena. Following from this argument, it is suggested that, in order to be able to fully assess whether – and to what extent - observations on the large-scale can provide us with the interpretive insights we wish to obtain, it is necessary to begin this examination by outlining its fundamental character.

In the light of this view, it is necessary to enquire as to the nature of the large-scale. This question can only be fully examined by first formulating a further question: what is archaeology? In the grand scheme of things, archaeology can be defined as a discipline that, through the examination of past material traces, offers narratives about those who inhabited the world in the past. If we took the second part alone – that is, interpreting the past – we could argue that everybody can do archaeology. However, what differentiates a random interpretation from an archaeological discourse is that the latter develops within the discipline, and a discipline can only be envisaged taking into consideration the use of method.

In seeking to demonstrate the influences on the formation of the social sciences in Chapter Three, it was discussed that the emergence of modernity brought forward a very specific situation characterised by the confluence of the following premises. Firstly, 'Baconian empiricism and Cartesian rationalism, shared a wish to reconstruct sciences from the first principles' (Thomas 2004b: 19-20). Secondly, from the eighteenth century onwards, human beings began to be perceived as an object that could be studied (see Foucault 1970). Following from these and the subsequent constitution of the social sciences, knowledge about human phenomena began to be sought by both empirical observation and by the application of a method which derived from those which had been previously devised within the biological sciences (ibid. 131). This triadic structure was not only fundamental for the development of the social sciences but also played a central role for the later constitution of archaeology (see Thomas 2004a; 2004b).

The idea of filtering knowledge through a method, as was discussed in Chapter Three, arose from the modern reaction against prejudice. Foundationalist thinkers sought to
find a way to eradicate error and, in doing so, a ‘method [that] would guarantee the truth of any knowledge simply by virtue of rigorous adherence to a defined structure’ (Bauman 1992: 129; Thomas 2004a: 55) was delimited. These developments, Thomas indicates, directly link to the ‘intellectual procedures of archaeology’ (2004a: 62). As he notes:

‘The position of epistemology as first philosophy is virtually constitutive of archaeology. The typological classification of artifacts and their chronological ordering through seriation, the construction of regional chronologies and stylistic sequences, the plotting of spatial distributions and the definition of ‘culture groups’ all depend upon the view that an abstract method should be applied to entities before they are rendered meaningful’.


This affirmation leads us to recognise that, despite the ‘counter-modern’ (ibid.) arguments that have been developed in recent years within archaeological thought (see section 5.2), method has been – and still is - the a priori condition for the development of archaeological discourses. Whilst the implications of this situation are revealed towards the end of this section, it is important to first shed light upon the relationship between epistemology and the large-scale.

Shanks and Tilley (2007) have reiterated that archaeological methodologies cannot be conceived without first recognising the ways in which these have been shaped according to the needs of theoretical discussions. Although this statement holds true, I would like to indicate that the most basic of the methods used to extract archaeological data has remained unchallenged since the origins of the discipline. This is the comparative method; one that owes its ‘legacy from earlier disciplines such as zoology and botany’ (Lucas 2001: 79). Briefly, this method classifies and categorises entities according to parameters of similarity and difference. In considering the centrality of this method, it can be said that the large-scale is a by-product of this way of structuring the past. Although this is the case, it is important to recognise that there has been a ‘before’ and an ‘after’ on the constitution of the large-scale. This has been discussed by Lucas (ibid.) when defining the main ‘twist and turns’ of the issue of archaeological typology, indicating a qualitative difference between the way it was used within and after the evolutionary frameworks sustained during the nineteenth century.

The application of the comparative method in archaeology during the nineteenth century was straightforward, in the same way that the natural sciences could demonstrate the evolution of species, archaeologists could use the method to reflect upon the progress of culture through the history of humanity (ibid.). Within this
framework, the large-scale was, at one and the same time, the equivalent of evolution (ibid. 79). In this sense, it was not conceived as the background against which archaeological interpretation developed. Rather it was considered interpretation itself.

Whilst this was the case, the nature of the large-scale changed dramatically with the development of a new interest. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, archaeologists became interested in contextualising the archaeological evidence not only in temporal sequences but also using spatial values. One of the first exponents of such change was Montelius who, rather than being simply interested on improving the organisation of museum collections (Klejn 1982), focused upon tracing the origin and evolution of certain peoples prehistory (Jones 1997). This tendency was crystallised, as I discussed in Chapter Two, with the development of the culture-historical framework and the notion of the ‘archaeological culture’. By considering social units as being characterised by the replication of cultural phenomena through time, it was possible to gradually move from an emphasis on classification to one of archaeological categorisation. If the comparative method had been used to locate the position of evidence in a temporal sequence, from then onwards, it became a tool to define replication and change in time and space.

Having arrived at this point, I would like to emphasise that, the use of the comparative method as means of classification and categorisation has remained unchallenged since culture-historical times. As Andy Jones (2007) – after Sian Jones (1997) - has suggested, the ‘culture historical description of material culture has remained remarkably resistant to change’ (ibid. 122). This situation can be clarified by stressing the similarities observed within the birth of an archaeological category during culture-historical times and within post-processual discourse.

In the publication report of Childe’s (1931a) excavations at Skara Brae, the Australian archaeologist dedicated three pages to the analysis of the pottery assemblage. The lack of means by which to classify it, led Childe to speculate on its possible chronology and attribution by drawing parallels with prehistoric pottery found elsewhere. The ‘splayed based technique’ (ibid. 128) identified by Childe in the Skara Brae pottery found parallels with the Bronze Age Cinerary Urns from Longniddry and a food vessel from Aberlady in the National Museum. The same peculiarity was observed in Neolithic comb-ornamented pottery of Finland. In establishing this analogy, he suggested that the technique could be traced back to the Mesolithic of Eterbølle culture of the Danish kitchen middens.
In fact, he was attempting to locate this pottery assemblage in time and space using the comparative method. Even though he did not provide a conclusive statement, this pottery assemblage was finally categorised in 1936 when it was recognised that a group of very individual pottery from the submerged land-surface of the Essex coast at Clacton (Warren et al. 1936) could be related to that already published from the Wiltshire site of Woodhenge (Cunnington 1929) and also to that from a settlement site in Orkney at Skara Brae (Childe 1931)’ (Piggott 1954: 290). This episode was constitutive of the categorisation of the celebrated British Grooved Ware.

Moving more than half a century on from this episode to examine the way in which new archaeological discoveries are spatially and temporally contextualised, it becomes apparent than little has changed when devising new archaeological categories. For instance, in 2005, the ‘Stonehenge Riverside Project’ team found evidence of household structures at Durrington Walls. These structures were soon defined as houses due to their contextual evidence, and they have gradually been related to the houses found in the context of the Orcadian later Neolithic as a consequence of a series of structural affinities (Fig. 5.1). As the team pointed out in the 2006 Interim Report: ‘the house plans are reminiscent of Skara Brae and other Orcadian houses of the 3rd millennium BC’ (Parker Pearson et al. 2006). The Orcadian flavour of these structures has been pointed out again by Thomas (2010) in the latest interpretive approach to the Grooved Ware assemblage (see section 5.5). In any case, in comparing the establishment of this analogy with that described in 1931, it is possible to assert that the comparative method still is a fundamental resource of archaeological interpretation.

In summary, the large-scale in archaeology is ultimately the result of the application of a method that, through focusing upon parameters of physical similarity and difference, classifies and assembles evidence in space and time. This method can be understood as a system ‘of concept formation’ (Adams & Adams 1991: 5). The large-scale is a ‘virtual field’ created by a discourse – modern discourse on method – which initially endorsed the possibility of reflecting upon past phenomena objectively. However, whilst few continue to promote this relationship and the value of large-scale, as will be discussed, is questioned, it still occupies a central position within archaeological practice.
First and foremost, the large-scale, in being a space of category formation, can be said to be central for, as Joyce indicates, ‘narrative is constitutive of archaeology’ (Joyce 2002: 2). If archaeology is textual in its character, then its meta-language (Olsen 1990: 195), which is constituted - and constitutes – the large scale, has to be considered to work as basic units of intelligibility from which the past is structured and ready to be interpreted. Therefore, the large-scale works as a common reference point (Jones 2007) from which we have access to the past; we can talk about the past, and pass on this knowledge to new generations of archaeologists.

The centrality of the large-scale can be reflected upon every step taken in archaeology; from the point one comes across a structure never seen before, and from the moment in which something is unearthed. This movement is considered by Joyce as reflecting upon the textual character of archaeology, insisting that the act of ‘writing starts long before an author puts pen to page’ (2002: 2). The centrality of this practice can be clearly evidenced with fieldwork methodologies. For instance, if we look at the finds
record of any site, we will realise that, in many instances, the objects recovered are recorded as already being something other than a ‘flint’ or a ‘pot’. Instead, these remains are already recorded as being ‘leaf-shaped arrowheads’, ‘Grooved Ware’ and so forth. Likewise, the centrality of the large-scale is revealed through thinking about the way students of archaeology gain understanding of the past. Before being taught about the nuances and themes developed within certain archaeological contexts, they first learn about the existence of ‘henges’, ‘causeway enclosures’, ‘cursus monuments’ etc. Conceptual categories give the student access and a sense of structure to the past they study.

From this definition a series of questions develop. If the large-scale is so central for archaeology, why has it been looked upon with scepticism within current archaeological practice? What sort of alternatives do archaeologists provide in order to move away from this way of doing archaeology? Given the criticism heaped upon the large-scale what situation does archaeology find itself in?

5.2 Raising questions on method.

In the last section, I argued that, for the most part, the large-scale can be defined as a ‘virtual field’ that is produced by a method which both helps locate the evidence in space and time and that gives rise to the formation of conceptual categories. Understood within these parameters, the large-scale has not triggered debate in terms of spatial distribution of evidence, and the past concerns over temporal allocation have been dissipated by the emergence of different dating methods. In contrast, the validity of archaeological categorisation – and of specific categories – has always been contested.

In this section, some of the major critiques of the nature and character of archaeological categorisation within current archaeology are examined. The discussion seeks to explore the origins and character of these appraisals. Moreover, it assesses the alternative strategies devised in order to overcome the determinism of the large-scale, and the positive and controversial effects that have been triggered by the questioning of what we define as the large-scale. Are these views solid enough to be able to discard any sort of inference that is developed from the large-scale? If so, should we abandon the possibility of exploring interpretive contexts such as the one selected for this research?
5.2.1 Archaeological categorisation and the construction of past realities.

'We as archaeologists could be accused of having become conceptually blinded by language, and not only by language, but by contemporary cultural context too, for language and cultural contexts are intrinsically linked'.

(Insoll 2007b: 16-17).

'Taxonomies and descriptions tell us about how archaeologists think about past socio-cultural systems, but is there any reason to think that they tell us anything about the manner in which social actors thought about their culture?'

(Shanks & Tilley 2007: 84).

A shared agreement exists currently in archaeology that archaeological categories do not reflect upon the realities of the people they wish to interpret. In fact, this concern has been raised within different areas of archaeological practice. For instance, archaeological approaches that have been aided by direct ethnographic sources (e.g. Insoll 2004; 2007) have demonstrated that archaeological classification and categorisation, at least as formulated and used in prehistory, may be structuring the past in ways which differ radically from the contexts we study. Similar concerns have arisen within ‘post-processual’ circles resulting from the effects of the application of, for instance, hermeneutics in our discipline (e.g. Johnsen & Olsen 1992; Shanks & Tilley 1992: 278). In this case, attention has been drawn to the kind of constraints that modern epistemology has upon archaeological interpretation. In particular, it has been noted that the methodological resources archaeology employs are not neutralising devices but are historically constituted within the ideological structures that emerged with modernity (e.g. see Thomas 2004a). In whichever case, the concern with the potential for archaeological classification and categorisation to reflect upon past phenomena is not new. Similar doubts were already present during culture-historical times in the context of the archaeology practiced in the United States (Trigger 2006).

For instance, in the early 1920’s, Harold Gladwin and Winifred Gladwin proposed a system for classifying the cultures of the American south-west (Wesson 2005). In understanding material patterns resulting from processes of trade, these researchers suggested that artefact classification had to be deployed independently from cultural classification (Trigger 2006: 297). Following from this debate on the nature and usefulness of archaeological categorisation, in 1932, Colton devised a classification method derived from the Linnaean-style system used in the biological sciences (ibid. 298). The debate came to its zenith with Ford’s questioning of the usefulness of certain typologies. He emphasised (Colton 1932) that only those classifications which prove to
be useful to interpret the culture histories of the peoples we study should be taken into consideration.

A year after Ford's publication, Rouse indicated how, through statistical clustering, it was possible to identify *emic* types, that is, types which ‘represent the norms or ideal mental templates share by a group of artisans’ (Trigger 2006: 299). Although this issue had already been discussed during the 1920's and 1930's, Taylor, in *A Study of Archaeology* (1948), re-emphasised the importance of creating systems of classification which correspond to actual categorisations of the cultures studied (Lucas 2001: 81). Following this reasoning, Taylor distinguished amongst empirical and cultural classifications (*ibid.* 83). This distinction was also suggested by Ford and Spauling with reference to *emic* and *etic* types. In contrast to the most generalised views regarding the topic, Ford – anticipating an attitude characteristic of the American New Archaeology – criticised the idea of cultural classification, ‘claiming that archaeology must go beyond the specific details of a culture to a more objective, scientific understanding of general principles of cultural change’ (Lucas 2001: 84). What all these positions share is a concern about the kind of information that archaeological categorisation and classification offers; a concern which moved beyond the debates of the first half of the twentieth century to being placed at the core of the New Archaeology.

Although, as has been noted, questions about the potential for archaeological classification and categorisation to reflect upon past events were already anticipated during the early twentieth century, fundamental differences have to be defined between these and the contemporary approaches mentioned at the beginning of the text. The traditional concerns with the nature and character of archaeological classification and categorisation emerged only through the expectation of devising methods which could better reflect upon past patterns, clearly identified as: ‘one idea underlying the development and refinement of the classificatory schemes was that the act of classification was usually held to be a neutral device and independent of theory’ (Shanks & Tilley 2007: 83). In contrast, contemporary approaches – at least those emerging from concerns over archaeological epistemology – have not sought an alternative method as such, for what is questioned is not so much the results of applying a method, but the idea of a neutralising method itself (see e.g. Barrett 1997; Thomas 2004a). If there is no reason to suppose that archaeology can be value-free, then there is no reason to build an alternative epistemological edifice. This has led to a situation characterised by (1) a critique of the effects of archaeological epistemology, (2) the
development of alternative interpretive strategies which may be thought to surpass the need of method and (3) a displacement of concern from material patterning to what has been designated as social practice.

Jones and Richards (2000) have drawn attention to the fact that the traditional classificatory schemes that gave rise to the conceptualisation of the Orcadian Neolithic can work as 'powerful mechanisms of identification' (ibid. 101) but also limit the extent of our interpretations. They argue this by emphasising the historical contingency of the seemingly neutral classificatory systems and conceptual categories that stand above any interpretation. In order to distance the research from the determinism of the method, they suggest that there is a possibility of approaching archaeological data by focusing on social practice rather than on typology (ibid.). In this case, typology is not only taken as a neutralising device which classifies according to parameters of similarity and difference but it is also considered as one which reflects upon the character of social traditions as defined in culture-historic times. In this sense, these authors denote that the reliance upon 'ideal types' (see section 7.4) hinders the possibility of understanding elements such as 'construction and use, forcing us to look at them as single events with original and unitary meanings' (ibid. 104). This concern leads them to indicate that archaeology should move away from this emphasis on classification and categorisation to examine the social practices which take place in specific conditions. Although this theoretical movement, as shall be demonstrated in Chapter Seven, takes Jones and Richards to devise novel understandings about the Orcadian Neolithic, it also raises a number of questions which I intend to address at the end of the present chapter. Has the archaeological interest on the creative forces of agency taken archaeology to a position in which - rather than exposing the double movement 'reproduction-alteration' expressed in the 'structuration theories' –it has translated mostly through an emphasis on variability? Do we examine social practices encountered in the archaeological record? Why are social practices considered less of an interpretive outcome than, for instance, archaeological classification? Is the emphasis upon variability taken to the extreme in which material patterns are thought to have no interpretive value whatsoever?

In order to take this section to an end, I would like to draw upon an example related to the question of whether archaeological categories reflect upon past phenomena. Critiques of the influence that modern epistemology has in archaeology have taken place through the formulation of questions which, I suggest, are still positivistic in character. Although this issue will be further discussed in section 5.5 with an examination based
upon the asymmetrical use of conceptual categories, it can be introduced here by using a particular example. In this case, I would like to draw attention to Tilley's examination of the term ‘megalith’ (1998; 1999). In a series of articles, Tilley has pointed to the perseverance of the concept throughout the history of archaeology. As he notes, although the term has been discussed in many different ways by multiple authors, ‘they all assume that there is something that links together these structures at a regional or European level’ (1999: 95). He argues that whilst empirical detail demonstrates that ‘the concept of ‘megalith’ unifies what are disparate things’ (ibid. 97), researchers have not yet found the means to move beyond the use this concept in our narratives of the European Neolithic. This discussion is encouraged by posing the following question ‘to what extent does the term ‘capture’ the reality of the stone monuments it is used to discuss?’ (ibid. 82).

Whilst, as has been mentioned, some of the connotations resting beneath Tilley's discussion over the term 'megalith' will be delineated in following sections, it is here important to underscore the fact that, even though, Tilley had developed numerous critiques on the force of modern epistemology through the incorporation of phenomenology in the discipline (e.g. Tilley 1994; 2004; 2008), his main question here, is essentially positivistic in character. In wondering whether the term can ‘capture’ the reality of the elements that we wish to discuss, Tilley is, in effect, indicating both that some categories reflect upon reality better than others, and that archaeological categorisation can shed light upon the realities of those who lived in the past. Therefore, he is implicitly maintaining the Cartesian distinction which he has insensitively argued against in his approaches to ‘embodied experience’.

5.2.2 Categorisation, sight and the archaeology of senses.

‘If archaeologists are to study all the senses [...] in order to produce more comprehensive accounts of past cultural practices, what theories and methods should they use?’

(Skeates 2010: 2).

When considering the development of the present research in Chapter Two, I discussed how the post-processual concern over the determinism of Western epistemology triggered – amongst other things – the emergence of a critique concerned with the ways in which landscape had traditionally been studied in archaeology. Empirical approaches to the study of landscape began to be considered as ‘accounts that often see[m] quite remote from the past human lives that were lived in these places’
This position emerged through the recognition that the techniques used to study the landscape emphasise the possibility of observing reality from a disengaged position (Wylie 2007: 145; Thomas 2008). Likewise, it was also pointed out that traditional approaches emanate from the ‘contemporary Western understanding of landscape’ (Thomas 2001: 167) which relates to ‘a distinctive conception of the world which developed within the modern era’ (ibid.). These concerns caused the development of alternative ways of studying the landscape which derived from insights originated within the ‘New Cultural Geography’ and, ultimately, from the spheres of phenomenology (see e.g. Tilley 1994, 2004, 2008; Thomas 1993a, 2001).

What is important for this research is that through these studies, it was possible to stress the ‘corporeal nature of knowledge, experience and perception’ (Wylie 2007: 147). These new bodies of theory highlighted how human experience is inevitably multisensory. In this sense, we should not render the experience of landscape exclusively at a visual level, for landscape is ‘simultaneously a visionscape, a touchscape, a soundscape, a smellscape, and a tastescape. These different perceptive experiences occur all at once. Thus, our experience is always synaesthetic (emphasis added by the author)’ (Tilley 2010: 27-8). Insights like the ones discussed by Tilley began a movement in archaeology concerned with the importance of exploring the human senses.

Drawing from insights developed by ‘sensual culture studies’ which had arisen in other fields such as anthropology, geography and cultural studies in the early twenty-first century (see Skeates 2010 for discussion), it began to be recognised that not only does the human experience derive from the senses but that sensory understanding is culturally specific and hierarchically distributed in different cultures (Classen 1993; Gosden 2001; Howes 2009). As a result, it began to be acknowledged that the ‘sensory qualities of places have the potential to aid us in our search to understand their uses and meanings’ (Watson 2001: 297). Numerous researchers reinterpreted prehistoric contexts taking into consideration elements which had been traditionally overlooked (see e.g. McGregor 1999; Cummings et al. 2002; Tilley 2008).

Furthermore, this ‘sensory turn’ triggered a movement of reflection upon the privilege given to sight in both archaeological methodology and interpretation. Whilst the historical contingency of the archaeological method had been highlighted through emphasising its relationship to modern epistemology, it was now possible to further
elaborate on this critique by pointing out that sight has traditionally occupied a privileged position in both archaeological theory and practice (MacGregor 1999; Skeates 2010). Again drawing on the character of modern epistemology, it has been possible to establish that the importance of sight, and its relation to the archaeological method, finds its origins with the development of ‘Cartesian perspectivism’ (Thomas 2009). In contrast to the other senses, Descartes indicated that sight is to be privileged for the eye provides ‘sensory stimuli to the brain’ (ibid. 4) indicating that it is actually ‘the soul that sees’ (ibid.). The importance of sight for the development of scientific knowledge was also recognised by empiricists through their emphasis on observation and experimentation (ibid.). The establishment of a further link between archaeological methodologies and modern epistemology again served to denaturalise the archaeological method, and to cast doubt on the potential of archaeological categorisation to reflect upon the ways in which the people we study categorised their worldly experience.

These studies have provided us with a critical edge that was necessary to bring to the surface the naïveté of archaeological practice, and have brought forward new interpretive dimensions to the study of the archaeological record. However, I want to argue that in doing so, we are at danger of falling into a situation in which, in order to avoid imposing our sensory biases upon other cultures (Skeates 2010: 3), we systematically undervalue visual inferences in favour of others which may be thought to represent the past more accurately. In highlighting that sensory experience is necessarily situated, it is important to remember that our experience is also situated. In claiming that, the way to obtain better insights about the ‘sensory world of others […] necessitates an unlearning […] of sight which prejudice is only part’ (Gosden 2001: 162) might takes us to a situation in which Otherness is not only characterised as different to our modern experience but opposite to it. Some questions arise in the light of this proposition: is it possible to emancipate archaeology from the ‘tyranny of method’ (Thomas 2004a)? Should we instead critically consider the kind of insights that method can provide for archaeological interpretation?

5.3 Primary conclusions: method and language.

‘We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there. To say that the world is out there, that is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states. To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no
sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations’.

(Rorty 1989: 5).

In the last section, I have argued that the large-scale should be, first and foremost, defined as a ‘virtual field’ that encloses the frame of reference from which the past is primarily structured, and from which the basic language of archaeology derives. However, despite its centrality, resulting from the recognition of the historical contingency of the method by which the large-scale is configured, it is no longer possible to indicate that the large-scale reveals past social action. At the very most, the large-scale is the by-product of a method which, as has been pointed out, is historically contingent and classifies and assembles archaeological evidence in parameters of visual similarity and difference.

This indicates that it is not the only method that could be applied in archaeology to structure past evidence. In its place, we could devise alternative methods in which archaeological evidence is classified according to, for instance, fabric or taste but these methods would still be constrictive and would, in effect, continue restricting what we can say about the past. Alternatively, we could think about abandoning the idea of a method but, ironically, in doing so, we would no longer be in the position of doing archaeology as archaeological discourses exist insofar as there is a dialogue and, for there to be a dialogue there needs to be a common language (see Bakthin 1981; Joyce 2002).

This is important for several reasons. Firstly, the historical contingency of archaeological language must be demonstrated in order to denaturalise it and, hence, to find other resources from which to feed interpretation. Secondly, it allows us to think that it is not possible to either do without a language or to seek the development of alternative languages which may reflect the past to a greater extent (see Rorty 1989). Drawing upon the latter, it then becomes possible to question Tilley’s enquiry into the validity of the term ‘megalith’ (1998; 1999). Should the question focus on the term itself or upon the inferences that have been traditionally attached to the term? In effect, there is no reason to discourage the use of the term as it is possible to integrate a series of structures that are related in terms of physical similarity. The question should be directed at the soundness of the inferences drawn out of this conceptual category.

Moreover, even if, as Jones and Richards (2000) contend, it is possible to move away from the determinism of typology by approaching the data through inferring social practice, the former will still be necessary to be able to develop narratives about the
Orcadian Neolithic. A concern with social practice might help us to avoid the homogenising effects of typology and of archaeological categorisation. Yet, as has been noted with regards to the way in which students learn about the past, the nuances represented through a focus on social practice will only be placed within a narrative using language which derives from typological description. In this sense, the variability of the archaeological record can be explored, but by maintaining the language they seek to dismantle.

5.3.1 More implications: material patterns and variability.

‘If there is not a determinate relationship between large-scale and small-scale [...] then it cannot be sufficient to focus all archaeological endeavour on the large-scale. To do so is to treat all variability as ‘noise’, as indeed it has been treated through recent decades in archaeology’.

(Hodder 2000: 26).

Up to this point, it has been suggested that the large-scale is a ‘virtual field’ from which the past is structured and through which the meta-language of archaeology emanates. In this sense, the large scale is necessary for the narration of the past, even if it is contended that it is not a neutralising device which plots past human action. Nevertheless, one question remains to be answered. If, as has been pointed out, the large-scale is primarily the by-product of a method which classifies data in terms of similarity and difference, is it possible to indicate that, despite its historical contingency, it has interpretive value? Or should we move away from its use as it simply hinders our possibilities of engaging with past social action?

In section 5.2.1, it was noted that Jones and Richards (2000) foresaw the possibility of moving away from the homogenising effects of archaeological classification and categorisation, through focusing the interpretive efforts into the examination of social practice. The detrimental effects of typological studies had been exposed by Richards (1993b) drawing attention to the particular context of the Stenness-Brodgar area (Mainland Orkney) during the later Neolithic (Fig. 5.2). As he noted, it would be possible to examine Maeshowe as a ‘passage grave’ (see Davidson & Henshall 1989), the Stones of Stenness as a ‘class 1 henge’ (see Ritchie 1985) and the houses at Barnhouse as typical later Neolithic structures (see Richards 1991a: 27) due to physical affinity (see Chapter Seven) However, in doing so, the existing relatedness amongst these structures and the ways in which they were experienced and used by inhabitants of that time would be undermined as they would ‘remain typologically
distant' (ibid. 146). On the contrary, these structures should be considered in relation to each other as they form part of the same archaeological landscape (ibid.).

This was not the only problem encountered by Richards. Conversely, in considering the abovementioned structures typologically, their completed form tends to be prioritised. This situation, he noted, induces to the development of single meaning (Richards 2004: 105). Nevertheless, Richards demonstrated that this view is problematic, maintaining that, for instance, the monoliths that we see today at the Stones of Stenness (Mainland) were erected at different points in time, perhaps in occasions where social gatherings took place within this locale (Richards 1993b; 2004).

Figure 5.2 Stenness-Brodgar area. (After Richards 1996a).
Richards scepticism of the value of the large-scale forms part of a wider movement which, as has already been pointed out, was triggered within post-processual discourse through the reaction against previous archaeological paradigms, and by the application of bodies of theory which enhanced the worldly character of human experience and the necessity to account for the creative forces of human agency within specific socio-cultural milieus. Whilst at various points throughout this research I have examined the character and limitations of these approaches (see e.g. section 2.2.1) and, therefore, no review is needed at this point, I would like to draw attention to the methodological strategies adopted in interpretive approaches.

In order to obtain the picture of this movement, it is possible to indicate that two different but yet related outlooks are at play. On the one hand, if the archaeological record is contemplated as cumulative social practice, then it is only possible to draw attention into the creating forces of human agency within instances in which variability in the archaeological record is perceived. A clear instance of this attitude is found, as we shall discuss in Chapter Seven, with regards to the examination of Orcadian later Neolithic households. Although, Richards has persuasively drawn attention to the fact that the patterned social order observed in these households might be drawing upon cosmological order, he is quick to point out that ‘human agency is constantly reworking and modifying this architectural representation’ (Downes & Richards 2005). An obvious way to pinpoint agency in the archaeological record is, therefore, to draw upon instances of variability. Moreover, as has been discussed in the previous lines, variability can be also used to dismantle discourses drawn under the guise of classification and categorisation at a wider level. Even though this movement towards the examination of variability is acute within approaches that have actively engaged with these new theoretical discussions, it is possible to indicate that this methodological movement has influenced wider audiences knowledgeable of the changing directions of the post-processual discourse. The later stance can be clarified with the following example.

In Chapter Two, I briefly presented Bradley and Chapman’s (1986) model of intercultural interaction in the context of the later British and Irish Neolithic. In this model, the authors considered the ‘replication’ of certain elements in different regions of the above mentioned archaeological context as evidence for interaction amongst different social groups in which elites would have participated in excluding spheres of
exchange. Amongst the assemblages taken into consideration to develop this approach, the authors pointed at the identification of henges in the different regions examined. Whilst on this occasion, these structures were somehow perceived as historically related, that is, built in different regions resulting from intercultural interaction, Bradley’s approximation to the study of these structures has changed considerably in his new publication *Stages and Screens: an investigation of four henge monuments in Northern and North-eastern Scotland* (2011).

Like many other conceptual categories, the term ‘henge’ was coined in the early twentieth century. Kendrick and Hawkes (1932) used it to account for a series of similar structures widely distributed in the geography of the British Isles although, according to Bradley (2011), they did so in a concerned manner for they defied strong classification due to the lack of means to determine their chronological allocation. Nonetheless, with the passage of time, ‘henge’ came to be understood as a term defining structures characterised as ‘circular earthwork enclosures’ (*ibid. xv*) with an internal ditch and an external bank (Harding & Lee 1987). Whilst this definition has been sustained through time, it has been complemented with a series of connotations. For instance, there is general agreement that wooden structures are often replaced by monoliths (see e.g. Wainwright 1989).

Nevertheless, these connotations have to be examined further for, as Bradley (2011) strongly suggests, traditional classificatory schemas were devised through the characterisation of southern henges. As he notes: ‘all too often archaeologists treat their type site as a prototype for a tradition of prehistoric architecture’ (*ibid. xv*). In order to put this and other characterisations into scrutiny, Bradley examined a series of northern henges. If better understandings are to be pursued, says Bradley, more attention has to be placed upon the inspection of building sequences to the detriment of the visual component through which conceptual categories once emerged. Responding to the aforementioned situation, Bradley induces us to follow an approach which not only looks closer at the sequences through which these structures were built but also stresses the specificities found in examining henges. However, despite keeping the term to describe a tradition of architecture, he stresses that ‘henges cannot be treated as unitary phenomena’ (*ibid. xvii*).

Bradley’s example is revealing for it allows us to observe the influence of post-processual discourse over researchers which had traditionally placed enquiries directed to the examination of contexts of intercultural interaction. Indeed, structures
of meaning and association are to be sought within the realm of practice taking place in particular contexts. However, this enquiry has played in detriment to the instigation of better understandings regarding the nature and character and value of material patterning. In the light of this discussion, it appears necessary to enquire into the possibility to reconcile an ever growing polarisation occurring in archaeological interpretation. Conceivably, one way of doing so, is to re-think the interpretive value of material patterning in the light the new conceptualisation of social dynamics portrayed in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Four, I have discussed that by the very conditions of existence, social dynamics can no longer be exclusively conceived internally but have to account for the transformative space which is created in situations in which social groups interact with others conceived as Other. The space ‘in-between’ is, in itself a space of transformation for it triggers self-conceptualisation and, therefore, re-conceptualisation of identity. Moreover, this space can also give rise to changes which are sometimes characterised by the integration of new forms within specific socio-cultural milieus. These forms emerge from the hermeneutical conversations’ taking place in the ‘in-between’, however, in some instances can give rise to cultural phenomena which, in archaeology we can define as diffusion. Although the elements diffused can no longer be conceived as the transfer of cultural traits from one culture to another, they can be envisaged in archaeology through visual means and aided by other contextual evidence. Following from these insights, I would like to suggest that, whilst the large-scale – understood within the parameters discussed in this chapter – is a by-product of a historically contingent method, it can demarcate contexts which are symptomatic of historical relatedness. In the light of this proposition, how are we to deal with contexts of material patterning taking into consideration theoretical frameworks which integrate the new reconceptualisation of diffusion? This question will be used as the opening of Chapter Six as this reflection takes us to new possibilities to think about style in archaeology. However, before doing so, I would like to discuss a last point in this chapter. On this occasion, I would like to underscore what I consider to be a paradox of the post-processual discourse. Whilst on the one hand, fundamental questions are placed on the possibilities of archaeological epistemology, at the level of practice, a series of long questioned understandings still play a central role into what we say about the past. This situation is exemplified by considering the life stories of two conceptual categories: Grooved Ware and megalith.
5.4 Similarity, difference and the ‘old phantoms’ of traditional archaeology.

Whilst, theoretically speaking, archaeological thought has cast doubt on the possibility of conceptual categories to reflect upon past social patterns due to the contingency of the method from which they emerge, at the level of practice, the usefulness of conceptual categories is often defined through a series of understandings which demand further consideration. In effect, it is possible to indicate that the value of conceptual categories varies asymmetrically, and it does so, drawing from an underlying logic which, as will be discussed towards the end of this section, has been for long time superseded. In order to illustrate this tendency, I would like to unfold the stories of two conceptual categories: ‘Grooved Ware’ and ‘megalith’. Of central importance is to point out (1) how these categories were first formulated, (2) how they have been treated throughout the history of archaeology and (3) what is their present situation.

As was discussed in section 5.1, the conceptualisation of Grooved Ware occurred through the increasing number of assemblages of the same kind found across the British Isles. Whilst aS Childe struggled with its definition when he first encountered this pottery assemblage at Skara Brae, Grooved Ware was finally regarded as an archaeological category in 1936, drawing attention to the similarity of assemblages found both in southern Britain and in the Orkney Islands. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Grooved Ware was lately conceived as a specific entity not only because it lacked Continental antecedents (Thomas 2010) but also because it was correlated to a variety of different contexts, violating the classical definition of A ‘archaeological culture’ (Ibid.). Similarly, the conceptualisation of ‘megalith’ occurred through the correlation of different structures that were characterised by ‘large blocks of unworked stone or slightly worked stone’ (Peet 1960[1912]: 8). Whereas initially, these structures were localised in Asia, Europe and North Africa (Daniel 1950: 14; Tilley 1999: 8), it soon became a concept designed to account for those structures found within the limits of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic shores of Europe, during the Neolithic and the Copper Age.

To this point, it could be argued that the formation of both conceptual categories is virtually identical. The structures/objects integrated within the categories were defined by the ‘transportation of information from one object to another on the basis of some relation of comparability between them’ (Umeov 1970 as cited in Hodder 1982c: 16). In addition, both categories are integrated by elements which were recovered
amongst wide geographical regions and throughout a lengthy time span, and were found in relation to different contexts and differing practices (e.g. domestic use and deposition in pits in the case of Grooved Ware and funerary activities within the tombs).

In whichever case, it is important to highlight that whether throughout the history of archaeology the location of Grooved Ware in different areas of the British Isles has been implicitly and explicitly perceived as product of historical circumstances of one kind or another, the history of the term ‘megalith’ has been a history of constant redefinition. Thus, since its conceptualisation, Grooved Ware has not only been examined hoping for the definition of regional sequences (e.g. Longworth & Wainwright 1971) but has also been used to construct interpretive scenarios such as follows. For instance, Longworth & Wainwright (ibid.) postulated that, given the predominance of pig bones in association with Grooved Ware, the users of Grooved Ware could have been pastoralists (Thomas 2010: 4). On the other hand, Bradley, drawing from the sets of material culture associated with Grooved Ware, suggested that these pots could be related to elites through spheres of privileged exchange (Bradley 1984a, Bradley & Chapman 1986; Thomas 2010: 4) (see section 7.1.1 for discussion).

In contrast to Grooved Ware, the history of research on ‘megaliths’ is a lot more complicated, not only because these structures have always sparked off debate but because they have, on many occasions, been used to justify and to illustrate theoretical positions of a different nature. In Chapter Two, I anticipated some of the interpretive scenarios given to the so-called ‘megalithic phenomenon’. As was pointed out, the ‘megalithic phenomenon’ gave rise to innumerable models of diffusion during the first half of the twentieth century (see e.g. Montelius 1905; Peet 1912; Childe 1925; Forde 1930; Daniel 1958). However, with the advent of the New Archaeology, the discussion was readdressed by Renfrew (e.g. 1973; 1976) who argued that these structures were not historically related but would have acted as territorial markers in the advent of population pressure.

Likewise, ‘megalithic art’ became a matter of concern with the development of structuralist thought in our discipline. On the one hand, drawing from an understanding by which ‘within human individuals there is some essence which does not change and which oblige us to behave in predictable limits’ (Sturrock 1993: 53), a series of authors began to pursue the possibility of finding out about the internal
structures of societies through reading ‘megalithic art’ (e.g. Bueno Ramírez & Balbin-Berhmann 1992, 1996, 2000). On the other hand, it was postulated that the similarities of ‘megalithic art’ should not be considered as resulting from individuals undergoing similar stages of altered consciousness (e.g. Bradley 1989; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988, 1989, 1993). In addition, it is important not to obliterate that the discussion on long-distance interaction that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s in the context European Atlantic during the Neolithic were often centred on the contemplation of material similarities amongst megalithic structures of different regions (e.g. Eogan 1989; Shee Twohig 1993; Scarre 1998; Sheridan 2000, 2003) (see 2.2.1 for discussion).

Through this brief account of some of the major discussions and narratives generated by the use of these conceptual categories, it has become possible to underscore that, at the very least, the archaeological community has always been more inclined to link historically the elements which integrate the category Grooved Ware over the entities which are defined as ‘megaliths’. The latter has always triggered debate and, in many occasions, its historical correspondence has been questioned.

In section 5.2.1, Tilley’s examination of the validity of the concept ‘megalith’ has been anticipated. So far, the positivistic undertones of the question which opened the discussion – to what extent the category reflects upon past reality – have been pointed out. By drawing attention to the contingency of the method through which archaeological categories emanate, it has been noted that Tilley’s enquiry was not only positivistic in character but was wrongly addressed towards the concept itself rather than towards the kind of inferences which have emerged from the observation of the category. Moreover, I argue that, by contending that this category should be abandoned for, within it, high levels of variability are encountered, Tilley is, by implication, permeating the perception by which a historical relation between assemblages can only be inferred insofar as its members present durable levels of similarity.

The perseverance of the archaeological consciousness over the indication of historical relatedness over different elements integrated within a specific category becomes clearer when comparing those which are put into question with others that not only are untroubled but that are nowadays being used to portray interpretive scenarios which consider the historicity of elements integrating a category. A perfect example of this situation is found within Thomas’ (2010) latest interpretive narrative produced over the examination of Grooved Ware. Whilst this account will be thoroughly considered within the case study of Chapter Seven, it is important to recognise in this
section that his account has persisted the historical relatedness amongst Grooved Ware assemblages found across Britain and Ireland during the later Neolithic. This category holds an entity which first originated in the Orkney Islands and that gradually was adopted by a series of communities moving towards the south of England. Grooved Ware, according to Thomas ‘provided a medium for the elaboration of the notion of the domestic community in southern Britain, creating a new conception of the social at a time of profound change’ (ibid. 1).

In this section, I have not tried to argue in favour or against the validity of the concept ‘megalith’. Instead, I have attempted to illustrate that the historicity of archaeological categories is often put into question through the level of variability which is observed in analysing its integrating elements. This understanding defies the realisation that diffusion, understood as the effects of social interaction, can give rise to innumerable situations and through a variety of means and, therefore, it is questionable as to whether indices of similarity should be taken as unquestionable precepts from which the level of interaction or the possibilities of a historical link amongst elements is assessed. Bearing this in mind, it is time to draw a series of conclusions.

5.5 Conclusions.

In this chapter, I have focused on assessing the nature and character of the large-scale in archaeology. This exploration was needed to disentangle the different strands of discussion developed within the post-processual discourse. In the course of this examination, I have discussed that not only is it impractical to strive for archaeological approaches which move away from the large-scale as it is central for the definition of the meta-language of archaeology, but it is also not desirable to overlook the interpretive possibilities offered by, for instance, contexts of material patterning.

Through this discussion, I have not called for the return to previous archaeological paradigms. Rather, I have suggested that, once having come to terms with the historical contingency of the large-scale, it is possible to begin thinking about the possibilities of making inferences through means of sight. Following from this, I have argued that material patterning can be symptomatic of historical relatedness. In this case, material patterning might not directly reflect upon past entities but can be indicative of processes which should not be underestimated in archaeological interpretation.
CHAPTER SIX:

ON STYLE

6. Introduction.

'Style matters as the explanation for art history and archaeology: without style we have nothing to talk about, no problem to solve'.

(Davis 1990: 22).

'[...] I have come to the conclusion that (style) [...] does not exist. It does not exist because style is not a meaningful category within which to define the social and I hope to argue in this paper that we should abandon the style concept altogether'.

(Boast 1997: 173-4).

In the last chapter, I argued that due to a series of theoretical concerns raised within the post-processual discourse, the traditional character conferred to the large-scale and of material patterning was put into question chiefly drawing upon the historical contingency of archaeological epistemology. This kind of discussion was essential to overcome the naiveté of previous archaeological paradigms but, in doing so, the centrality of the large-scale as an a priori condition for archaeological discourse was ultimately undervalued and so it was the possibility of thinking about alternative ways of engaging with the interpretive value of visual inferences.

Although to a degree, the topic discussed in Chapter Five is reminiscent to that of style, the latter has been taken to a very different a domain of enquiry throughout the history of research on the topic. In this case, post-processual discourse has worked in some instances towards the theorisation of style (e.g. Hodder 1990b; Shanks & Tilley 1992) but only Boast (1997) has raised epistemological concerns within this topic.

In this chapter, I aim to briefly inspect the different theoretical paradigms which have dominated the discourse on style to date. This discussion will be followed by a little reflection into the state of research on style and into the kind of possibilities that can be raised through placing this notion within the framework presented in this research. As such, this reflection does not aim at seeking for another theoretical paradigm on style but it works to fulfil Chapter Five and to raise awareness to the fact that style could be defined differently.
6.1 Style in archaeology.

Few topics have triggered as much prolonged debate in archaeology as style. Style has been characterized as an active element of material culture; as a passive one; as a medium of communication. Style has been related to identity and to ideology. From being considered central to archaeological interpretation, it has also been portrayed as an ineffectual category. It has always proved to be a conflictive term (Shanks & Tilley 1992; Boast 1997) and rarely has a decade passed without it being subjected to a major revisionist movement.

In this section, I aim to explore the main discussions on the nature of style in so far as it relates to archaeology. However, this cannot be considered a comprehensive account and outstanding reviews on the topic of style in archaeology have been published elsewhere (see e.g. Dunnell 1982; Shanks & Tilley 1987a; Hegmon 1992; Jones 1997; Lucas 2001). Therefore, the discussion is limited to highlighting a series of underlying themes which have permeated all approaches developed to date, including Boast’s (1997) celebrated rejection of the category. Drawing from this discussion, I will then proceed to deal with the following questions: (1) how much the integration of the space ‘in-between’ in our attitudes to social phenomena challenges our understanding of style in archaeology? (2) Is it possible to sketch yet another account on the issue of style in archaeology?

6.1.1 Tradition, transmission and replication. Style and culture-history.

‘Types are stylistic patterns, to which the artisan tries to make his completed artefacts conform’.

(Rouse 1939: 15 as quoted in Shanks & Tilley 2007: 80).

Summaries on the history of the debate of style in archaeology often begin their discussion within the context of culture-history (e.g. Shanks & Tilley 1992; Lucas 2001). This is so, because both cultures, and the spread of cultural elements, were sought in archaeology through parameters of visual similarity. However, it should be pointed out that style was never used as a specific category and was not conceptualised as such. Instead, the word was used in a few instances, as above, to refer to particular ways of ‘doing’, specific to given cultural units. Following from the generalised perception that cultural units are constituted through the sharing of a tradition amongst its members, this being inherited and passed down to subsequent generations (see section 3.3.1), stylistic patterns were conceived as ‘mental templates’ through
which material objects were fashioned. Because cultures were understood as bounded entities resistant to change, it was possible to plot them through the replication of certain material elements.

From this it appeared possible to construct (1) archaeological typologies which reflected upon the replication of certain elements through time to then (2) decipher ‘archaeological cultures’ through the association of types in space and time. This logic was clearly defined by Childe as follows:

‘When a group of types are found together under circumstances suggesting cotemporary use, they are said to be associated. [...] The larger the number of closed finds in which the same types are associated and the more types thus associated, the less likely is the association to be fortuitous, the greater the probability of an organic coherence between the types as products of one common pattern of behaviour’.

(Childe 1956: 31-4).

In this sense, if discussions surrounding the debate over the concept of style in archaeology sometimes locate its origin within the boundaries of culture-history, they do so mainly by creating a parallel between style and the configuration of archaeological typologies. In any case, it is important to recognise that unlike subsequent understandings, style was not considered to be located within specific dimensions of artefact variability (Jones 1997: 111). Instead, style was conceived as one resulting from the ‘look’ of material objects replicated through space and time. Following this logic, style was always conceived within parameters of referentiality.

Even though during this period style was not thought to be a constitutive part of an object, certain elements found within archaeological assemblages were intuitively selected as having more potential to reflect upon the traditions of specific cultures. This distinction was crystallised by Childe (1929), drawing a division between (1) tools and weapons and (2) tombs, ornaments and pottery. The former group were thought to be primarily conceived by their functionality. In keeping with this view, they were spread to different social units through trade and copying (Lucas 2001: 86). Moreover, Childe indicated that, unlike the second group, these objects could be placed within evolutionary sequences as, due to their functional nature, they would be constantly replaced by better specimens (ibid.). The latter group was considered to be more capable of reflecting specific cultural traditions and, following from the definition, more resistant to change. In contrast from the former type, their spread had to be
understood as the outcome of a process of diffusion. Childe defined these objects as 'local styles' (ibid.).

Later in his career, Childe developed a new way of thinking about material objects which came close to the dichotomisation between style and function that emerged during the 1960's (see next section). In this new conceptualisation he indicated three dimensions of variability of objects: functional, chronological and chorological (Childe 1956; Lucas 2001: 86). In this, Childe gave a primary position to function. Hence, whilst at an individual stance an object can be a glass, a window, a bottle and so forth, when integrated in clusters (e.g. typology and classification), material culture could inform us about the spatial and temporal parameters of the objects for, as has been noted at the beginning of the text, their 'looks' had to be associated with specific ways if doing within the traditions of specific cultures.

6.1.2 The origins of a dichotomy: style as formal variability of material culture.

The conceptualisation of style, and the origin of a debate which ran through to 1997 with Boast's rejection of the concept (see section 6.1.5), emerged in 1962 with Binford's re-assessment of the nature and character of material culture. Breaking with the fundamental tenets of traditional archaeology, Binford argued that, due to the existing bonds between human beings and the environment, culture had to be understood as an 'extrasomatic means of adaption for the human organism' (Binford 1962: 219).

Following from this logic, Binford indicated that material culture should not be understood as reflecting upon past patterns. It should rather be conceived 'in terms of its function within the cultural system' (Lucas 2001: 86). Drawing outwards from this perception, Binford indicated that material culture could be classified within three classes ('technomic' 'technic' and 'ideo-technic') (Binford 1962: 219-220). Each of them was thought to provide a primary function within the subsystems that composed the social system (ibid.). Moreover, as was anticipated in Chapter Two, Binford indicated that within these three classes we should account for some formal characteristics which he defined as being stylistic. Unlike the aforementioned categories, style was not regarded as adaptive but as an attribute whose function was related to the permeation and definition of group identity (ibid.). Binford (1963) broadened his conceptualisation of style by discussing how stylistic variability takes place. If culture could be studied as
a living system, he argued, the following analogy could be established. Maintaining that style should be regarded as adaptive, stylistic variability could be paralleled to the process of ‘genetic drift’; one detached from environmental causes. In the same way as the ‘genetic drift’ is more pronounced in small scale societies, the ‘stylistic drift’ would be caused by duplication errors that emerged with the passing of information to subsequent generations within these types of societies (see ibid. 91-95).

Binford’s conceptualisation of style differs little from Childe’s (1956) later differentiation of chorological, chronological and functional aspects of material culture. Binford similarly noted that style could be attributed to a process of learning and transmission. As such, style for Binford could be used as a passive indicator of ethnic affiliation in a similar vein that Childe had defined ‘local styles’ (see section above). Despite this, a fundamental difference exists between the two conceptualisations. Whilst style in culture-history was utterly subordinated to replication, that is, to the reproduction of mental templates in space and time and therefore of referentiality, Binford’s definition took style to be a component of formal variability to be found in objects.

This subtle, yet significant, change was crucial to the gradual parallelisation of style with the decoration of objects; to that facet of objects which was thought to ‘speak’, to ‘reflect’ upon a series of social aspects. More to the point, I would like to call attention to the way in which Binford defined style was central because, from that moment onwards, the majority of studies on style developed to date have analysed it synchronically rather than ‘as part of diachronic processes’ (Hodder 1997: 164). This has given rise to a series of fundamental implications which need considering, as I argue that, this movement has deeply affected the way in which style has been studied to date, including, as will be demonstrated, Boast’s (1997) final rejection of the concept as a meaningful category.

6.1.3 The classic debate.

The conceptualisation of style as an entity of archaeological examination gave rise to a debate which, as has been already noted, lasted into the late 1990s. This debate can be divided into two main episodes; first wave of discussion emerged within the New Archaeology, and the topic was taken on board by different exponents of the ‘interpretive archaeologies’ (see next section) during the late 1980’s and 1990’s. In this
section, I draw attention to the former group. Since the classic debate has been discussed in multiple reviews (see e.g. Dunnell 1982; Shanks & Tilley 1987; Jones 1997; Boast 1997; Lucas 2001; Shanks & Tilley 2007) in this section, the discussion is specifically focused on exposing the underlying logic that gave rise to different models on the concept of style.

In 1977, Wobst declared that, unlike what had so far been said about style in archaeology, style could not be rendered as a passive element of material culture but rather as an active one whose main function is the exchange of information between social groups (Wobst 1977: 327-8; Shanks & Tilley 1987: 142). Drawing parallels with 'systems theory' (see Hegmon 1992: 519), he indicated that 'stylistic messages will operate within the limits of optimal efficiency, that unambiguous, simple, and recurrent messages are most communicated with style, and that stylistic messages will be found primarily within most visible contexts' (Wallis 2011: 141). Whether, as had been anticipated in previous positions, style was mainly conceived in the decoration of objects, Wobst suggested that it should be conceived as having a primary adaptive function. Wobst's position was ground-breaking as, for the first time, style – and by extension material culture – was not conceived as passive, but as one playing an active role within social groups. This new understanding played central to both Conkey's (1978) definition of style as constitutive to social identity, and to Wiessner's further characterisation of the role of style as passing on information regarding identity to others (see below).

The recognition that style plays an active role in social spheres was re-affirmed by Wiessner's examination of the concept amongst the Kalahari San (e.g. 1983; 1984, 1985, 1989, 1990). In a similar line to that suggested by Wobst, Wiessner indicated that style is a means of communication as it acts as a channel through which identity is portrayed to others (1984: 94). This was suggested to occur in two main ways which she defined as ‘emblemic’ and ‘assertive’ style. The former mode is characterised by the transmission of a clear message and the latter is reduced to the expression of individuals and has more vague associations (Wiessner 1983: 257; Boast 1997). Resulting from the responses to a heated debate with Sackett (see below), Wiessner indicated that style was not to be exclusively found in the decoration of objects (Boast 1997), and that passive elements of style could become active depending on context (see Wiessner 1983; 1990).
Whilst Wobst and Wiessner emphasised the need to acknowledge the active character of style, the debate was further complicated by Sackett's elaborate analysis of the phenomenon. In contrast to Wobst, Sackett accentuated how style and function cannot be regarded as distinct entities (1977: 371); they had to be considered as having an equal voice in the constitution of objects (Boast 1997). Instead, he noted how style is 'inherent in the choices made by people from a broad spectrum of possibilities' (Jones 1997: 112). He defined this phenomenon as 'isochrestic variation' (Sackett 1986: 630). The latter was not considered by Sackett as a deliberate choosing. Even though, there is always a number of ways to attain specific ends, these are limited to those considered appropriate by specific cultural units (Sackett 1990: 33) and reproduced according to tradition. As follows, style, according to Sackett, is passive in nature (ibid.). Moreover, his definition implied that style is 'peculiar to specific time and place' (Sackett 1982: 73) and, therefore, it 'reflects units of ethnic tradition' (ibid.).

Even though, for the most part, Sackett presented a model opposite to those debated during the 1970's and 1980's, he indicated the possibility for style to be active using what he termed 'adjunct forms'. With this term, the author was referring to those features that resided as additional features alongside the utilitarian morphology of an object (Sackett 1990: 33). These, unlike the 'isochrestic' parameters, could play an active role within members of society.

Before proceeding to the examination of those views on style that emerged within the context of interpretive archaeologies, it is interesting to reflect upon some of the recurrent understandings found within the approaches just examined. Firstly, as has already been discussed, the dichotomisation of style and function gave rise to a generalised perception by which style could be located amidst the most visible features of material objects. This was overtly the case with Wobst but was also influential to even Sackett's conceptualisation of the 'adjunct forms'. As was indicated in Chapter Two, the understanding of style as decoration was influential for the promoters of 'ceramic sociology' (e.g. Deetz 1965; Whallon 1968). Moreover, it also became a central element of examination within posterior interpretive scenarios influenced by the entering of structural thought in archaeology. For instance, Hodder (1982d) interpreted the transformation of designs on Dutch Neolithic pottery as a reflection of change 'from strongly bounded to incorporative social groups' (Shanks & Tilley 2007: 95). Secondly, with the exception of Sackett, style ceased to be perceived as an entity which could only be sought within parameters of referentially, and was reconsidered - after Binford's conceptualisation - as formal variability within material culture. What is more, style
began to be conceptualised at that part of material culture which is inherently communicative; that part which makes materials social.


Although the debate of style reached something of a zenith within the context of the New Archaeology, it was reinvigorated in a number of occasions by exponents of 'interpretive archaeologies'. Hodder has contributed to the debate in many occasions, and his first clear contribution to the topic is found in *Symbols in Action* (1982a). In assessing the kind of insights he had obtained from his fieldwork in Kenya, he established a brief reflection on the nature of style. Contrasting with previous positions on the topic, Hodder drew attention to the fact that style should be considered more than as a means of overt communication (*ibid.* 204). Among the evidence cited for this, he indicated how hearths found in the Njemps, Tugen and Pokot huts (*ibid.* 54) are positioned in a different way. In this sense, the hearths are also reflecting ethnic identity but, unlike other more visible elements, the stylistic value of the hearth position is not communicative in character (*ibid.* 204). As follows, he indicated that 'style is the form and structure which lies behind all social functions and all information flows' (*ibid.*).

Moreover, similarly to Wiessner, he also indicated that the role of style is dependent upon context. Whilst within this definition, Hodder was already implicitly contending that style can be understood as an expression of structure, this understanding was explicitly discussed in his later theoretical explorations, indicating that style ultimately 'refers to the way something is done' (1987: 4). His definition was obviously influenced by the integration of Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' (see 3.1.2). In this way, style can be defined as the 'surface appearance of structure' which is sustained through practice and this understanding has pervaded virtually untouched in his later considerations of the topic. As he indicated in 1990, 'style is a relational property but it is not an entirely objective relation' (*ibid.* 45) and as such, it is not a product of simply following the rules. Style cannot be conceived without taking into consideration agency (*ibid.*).

Shanks & Tilley (1992) have similarly argued that, understanding style as resulting from habituated practice, is defined as the material effects of stocks of knowledge in which people continually draw. Because structuring principles do not determine but enable action, it is not a material template of a structure but, in contrast, it allows
transformation (ibid. 148). In creating an analogy between art and style, Shanks & Tilley argued that due to its transformative nature, style is 'capable of producing new and unexpected visions of the social realm in which it relates' (ibid. 149). As a result, style can be used as a potential tool to promote ideology. To them, 'art [style] helps to orientate people in relation to their social world and to come to terms with the world, often at an unconscious level (emphasis added)' (ibid. 150).

Before moving on to Boast's rejection of the term, it is necessary to underline some of the common themes found within the post-processual approaches to style. As can be clearly observed, style was redefined through the influences projected from the application of the 'structuration theories' of Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and Giddens (1984; 1990) in archaeological thought. In this sense, style was devised as inherently related to the way in which 'traditions' are reproduced and altered within social systems. Even though, resulting from the adoption of these insights, style – or the dynamics of style – were conceived temporally, their views – especially Hodder's definition of style – continued to be based upon the characterisation of 'historical horizons'. Style was conceived synchronically, and was limited to specific socio-cultural systems. Whilst the implications of this definition will be re-examined in section 6.2, it is of central importance to take this review to an end by briefly exposing the central causes that took Boast to reject the term in his celebrated article published in 1997.

6.1.5 Boast's response.

'I hope by the end of this paper to have convinced you [...] that 'style' is not a universal, but a contemporary way of speaking about the world, a way of speaking that is dependent on a Cartesian dualism that few of us would accept as more than an historically situated 'view of the world'.'

(Boast 1997: 174).

After many 'twists and turns', in 1997, Boast published an article in which he argued for the dismissal of style as a meaningful category of analysis. Amongst his objections, Boast placed a great deal of emphasis upon the fact that in every single theory put forward, at least in archaeology, the notion has been considered as the key to the social. Although this premise might seem indisputable at first sight, it begins to be a questionable one in taking into consideration the way in which human understanding derives from the worldly conditions of our experience (see section 3.1). This perception of style, he contended, presumes that 'there exists a basic essence or purpose to things
prior to them becoming social’ (ibid. 174). Understood within these parameters, style appears to maintain the Cartesian divide relentlessly questioned by post-structural thought. If, for instance, we indicate that the style of Grooved Ware is what makes the object social, then we have to take into consideration the pot itself as an essence. As he noted:

‘Any concept of style requires two necessary predicates. First, that a socially meaningful material world exists prior to our interpretation of it. That there is a world ‘out there’ that we live in, perceive, and engage with prior to any set of understandings we may have about that world’.

(Boast 1997: 180).

Following from this argument, Boast suggested that styles are defined through categorisation according to parameters of similarity and difference; through a methodological mechanism which, according to the author, can only emerge through placing concern upon the properties of objects themselves. This situation, he suggested, emerges from both the indication that style can be considered as the replication of forms either through tradition (e.g. culture-history view of style) or through the material surface which arises from underlying social structures (post-processual view of style) (ibid. 180). Drawing from this understanding, style has been understood as those properties of objects which enable the classification of material socially and historically. Moreover, he contended that style demands a view of the object as finished rather than constantly being interpreted through practice. In a similar vein to Richard’s claims discussed in Chapter Five, Boast pointed out that style triggered an understanding of a unity between form and content. After a lengthy discussion regarding the problematic nature of style, drawing upon Rorty’s (1989) relationship on truth and language amongst others, Boast indicated that, in the face of the impossibility of describing the world through a neutral language, and having acknowledged the modern connotations intrinsically attached to the notion of style, there is no reason to sustain style as an analytical category any longer (Boast 1997: 65).

6.2 Afterthoughts.

I would like to begin this discussion by means of the way is going to end. Every single theory on style has implicitly or explicitly defined style as a product of specific socio-cultural units. For some (e.g. culture-history or Sackett [e.g.1982]) style exists insofar as there is transmission of knowledge amongst groups of individuals. For others (e.g.
Hodder 1990b), style takes places through ways of doing which are particular to specific socio-cultural milieus. Besides this element of concordance (to which I will be referring to and the end of this section), style has been a rather contested topic in our discipline.

Even though the study of style has taken on a number of theoretical terrains (this is where analyses on style differ from those on material patterning), most positions have developed from the underlying influence of Binford’s dichotomisation (1962) of material culture. Perhaps this understanding has been somehow crystallised by the ways in which style is used in everyday speech. In any case, this understanding defines style as formal variability of material culture and it allows enquiry upon the social role that it has in communication (e.g. Wobst 1977) and in the forging of identities (e.g. Wiesnner 1983). The influence of this characterisation, led style to take a distinctive theoretical direction which was only finally questioned by Boast in 1997. During the previous section, I argued that Boast’s fundamental premise from which he instigated to the rejection of this category maintained that, in defining style as that which makes the material social, the material itself is understood as an essence.

The understanding of style as formal variability was also inherent in Hodder’s (1990) conceptualisation of style. In his view, style was the outcome of habituated action; of a particular way of doing characteristic of a specific cultural unit. However, style was not considered a reflection of a norm but a relation to a structure. Whilst this understanding inherently contemplates that style can only be discovered in terms of referentiality, Hodder moved on to indicate that the Togo and the Njemps positioning of the hearth within the household could be considered as stylistic traits amongst these groups. But were they?

In effect, Hodder was only able to suggest that the location of the households hearths were manifestations of specific styles by contrasting different spatial patterns amongst the Togo and the Njemps, and this is so, I argue, because style can only be conceived in referential and differential parameters. This position is contended by Davis (1990) who states that style is not in the material but ‘has to be discovered and written up by someone’ (ibid.). Furthermore, he notes:

‘The correlation between stylistic and historical entities need not to be interpreted as a relation of expression but rather as an indexical or symptomatic. [...] stylistic description does point to an historical entity, but does not map it and is certainly not necessarily caused by it’.

(Davis 1990: 25).
Davis’ approach shares a number of points to those formulated in Chapter Five with regards to the interpretive value of material patterning. In contrast to Boast’s (1997) rejection of the category which contends that language is not able to reflect upon reality, Davis’ approach promotes the value of style in archaeological and historical enquiry as a primary tool from which inferences about the past develop.

Whilst Davis (1990) characterisation of style was present within the major publications dedicated to the analysis of this category in archaeology (e.g. Conkey et al. 1990), his views did not spark as much interest as did other contemporary paradigms (e.g. Hodder 1990b). However, his understanding of style as having an indexical value (see quote above) for the first time allowed us to consider the possibility for style to surpass specific socio-cultural boundaries.

As I claimed at the beginning of this chapter, the discussion exposed here does not seek the development of a definitive framework from which to re-address the topic of style but a short reflection on the possibilities given to think about this issue within contemporary social theory. Style, taken as defined by Davis and as similarly discussed in the context of material patterning in Chapter Five, opens possibilities to explore socio-historical contexts of intercultural interaction as well as its material effects. It allows the primary articulation of contexts which puzzles archaeological enquiry. However, if in the last chapter I discussed the reasons for pursuing the development of these enquiries in archaeology, in this chapter (and this is where I end it), I would like to suggest that it may perhaps be time to take on the challenge of re-thinking style.
PART FOUR: CASE STUDY AND CONCLUSIONS
CHAPTER SEVEN:

CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS, TIME AND THE FORMATION OF HYBRID IDENTITIES

EXPLORING THE ORCADIAN LATER NEOLITHIC: A CASE STUDY

7. Introduction.

The main goal of this research has been to develop an approach through which it would be possible to address the production of narratives that are concerned with intercultural interaction within the post-processual discourse. To do so, a great deal of attention has been directed at exploring this issue within both theoretical and methodological spheres. In order to test the viability of the framework that has been established in previous chapters, it is necessary to take this project to its conclusion through the development of a case study. Owing to its distinctiveness, the socio-historical context of the Orcadian Neolithic during the late of fourth millennium BC (3300/3000 cal BC) has been selected in order to achieve this goal.

Traditionally, this period has been characterised as one of 'structural change', reflected in the emergence of new sets of material culture (e.g. Renfrew 1979b; Davidson & Henshall 1989; Richards 1998: 524; Jones 1999: 58; Ashmore 2000a; Card 2005: 47). However, addressed in isolation, this context has either been used to unfold interpretive models focused on the definition of the rise of social complexity (Renfrew 1979b; Hodder 1982a; Sharples 1985) or has been barely discussed in more recent accounts which have favoured the study of the Orcadian later Neolithic (e.g. Richards 2005; Jones 2007). Alternatively, some authors (e.g. Bradley & Chapman 1986; Bradley 2007) have, for some time now, identified strong affinities between the new cultural repertoire emerging in the Orkney archipelago during this period and that of the Boyne Valley (Ireland) at much the same time.

For the purposes of this study, I seek to move away from comparative exercises aimed at linking Orkney and the Boyne Valley, to explore instead the underlying historical
contingencies that lay behind change in the later fourth millennium BC. Drawing on a series of insights developed within the main discussion unfolded in this doctoral thesis, I will suggest that the character of the Orcadian later Neolithic assemblages may reflect processes of hybridization that can be attributed to episodes of intercultural interaction. In turn, it is argued that new cultural forms produced within these spheres of interaction were strategically used to create a unified self-image of society. These and other related narratives are finally linked to wider historical processes that took place centuries later in the context of the British Isles and Ireland and that, without a doubt, drew upon material assemblages which had originated in the Orkney Islands.

7.1 Part One: Back to the beginning.

In contrast to the significance afforded to diffusion in archaeological discourse during the early twentieth century, it has been rejected as a cause of cultural change in more recent narratives. However, this situation has not stopped archaeologists from establishing comparisons between archaeological assemblages, and from placing them as the focal point from which interaction between different social groups is discussed. Periodically, archaeologists call attention to possible links between different regions owing to the recognition of material patterns. For instance, whilst concerned with demonstrating the relationship between the scale of monumentality and the degree of social complexity, Renfrew (1979b) pointed out that, on the basis of a series of parallels, ‘it was perfectly possible’ to suggest the existence of contacts between the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands and the Boyne Valley (Ireland) during the later Neolithic (ibid. 210). Similarly, in his discussion of burial practices in the Orcadian Neolithic, Sharples noted that ‘the appearance of features with close parallels of Newgrange in Ireland merely underlines a link between the two areas’ (1985: 71).

In other instances, whilst attempting to circumvent the use of the concept, diffusion has continued to be placed at the centre of the enquiry of many interpretive narratives. In this case, material patterns have been argued to reflect the effects of interaction between distant groups, and a perfect example of this tradition of research, as was noted at the beginning of this thesis, is found within the context of the Neolithic of the Atlantic fringe of Europe (see Bradley 1997). Be it through the observation of similarities between Irish and Iberian passage tombs (see e.g. Herity 1974; Eogan 1989), through the identification of affinities between the megalithic art of Iberia, Ireland, Scotland, Brittany and Norway (see e.g. Shee Twohig 1981, 1993; Devignes
1997) (Fig. 7.1) by the translation of designs from Irish passage graves into other portable objects such as Grooved Ware (see e.g. Brindley 1999), or by the identification of similar objects associated with passage tombs in Ireland and Iberia (see e.g. Eogan 1979; 1989; 1992; 1999), it has been contended that during the Neolithic, the Atlantic façade of Europe was characterised by long distance navigation. Even though this tradition of research emerged with the growth of ‘megalithic studies’ by the mid 1980’s (see section 2.1.3), its influence has persisted to date both within this archaeological context and in others (see e.g. Sheridan 2000; 2003 for Mesolithic-Neolithic transition).

**Figure 7.1** Examples of Megalithic art (not to scale), a: decorated stone from Gavrinis passage tomb (Brittany, France) (After Péquart & Le Rouzic 1927), b: rock-carving from Ausevik (Western Norway) (After Hagen 1969); c: kerbstone 52 from Newgrange (Ireland, Co. Meath) (After O’Kelly 1982).

On the other hand, British archaeological thought – particularity within Neolithic studies- has gradually produced approaches in which neither contact nor diffusion have been directly contemplated. As has been discussed at different points throughout this thesis, the post-processual discourse has reverted to cultural relativism through embracing views which are rooted in the socio-historical situatedness of human experience. From the many themes contained within this position, I have placed particular emphasis on the ‘ways of doing’ and narratives produced by approaches which have focused on the generation of better understandings of human agency and
social practice (see section 2.2.1); theoretical frameworks that materialized through the application of both the structuration theories of Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and Giddens (1979; 1984) and Heidegger’s notion of being-in-the-world (1962), and that can be characterised as approaches which are limited to the definition of the internal dynamics of social systems (see section 3.1).

In reviewing this material, it is clear that – apart from exceptional cases - little dialogue has occurred between these traditions of research to date. The former has carried on describing episodes of intercultural contact through establishing pervasive comparative exercises without exploring the actual scenarios which triggered the ‘assimilation’ of material forms or the kind of effects that new material assemblages had within specific social groups through time. The latter tradition has centred on the production of narratives ascribed to specific socio-cultural milieus and has ignored the fact that a comprehensive account of the internal dynamics of social systems has to take into consideration the ways in which social dynamics can be affected by the meeting of other social groups. Whilst the side effects of both approaches have been largely discussed at different points throughout this thesis (and will be summarised below), before opening the interpretive study, I would like to draw attention to a paradoxical situation in which the same archaeological assemblages have been examined independently by these traditions of research. This situation can be illustrated by noting the kind of inferences that these approaches have developed in the examination of the passage grave of Maeshowe (Mainland Orkney).

Like many other archaeological assemblages of the later Orcadian Neolithic, different elements of Maeshowe have been compared to the passage graves of the Boyne Valley (Ireland). Architecturally, Maeshowe strongly resembles the passage grave of Newgrange in that a long and narrow passage leads to a cruciform chamber, enclosed by a characteristic corbelled roof (Henshall 1972: 221-222; Herity 1974: 28-30) (Fig. 7.2, Fig. 7.3). Likewise, within the chamber at Maeshowe, a series of incised panels have, on many occasions, been related to the earliest decoration found within different tombs of the Boyne Valley in which angular forms are prevalent (Eogan 1997: 222; Bradley et al. 2000: 63) (see section 7.4). Interestingly, at Maeshowe, greater emphasis is placed on decorating the right-hand recesses (Shee Twohig 1996; Phillips & Bradley 2000) (see Fig. 7.2). In fact, at Newgrange, the right-hand recess is comparatively larger than other recesses found within the chamber (see Fig. 7.3). Other areas of similarity are also found outside the actual burial structure of Maeshowe and Newgrange. Evidence suggests that these cairns are sat on top of platforms, considered
as the epicentre of much ritual activity (Sharples 1985; Stout 2002; Challands et al. 2005: 229). Lastly, it has been argued that the south-west orientation of Maeshowe points towards Ireland and shares the same alignment of the midwinter sun as identified at Newgrange (Bradley 1999: 21).

In contrast to those who focus their interpretive efforts on the discussion of possible contacts between the Orkney Islands and the Boyne Valley, different approaches to the interpretation of Maeshowe have developed. Interpretations which, as was discussed in Chapter Five, partly emerged from both a reaction against the homogenising effects of typological description and that have enhanced the need to take social practice into consideration. Amongst the overall description of this passage grave, considerable weight is placed upon the following traits. Although the four orthostats placed at the corner of the main chamber were already described in earlier accounts (see Davidson & Henshall 1989: 142) (Fig. 7.4), little has been said about their significance and uniqueness within the context of the burial chamber (Challands et al. 2005: 229). On closer inspection, it is clear that these orthostats are not functional as they do not help to support the corbelled roof. Instead, it is suggested that their social significance should not be underestimated as it is possible that they were erected prior to the construction of the tomb (ibid. 244). This is interesting in itself as the stones and their setting can be compared to the Stones of Stenness (Fig. 7.5) which rests in relative proximity to this monument (Garrow et al. 2005: 252). The place in which Maeshowe was built may also have been selected as it was already a place of social significance as suggested by the fact that this passage grave is built on top of an earlier Neolithic house structure. This situation has been replicated at Howe (Mainland) (Fig. 7.6), where it was possible to observe that the passage grave partially overlays a structure which could be identified as an early Neolithic household (Ballin Smith 1994; Garrow et al. 2005: 250). This characteristic has led a number of researchers to suggest that by placing these burial structures on top of earlier places of inhabitation, 'links were forged with an ancestral and mythical past' (ibid.). Moreover, interpretive links between Maeshowe and other archaeological assemblages were confined to the contextual evidence found in the Stennes-Brodgar area in Mainland Orkney (see Chapter Five, Fig. 5.2). Given the relationship amongst the monuments of this area to the later Neolithic settlement of Barnhouse, it has been suggested that these structures were not simply built around the village but made reference to it (ibid. 252). Lastly, it has been argued that the alignment of Maeshowe towards the midwinter sunrise may
have marked the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one, ‘involving the union with the ancestors’ (*ibid.* 253).

The difficulties observed with both approaches have been discussed at different points throughout this thesis. However, they can be summarised here in the light of the example above. The first tradition of research – focused entirely upon the identification of intercultural contacts - establishes accounts which, due to the lack empirical detail, elaborate on the definition of thick descriptions. What this research strategy tells us is that, whether explicitly or implicitly, there is a general sense of agreement in that the higher the number of similarities identified, the closer the relationship between different social groups. In Chapter Four, I argued against this position as, in considering diffusion within the parameters of inter-social interaction and, therefore, within the experience of alterity, it becomes possible to indicate that diffusion is not the simple transportation of elements from one culture to another. Rather it is one of the effects of situations which occur during these conversations which are transformative and, therefore, bring about new cultural forms. In this sense, the effects of intercultural interaction cannot be measured by rules of probability.

![Maeshowe - location of motifs](image)

**Figure 7.2** Maeshowe (Mainland), location of motifs (*After Bradley et al.* 2000).
Figure 7.3 Plan of Newgrange (Ireland, Co. Meath) (After O’Kelly 1982).

Figure 7.4 Maeshowe detail of orthostat (© Charles Tait).
Figure 7.5 Stones of Stenness (Mainland) (©Irene Garcia Rovira).

Figure 7.6 Passage tomb overlaying earlier Neolithic household at Howe (Mainland) (After Ballin Smith 1994).
Hence, whilst comparative descriptions bring to the surface evidence which is symptomatic of, and points towards scenarios of intercultural interaction (Chapter Five and Six), the actual construction of narratives has to be built through a multi-scalar approach which takes into consideration how these processes – and their outcomes – might have occurred through a view which considers the ‘worldly’ conditions of human existence.

Conversely, the kind of insights that have arisen from the latter tradition of research described in this section, has helped to create narratives which enhance the lived space; which remove this burial structure from typological concerns (see section 5.3) and relate it to other built environments in which specific populations carried out their daily practices. Whilst these approaches have produced more insightful narratives about the inhabitants – in this case of the Orcadian archipelago during the later Neolithic - they have failed to portray the interplay of these communities with others. More to the point, they have ignored the fact that their cosmologies may have been affected by the meeting of other social groups, giving rise to new forms which, in turn, produced changes in their material environments. Intercultural interaction has been only partly discussed through the identification of objects of foreign origin. For instance, it has been pointed out that pitchstone from Arran was recovered from the later settlement of Barnhouse (Mainland) (Richards 2005).

In this thesis, I have elaborated upon the development of theoretical and methodological strategies which allow merging the traditions of research described above. Having arrived at this point, it is necessary to explore the applicability of the insights produced throughout the discussions presented in the preceding chapters. However, before moving into this, I would like to present the context selected for this case study by making reference to Bradley’s work on intercultural interaction in the later Neolithic of the British Isles and Ireland. This brief examination not only serves to contextualise the interpretive study presented below but also to acknowledge the point of departure from which the main research question originated.

7.1.1 ‘Weapons of exclusion’: finding the roots of this research.

In the course of the 1980’s, Bradley published a number of interpretive studies which were linked by the need to discuss the situation of intercultural interaction amongst different regions of the British Isles and Ireland during the later Neolithic (e.g. Bradley
Bradley 

and Chapman (1986). This spatial and temporal context was defined by the author as one displaying the fragmentation of the unity which had defined the earlier Neolithic (Bradley 1984a). Conversely though, in exploring local sequences, it was possible to identify assemblages which owed ‘nothing to local prototypes’ (ibid. 36). Characteristically, these cultural elements did not override existing material culture. Quite the opposite, it was noted that they maintained a level of separateness from local assemblages (ibid. 40). As was briefly discussed in Chapter Two, Bradley (1984a), and later Bradley and Chapman (1986) developed an interpretive model based upon the examination of five key regions (see Chapter Two, Fig. 2.1) distinguished by the archaeological assemblages discussed above. Whilst, on the basis of shared assemblages, it was postulated that interaction had taken place amongst these areas, the authors aimed to shed light on the historical circumstances which had caused these regions to share specific symbols and monumental forms (ibid. 128).

Firstly, the later Neolithic was characterised by the widespread construction and use of passage graves. The exemplars of the Boyne Valley (Ireland) and those of the Orkney Islands (e.g. Maeshowe), by their scale and sheer complexity, were considered by Bradley and Chapman as a means through which different communities may have competed with each other (ibid.). Likewise, in these areas, it was possible to find a series of objects which almost exclusively related to the aforementioned contexts (ibid. 132). This period also saw the emergence of 'henge' structures in various regions of the British Isles and Ireland; specifically in Wessex, south east Scotland and the Orkneys. Interestingly, the authors argued, these structures find their earliest examples in the Orkney Islands, and are also represented in the Boyne Valley in later chronologies. These Irish examples and the practices taking place within them could be paralleled with their Wessex counterparts. More importantly for their interpretive exercise, in the later Neolithic, it was possible to locate a series of artefacts such as Grooved Ware and the Folkton Drums of east Yorkshire which were characterised by decorative elements that find their roots in the engravings depicted inside and outside the tombs of the Boyne Valley. Again, Bradley and Chapman (ibid. 138) pointed out that the earliest dates so far obtained for Grooved Ware appeared to be located in the Orkney archipelago. Bearing this archaeological context in mind, Bradley and Chapman devised the following interpretive scenario.

As has been already pointed out, these authors indicated that these shared assemblages reflected the outcome of networks of interaction established between different social groups. What is more, they contended that these contexts did not reflect
the creation of such networks but rather were the effects of well-established connections amongst different social groups (*ibid.* 136). Due to the kind of objects and structures ‘shared’ among the different regions listed and, accounting for the fact that these elements were used in contexts which differ from the other sets of cultural phenomena, Bradley and Chapman saw this socio-historical context as one characterised by a growth of social complexity (*ibid.*). In this context, they suggested that a series of symbols and other cultural phenomena were acquired by elites to maintain their social status in the form of exotic goods. These were obtained by certain social groups who maintained them at a distance from the rest of the population. This happened, according to them, through the control of the spheres of exchange. These elements were ultimately used as ‘weapons of exclusion’ (Bradley 1984a).

### 7.1.2 Part Two: Setting the scene.

Bradley's and Chapman's interpretive study superseded contemporary accounts on inter-regional interaction (see section 7.1) thanks to the application of a multi-scalar approach which combined observations obtained within the large-scale with insights acquired through a detailed examination of local sequences. This methodological approach allowed them to distance their work from the development of comparative descriptions used to justify intercultural contacts in prehistory. It also allowed them to define a picture of the emergent social complexity in the British Isles and Ireland during the later Neolithic.

However, despite the refinement of this study in comparison to others developed in similar archaeological contexts during the 1980’s (e.g. Clarke 1985), the ‘weapons of exclusion’ model presented a single explanation of an archaeological context which integrated multiple social groups during a chronological span of almost a millennium (c. 3500 to 2500 cal BC). More importantly for the discussion presented in this research, the model developed by Bradley and Chapman overlooked the necessity of exploring the ways in which new assemblages would have affected the dynamics of specific groups. Furthermore, it undervalued the significance of the fact that these new objects, symbols and structures were not physically exchanged among different groups but ‘adopted’ and reproduced locally through many centuries.

Despite the restrictions observed in their interpretive inferences, Bradley and Chapman were quick to point out the distinctiveness of the assemblages examined. The
peculiarity of these contexts have only been further ratified in the light of new archaeological evidence (e.g. Parker Pearson et al. 2007) and have been placed at the core of more recent interpretive exercises (e.g. Thomas 1996, 2005, 2010; Sheridan 2004a). In all cases, it has been contended that these material assemblages speak of historical contingencies which can only be explained through taking intercultural interaction into consideration. Moreover, in every single case, attention has been drawn to the fact that within this scenario, it is possible to demarcate two distinct but interrelated contexts. Whilst on the one hand, these assemblages reflect upon contingencies which relate to the wider context of Britain and Ireland, some of the material assemblages find their origins in the context of a relationship between the Boyne Valley (Ireland) and the Orkney Islands which was not only different in character but that occurred a few centuries earlier (c. 3300/3000 cal BC).

This is interesting, for despite acknowledging the different character and chronological attribution amongst the phenomena linking the Boyne Valley and the Orkneys in earlier chronologies, little attempt has been established at seeking an interpretive account that goes beyond the recognition that interaction between these regions must have taken place, at least, by the late fourth millennium, and most probably later. In fact, Bradley (2007) has, to a degree, moved away from the examination of the wider historical picture of the later British and Irish Neolithic and has focused directly upon the examination of the Orcadian later Neolithic and the Boyne Valley. However, whilst having come closer to the delimitation of this archaeological context, his work has not yet developed into an interpretation that goes beyond the definition of those material contexts which define clear affinities between these two regions. In the light of this situation I would like to select this archaeological context to explore a series of insights developed within the present doctoral research.

The following case study focuses upon the reinterpretation of the changes occurring within the Orkney archipelago during the chronological span of c. 3300/3000-2900 cal BC, centring upon the effects that these processes of interaction had within the context of the Orcadian populations. In contrast to previous accounts, in focusing upon a specific context, it appears possible to explore the character of such interaction, their immediate effects and the long-term effects of introducing ‘new cultural forms’ through time.
7.2 The Orkney archipelago: background and history of research.

Having defined the context of study, and before the interpretive exercise begins, this section provides a brief description of the location and character of the islands and an account of the history of archaeological activity in the area. Particular emphasis is placed upon exploring the following questions:

(1) In what ways can the geographical and environmental character of the islands be said to play a role in both the lives of those who inhabited the Orkneys in prehistory, and on the ways in which the archaeological assemblages we encounter have been preserved to date?

(2) To what extent have different waves of archaeological research shaped and influenced our understanding of the Orcadian Neolithic?

(3) In what ways may new discoveries re-shape the picture of this spatial and temporal context?

Since some of elements discussed in this section will re-appear later in this chapter, this section does not offer an extensive review but points out a series of elements which help to set the context from which the case study can finally unfold.

7.2.1 The Orkney Islands: background information.

Situated on latitude 59° North in the North Atlantic, and separated from Mainland Scotland by about seven miles (Jones 2002: 108), the Orkney archipelago consists of ninety islands, islets and skerries (McClanahan 2004) (Fig. 7.7) of which sixteen are nowadays inhabited. Although these islands are in close proximity to Mainland Scotland, they are cut off by the Pentland Firth, a crossing described by Wainwright (1962) as one of the most dangerous in Britain.

The geographical setting of these islands, as well as the archipelago itself, present a series of characteristics which are highly relevant for examinations of inter-island interaction, and interaction with regions further afield in prehistory. Orkney’s main geographic feature is the coastline, whose total length is about 800 km. (Davidson & Jones 1985: 12). The Orcadian landscape is characterised by inter-island visibility (Fig. 7.8) and Richards (2005) has pointed out that travel by sea has been, until recently, favoured to travel by land. The role that the sea played for Neolithic communities has been testified on many occasions. As we shall see, the material worlds of the
inhabitants of the islands, at the very least, demonstrate that inter-island communication was a salient trait. This evidence raises the possibility that these communities shared specific cosmologies during the later Neolithic. It also seems to provide an indication of a marked Orcadian identity already established in early chronologies. Whilst these questions will be explored during the case study, it is worth mentioning that, during the Neolithic, the sea was not only a means of transport but also of subsistence. For instance, in the later Neolithic settlements of Links of Notland (Westray) and Skara Brae (Mainland), the evidence suggests that marine resources formed part of the diet (ibid. 21).

![Map of study area](image_url)

**Figure 7.7** Map of study area.

Whilst the physical qualities of the archipelago have certainly played a central role in the interpretation of past contexts, these are not the factors to consider. In fact, the Orcadian climate is an element which deserves some consideration. From the many
aspects that could be listed here, it is important to recognise the significance of daylight in the life cycles and activities of those who lived in the past. As known, the Orkney archipelago has only two to four hours of daylight during the winter, this situation being reversed during the summer (Jones 2002: 108). Some authors (e.g. Richards 1990a) have already noted the relevance that this feature might have played for those who inhabited the islands in the past. However, the implications of such a situation have not yet been pragmatically assessed in archaeological interpretation, despite posing a number of questions. For instance, if the entrance of Maeshowe is aligned with the midwinter sun (Bradley 1999: 21), this being the shortest day and the longest night of the winter, it is possible to suggest that solar cycles characteristic of these islands might have played an important role within the cosmological dimensions of those who built this burial structure. Likewise, if it can be suggested that the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands during the Neolithic travelled to distant locations, it is worth taking into consideration the periods in which navigation might have occurred, and the role that the constellations might have played as a means of orientation during these journeys at sea.

Moving back to the geophysical setting, this time considering it within the context of the later Orcadian Neolithic, the evidence seem to portray a landscape characterised by its treeless nature and by lowland lochs (Jones 2002: 110). The former characteristic has, throughout the history of research, led to debate regarding the source of the fuel which was burnt, for instance, on the hearths of the Neolithic houses (e.g. Childe 1931a; Clarke & Sharples 1985). The latter feature is also important within the context of the occupation during the later Neolithic for the evidence demonstrates that settlements were often located near lochs and lagoons. A clear example of this situation can be illustrated with the Barnhouse settlement, located between the Loch of Stenness and the Loch of Harray in Mainland Orkney (Richards 2005) (Fig. 7.9). There is evidence from other settlements such as those at Pool (Sanday), Bay of Stove (Sanday), and Skara Brae (Mainland) which indicates that they were also located ‘near lochs, lagoons and oyces’ (Hunter et al. 2007: 170).

The last feature to be described concerns the geology of these islands. These are dominated by Middle Old Red Sandstone, with the exception of the island of Hoy which is formed of Upper Old Red sandstone rocks (Wainwright 1962: 5; Davidson & Jones 1985: 10). The former laminates into slabs (Childe 1931a: 8; Jones 2002: 101) which are ideal for construction. Caithness flagstone was commonly used for dry stone walls and vaulted roofs of chambered tombs, passage graves and houses during the later
Neolithic (Jones 2007: 239). Moreover, the use of local Caithness stone flags as a perdurable constructive element (Richards 2005: 7) has played a crucial role on the preservation of prehistoric and historic sites.

The Orkney archipelago has caught the archaeological interest for it is a landscape in which archaeological remains are still highly visible; where past landscapes such as those of the later Neolithic can be conceived and experienced, and in which the preservation of archaeological remains is outstanding. As Renfrew has expressed, ‘Neolithic Orkney is one of the wonders of the prehistoric world’ (Renfrew 2000: 1).

The reasons for such levels of preservation are the persistence of traditional and non-destructive farming methods (Renfrew 1979b: 3), and the use of stone in construction. The uniqueness of archaeological sites such as Skara Brae (Mainland), the Ring of Brodgar (Mainland) and the Stones of Stenness (Mainland) led UNESCO to award them World Heritage Site status in 1999 (McClahanan 2004; Downes et al. 2005). However, a profound interest in the island’s heritage can be perceived as far back as later prehistory, as seen by the re-use, or at least respect for, Neolithic monuments through the Bronze and Iron ages (ibid). Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Orcadian heritage is the existence of contemporary evidence. It is not only possible to observe this feature with regards to the almost contemporary settlements of the later Neolithic but also the contemporaneity of these settlements with other archaeological remains found throughout the Orcadian landscape. Orkney is one of the few areas for substantial upstanding evidence of Neolithic inhabitation (Jones 2002: 111). Whilst many other characteristics could be listed in this account, I will end here to move into the definition of the main period of archaeological research in the Orkney Islands.
Figure 7.8 View of Mainland from Rousay (© Irene Garcia Rovira).

Figure 7.9 Proximity of Barnhouse (Mainland) to the lochs of Harray and Stenness (© Irene Garcia Rovira).
7.2.2 A review on the history of archaeological research in the Orkney Islands.

Archaeological activity in the Orkney archipelago can be documented as far back as the late eighteenth century. The earliest account dates to 1772, and relates to the investigations carried out by Sir Joseph Banks at the Bay of Skail, near the later Neolithic settlement of Skara Brae (Mainland) (Renfrew 1985: 2). Although this event is often referred to in different sources, the value of this account has been somewhat underestimated. In fact, Banks’ work has no precedent as his survey of the Ring of Brodgar and Stones of Stenness (Mainland) offers a detailed record of the region at the time (Card 2005: 40).

The intensity of research increased significantly at the end of the nineteenth century as can be seen in the table below (Fig. 7.10), ushering in what Card (2005) has defined as the ‘Golden Age’ of antiquarian investigations. At the most fundamental level, this period ‘brought a revolution in attitudes towards prehistory which was part of a greater movement in the pursuit of knowledge throughout Victorian Britain’ (Fraser 1983: 39). In Orkney, this was a period of discovery in which many archaeological sites were not only opened but the discoveries began to be published in antiquarian journals such as in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. This mostly featured the work carried out by Petrie, Hebden and Farren (Card 2005) who were responsible for the excavation of eleven chambered cairns between 1849 and 1867 (Fraser 1983: 44), including Maeshowe (Mainland) by Petrie in 1861 (see Petrie 1861a). However, the most cited incident of this period was the discovery of Skara Brae (Mainland) in 1850, after it was revealed by the effects of a storm. From this date, and until Childe took over the excavations of this site in 1927, antiquarian activity was constant at Skara Brae. After periods of collection of archaeological material undertaken by Watt, Petrie assisted the Laird of Skail on subsequent explorations during the 1860’s (Childe 1931a: 4). By the time Childe assumed control of the examination of Skara Brae, four structures had already been cleared.

A new period of archaeological research emerged through the confluence of a series of elements during the early decades of the twentieth century. Archaeological research was triggered by the work of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Orkney from 1928-1937, and by the arrival of Childe to the islands (Card 2005: 42). The excavations of the later Neolithic settlement of Skara Brae (Mainland) caught the attention of many regional and international researchers (Fraser 1983: 43). During the second quarter of the twentieth century, further archaeological investigations were
carried out and between the 1930's and end of the 1950's, seventeen cairns and two prehistoric settlements were excavated ([i]bid. 44). For instance, during the 1930's, Grant and Callander excavated ten chambered tombs on the island of Rousay (Callander & Grant 1934a, 1934b, 1935, 1936, 1937). In clear contrast with the antiquarian activity of discovery and unsystematic examination, this period was characterised by the development of systematic excavation procedures, the crystallisation of the conceptual framework of the Orcadian Neolithic and by the creation of the first grand narratives built upon its evidence. In all three cases, Childe's influence should not be underestimated.

Firstly, Childe's excavation techniques and recording efforts clearly outshone the earlier antiquarian methods. For instance, he invested a lot of effort in the provision of photographic records (Clarke 1983: 46). Despite the positive influence that Childe had upon the archaeologists working in the Orkneys, his work has often been criticised for he failed to record plain pottery and Skaill knives – amongst others – at Skara Brae (Piggott 1959: 8; Richards 1991a: 25; Richards 2005: 34). His fieldwork results have also been questioned, particularly with regards to his stratigraphic fallibility (Clarke 1983). This situation was, most probably, aggravated by the fact that, at Skara Brae, the main task given to the Australian archaeologist was one of conservation of architectural structures rather than recovery.

Likewise, Childe's excavations at Skara Brae (1931) and Rinyo (Childe & Grant 1937) instigated a movement of classification and categorisation of new evidence, which slowly but surely allowed the construction of a template for the Orcadian Neolithic; a picture which would influence much of what has been said about the prehistory of the Islands from then onwards (see e.g. Jones & Richards 2000; Hunter et al. 2007). During his stay in the Orkneys, Childe was able to put into practice his thoughts about archaeology and human nature. Whilst some of his theoretical explorations were discussed in Chapter Three, they can be recalled as follows:

‘Childe’s vision of culture-history was one that emphasised the significance of tradition in that material culture could be understood as the concrete manifestation of a social tradition (Childe 1942: 16). An assemblage of artefacts is therefore the outcome of the operation of standardised and reproduced customs of manufacture, and the coherence of the assemblage is a consequence of its production by a single group of actors at a singular historical time (Childe 1956: 111). [...] As well as being distinguished by a coherent tradition, a people would always inhabit a definitive territory, and for this reason cultures might be expected to exhibit mutually exclusive distributions (Childe 1956: 115-18)’.

(Thomas 2004a: 112-113).
The social equation defined by Thomas is reflected in both the interpretation of specific sites and, at a more general level, in relation to the construction of the grand narratives of the time. In relation to the former, Childe stressed in the archaeological report of Skara Brae that,

‘[...] the same culture was represented in all levels. In other words a single people, imbued with the same architectural traditions and possessed of the same material culture, had occupied the site continuously throughout the long period needed for the accumulation of 15 feet of midden’.

(Childe 1931a: 6).

Expanding outwards towards the interpretation of the Orcadian Neolithic, Childe defined two contemporary cultures. The former – Megalithic culture - was related to Unstan Ware and the latter – Skara Brae culture – associated with Grooved Ware pottery (Jones & Richards 2005: 195). This interpretation again remained largely unchallenged even after both pottery styles were identified in single archaeological contexts in the settlement of Rinyo (Rousay) (Childe & Grant 1937), and at the chambered tomb of Quoyness (Sanday) (Jones & Richards 2000: 101). Childe’s ‘Skara Brae culture’ was subsequently challenged through Piggott’s (see Warren et al. 1936) establishment of a direct relationship between the Orcadian latter pottery style and that found in different regions of the British Isles. However, whilst this fact led Childe to push Skara Brae and Rinyo back to the Neolithic, the cultural differentiation between a ‘Megalithic culture’ and a ‘Rinyo-Clacton culture’ was still pursued (see Piggott 1954: 64). Finally, in addition to Childe’s examination of the Orcadian Neolithic, he also contributed to a tradition of works of synthesis, through publications such as The Prehistory of Scotland (1925) and Scotland before the Scots (1946).

This tradition continued through to the 1960s and 1970s along with a further phase of fieldwork and research on the islands. During this period, Henshall’s celebrated Chambered Tombs of Scotland (1963) was published, which documented the results of early excavations as well as more than fifty-seven chambered cairns (Renfrew 1979b: 3; Fraser 1983: 47), whilst Wainwright’s The Northern Isles (1962) was another important publication. Besides the works of synthesis, this period was characterised by academic activity on the islands. This was aimed both at developing new excavation and recording procedures, and at proving the value of new interpretive models emerging under the rubric of the New Archaeology. The archaeology of the Orkneys could be used as a kind of laboratory in which different theoretical positions, new archaeological techniques and archaeological models could be tested. In 1972-1973, Clarke (1976a; 1976b) undertook several fieldwork seasons at Skara Brae in order to
clarify a series of interpretive propositions that had been put forward by Childe in the 1930’s. He also hoped to recovered environmental material for dating (Card 2005). A few years later, Clarke excavated the later Neolithic settlement of the Links of Notland (Westray) (Renfrew 2000: 1). Unfortunately, the accounts of neither these excavations at Skara Brae nor the Links of Notland have been published (Card 2005).

Contemporary excavations were carried out by Anna Ritchie (1983a), at the Knap of Howar (Papa Westray), and Graham Ritchie (1976) at the Stones of Stenness (Mainland). The excavations of the Neolithic ‘henge’, consolidated the views regarding the relationship between the monument and Grooved Ware pottery, Renfrew also carried out research in Quanterness, Ring of Brodgar and Maeshowe during the early 1970’s (Renfrew 1979b), all located in Mainland Orkney. As well as the archaeological fieldwork, the first Orkney County Archaeologist, Lamb, was appointed in 1978, leading to the creation of the Sites and Monument record (SMR) (Card 2005: 44).

At a more theoretical level, Renfrew sought to establish new interpretive questions about the economy and society of early Orkney through the ‘disposal a battery of new techniques to undertake this task’ (Renfrew 1985: 5). This gave rise to two fundamental developments. Firstly, the established chronologies, and relationships between material culture assemblages, were called into question by new advances in radiocarbon dating. Secondly, this revisionist atmosphere proved ideal to apply new ideas emerging through the theoretical discussions of the time. For instance, drawing from evolutionary frameworks, and aided by radiocarbon dates, Renfrew (1979b) dismantled the view that Unstan Ware and Grooved Ware users belonged to two distinct cultures. Instead, he defined an earlier Neolithic composed of early settlements and burial structures of the ‘Orkney Cromarty Group’ (see Henshall 1963; 1972) associated with Unstan Ware, and a later Neolithic associated with later settlement types, Maeshowe tomb types and Grooved Ware (Jones 2000: 127; Jones & Richards 2000: 101; Jones & Richards 2005: 197). Moreover, drawing out of this sequence, Renfrew moved away from Childe’s views on the Orcadian Neolithic as equalitarian societies in impoverished primitivism (Richards 2005: 2), suggesting that the impasse between Unstan and Grooved Ware should be understood as a moment of social change characterised by a movement from segmentary societies to chiefdoms (Renfrew 1979b: 208; Richards 1998: 518) (see section 7.3.1). This position was strengthened by highlighting the size of the work force needed to build monuments such as the Stones of Stenness or the Ring of Brodgar (Mainland).
Although it is perhaps too early to define a clear-cut picture of the character of subsequent archaeological activity in the islands, an examination of recent work suggests that a fourth episode of research took place during the 1980s and 1990s. A primary period of research is characterised by the creation of new narratives surrounding later Neolithic settlements. As has been discussed elsewhere, in 1984, Richards discovered – and afterwards excavated – the later Neolithic settlement of Barnhouse (Mainland) through a novel attempt at systematic field walking in the Orkneys (Richards 2005; Card 2005). During the same period, two settlement sites in Sanday (Pool) (Hunter et al. 2007) and Tofts Ness (Dockrill et al. 2007) were excavated by the University of Bradford, in response to environmental threats that were causing serious damage on the coastal landscapes (Fig 7.11). Work was also carried out at the later Neolithic settlement of Bay of Stove (Sanday) in order to record, and assess yet another site in danger of destruction by coastal erosion (Bond et al. 1995).

These discoveries had important implications for our understanding of Neolithic Orkney. For instance, the excavation of Barnhouse (Mainland) challenged those views which had both suggested the coastal location of the settlements and that had conceived the Stenness–Harray area as an exclusive ‘ritual landscape’ (Richards 2005). Equally significant, the excavation at Pool (Sanday) not only provided a multi-period sequence running from the earlier Neolithic to the Iron Age, but also offered stratigraphic evidence to corroborate the relationship of Unstan Ware to Grooved Ware (see Hunter & MacSween 1991; Hunter et al. 2007).

As well as changing the existing knowledge of the later Neolithic through means of archaeological discoveries, this period was also defined by the development of new interpretive narratives. Resulting from a combination of factors including the increasing accessibility of site comparison and the influence of structuralist and post-structuralist literature amongst academics working in this region, novel discourses about the Orcadian Neolithic were formulated by Richards and his colleagues.

In particular, those narratives which had focused, upon the discussion of the Orcadian Neolithic, through placing weight on the determinism and two dimensionality of classificatory schemes, were challenged (e.g. Parker Pearson & Richards 1994; Richards 1996, 1998; Jones & Richards 2005) (see Chapter Five). These critiques were partly triggered through the influence of the structuration theories of Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and Giddens (1984; 1990), and of anthropological and social studies influenced by these theoretical frameworks (e.g. Moore 1986). The results of this new approach
were crystallised by the development of narratives on the Orcadian later Neolithic focused on social space.

Amongst the interpretive scenarios developed within this phase, the work of Richards and, in particular, his interest in the relationship between architecture, social order, and practice cannot be overstated. As Parker Pearson and Richards noted:

‘Classifications of people and things are physically realized through architecture, thus conceptions of order are constantly confronted from our earliest days and recollections. In some cases the most complex cosmological schemes are manifest in spatial representation. However, it should not be forgotten that the derivation of such meaning is contingent, on people and practice’

(Parker Pearson & Richards 1994: 1).

As will be discussed in following sections, drawing from these and other insights, Richards developed a series of interpretive narratives based upon the examination of architectural space; studies which drew upon the characterisation of the cosmologies of the inhabitants of the later Orcadian Neolithic (e.g. Richards 1991a; 1994).

A concern with social practice also led Andy Jones to point out the weaknesses of constructing narratives based upon typological classification. Through a detailed study of the Grooved Ware assemblage at the settlement of the Barnhouse (Mainland), he demonstrated that not only should Grooved Ware be examined within regional and inter-regional studies but it should also be studied at a local level. In doing so, Jones argued, it was possible to show that the making and distribution of Grooved Ware within the site of Barnhouse, reflected upon a series of distinctions and patterns which should be taken into consideration in creating narratives about the cosmologies and social structure of the inhabitants of this settlement (see e.g. Jones 2002; 2007).

Even though new narratives about the Orcadian Neolithic have yet not been produced, it is possible to show that the results of fieldwork carried out in the last two decades might be about to change the picture of the Orcadian Neolithic. In particular, later Neolithic settlements have continued to be uncovered in Mainland Orkney. A series of investigations developed by the ‘Cuween-Hill Project’ (Richards et al. in press) have revealed three settlement areas – Stonehall, Wideford Hill and Crossiecrown – which contain evidence of later as well as earlier Neolithic structures (see section 7.3.2). Another late Neolithic settlement was discovered in 2002 in the Brodgar peninsula (Mainland), and excavated throughout the following years by Card. Based on its size and complexity, this site has been interpreted as a place of gathering. This suggestion has not only arisen by its location – next to the Ring of Brodgar and in close proximity
to the Stones of Stenness – but also by the fact that the Grooved Ware uncovered at this site seems to have been brought in by the inhabitants of different settlements throughout the Orkney archipelago (N. Card pers. comm.).

As well as changing our view of the later Neolithic, recent fieldwork has also led to the discovery of a number of earlier Neolithic sites, and are presenting results which break with the traditional ‘farmstead’ view of the earlier Neolithic built upon the evidence at the Knap of Howar (Papa Westray). As will be discussed in section 7.3.2, an agglomeration of timber structures has been found at Wideford Hill (Richards in press), whilst other timber and stone structures have been discovered at Braes of Ha’Breck (Wyre) and Green (Eday) (A. Thomas pers. comm.). Whilst these discoveries will surely change the picture of the Orcadian Neolithic, the results of these excavations are still awaiting publication. Taking into consideration this situation, and in order to take this section to the end, I would like to point out that the case study presented below is based upon evidence available to date.

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**Figure 7.10** Archaeological activity in the Orkneys to the 1980’s (After Fraser 1983).

**Figure 7.11** Detail of coastal erosion affecting the settlement of Pool (Sanday) (© Irene Garcia Rovira).
7.3 Part Three: Intercultural interaction and the formation of hybrid identities: the Orkney Islands at the end of the fourth millennium BC.

As was noted in the previous section, the large-scale picture of the Orcadian Neolithic has changed little since Renfrew (1979b) demonstrated that the established distinction between Unstan Ware and Grooved Ware could no longer be conceived as reflecting distinct cultures (Childe 1946), but could, instead, be placed in a sequence in which Unstan Ware and 'Orkney Cromarty' burial structures would have been superseded by Grooved Ware and Maeshowe passage graves at the end of the fourth millennium BC. At a basic level, this distinction was central to the consolidation of the phasing of an earlier (early to late fourth millennium BC), and a later Neolithic (late fourth millennium BC to mid to late third millennium BC) in the islands. Unfortunately, the direct association of temporal phasing to certain archaeological assemblages has been detrimental, as it has often treated these assemblages as 'ideal types', promoting the development of narratives in which social dynamics are often undermined (see section 7.3.2 for discussion).

Even though Renfrew pointed out that the abruptness created by this classificatory schemes had to be treated with caution, recognising a 'transitional period' - 3310 to 3030 cal BC – in which both assemblages would have coexisted (1979b: 207) (Fig. 7.12), the clear-cut picture created through classification led to a view in which the earlier assemblages were simply superseded by later ones. This image has been, to some degree, crystallised through the results of radiocarbon dating which point at the fact that by about 3300/3000 cal BC, new settlements were founded (see e.g. Ashmore 2005), pristine burial structures were constructed (see e.g. Renfrew 1979b), and novel pottery assemblages began to be produced (see e.g. Brindley 1999). Although, surely this evidence points to the late fourth millennium BC as a moment in which structural changes occurred in the Orkney archipelago (Renfrew 1979b; Davidson & Henshall 1989; MacSween 1992; Thomas 1996; Richards 1998: 524; Jones 1999: 58; Ashmore 2000a; Card 2005: 47), the character of this 'transitional' period has remained poorly understood. Furthermore, the underlying reasons that triggered this change have been somewhat under examined in the wake of later archaeological activity in the islands.

Drawing on this concern, I would like to re-think this archaeological context, taking into consideration a series of insights produced throughout this thesis but also drawing upon new sets of evidence emerging from recent archaeological activity in the islands. In order to reveal the subtleties of this socio-historical context, I will begin by critically...
examining the interpretive models so far devised to explain this episode of change. This discussion will be followed by paying particular attention to the new interpretive possibilities which can be conceived in the light of new available evidence for the earlier Orcadian Neolithic. As will be demonstrated, this examination brings about a series of insights which are of central importance to shed light into the context selected for this study. Finally, I will concentrate upon the development of a more comprehensive picture of the turning to the later Neolithic. This discussion will open space to explore the following enquiries:

(1) Could it be possible to suggest that the episode of material change discussed above occurred partly as the effect of interaction between the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands and those of different regions?

(2) If material culture is ‘constituted within frameworks of conceptual meaning’ (Hodder 1992: 12), could it be argued that interaction brought about transformations in the cosmologies of these inhabitants which, in turn, affected their material culture?

(3) Were certain material assemblages actively used to portray a strong sense of identity? If so, could we argue that this growing concern with creating a new identity reflected the urge to differentiate themselves from others?

(4) How can this discussion be linked to the wider picture of the later Neolithic, in which characteristically Orcadian assemblages began to be produced elsewhere?

7.3.1 On social complexity.

Even more than contexts of material patterning, contexts of material change have traditionally represented the breeding ground for the development of interpretive models and for testing the viability of new theoretical approaches. The impasse between the earlier and the later Orcadian Neolithic has not represented an exception to this situation. Quite the opposite, this spatial and temporal context has not only been considered by those exclusively focusing upon the archaeology of the Orkney Islands but also by those who, like Bradley (e.g. 1984a; 2007) (see section 7.1.1) have endeavoured into the interpretation of the bigger picture of the British and Irish later Neolithic (e.g. Sheridan 2004a; Thomas 2005, 2010). In any case, in this section, attention is drawn to Renfrew’s model of ‘centralising tendencies’ (1979b), Hodder’s model of ‘ritual antistructure’ (1982a) and Sharples’ model of ‘burial practices’ (1985).
These models are linked by their response to the changes observed in the Orkney Islands at the turn of the third millennium BC.

Figure 7.12 Radiocarbon dates for Neolithic Orkney. Transitional period (After Renfrew 1979b).

During the brief history of research presented in section 7.2.2, it was noted that, from work carried out at the passage graves of Quanterness and Maeshowe, and at the Ring of Brodgar in Mainland, Renfrew (1979b) was able to acquire dating evidence which helped him break from the culture-historical framework under which narratives of the Orcadian Neolithic had so far been sustained (Jones & Richards 2000). He was able to postulate that, at least in Mainland, a transitional period took place between 3310 cal
BC and 3030 cal BC (Renfrew 1979b: 207); a time span which saw the ‘evolution’ (ibid.) of Unstan Ware to Grooved Ware, and which was followed by the construction of the henges of Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar and the passage grave of Maeshowe (ibid. 211).

The latter monuments were not only considered as being constructed later in the sequence, but in contrast to the former monuments (the ‘Orkney-Cromarty group’) the construction of the henges required a work force which could only be attained through social gatherings which surpassed the size of local groups. Following in this vein, Renfrew focussed on characterising the social forms prevalent both in the earlier and the later part of the Orcadian Neolithic. Drawing on the size and location of the earlier monuments, Renfrew inferred that the ‘Orkney-Cromarty’ graves corresponded to either specific kinship or local groups (1979b: 215), in which people ‘would have been buried together as they lived together’ (ibid.). In effect, these burial structures would have served as territorial markers for segmentary communities (ibid.). In contrast, Renfrew argued that the sheer scale of monuments such as the Mainland henges and Maeshowe, and their unique conglomeration in Mainland Orkney, indicated that these structures reflected the emergence of a chiefdom society which, rather than being centred 'on the eminence of the leader' (ibid. 217), placed emphasis on the definition of 'group identity' (ibid.).

Three years after Renfrew's *Investigation in Orkney* (1979b) was published, Hodder (1982a), in a rather concise manner, developed a case study in which the issue of social complexity in the Orcadian Neolithic reappeared as the centre of analysis. However, his approach, although in keeping with Renfrew's portrayal of emerging social complexity, developed from a radically different concern. For Hodder 'culture was meaningfully constituted', with material traits drawing upon a set or schema of culturally significant symbols and meaning (ibid. 185). Hodder believed that the structuring principles of past societies could be explored through examining archaeological evidence in its totality rather than divorcing specific assemblages from the whole. On this occasion, Hodder's exploration gave rise to a concern with social space which was later taken-up by Richards in the study of the later Orcadian Neolithic (see e.g. 1991a; 2005), as we shall explore further, below.

Beginning his account with the analysis of the later Neolithic house structures recovered from the settlements of Rinyo (Rousay) and Skara Brae (Mainland), Hodder pointed out that, in the majority of cases, these structures were characterised by a
cellular layout, with a centre point in which a hearth was placed, and from which a cruciform arrangement developed (1982a: 220). Interestingly, he noted that the right recess was persistently larger than the left one, and the entrances were often offset to the right (ibid.) (Fig. 7.13). Whilst this was the general tendency observed in household architecture, similar arrangements could be seen within the chamber of Maeshowe passage graves. Although the cruciform arrangement was, in some cases, blurred through the incorporation of multiple cells, the central space still enhanced the front/back, right/left arrangement of the houses. Through this correspondence, Hodder argued that the built space of the Orcadian later Neolithic was organised in relation to a series of general principles of symbolic meaning (ibid.).

Figure 7.13 Spatial order identified by Hodder (1982a). House A, Rinyo (Rousay) (After Fraser 1983).

Building on this position, Hodder moved on to argue that, whilst burial structures and households reflected upon the same structuring principles, the same could not be said in the case of the Mainland henges (Fig. 7.14) Despite also being concentric, neither the Ring of Brodgar nor the Stones of Stenness seem to reproduce the cellular form characteristic of the houses (ibid. 222). This distinction led Hodder to develop the following inference. Retaking Renfrew's model of 'centralising tendencies', Hodder discussed the possibility of elites emerging in the islands through ritual activities
occurring in these structures. Following from Turner's (1969) examination of ritual activity, he indicated that, in the spheres of ritual, a liminal, intermediate stage takes place. Whilst, as had been noted, cultural phenomena springs from a series of structuring principles, in this arena of social action, the subversion of social forms could occur, and could have been manipulated by certain individuals in order to gain group status (ibid. 227).

As has been noted, in the time span of three years, two radically different – yet related – visions of the later Orcadian Neolithic had developed. However, the examination of this archaeological context did not end here. On the contrary, it triggered the development of a further interpretive exercise, this time focused upon the evidence for burial practices both in the earlier and later part of the Orcadian Neolithic.

Figure 7.14 Plan of Stones of Stenness (Mainland) (After Ritchie 1976).
Despite, explicitly acknowledging the fragmentary evidence for burial practice, Sharples (1985) pointed out differences between earlier and later practices, and proceeded to develop a series of inferences which helped moving away from the exclusive consideration of architectural structures seen until this point.

In his discussion of the differences between the ‘Orkney-Cromarty group’ and the ‘Maeshowe’ group, Sharples moved beyond the characterisation of the architectural layout. Instead, the former group was characterised by ‘small, geographically dispersed’ (ibid. 68) structures which, in contrast to the Maeshowe tombs, were greater in number (ibid. 69). Moreover, due to the lack of mixing of human remains found in these structures, Sharples considered that the earlier tombs would have been associated with specific kinships and that - in line with Renfrew’s position– these would have worked as territorial markers (ibid. 70).

In contrast to the earlier Neolithic, the later burial practices occurred within more complex spatial arrangements in almost every case (see Hedges 1983 for Isbister). Due to the bulk of human remains found in the side-cells of, for instance Quanterness (Mainland) (see Renfrew 1979b), it was postulated that the burial rituals during the later Neolithic had changed substantially. In this case, rather than placing the dead within these structures, human bodies were excarnated and only placed within the tombs after a span of time (Sharples 1985: 70). Once within, the evidence demonstrates that the bones were redistributed according to patterns which did not reflect kinship. In the light of this view, Sharples argued that the Maeshowe tombs were not territorial markers. Instead, the re-distribution of bones, it was argued, reflected upon the ‘concept of a society where individuals are regarded as components which, though originally belonging to a kinship group, are more importantly perceived as belonging to groups which cut across kinship boundaries’ (ibid. 71). Moreover, in the latter tombs, social gatherings are observed outside the tombs through the conglomeration of animal bones and artefacts, meaning that in this period, not only attitudes to the dead would have changed, but that these structures were acting as important ritual centres (ibid. 73).

7.3.1.1 Monuments, burials and ritual: a critical consideration.

As I shall discuss in this section, a number of flaws have been identified in the interpretive models discussed above, both through the development of alternative
theoretical approaches and by the results of new discoveries and excavations. Nonetheless, I would like to take the occasion to point out that despite criticism, these approaches present a series of interesting insights which should not be understated. Firstly, Renfrew’s depiction of the significance of Mainland for the later Neolithic inhabitants of the islands should be taken into consideration for, if as Card suggests, growing evidence at the Ness of Brodgar shows that this site is best considered as a place for gathering (pers. comm.) (see section 7.2.2), then we would be in front of a landscape both without precedents in other islands of the archipelago, and in which the different sites are characterised as locales of interaction amongst different social groups. The role of different monuments of the Brodgar-Stenness area as locations for social gatherings (see Chapter Five, Fig. 5.2), has also been discussed by Jones & Richards (2005) in relation to the Stones of Stenness. Secondly, Hodder’s awareness of patterned structural order both affecting the households and the burial structures of the later Neolithic provides valuable evidence, upon which inferences regarding the cosmological world of the inhabitants of the archipelago can be drawn. As was noted in section 7.2.2, this perspective has been adopted - and partly modified- by Richards (e.g. 1991a; 1998; 2005), developing well-established narratives of the later Orcadian Neolithic. Thirdly, Sharples’ concern over the value of examining burial practices ultimately places awareness on the risk of overemphasising material forms (e.g. structural layouts, typological sequences) over the practices taking place within the different settings of interaction examined.

Although in comparison to the other two accounts discussed in the previous section, Renfrew’s model was supported both by empirical detail and a detailed assessment of chronological evidence, his approach has been questioned both in the light of new archaeological evidence, and through the rejection of the evolutionary premises under which it was sustained. Concerning the former, Richards (e.g. 1998; 2005) has suggested that to regard the Orcadian henges and Maeshowe as structures which emerged in the later stages of the Orcadian Neolithic is problematic. Despite the fact that, typologically speaking, one might be tempted to place this monument at the end of the sequence of Orcadian passage graves (see Davidson & Henshall 1989: 90) due to its sheer size and superb finishing, contextually, this structure could only be directly related to House 2 at Barnhouse (Mainland) (Richards 1998; Challands et al. 2005) (Fig. 7.15). This relationship could also be further complemented by noting that the incised motifs found in this passage grave (Fig. 7.16) directly relate to Grooved Ware and to the incised motifs found in the Mainland settlements of Barnhouse, Skara Brae.
and Ness of Brodgar amongst others (see e.g. Childe 1931a: plate LIV; Downes & Richards 2005: 81; Card & Thomas 2011) (Fig. 7.17). If, in fact, Maeshowe could be chronologically related to House 2 at Barnhouse, then the former could no longer be placed within the later stages of the later Neolithic as radiocarbon dates for House 2 demonstrate a time span of 3300-3200 cal BC for primary use (Richards 1998: 523). Likewise, Renfrew’s ideas regarding the late incorporation of the Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar in the Orcadian landscape of the later Neolithic have also been scrutinised. On this occasion, Richards has pointed out that Grooved Ware sherds recovered from the Stones of Stenness are not only of distinctively earlier chronologies, as they use incised rather than applied decoration (see Brindley 1999), but that they can also be related to the earlier phases of the Barnhouse assemblage both in decoration and technique (Richards 1998: 523).

![Outline of House 2 at Barnhouse (After Richards et al. 2000).](image)

**Figure 7.15** Outline of House 2 at Barnhouse (After Richards et al. 2000).

At an interpretive level, both the progressive linear narrative used to describe the sequence of the Orcadian Neolithic, and the equation between monumental size and social type described by Renfrew, have been critically considered on previous occasions (see e.g. Bradley 1984b) and, therefore, detailed review is not necessary. In any case, it is important to highlight the fact that Richards critiqued that virtually the same interpretive model that had been elaborated by Renfrew to discuss the archaeological evidence of Wessex (see 1998: 516). Moreover, despite being focused upon the explanation of social change, Renfrew’s model not only overlooked the
reasons triggering the emergence of a centralising chiefdom, but also developed a model based on a comparison between the earlier and later assemblages, which neglected the actual significance of the transitional period which he had sought to define through his concerns on chronological evidence.

**Figure 7.16** Graphic design from Maeshowe (Mainland) (After Richards et al. 2000).

**Figure 7.17** Decorated slab from Brodgar area (Mainland) (After Richards et al. 2000).

Moving onto Hodder’s model, as has been noted above, his approach surpassed earlier evolutionary accounts by placing his narratives within a concern for cultural relativism. The built environment ceased to be understood as a direct reflection of social complexity and began to be conceived as social space which was both constructed according to a series of underlying principles, and in which social action took place. Despite the interest that his model generated for later interpretive activity (e.g. Richards 1990a, 1991a; Jones 2000, 2002), Hodder’s account on the later Orcadian Neolithic focused exclusively upon the examination of patterned social space, ignoring
the activities taking place within it, and developing a narrative in which social action was determined structurally. Although, in contrast to Renfrew, he attempted to answer the question of why social change took place during the later Neolithic by suggesting that ritual activity produced structural changes within society, his discussion only replicated that of Renfrew in characterising the emergence of elites. In this sense, the emergence of social complexity was a given and Hodder only worked upon portraying the cause that allowed this situation to take place in the first instance. This is not the only assumption, as Hodder supposed that both the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness would have been used as places in which ritual activity would have been carried out without placing any concern in examining the practices that took place within these locales. He also omitted the fact that, at this time, social gathering was not only taking place within these structures but also, as Sharples (1985) pointed out, was taking place outside tombs structures such as Pierowall (Westray), Quanterness (Mainland) and Isbister (South Ronaldsay) (Sharples 1985: 70; Bradley 2007: 110). Again, similar to Renfrew’s study, Hodder’s model of emergence of social complexity not only focused on specific aspects of the archaeological data in detriment of others of equal significance, but also undermined the actual examination of the picture of the late fourth millennium BC, producing a narrative which was entirely focused upon the late Orcadian Neolithic.

Lastly, Sharples’ analysis, though combining different sets of evidence in which social practice was considered (e.g. location of passage graves, spatial arrangement and burial practices), did so at the expense of considering the evidence that could be obtained in other spheres of social action such as settlement sites. Moreover, although moving away from an account focused purely on the reasons underlying the emergence of social complexity, he still regarded the earlier Neolithic in the same manner as Renfrew. Likewise, although he demonstrated the existence of changing patterns of burial deposition in the later Neolithic, he failed to provide an interpretation of how the structure of society and the changing attitudes to death emerged in the first place.

Having questioned the soundness of the interpretive models which have developed surrounding the structural changes that took place in the Orkneys at the end of the fourth millennium BC, it appears appropriate to question the reasons why recent approaches to the Orcadian Neolithic have largely set aside the need to examine the historical contingencies which might have triggered the above mentioned change. On the one hand, the abruptness of this transitional period has been mitigated by those working within the fourth wave of research in the islands (see section 7.2.1). In their
view, although the late fourth millennium BC was, without doubt, a period of substantial change, the degree and speed of change initially depicted might correspond to an illusion created through archaeological classification. As we will discuss in section 7.3.3, Richards (in press) has placed particular attention on discussing how the people inhabiting the Orkney islands during these chronologies might have experienced this moment of change in relation to a reflection on built environments. In any case, it is possible to indicate that current research in the islands has not taken this socio-historical context as a priority in their 'interpretive agenda'.

Secondly, and most importantly, I suggest that the lack of concern placed upon this moment of change, corresponds to the character of the enquiries which developed through the incorporation of new understandings concerning social dynamics and material culture. As was discussed in Chapter Five, in relation to Richards' movement towards a study focused on social practice, and at the beginning of this chapter, through inspecting the differential treatment of archaeological data between current traditions of archaeological research, the fourth wave of research has mainly focused upon the interpretation of the Orcadian Neolithic, placing a great deal of attention to the study of material culture with concerns to 'schemes of association and meaning' (Jones & Richards 2005: 199) triggered from what Richards has contemplated as Orcadian cosmologies. Within this approach, research has mainly been placed on the study of social dynamics within specific socio-cultural milieus rather than into episodes of social change. Having explored the state of research on the archaeological context selected for this study, it is now time to build the picture preceding the later centuries of the fourth millennium BC. As will be demonstrated, new evidence does not only allow the development of more multifaceted picture of the earlier Orcadian Neolithic but helps create a series of understandings which, I suggest, are central to shed light upon the underlying forces and the character that prompted what in archaeology we identify as a moment of structural change.

7.3.2 Refining the earlier Orcadian Neolithic.

Nowhere else have the effects of archaeological classification been as pronounced as in the context of the Orcadian earlier Neolithic, and a number of reasons can be given to explain this situation. A brief review of the history of research in the islands demonstrates that the later Neolithic, be it by the sheer size and complexity of monuments such as the Ring of Brodgar (Mainland), by the discovery and preservation
of sites such as Skara Brae (Mainland) or by the integration of this socio-historical context into the wider picture of British prehistory (see section 7.1.1), has caught the eye of researchers from a very early date. Contrasting, the earlier Neolithic was not only defined much later (see Renfrew 1979b) but has been known, until recently, mainly through evidence of burial structures which, as was discussed in section 7.2.2, were mostly excavated in the earliest phases of archaeological activity in the Orkney archipelago. Moreover, the only evidence for early Neolithic settlement in the islands up to the 1980s was that of the Knap of Howar (Papa Westray) (Traill & Kirkness 1937; Ritchie 1983a).

This situation has triggered three major consequences. Firstly, due to the lack of comparative data, the ‘farmstead’ interpretation given to the Knap of Howar led to it being taken as the ‘ideal type’ (Downes & Richards 2000) when discussing settlement patterns during this period. Secondly, the diagnostic features of the earlier Neolithic - namely, isolated settlements, Orkney-Cromarty tombs and Unstan Ware - have triggered the development of a one-dimensional and static picture of what is a lengthy time span (early to late fourth millennium BC). Thirdly, contrasting with the kind of narratives produced for the later Neolithic, studies developed within the earlier phase have tended to concentrate their efforts on the examination of specific archaeological assemblages. Fortunately though, a new and more complex scene is beginning to emerge resulting from the discovery and excavation of new sites (see section 7.2.2). Innovative narratives regarding this phase are also being produced (e.g. Richards et al. in press). In this section, I aim to briefly consider this new picture as it aids the interpretation of the time frame selected for this research. Although this is the case, it is important to recognise that the narrative produced in the following lines is only provisional and its substantiation depends upon the recovery of further archaeological data.

At the settlement site of Wideford Hill (Mainland), extensive occupation has been found in the form of circular timber houses dating from the earlier to mid fourth millennium BC (Richards in press) (Fig. 7.18). This settlement site has given us an insight into the adoption of stone as a building material, as can be seen through the sequence of Structure 1, which overlies a timber household (Structure 2) (ibid.). This change has been chronologically attributed to 3600-3300 cal BC and, at least at this particular site, not only involved a change of building material but also a series of alterations to the spatial order of the house (ibid). Whilst the timber structures are concentric in character, the stone houses overlaying them are elongated. Interestingly,
the timber phase is also associated with both Unstan Ware and early Neolithic plain bowls, meaning that these pottery assemblages should no longer be exclusively associated to the stone longhouses traditionally attributed to the earlier Neolithic phase.

![Figure 7.18](image)

**Figure 7.18** Timber structure 1c, Wideford Hill (Mainland) (© Colin Richards).

However, although the significance of this site has no precedents, it is necessary to acknowledge that further evidence for earlier Neolithic settlement within the islands negates the temptation to re-phase the earlier Neolithic into two main periods characterised on the one hand, by circular timber structures and, on the other hand, by stone elongated houses similar to those of the Knap of Howar (Papa Westray). In contrast, the picture is further complicated by the evidence for earlier Neolithic occupation at the multi-period settlement of Pool (Sanday). Phase 1.2 is characterised by a series of roughly circular household structures which date to the early to mid fourth millennium BC (Hunter 2007: 31) (Fig. 7.19). Interestingly, these structures, although associated with Unstan Ware and earlier Neolithic plain bowls, are characterised by a lack of furniture and a central hearth (*ibid*). The latter feature raises questions concerning the attribution of these structures as places of dwelling.
Moreover, of further interest is the household structure found in Trench C at Braes of Ha’Breck (Wyre) (Fig. 7.20). Although the layout of this structure mimics that of the longhouses (see discussion below), timber, instead of stone, was used as the fabric for its construction (A. Thomas, pers. comm.). Whilst the chronological context of this structure is awaiting publication, it is interesting to note that it is partly overlaid by a stone longhouse (ibid.).

![Mushroom shaped structure from Pool (Sanday), Phase 2.1 (Hunter et al. 2007).](image)

Figure 7.19 'Mushroom shaped' structure from Pool (Sanday), Phase 2.1 (Hunter et al. 2007).

Returning to the evidence found at Wideford Hill, Richards (in press) has developed an observation which, I suggest, deserves to be considered further, even if comparative data is not yet available to be able to validate his interpretation. Breaking with the typological unity given to the ‘Orkney-Cromarty’ tombs (see Davidson & Henshall 1989), Richards has emphasised the different character of the Bookan tomb-type. In contrast to the ‘stalled’ and ‘tripartite cairns’, Bookan tombs are subterranean structures, non-monumental in character, and defined by an internal concentric layout in which different chambers radiate from the central area (Richards in press).

Furthermore, Richards has suggested that these burial structures may in fact be chronologically situated at the beginning of the fourth millennium BC and related to timber households like those found in Wideford Hill. Timber households and Bookan tombs can be related as they both replicate the same spatial order. Moreover, Richards
has pointed out that, if a relationship existed between the timber houses and the subterranean tomb structures, meaning that the Bookan tombs were the earliest structures in the sequence of the Neolithic, it could be suggested that the idea of burying the deceased in subterranean contexts could be paralleled to the evidence for the Mesolithic, indicating the effects of a long held tradition of burying the dead (ibid.).

Figure 7.20 Timber structure from Braes of Ha’ Breck (Wyre) (© Antonia Thomas).

Figure 7.21 Calf of Eday long (Eday) (After Davidson & Henshall 1989).
Whilst no dating evidence is available to support his interpretation, an earlier date for Bookan tombs can be suggested as in a number of instances 'Orkney-Cromarty' tombs are built on top of, or overlie earlier Bookan burials. One such example can be identified at Calf of Eday Long (Eday), in which a 'stalled cairn' is partly superimposed on a Bookan structure (see Davidson & Henshall 1989: 107-108) (Fig. 7.21).

At this point, before proceeding to discuss the inferences drawn from Richards insights, it is worth noting that this new evidence represents a unique opportunity to break with those traditional views which had portrayed the earlier Neolithic through static and one-dimensional narratives. More importantly, for the purpose of this discussion, if the evidence at Wideford Hill can be used to define an overall picture (dates for the Knap of Howar seem to support this proposition [see Ashmore 2000a]), then it can be said that sometime during 3600-3300 cal BC, the inhabitants of the Orkney archipelago began to build household and burial structures substantially different from those that characterised previous times. This new picture undoubtedly inspires new interpretive enquiries.

Even though the kind of house architecture found at the Knap of Howar (Papa Westray) can no longer be regarded as an 'ideal type', it is significant to note that similar structures have been found in different locations within the islands. These have been identified at Green (Eday), Braes of Ha'Breck (Wyre) (Fig. 7.22), Stonehall (Mainland) and possibly at Howe (see Ballin Smith 1994). At Stonehall Meadow (Mainland), it has been noted that House 2 and House 3 are linked in a similar fashion to that of the two structures at the Knap of Howar (Richards et al. in press). Interestingly, a number of researchers have pointed out the similarities encountered between the layout and construction techniques used in both the elongated houses and the 'Orkney-Cromarty' tombs (see e.g. Hodder 1984; Richards 1992a; Ritchie 1995; Jones 2002; Card 2005). In general terms, they can both be described as having elongated interiors in which the spatial arrangement is divided up by slabs and which are circumscribed within double skinned walls (see Henshall 1963, 1972; Davidson & Henshall 1989: 19-51)(see Fig. 7.21). This relationship is revealing for, if as Richards suggests, during the earlier fourth millennium BC, circular timber houses and subterranean tombs were built, then, during the mid to late fourth millennium BC, substantial changes in the architecture of both houses and tombs would have taken place in the islands. Remarkably, the evidence suggests that the earliest dates for 'Orkney-Cromarty' tombs are found in
Mainland Scotland (see Noble 2006), meaning that the architecture of the Orcadian longhouse would have developed from that of the tomb.

Typologically related tombs have been identified in the regions of Inverness-shire, Ross-shire, Sutherland and Caithness (Richards 1992a: 65; Noble 2006: 15) and, in some cases, have been dated to the first centuries of the fourth millennium BC (Davidson & Henshall 1991; Sharples 1986; Noble 2006: 118). Likewise, Davidson and Henshall (1989) have pointed out that in the small tripartite chambers of Huntersquoy (Eday), Bigland Round (Rousay), Sandhill Smithy (Eday) and Knowe of Craie (Rousay), the pottery assemblage not only differs from Unstan Ware, but, in almost every case (excluding Huntersquoy) Unstan Ware is characteristically absent (ibid. 77). Although the origin of this pottery is not clear, it has been suggested that they find their closest affinities within the assemblages of Mainland Scotland (Noble 2006: 119). In the light of this context, how can these changes be interpreted?

Figure 7.22 House 5 at Braes of Ha’Breck (Wyre) (© Antonia Thomas).
Although this chronological evidence has led Richards (in press) to acknowledge that the layout of the houses would have developed from that of the tombs, he has suggested that the ‘architecture of the tripartite chambered cairn may initially have acted simply as a process of formalization. This gave architectural expression to pre-existing conceptual notions of the spatial and temporal dimensions of the journey of life to death in early fourth millennium BC (ibid.). Whilst this could certainly have been the case, I would argue that this inference not only reduces the complexity of this situation but it may also respond, implicitly or explicitly, to a resistance to diffusion and to a desire to ascribe change exclusively to internal socio-cultural forces.

An alternative view is that of a context in which the introduction of new burial structures would have underlined the transposition of cultural phenomena from one location to another. However, not only is this based on the simplistic explanation of diffusion, which I have argued against throughout this thesis, but is not sustained by the archaeological evidence available. Instead, it may be argued that the archaeological context in question responds to the effects of continuous interaction between social groups inhabiting Mainland Scotland and those of the Orkney archipelago. If, as Richards has argued, the spatial order characteristic of the tombs and the houses of Neolithic Orkney responds not only to physical demands but also to socio-cultural forces, then, it could be argued that processes of interaction may have triggered the adoption of novel traditions of architecture which were associated with a series of modifications on the cosmological domains that act as structuring principles of spatial order.

This situation, can be paralleled (albeit with some reservations) to Insoll’s (1999) differentiation between ‘structuring principles’ and ‘cultural diversity’; elements which, he suggests, affect the architecture and, therefore, the spatial layout of the Mosque. The Islamisation of different geographical regions has given rise to a series of effects which are crystallised in the architecture of the Mosque. In this sense, whilst the spatial layout of Mosques is mainly defined through their orientation towards the qiblah (ibid. 28), therefore, acting as a ‘structuring principle’, Mosques take on a great variety of forms within regional traditions. As such, this built space is affected through the confluence of various elements which are best understood as hybridising effects instigated by confluence of belief within the sphere of cultural diversity.

Indeed, in the context of the Orcadian Neolithic, it is difficult to argue that new architectural forms would respond to the infiltration of new belief. However, it can be
suggested that the building of different burial spaces was influenced by new understandings originated within spheres of interaction between different social groups. Reaching this point, it is no longer possible to suggest that the introduction of Orkney-Cromarty tombs correspond to the either the simple assimilation of cultural phenomena or to the adoption of a tradition of architecture simply to suit new understandings triggered exclusively from transformative forces acting within social systems, or as Richards suggest, within specific cosmologies. In this sense, it is not a case of replacement but of transformation which is then sustained and altered through time as can be seen at the level of practice. One clear example of this situation is contemplated in the way, within the context of the Orkneys, the original ‘tripartite tombs’ take on a distinctive local character (Henshall 1985; Sharples 1985) (see Fig. 7.24). Evidence that sustains a process of hybridisation rather than a simple transposition of understanding is given, supported by the reproduction of the spatial order of the tomb into domestic spheres. If, as was suggested, prior to these modifications, the spatial layout of the Bookan tombs and the timber houses shared a component of concentricity, then it could be postulated, not only that despite the degree of transformation occurred with the emergence of the new burial architecture the relationship among the living and the dead remained unaltered but also that this relationship might have figured as a dominant element within the cosmologies of those inhabiting the islands during these chronologies. In the next section, I will suggest that this relationship might have been a dominant one throughout the Orcadian Neolithic. More importantly, as will be discussed, this relationship helps shed light into the archaeological context explored in this case study.

One last strand of evidence which supports the idea of transformation as hybridisation rather than as the assimilation of external cultural phenomena can be inferred at Wideford Hill (Mainland). As was discussed at the beginning of this section, a superimposition of a stone elongated structure (Structure 1) to a timber household (Structure 2) was identified at Wideford Hill (Mainland) (Richards in press). Interestingly, the stone structure is not only carefully superimposed to the earlier structure but the evidence suggests that the scoop hearth, used in the older timber house, is re-used in the stone house. As Richards suggests, this preserved the centrality of the hearth and the spatial order that emanated from it in the wake of new social circumstances (ibid.).
7.3.3 Re-thinking the late fourth millennium BC.

In the last section, I suggested that by the mid fourth millennium BC, new understandings regarding death and the ancestors gradually crystallised in the islands resulting from prolonged interaction with social groups inhabiting Mainland Scotland. However, interaction did not cause the replacement or the eradication of traditional understandings, but a reconfiguration through a process of gradual hybridisation. In turn, the spatial order of dwellings, on many occasions, began to parallel that of the tombs; a situation which finds its roots in earlier times and that, as I will discuss later on in this chapter, was replicated with the changes that took place by the later fourth millennium BC. In the light of this evidence, it is suggested that a relationship between the dead and the living remained a constant element in the changing cosmologies of the inhabitants of the islands during the Neolithic.

If the evidence at Wideford Hill is used to explain wider social processes (see Ashmore 2000a for Knap of Howar), then it is important to note that the alterations of the house/tomb discussed above occurred by about 3600/3300 cal BC. That is, not long before a new and more profound set of changes took place in the islands which affected many dimensions of the cultural repertoire of its inhabitants. This narrow chronological span, I suggest, can be used to reveal the character of the changes which took place in the late fourth millennium BC. In any case, in order to explore the socio-historical context selected in this case study, it is also necessary to review an existing overlap concerning ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ assemblages and to elucidate the ways in which new material expressions began to the produced during these chronologies. In this section, I briefly outline the character of what Renfrew (1979b) referred to as the ‘transitional period’. Before any sort of inferences are made in relation to this context, it is important to underscore that this temporal span falls on a plateau on the radiocarbon curve (see Ashmore & MacSween 1998; Brindley 1999: 133; Hunter et al. 2007: 61). Therefore, the ability to explore the timing of this transition relies heavily on stratigraphy and other indications of sequence. Overall, it is possible to indicate that a degree of overlap occurred within this time span (Renfrew 1979b; Bradley et al. 2000: 70). This has been defined through the sets of evidence discussed below.

The transition from the use of Unstan Ware to the emergence of Grooved Ware has been established through the contextual evidence found at the settlement of Pool (Sanday). Whilst Phase 1 is characterised by Unstan Ware and plain bowls, Phase 2 is defined by a different kind of pottery described by its wide mouths, plain rims and ‘baggy sides’ (MacSween 1992; 1994; 2005) (Fig. 7.23).
Interestingly, the earlier Grooved Ware of this site resembles Unstan Ware in fabric, decoration and method; a situation which, as MacSween notes, changes dramatically in Phase 3 (early third millennium BC) (see MacSween 2007). Drawing from this evidence, it has been argued that Grooved Ware developed from Unstan Ware rather than representing a radically divergent pottery tradition (MacSween 1992; Thomas 1999: 118). Moreover, the evidence suggests that Unstan Ware continued to be used in some contexts during the later Neolithic (Jones 2000: 218).

A degree of overlap between the construction and use of ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ assemblages is more apparent within burial structures. In particular, a combination of Orkney-Cromarty features and Maeshowe forms has been identified at the tomb of Isbister (South Ronaldsay) (Sharples 1985: 63-64). Moreover, dating evidence suggests that the construction and use of this tomb overlaps that of Quanterness (ibid.) as it seems to have been erected ‘within a century and a half of 3150 BC’ (Davidson & Henshall 1989: 85). Sharples (1985: 68) also noted that the burial practices taking place within the tomb are characteristic of those of the later Orcadian Neolithic.
Drawing again on dating evidence, it is possible to infer that the elongated stalled cairns of Rousay such as Knowe of Roweigar, Knowe of Ramsey and Midhowe could have been constructed at the same time as Isbister (Richards et al. in press; Hedges 1983: 63-5; Ashmore 2000a) (Fig. 7.24).

![Figure 7.24 Knowe of Ramsay (Rousay) (After Davidson & Henshall 1989).](image)

Even though a number of settlements appear to have been founded by the last centuries of the fourth millennium BC, at least at Pool (Sanday), Rinyo (Rousay), Stonehall (Mainland) and Crossiecrown (Mainland) the sequences go back to the earlier Neolithic. Likewise, new dates obtained from Skara Brae (Mainland) suggest the existence of a Phase 0, which runs back to the mid fourth millennium BC and which is characterised by earlier Neolithic pottery with affinities to that identified at the Point of Cott (Westray) (Richards pers. comm.). Breaking, to some degree, with the picture of an earlier and a later Neolithic house in Orkney, at Stonehall Knoll (Mainland), the spatial layout and the methods of construction of House 3 differ in that, whilst it is still elongated in the same fashion as the earlier houses, the internal layout resembles the later houses, whilst substituting the traditional ‘furniture’ for a space which developed from the wall itself (Richards et al. in press) (Fig. 7.25).
This evidence not only loosens the classification of the architectural forms, but also the chronology as, dating evidence suggests that the house would have been built c. 3300 cal BC and would have been used until c. 2600 cal BC (ibid.). Besides dating evidence, the chronological context aforementioned has been best portrayed by Richards through an interpretation based upon the evidence found at the settlement of Stonehall (Mainland) (Richards et al. in press). As he notes, if we could place ourselves in the context of the late fourth millennium BC, we would realise that whilst a variety of forms of elongated houses are still inhabited, nearby at Barnhouse and Skara Brae, differences in house architecture and settlement organisation are being realised (ibid.).

Whilst Richards’ reflection is elucidating as it breaks with the almost artificial image of abrupt change, I would like to underscore the fact that this evidence should not, therefore, be necessarily taken as portraying the changes occurring through this period as subtle and organic in character. As will be discussed in the following section, whatever the underlying reasons that promoted this change, they brought about a series of profound transformations into the way the inhabitants of the Orkney Islands understood the world gradually defined themselves as a group. As Richards pointed out, by the third millennium BC, the inhabitants of these islands used specific sets of material culture as cultural expressions to portray a ‘unified image of society’ (1998: 525).
7.4 Identities in re-definition.

In this section, I would like to briefly examine the character of the material forms (later Neolithic house, Maeshowe chambered tombs, Grooved Ware and related graphic expressions) which emerged at the cusp of the later Orcadian Neolithic. In particular, I would like to explore the ways in which these cultural expressions crystallised new understandings about the world and were, in turn, used to actively give material expression to group identity. It is through this discussion that, it will be finally possible to explore the role that intercultural contact with the Boyne Valley had in the emergence of the so-called later Orcadian Neolithic.

Amongst the new material forms which begin to emerge by the later fourth millennium BC, the later Neolithic households are one of the assemblages which has triggered most discussion. As was discussed in relation to Hodder’s interpretive model (see section 7.3.1) the spatial layout of the house displays a degree of consistency which was represented ‘over several hundred years’ (Downes & Richards 2005: 57). Extensive descriptions on spatial order have been developed by Richards (e.g. 1990a; 1991a; 1998; 2005) who draws upon the following characteristics. Although it could not be inferred that these houses are identical, they all seem to promote a cruciform layout which develops from the relationship amongst the furniture and the hearth (ibid.). Moreover, as was pointed out by Hodder (1982a) (see section 7.3.1) and later by Richards, the later Neolithic house often displays an entrance off-set to the right which would have affected the patterns of movement in entering the house (Parker Pearson & Richards 1994). The significance of the right-hand side is also displayed by the tendency of the ‘box-bed’ to be larger (ibid.). Similarities do not simply occur in the spatial layout, but also orientation with later Neolithic houses frequently aligned on north-west/south-east orientation (Downes & Richards 2005: 59); a trait which appears to be, to some degree, sustained with the evidence of the Ness of Brodgar (Card & Thomas 2011).

Although not all the houses were identical and they were continually modified by human agency (Downes & Richards 2005), and by the resulting consistency of its layout and orientation. In keeping with the discussion above for the earlier Neolithic house, the characteristic forms of the later Neolithic houses should be understood as architecture moulded by cultural forces. This proposition is further substantiated by the shared patterns of spatial order existing between the later Neolithic house and the Maeshowe tombs. As was noted above, Maeshowe not only replicates the characteristic cruciform pattern of the house but places particular attention to the right
hand recess by means of decoration (Richards 1991; Bradley et al. 2000: 62). At a more general level, Maeshowe passage graves are also associated with the house in terms of spatial concentricity and the use of differential spaces built up as cells (Davidson & Henshall 1989). It will be discussed below that the graphic imagery of the tomb is also found in the house furthering its association. Finally, structures like House 2 at Barnhouse or Structure 1 at the Ness of Brodgar, in their layout and superb finishing have been directly related to passage graves such as Maeshowe and Howe (Downes & Richards 2005).

Whilst a lot more could be said about the tomb and the house, I would like to move into considering two further elements which emerge in the Orkney Islands alongside the founding of later Neolithic settlements such as Barnhouse (Mainland) and Skara Brae (Mainland). These are the characteristic graphic expressions of later Neolithic Orkney and Grooved Ware. These graphic expressions are angular in character and have been found in passage tombs (see Bradley et al. 2000), at different later Neolithic settlements (see Childe 1931a; Shepherd 2000), in other portable media such as Skaill Knives (Saville 1994) and finally in Grooved Ware (e.g. Brindley 1999). In the next section, further discussion is given to this material assemblage in relation to Irish ‘megalithic art’. However, what is important to underscore here is that it is a graphic expression which can identified in the earlier sequences within settlements (Childe 1931a; 1931b) and that it is reproduced in multiple media, throughout the later Orcadian Neolithic.

No discussion of this subject is complete without a consideration of Grooved Ware. One of many interesting insights about this pottery assemblage it that is can take different dimensions of narrative. On the one hand, in the British and Irish context, Grooved Ware takes on a different character as it does in the Orkney Islands (Thomas 2010). In the Orkneys, this pottery assemblage is directly related to settlement, although it has also found in within passage graves and henges (Jones 2000: 130). More importantly, for the matters of the present discussion, Grooved Ware designs, as will be discussed in the following section, echo those of funerary contexts in Boyne Valley. Whilst Grooved Ware appears to be a widespread phenomenon, it cannot be simply conceived regionally for, as Jones (e.g. 2007) has demonstrated, at Barnhouse (Mainland) different tempers were used in distinctive areas of the settlement.

Although this brief description does not do justice to the data, it sheds light into a couple of elements which are revealing when examining the role and the effect of
intercultural interaction between the islands and the Boyne Valley. Two elements should be retained: (1) the ‘tomb-house’ relationship established through the evidence of the earlier Neolithic, reappears within a process of cosmological transformation. (2) new material forms which emerged as the crystallisation of changing social order were, after some time, used to portray a communal sense of identity.

7.4.1 Intercultural interaction and the formation of hybrid identity.

‘Why do the motifs found inside passage graves have so much in common with those in other media? And how much does this evidence differ from Ireland?’

(Bradley et al. 2000: 60).

‘Cultural hybridity refers to the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombined with new forms and new practices’.


Throughout this chapter it has been pointed out that a series of affinities exist between the material repertoire of later Neolithic Orkney and the Boyne Valley. These have often been used as evidence to elaborate interpretive models based upon the effects of inter-regional contacts during the later Neolithic of the British Isles and Ireland (Bradley 1984a; Bradley & Chapman 1986; Sheridan 2004a; Thomas 2005, 2010). Yet, as was discussed, few attempts have been made to establish the exact relationship between the Orkney Islands and the Boyne Valley during late fourth millennium BC. Analysis of the changes taking place during this time span in the Orkney archipelago might reveal episodes of contact between these regions. In this section, I will not develop a comprehensive study of how intercultural interaction with the Boyne Valley took place. Instead, I will pinpoint alternative enquiries which arise when considering the kind of insights developed throughout this thesis. In order to move further I will briefly comment upon the context of the Boyne Valley at the time Orcadian populations might have established contact before moving on to discuss a clear example of hybridisation which translated into the rise of Orcadian identity.
7.4.2 The Boyne Valley.

The Boyne Valley is located in the highest point of a low ridge, 1 km north of the River Boyne and 14 km away from the coast (O’Kelly 1982: 13). This location has traditionally been one of exceptional importance as can be seen by both prehistoric and historic evidence (see Stout 2002). However, it is mostly celebrated for its Neolithic passage grave ‘cemetery’ (ibid.). Before the attention is drawn into the cemetery itself, it is important to think about those who were the responsible for the construction of and use of these tombs. However, it is in this domain of enquiry where the evidence appears to be fragmentary.

Similar questions to that suggested here, have been placed at the centre of much archaeological research in Ireland. Some interesting insights have emerged largely through field walking, rescue excavation and of evidence encountered during the actual excavation of the main tombs. Regarding the former, scatters of lithics have been found in the proximity of the cemetery, demonstrating different moments of activity (Brady 2002, 2007a), including that of the earlier Neolithic. In relation to this chronological context, charcoal flakes which could be interpreted as remains of habitation layers have been found under mound L at Newgrange (O’Kelly et al. 1978; Smyth 2009: 25-26). Associated with this site were hollow scrapers and undecorated pottery (Stout 2002: 21). Similarly, pre-tomb activity has been also associated by mound Z. In this case, remains of a hearth, a setting of cobbles and several post-holes have been recorded (ibid.).

Earlier Neolithic activity has also been found associated to Knowth (see Eogan 1984; Eogan & Roche 1997; Eogan & Roche 1998). In this case, foundation trenches and postholes overlain by the main mound have been interpreted as remains of three rectangular houses (Smyth 2009). Dating evidence suggests that these houses and associated material assemblages belong of c. 3900 cal BC (Stout 2002: 21). Likewise, relating to a later date (3500 cal BC), a number of structures related to pits and hearths have also been identified at the west of Knowth (Brady 2007a). Evidence of other timber structures from the earlier Neolithic exist as has been identified mainly through the results of rescue excavation.

In contrast to the settlement evidence identified in the context of the earlier Neolithic, it is possible to state that evidence for the society who built the burial structures at the Boyne Valley has remained elusive (Smyth 2009: 31). For instance, at Townleyhall 1 and 2, a series of stakeholes which defy the identification of a particular pattern were
identified and it was suggested that ephemeral structures were erected on the same location overtime (Eogan 1963; Smyth 2009). Likewise, at Knowth site 1, a dark habitation layer was uncovered overlaying an earlier Neolithic structure (Smyth 2009). This layer appeared to contain of a series of hearth and stakeholes forming arcs (ibid.). This set of evidence has taken to suggest that a change from rectangular to circular timber structures would have occurred sometime during the Middle Neolithic (Cooney 2000). In any case, evidence suggests that a shift from being a place of dwelling to one of burial deposition occurred sometime before the 3300 cal BC. The lack of megalithic architecture in the area during the earlier Neolithic has always proved puzzling to researchers (see e.g. Eogan 2007b).

A model for tomb construction in the area was devised by Sheridan (1985) who identified five main phases of tomb construction. However, for the matters of the recent discussion, suffice is to say that two main period of construction can be contextually identified. Whilst some of the satellite tombs at Knowth, Dowth and Newgrange would have probably been constructed in earlier chronologies, it is only possible to certify this situation with regards to Sites 13 and 16 as they were partly overlaid by Site 1 at Knowth (Eogan 1986; 1998: 170; Cooney 2000: 153). In general terms, it can be said that the sequence of tomb construction began c. 3400 cal BC and reached zenith by 3300/3100 cal BC (Brindley 1999).

In acknowledging that contacts between the Orkney Islands and the Boyne Valley may have existed during this chronology, and accounting for the material assemblages emerging in the Orkneys during the later centuries of the fourth millennium BC, it is important to think about the context of these encounters. Postulating that inhabitants from the Orkney Islands may have visited this area of the Boyne valley, they would have been faced with what appears to be a sacred space. A location which gradually became a ceremonial centre; perhaps, as Bradley has suggested, the Boyne Valley became a centre of pilgrimage (1999: 1). Although, the issue of pilgrimage in prehistory has not found much support, Bradley indicated that it ‘is widely attested in the ethnographic record and there seems no reason for prehistorians to reject this subject out of hand’ (Bradley 1999: 1). In whichever case, for the matters of the present study, I would like to underscore the fact that, contacts existed between the Orkney Islands and the Boyne Valley during these chronologies, those who experienced the Boyne Valley would have experienced a sacred context: a land of the ancestors.
7.4.3 Back to the Orkneys.

Up to this point, I have made the following key points:

(1) Towards the mid fourth millennium BC, new understandings about the dead and the after world emerged in the Orkney Islands. This transformation occurred gradually, through continued interaction with Mainland Scotland and entailed the recombination of new and old understandings in which a central relationship between the dead and the living was reflected through the emergence of spatial layouts clearly influenced by those of the tomb.

(2) A few centuries later (c. 3300/3000 cal BC), a more profound set of changes took place in the Orkney Islands. Even though, not all the Orcadian communities embraced the production of new material expressions, in the centuries to come these ‘new’ sets of material culture were used to produce a picture of a unified sense of society.

(3) The later Neolithic house, tomb and associated material culture would have initially materialised a set of profound changes which, despite them all, retained some old understandings (e.g. tomb-house’ relationship).

One further element has to be accounted for here. It is necessary to take into consideration that the new material expressions which characterise emergence of the Neolithic in these chronologies have a distinctive ‘Irish flavour’. The most obvious element is the graphic expressions. As we have seen, in Orkney these graphic expressions are not confined to the tomb but are a common element in the house and in other media (Shee Twohig 1981; Saville 1994). The early attribution of this graphic imagery can be verified by stratified evidence at Skara Brae and Barnhouse (Ashmore & MacSween 1998). Similar graphic designs have been identified in the earliest decoration at the Boyne Valley which was composed of triangles, lozenges, and zigzags (Eogan 1997, 1999; Bradley et al. 2000). The early dates of these carvings can be testified in Site 16 at Knowth (Eogan 1997). This structure is overlaid by Site 1, meaning that this construction would have pre-dated c. 3400 cal BC (Brindley 1999; Bradley 2007: 108).

Whilst it is quite clear that the direct interaction between these regions would have existed and would have taken to the introduction of the aforementioned graphic imagery in the Orkneys, I would like to move beyond this point to suggest that something about the houses and the tombs was also echoed in the Boyne Valley.
I have already suggested that by the mid fourth millennium BC, the introduction of new forms of architecture was followed by the re-adaptation of the spatial layout of the Orcadian house, which in many senses, mimicked that of the tomb. At that point, I also suggested that the ‘tomb-house’ relationship, and more importantly aspects related to the dead and the afterworld and its relation to the living communities, was sustained throughout the Neolithic even in moments in which the profound transformation in their cosmologies took place.

At this point, I would like to move away, temporarily, from archaeological analysis to think about the actual processes of interaction. In short, not all the members of all the Orcadian communities would have experienced the Boyne Valley only a few would have done so. The encounter with such an empowering place, would have triggered a hermeneutical movement which slowly but gradually gave rise to a movement of self-reflection; of re-definition. Once home, perhaps through communal gathering, new conceptions about the world and about the dead begun to crystallise. In this case, these encounters would have prompted a movement of re-definition and the latter would have produced the triggering of hybrid identities.

Within these hybridising environments, one element remained constant. The later Neolithic house-type perhaps, once again referenced the tombs of the Boyne Valley. The cruciform spatial layout of the house reproduced in the tomb, at least in Maeshowe and the emphasis placed to the right hand recess; was replicated in the house. However, rather than a simple emergence of new understanding, the encounters with the Boyne Valley would have produced the creation of a hybrid identity which was enhanced, sustained and altered through periodical gatherings taking place at the emerging ceremonial complex of the ‘Brodgar-Steness’ area (see Jones & Richards 2005).

7.5 Afterthoughts

In this case study, I have explored two instances in which transformations of one kind or another took place resulting from intercultural contact. The first study (mid fourth millennium BC) portrayed a rather slow process in which intercultural interaction triggered assimilation and reconfiguration of new understandings were accompanied by the adoption of a new building tradition. Interestingly, the architecture of the house party mimicked the architecture of the tomb.
These interesting relationships had already been seen in relationship between early timber houses and the Bookan tombs. However, whilst so far, it was postulated the spatial layout of the house and the tomb were merely referencing specific cosmological orders, it was now possible to indicate that perhaps the dead, or the ancestors plays an important role on the way the inhabitants of the islands perceived their surroundings; their dwellings.

Interestingly, in the second example, something different was taking place. In this study, I have only touched upon the surface character of this context. In this scenario, the experience of Otherness was actively perceived through those who visited the Boyne Valley and through those who experienced the tales of others. In this case, intercultural interaction did not bring about new understandings which were enmeshed and recontextualised from within. Instead, in this context what we see is a moment of communal re-definition which using and recombining a series of elements in order to portray a strong sense of identity.

The reasons for such happenings are difficult to determine and, in any case, necessitate of a more profound study in this socio-cultural context. In any case, the historical contingencies that occurred in these islands and significance of the house in later Neolithic Orkney moved beyond the local context in to the wider scope and possibility the late four millennium BC played crucial in these happenings.
CHAPTER EIGHT:

CONCLUSIONS

8. Introduction: summary of research.

‘Notions such as globalization and cultural hybridity have become the buzzwords of much current debate in the social and human sciences. [...] Cultural and national borders have become increasingly blurred as jet transport, satellite communication and electronic information technology have ‘shrunk the world’. Flows of people, information, cultures, commodities and capital bring about a more immediate and direct articulation of local and global spaces, and a disruption of place as a self-evident reference for cultural distinctiveness and belonging’.

(Olsen 2001: 42).

‘Hybridization as a process is as old as history, but the pace of mixing accelerates and its scope widens in the wake of major structural changes, such as new technologies that enable new phases of intercultural contact’.

(Nederveen Pieterse 2001: 222).

‘The importance of hybridity is a sadly neglected issue in archaeological analyses. On the contrary, the basic element of departure is normally generalised fictions of homogeneous cultures’.

(Fahlander 2007: 19).

Social scientists engaging in the exploration of contemporary socio-political contexts have for some time been faced with the difficulties of describing the intricate and accelerated dynamics of our globalised world. These dynamics are unique to our time. As Olsen (2001) suggests in the above quote, much of this distinctiveness arises from new media (e.g. technology, transport) that enable different forms of intercultural contact. Yet, while the causes are particular to our day and age, the effects of these cultural encounters have driven researchers to reconsider the theoretical structures through which we have traditionally sought to explain social phenomena (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Young 1995). Cultural hybridisation can no longer be thought of as a distinctive trait of today’s world. Instead, as Nederveen Pieterse (2001) states in the above quote, ‘hybridisation as a process is as old as history’ (ibid. 222) and, it is so because it generates the very conditions of our existence. Building on this insight, the present research set out to redress the lack of attention given to issues of intercultural contact in the context of the post-processual discourse. Within its reflective arena, no attempt
has yet been made to expound theoretical frameworks that contemplate the effects of hybridisation.

8.1 Context of research.

The aim of the present research was to draw upon the above insights to explore a particular context characteristic of European Neolithic studies. To do so, I examined the differing paths taken by two influential traditions of research that together have shaped contemporary discourses in British prehistoric archaeology. This discussion was necessary to demarcate the theoretical and methodological requirements needed to both re-address existing narratives and produce alternatives in which episodes of intercultural interaction could be considered.

8.1.1 Material patterning and intercultural contact.

On the one hand, traditions of research developing from the growth of ‘megalithic studies’ in the 1980s have traditionally emphasised intercultural contacts in prehistory, noting for instance that some of the contexts of material patterning identified in the later British and Irish Neolithic correspond to historical circumstances characterised by the encounter of different social groups. Within this tradition, it is possible to define two main strands of research:

(1) In the context of the European Atlantic Neolithic, multiple studies have defined this context as one in which long distance interaction and navigation took place. These studies identified affinities between archaeological assemblages of different regions, including Iberia, Atlantic France, Ireland and Western Britain (e.g. Shee Twohig 1981; Eogan 1989, 1999; Scarre 1998; Burenhult 2001).

(2) Some researchers, using the same underlying logic characteristic of the first group, have moved away from the simple identification of similarities to portray the historical circumstances that may have led communities in these regions to establish episodes of contact. In the present study I focused largely on Bradley and Chapman’s (1986) ‘weapons of exclusion’ model, although similar studies have been produced in other archaeological contexts, including the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition (e.g. Sheridan 2003).
At different points throughout this research I have suggested that whilst these studies have been quick to acknowledge that intercultural contacts can sometimes produce a series of effects identifiable in the archaeological record through material patterning, they have failed to produce insights regarding the social dynamics that triggered these scenarios. Therefore, these accounts have not, in the majority of cases, gone beyond comparative description.

### 8.1.2 Post-processual discourse.

On the other hand, the post-processual discourse has traditionally been characterised as a reflective arena in which the development of better understandings of social phenomena and their relation to materiality appear to be the *a priori* condition for the development of interpretations. Unfortunately, however, no emphasis has yet been placed on developing theoretical frameworks that address the issue of intercultural interaction. In fact, I have suggested that both theoretically and methodologically speaking, understandings emerging from this research tradition have hindered the development of such an approach. The scenario can be summarised as follows:

- A reactionary attitude towards previous archaeological paradigms (culture-history, New Archaeology) has led archaeologists to seek new understandings which consider the **creative role of human agency within the limits of specific socio-historical milieus** (e.g. agency theory). This has been achieved mainly through the application of insights from Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1977; 1990) and Giddens structuration theory (1979; 1984).

- The influence of these bodies of theory can be found in contextual archaeology (e.g. Hodder 1987b), agency theory (e.g. Dobres & Robb 2000) and Barrett’s archaeologies of inhabitation (e.g. 1988; 2000; 2001) among others. However, the influence of these approaches goes beyond specific theoretical paradigms. An examination of social practice is clearly seen at the level of interpretation in, for instance, the work of Richards (e.g. 2005) and Bradley’s (2011) study of the northern henges.

- An emphasis on the importance of social practice has led to **studies restricted to specific socio-cultural contexts**. By implying that the dynamics of social phenomena occur **internally**, these studies exclude any possibility of discussing the transformative character of intercultural contact.
Lastly, the rise of the above mentioned theoretical approaches has led archaeologists to **cast doubt on the validity of studies which seek to surpass local contexts alone and explore the connections between wider geographical areas in greater temporal depth.**

### 8.2 Research questions.

Whilst literature produced in the fields of post-colonial and globalisation studies has demonstrated that intercultural interaction can affect all social domains (e.g. Bakhtin 1981; García Canclini 2005), our possibilities in archaeology are limited to situations discernable in materiality. In this research, I have chosen to explore examples of material patterning which might potentially reflect intercultural interaction. In order to allow fluidity in the discussion, the notion of diffusion has been taken into consideration. The two main aims of the present research were:

1. to explore diffusion *per se*.
2. to examine the ways in which diffusion can be discussed within the limits of materiality.

### 8.2.1 Aim 1: Main directions of research and achievements.

In order to shed light on that which we call diffusion, it was necessary to set this phenomenon within a framework of intercultural interaction. However, theoretically speaking, such interaction has remained largely untheorised in archaeology and, therefore, poorly understood. For this reason, the creation of a theoretical framework which considers the role of intercultural interaction in the configuration of social phenomena was considered as central.

Prior to the development of such a framework, the deconstruction of existing approaches was required. Two main elements were elaborated upon:

- **Traditional societies:** While there is no doubt that our contemporary environments are qualitatively different to those we examine in prehistory, the notion of Otherness – which has greatly influenced the interpretive strategies of archaeologists studying prehistory in recent decades – needs to be critically reconsidered. Among the problems encountered, I drew particular attention to the notion of traditional societies. In the discussion developed in the second part of
Chapter Three, I demonstrated that the modern-traditional divide crystallises one of the fundamental elements of the political agenda of the Enlightenment in the context of the social sciences. If, as Heidegger (1962) indicates, human understanding directly relates to the worldly conditions of our existence, then tradition should be considered as an ontological structure and, therefore, common to all human beings. Following from this discussion, I pointed out that the modern-traditional divide has been polarised to an extent that, whilst the modern West is characterised as one of globalisation, hybridisation and mixing, the Other has been largely defined as one of continuity. The conflation of the past with the Other has not only determined its portrayal, but has led to a situation in which ethnographic sources have been favoured over other sources, thus constraining the possibility of applying innovative insights from globalisation and post-colonial research into studies of prehistory.

- **From historical horizons to the temporality of tradition:** Even though both the structuration theories of Bourdieu and Giddens, and Heidegger's ontology were devised to explore the temporality of being, these approaches have been used in archaeology mainly to discuss specific historical horizons, rather than explore changes through time. In order to glimpse the effects of intercultural interaction, it was necessary to recapture the dynamics inherent in these theories, and explore how the experience of alterity is transformative. Within spheres of interaction, new forms develop and are integrated through time within the limits of specific social systems.

Having reached these goals, the research moved on to define common structures at play in processes of intercultural interaction. An approach was developed which encompasses elements from 'hermeneutical philosophy', globalisation studies and post-colonial theory. This was achieved via the following steps:

- Whilst Heidegger's ontology was essentially based on the portrayal of the experience of being-in-the-world (1962), Gadamer (1975) began to enquire into the experience of meeting alterity. He noted that in meeting another horizon, a series of hermeneutical mechanisms are triggered. Among them, a level of self-conceptualisation takes places, which is in itself transformative.

- This insight was applied to the social domain in Jones' (1997) work on the formation of ethnic identity. Like Gadamer, Jones noted that intercultural interaction generates a process of self-conceptualisation. In this sense, identity is
not fixed but contextually-formed and projected through specific cultural expressions.

- Whilst the situation just described is in itself transformative, as it brings about re-definition, in his account, Gadamer moved on to define what occurs in the space ‘in-between’, which he referred to as hermeneutical conversations. This space is characterised by what he refers to as the creation of a common language which is neither from one tradition or another.

- In the social domain, Gadamer’s discussion can be translated into what Bhabha has defined as the ‘Third Space of Enunciation’ (1994). This is a space of transformation, of interrogation and enunciation. It is a creative space in which new forms emerge. The recognition of this space implies that cultural elements are not simply assimilated, mixed, adopted and so forth.

This discussion led to the following reflection:

- Diffusion can no longer be conceived as the simple assimilation of cultural traits from one social group to another.

- The term diffusion in archaeology can be used to refer to the visible effects of intercultural interaction which are ultimately hybrid in character.

- If better understandings of diffusion are to be pursued in materiality, it is indispensable to set its examination within a framework that takes into consideration the creative forces of processes happening ‘in-between’, and the ways in which new forms are canalised within through time. This movement has to take into consideration the ‘cycle (Stross 1999) which contends that hybrid elements can be re-formulated as pure through time.

- Finally, a difference was posited between organic and intentional hybridity (Bakhtin 1981). Whilst the former type can go unnoticed, the latter can be strategically used to produce a series of desired ends.

**8.2.2 Aim 2: Main directions of research and achievements.**

Following on from the discussion in the second part of the research, it became clear that any attempt at shedding light on episodes of diffusion had to take into consideration both the examination of the processes occurring ‘in-between’ as well as
those occurring within. Therefore, it was necessary to devise an approach which takes into consideration both the local context (socio-historical milieu) and the wider context (inter-regional analysis). Likewise, it was necessary to acknowledge that the contexts of material patterning we are trying to confront would necessarily go beyond the immediate effects of intercultural interaction.

What this tells us is that studies of these characteristics have to adopt a multi-scalar approach. Although this requirement could to some extent be met through a methodological readjustment, it was necessary to examine the nature and character of both the large-scale and of material patterning, as their interpretive value has often been questioned in post-processual discourse. The following propositions stand at the base of given criticism:

- The large-scale has little interpretive value, for it does not account for the creative forces of agency (e.g. Barrett 2000; 2001).
- Conceptual categories are the result of a method which is historically contingent and therefore not capable of reflecting upon past entities (e.g. Thomas 2004a).
- In order to move away from the homogenising effects of archaeological classification, it is necessary to concentrate on the examination of social practices (e.g. Jones & Richards 2000).

Despite being acquiescent with most of the positions summarised above, I argued that both the alternatives presented and the directions of enquiry which have triggered from this revisionist movement, should be re-evaluated against the following insights:

- Working within large-scales of analysis alone blurs the possibility of accounting for the social dynamics triggered through social practice. However, the examination of the local-scale alone leads to interpretive accounts in which social phenomena are portrayed as internally constituted, thus neglecting the transformative nature of the space ‘in-between’ generated by intercultural interaction.
- In order to clarify the interpretive value of the large-scale, a difference has to be posited between large-scale inferences and the large-scale as a by-product of method.
- The large-scale can be conceived as a virtual field produced by a method which is historically contingent and which privileges the visual. Therefore, it should be noted the large-scale does not reflect past entities: it is not a neutralising device.
Nevertheless, the large-scale is central to the generation of **archaeological discourse** as it is the space within which all categories are formed. It is the space from which the **meta-language** of archaeology emanates and within which the past is **structured** and made accessible to archaeologists.

Moreover, it was suggested that once having recognised the **contingency** of the method which categorises and classifies material culture in terms of similarity and difference, it is still possible to suggest that the large-scale has interpretive value, because it can be **symptomatic of wider historical relations**.

Given the transformative effects which generate processes of diffusion, **it is necessary to stress that it is no longer possible to assess contexts through establishing rules of probability**. However, material patterning can be used as a primary indication through which a **multi-scalar approach** can be established. The position established and developed in Chapter Four therefore offers **new opportunities to re-direct research into episodes of intercultural interaction in prehistory**.

Having reached this point, the next chapter re-considered the issue of style in archaeology, drawing on the insights developed in Chapters Four and Five. The discussion presented in Chapter Six can be summarised as follows:

- In the history of archaeology, style has proven to be one of the most complex concepts to tackle. Style has been conceived as formal variability of material culture which is **not adaptive** in character (Binford 1962; 1963); it has been regarded as that category of material culture which **communicates** (Wobst 1977) and which refers to **identity** (e.g. Wiessner 1983; 1984; 1985). It has also been conceived as a subconscious **act of choosing** between an array of possibilities from which to manufacture an item (e.g. Sackett 1982; 1986; 1990). Within the post-processual discourse, style has been linked to the **surface appearance of structuring principles** operating within socio-cultural milieus (e.g. Hodder 1982d) and has also been discussed as a tool from which new **ideologies** become naturalised through reproduction (Shanks & Tilley 1992). Finally, Boast (1997) rejected style, drawing on the realisation that if style is that which makes an object social, then it is implied that the object in itself should be considered as an **essence**.
In Chapter Six, I argued that Binford’s (1962) definition of style as formal variability of material culture was central to the development of all the approaches discussed, including Boast’s rejection of the concept of style.

Following from this discussion, it was argued that style is ‘written up’ by the observer (Davis 1990) and, therefore, is ultimately referential.

In this case, style does not plot historical entities but is indexical (Davis 1990). Consequently, it is not possible to define the boundaries of a particular style.

Finally, contending that style can be symptomatic of historical relations, and taking into consideration new understandings defined in relation to diffusion, it appears necessary to indicate that style can surpass specific socio-cultural barriers. In this sense, stylistic descriptions can only be used as a primary tool to identify possible historical relations.

8.2.3 Aim 3: Cultural encounters, time and the formation of hybrid identities. Exploring the Orcadian later Neolithic: a case study.

As has already been pointed out, this research has sought to develop a theoretical and methodological framework which opens a space for discussing intercultural interaction and diffusion in prehistoric contexts. The viability of the framework was tested through the development of a case study: an exploration on the changes traditionally identified as taking place in the Orkney Islands during the late fourth millennium BC. The aim of this case study was threefold and can be summarised as follows:

(1) Working towards the reconciliation of two traditions of research.

On the one hand, the material assemblages emerging in the Orkney Islands during the last centuries of the fourth millennium BC have been the focus of interpretive models based on the effects of intercultural interaction within the context of the British and Irish later Neolithic (e.g. Bradley 1984a; Bradley & Chapman 1986; Sheridan 2004b; Thomas 2010).

On the other hand, current discourses have moved towards interpretive strategies favouring the study of local contexts and of social practice (e.g. Richards 2005). This tradition of research has focused on the narration of social dynamics rather than the exploration of social change and, although such studies have provided
excellent insights into the archaeology of the islands, they have rejected the possibility of discussing episodes of intercultural interaction with distant regions.

- Given the quality of both traditions of research, it was possible to reconcile these approaches through a case study which drew upon the theoretical framework developed in the present thesis.

(2) A scenario of diffusion as interpreted through new sets of archaeological data.

- The inferences presented in this study are built upon evidence which is susceptible to change, given the ongoing archaeological activity in the islands.

- However, it was possible to suggest that the emergence of Orkney-Cromarty tombs in the Orkneys would have been associated with a series of alterations to the shared cosmologies of the inhabitants of the islands by the mid fourth millennium BC.

- New understandings developed through continuous interaction with social groups of Mainland Scotland. However, these would not have acted as the simple introduction of new cultural elements but as the re-working of cosmological understandings which drew from previous understandings. This scenario is suggested by different sets of archaeological data (e.g. the local character of the Orkney-Cromarty tombs).

- Evidence suggests that the spatial order of the houses mimicked that of the tomb. Following from this insight, it was postulated that the relation of the dead to the living was a dominant element amongst the communities inhabiting the Orkney archipelago during this period.

- This evidence, as well as the realisation that the new house structures began to be built by 3600-3300 cal BC, gave some insight into the nature and character of the transformation that took place within the last centuries of the fourth millennium BC.

- This process of diffusion, in contrast to that occurring at the turn of the third millennium BC, was conceived as organic in character and a result of prolonged interaction.
(3) Assessing the changes that took place in the Orkney Islands by the end of the fourth millennium BC.

- Interpretive models (Renfrew 1979b; Hodder 1982a; Sharples 1985) focused on this socio-historical context have been called into question by new archaeological data and by the limited character of their approach.

- In order to understand this socio-historical context, it was indispensable to take into consideration the degree of overlap that existed between production and use of earlier and later material assemblages. Whilst some (Richards in press) have downplayed this moment of change and, therefore, have not focused on its development, I argued that particular contingencies occurring during these chronologies suggest that new sets of material culture were used as cultural expressions through which a unified sense of identity among Orcadian communities was depicted.

- Drawing upon the character of these assemblages, it was suggested that profound changes in the shared cosmologies of the inhabitants living in the islands began to crystallise at the turn of the third millennium BC.

- Although these changes were triggered from within, drawing upon the nature of the material expressions produced during the later Orcadian Neolithic, it is suggested that both the alteration in cosmologies and their material expression echoes processes of hybridisation that occurred as a result of interaction between some members of these communities and those of the Boyne Valley (Ireland).

- If the ‘tomb-house’ relationship seen in earlier chronologies was a dominant element in their cosmologies, then it could be suggested that understandings developed regarding the dead and the ancestors, while the ‘tomb-house’ relationship already depicted in previous times was maintained.

- This relationship was suggested not only by the re-enactment of the graphic imagery of the Boyne valley in the domestic spheres of Orkney, but also in the spatial layout of the later Neolithic house.

- Drawing on this and other sets of evidence, it was contended that during the last centuries of the fourth millennium BC, Orcadian communities engaged in the
creation of what can be considered a **hybrid identity**. Elements produced in the space ‘in-between’ were recombined to portray a communal identity.

- A sense of shared identity would have crystallised with both the construction and use of different material elements within the **Brodgar-Stenness area**. Evidence suggests that, for instance, the Stoness of Stennes and the Ness of Brodgar would have been, above all, places of social gathering.

### 8.3 Limits and future directions of research.

The topic of research presented in this thesis could have taken various different directions. For instance, I could have explored historical as well as anthropological instances of intercultural interaction to shed light upon the character and the effects of hybridisation. However, in doing so, I would have risked imposing known historical contexts on the prehistoric past.

Instead a theoretical examination was required in order to explore the space ‘in-between’ characteristic of intercultural interaction. Such an approach also allowed for a critique of some archaeological approaches within the post-processual discourse. However, there is only so much one can say within the limits of theory before moving to the level of empirical observation in order to test and refine the theory developed. The present research is, therefore, considered as a first step towards a more detailed account which can be aided by ethnographic and historical analyses. Ongoing ethnoarchaeological research which touches upon themes such as identity and syncretism (e.g. Insoll 2007b; 2009) may be of particular value here. Such studies not only offer insights into the effects of intercultural interaction but also provide archaeologists with the methodological strategies needed to interpret prehistoric contexts such as the one presented in this research.

At a more general level, drawing directly upon post-processual discourse, this research has sought to review present understandings of both the nature of the archaeological record and of style. As noted in Chapter Two, Barrett (2000; 2001) discussed a series of problems that arise in seeking to create an analogy that regards the archaeological record as a text (Hodder 1982d). Instead, he suggested that the aim of archaeology is to explore social practice within specific locales, which he defined as ‘fields of discourse’ (ibid.). This approach has proven to be restrictive as it inherently suggests that social dynamics are only triggered within the limits of specific social systems. By re-opening a
path to discussing wider contact and intercultural-interaction, this thesis has sought to broaden debates on the nature and character of what we customarily call the ‘archaeological record’. In relation to the above discussion, I also presented some preliminary thoughts seeking to problematize the ways in which style has been conceived so far in archaeology (Chapter Six). However, deeper definitions should now be sought, which move away from the one-dimensionality given by previous theoretical discourses, aided by developments in other areas of the humanities.

Lastly, I would like to stress the limitations and potential of the case study presented in Chapter Seven. As was pointed out in the chapter itself, ongoing archaeological activity in the islands (e.g. Ness of Brodgar, Braes Ha’Breck) is producing a series of insights which might alter the picture of the Orcadian Neolithic. Whilst new materials were kindly given to me by Dr. Colin Richards, Dr. Nick Card and Antonia Thomas, and were essential to developing the case study presented in Chapter Seven, these could be challenged in the near future. Furthermore, during the writing of the case study, I became aware of the fact that a detailed study into the context of the Boyne Valley will also be necessary in order to enrich and expand upon the interpretation offered here.

8.4 Final conclusions.

While the present research should be considered as a first step towards developing a more refined theoretical and methodological framework for studying intercultural interaction in archaeology, it contributes to an incipient movement of revision occurring within the theoretical discourse. As was noted in the form of a quote at the beginning of this chapter, various insights developed within post-colonial and globalisation studies are challenging former assumptions within every discipline which examines social phenomena. However, these understandings have until recently been ‘sadly neglected’ (Fahlander 2007: 19) in archaeological enquiry.

There are signs that such themes are now beginning to emerge in theoretical discussions. Perhaps, as Olsen (2001) anticipated a decade ago, archaeologists are now facing up to the ramifications of these ‘new socio-political agendas’. The challenge now is to move beyond purely theoretical discussions in order to embrace and accommodate these new agendas in the domain of archaeological interpretation.
Definitions:

**Diffusion**: traditionally defined as the transposition of cultural elements from one cultural group to another (see section 2.1.1, 3.3.1), diffusion has become a notion which although largely removed from the archaeological lexicon, continues to be inherently defined in the context of interpretation (see section 2.1.3). That is, in contexts where material patterns identified in different regions are contemplated as potentially reflecting on processes of intercultural contact. Whilst this might be the case, this thesis seeks to demonstrate the need to open up discussion on the notion of diffusion within current archaeological theory. In Chapter Four, diffusion is re-defined as ‘as the outcome of a hybridising effect which is the product of interaction - or the experience of alterity - and can only be defined insofar as it is observable, be it by the parties involved or by third parties at the moment it occurs, or, as in the case of archaeology, through its definition within temporal and spatial values’ (see page 96 for further discussion).

**In-between**: referring to interstitial spaces; metaphorical space defined in contexts of intercultural encounters. The use of the concept ‘in-between’ is favoured here in order to emphasise the need to account for this space as a productive space, a space which is innovative and essentially hybrid. This concept has been taken from Bhabha's introduction in *The Location of Culture* (1994) where he noted that the 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself* (ibid. 2). Following on from this, Chapter Four is devoted to developing better understandings on the character of interstitial contexts and to demonstrating the need to consider these contexts when exerting archaeological interpretation. Moreover, Chapter Four aims to re-think the concept of diffusion, setting it within the context in which it takes place.

**Large-scale**: referring to both inferences devised in temporal and spatial depth, and as the method from which the meta-language of archaeology emanates (see Chapter Five). In the first instance, the large-scale is defined as a scale of analysis which surpasses the local context (e.g. site, structure) characteristic of much recent archaeological production (e.g. archaeologies of inhabitation, see Chapter Two). It also defines the scopes of analysis used by approaches which revolve around what in archaeology is
translated as particular socio cultural mileus; approaches which fundamentally develop their narratives in what Robb (2007: 292) defines as the 'ethnographic present'. In the second instance, large-scale is considered as the 'virtual field' from which past traces become structured in the vocabulary of archaeology. Whilst categorisation is the result of construction made by the analyst and thus it does not represent reality, in Chapter Five it is argued that it should not be disguised as an element from which inferences can take place as categorisation can be taken as symptomatic of wider historical processes. Whilst current interpretive activity has focused largely on the definition of social practice, it is argued that it is possible to reconcile both the large and the small scale in archaeological interpretation (see Chapter Seven).

**Tradition:** this thesis seeks to move away from the understanding of tradition that sets itself in opposition to that which is modern in character (see section 3.2). Instead, the concept is used in the phenomenological sense. Gamader (1975), following from Heidegger (1962), defined the concept, departing from the premise that the human self is fundamentally situated. In this context, not only reason ceases to be the opposite of tradition but tradition is considered the pre-condition of understanding. Chapter Three explores the influence of this definition in the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and Giddens (1979; 1984) and opens up the question as to what happens when different traditions are confronted; a question discussed by Gadamer in the experience of reading a historical text, but one that can be used to discuss the kind of phenomena triggered in cross-cultural encounters (see section 4.2).
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