CHAPTER II

Material culture studies and historical archaeology

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INTRODUCTION

Material culture is ubiquitous in our everyday lives; we are surrounded by it and arguably can do little without it. The proliferation of new material forms is troubling to some, often forming the basis of debates over globalisation, modernity and the contemporary production of locality. But while it is true that people are regularly confronted with new objects and technologies, without question many understand and embrace them and consciously use them in the creation of multiple and often intersecting identities.

As historical archaeology has emerged as a field of study, understanding and interpreting material culture has become more important than simply identifying and classifying excavated objects (cf. Barker and Majewski this volume). In the United Kingdom, historical archaeologists have followed conventions established by archaeologists of earlier periods, typically grouping and describing their finds according to material (e.g. pottery, iron, bone). In North America, where historical archaeology emerged at approximately the same time as archaeologists’ redefinition of their field through the introduction of the scientific method and the search for laws of cultural behaviour, the overwhelming emphasis has been upon classification of finds according to functional categories (e.g. ‘personal’, ‘military’, ‘architectural’: see South 1977a). Until the 1990s, many American historical archaeologists were anxious to develop universal, standardised schemes for artefact classification so that artefacts and assemblages could be readily compared among historical sites. As a result, historical archaeologists were slow to accept alternative approaches to studying artefacts, approaches arising from the field of material culture studies (for a review, see Yentsch and Beaudry 2001). Our goal in this chapter is not to review typological and generalising approaches to artefact analysis; rather, we explore recent developments in transdisciplinary, interpretive material culture studies, and the opportunities they offer for material culture analysis in contemporary historical archaeology.
Archaeologists and anthropologists have long recognised the significance of material culture as a means of studying people, and anthropology and archaeology as disciplines both have long traditions of material-culture study. Archaeology has always used material remains to interpret human behaviour, but the interests of sociocultural anthropology during the latter half of the twentieth century shifted away from the focus on material culture that characterised its formative years. From the 1980s, however, sociocultural anthropologists, especially historical anthropologists, have turned their attention to how people express themselves and interact through material culture (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; N. Thomas 1991). Material culture studies as a distinctive interdisciplinary field of study has emerged in North America, with strong links to architectural history, decorative arts, and folklore, as well as to archaeology and anthropology (Lubar and Kingery 1993; Martin and Garrison 1997; cf. Rathje 1981). Concurrently, anthropologists and archaeologists in the United Kingdom have begun to bridge the gap between archaeology and sociocultural anthropology by incorporating within ethnography the political sensitivities and material focus from post-processual and Marxist archaeologies, to develop a broadly defined anthropological material culture studies aimed for the most part at studying the role of objects in contemporary contexts (e.g. Gosden 1999; D. Miller and Tilley 1996). A British school of ‘material culture studies’, arising largely out of work conducted by Daniel Miller and the material-culture group at University College London (Buchli 2002a; D. Miller 1998b, 2001b), remains distinct from archaeological material culture studies, but has nevertheless influenced many historical archaeologists.

Other archaeologists studying material culture have been influenced by alternative traditions of ‘interpretive’ interdisciplinary material culture studies that focus upon the body, especially through phenomenological or feminist perspectives (e.g. Meskell 1999, 2004; J. S. Thomas 1996; Tilley 1994, 1999, 2004). Such approaches have been concerned with embodiment – about how humans experience and enact the material world through the medium of the body – considering not so much the biographies of objects but how people create their own biographies through objects and in the ways they care for, present, and make use of their bodies throughout the course of their lives (cf. Gilchrist 2000; J. Hoskins 1998).

In this chapter we consider the range of subjects examined in material culture studies, and the distinctive contribution that historical archaeology can make to the interdisciplinary study of materiality. We explore how excavated ‘small finds’, such as objects of personal adornment, from historical sites provide intimate portraits of individual lives and of the construction
Material culture studies and historical archaeology

of personal and social identity. We then present a case study drawn from Cochran’s application of perspectives derived from anthropological material culture studies to the contemporary historical landscape of Annapolis, Maryland – a much-studied landscape in historical archaeology – in order better to understand the materialities of contemporary heritage.

MATERIAL CULTURE AND HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Historical archaeologists have long depended upon research by ‘material culture specialists’ who produce identification guides to artefact types of all sorts; for present purposes it is perhaps best to think of such work as ‘artefact studies’ because it stresses identification, chronology, and typology over interpretation (e.g. Brauner 2000; Deagan 1987, 2002; Karklins 2000; Noël Hume 1969). Barker and Majewski (this volume) rightly stress the importance of such ‘foundational’ studies for ceramics researchers, and it is clear that historical archaeologists require accurate information about, and descriptions of, the artefacts that they excavate before they can move on to interpretations of them. Prior to the 1990s, however, interpretative analyses of ceramics and other artefacts were largely absent from historical archaeology in the United Kingdom and in the Americas tended to focus on a narrow range of research issues, namely consumer choice, status, and, to a lesser extent, ethnicity (see Barker and Majewski, this volume). This has changed as over the last three decades material culture studies in historical archaeology have increasingly combined theories and methods from across the humanities and social sciences and as more and more historical archaeologists have approached their research with perspectives drawn from postprocessual archaeology (e.g. Lawrence 2000; M. Praetzellis and A. Praetzellis 2004; Tarlow and West 1999; Wilkie 2000, 2003). However, the fragmented nature of the practice of much archaeological fieldwork and post-excavation analysis – in which things from particular contexts are studied in isolation from each other by specialists in clay pipes, textiles or ceramics – remains a major challenge for the development of interpretive archaeologies of excavated material culture.

The study of material culture has a long intellectual history in the social sciences from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see the reviews by Buchli 2002a; Buchli and Lucas 2001c: 3–8). A new phase in material culture studies developed in the 1970s, which in its early stages began with the ‘insistence that things matter and that to focus on material worlds does not fetishise them since they are not some separate superstructure to social worlds’ (D. Miller 1998d: 3). Studies of ‘small things’ in
historical archaeology (Deetz 1977) emerged at the same time as anthropological consumption studies (e.g. Douglas and Isherwood 1979). Such researchers used material culture as specific data sets but each studied material culture from within the confines of particular disciplines. In contrast, during the 1980s a number of scholars began to focus on material culture as a specific problematic in approaches that drew from both archaeology and sociocultural anthropology. Two foundational works stand out in this regard: Arjun Appadurai’s edited volume *The Social Life of Things* (1986), and Daniel Miller’s monograph *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987). In many of the contributions to Appadurai’s volume, and especially in Miller’s monograph, the use and consumption of material culture was depicted as central to everyday social life. This turn was significant in that it constituted material culture studies as a people-centred, relational field of study, using material culture to comprehend aspects of everyday social life that often go unmentioned, or are obscured for varying ideological reasons.

These new approaches to material culture were distinct from traditional object-oriented studies in the decorative arts and in architectural history, which paid little attention to social and cultural context. However, such conservative studies persisted, and strands of such work can still be seen, for example in ‘connoisseurship’ models influenced by E. M. Fleming (1974). Such connoisseurship models in decorative arts studies and some strains of American studies, emphasise the typological classification and comparative analysis of objects based on their physical characteristics. For example, an eighteenth-century teapot would be assessed according to the materials of which it is made, judged by its style and design and evaluated within a field of similar objects. Such analyses did not extend to the uses of these objects, nor to people’s diverse experiences of objects within social contexts or relationships between people and objects. Connoisseurship divorced material objects from their social contexts and promoted an elitist fetishising of subjective qualities of the object by the analyst in the present.

In response to post-structuralist critiques such as that of Igor Kopytoff (1986), from the mid-1980s the archaeological and anthropological study of material culture began to shift focus towards addressing the formation of relationships between peoples and things within specific social contexts. Particularly relevant to historical archaeology are contextual approaches to material culture that developed within American studies and folklore research within the United States, emphasising the details of the production of material culture by individuals in contemporary contexts. Such work included Grey Gundaker’s study of cosmological references within contemporary African-American yard art (Gundaker 1998, 1996), Michael Owen
Material culture studies and historical archaeology

Jones' study of the poetics of chair making in the mountains of eastern Kentucky (M. Jones 1993, 1989) and Henry Glassie's work on the production of diverse folk objects ranging from woven carpets to pottery (Glassie 1999). These researchers developed methods that involved the detailed study of material culture forms and their placement within historically situated folk practices, alongside interviews with the producers of those forms in the present. By integrating these sources of evidence, these scholars produced nuanced, multi-tiered analyses centred on the production of particular objects by particular people, examining the production of form and style, how the processes of production play an active role in shaping individual producers' identities, and the broader contexts of producers' social and cultural identities. Such behavioural approaches to material culture understood objects as to some extent manifestations of their producers, carrying with them human cultural sensibilities bound to their materiality.

Meanwhile, in anthropological material culture studies in the United Kingdom, scholars consciously sought to bring archaeology's material focus to bear upon sociocultural anthropology by combining ethnographically based research methods with political sensitivities towards the study of material culture derived in part from postprocessual and Marxist archaeologies (Buchli 2002a; D. Miller 1998b, 2001b). In this work, material culture was seen as a means of providing 'insights into cultural processes that a more literal “anthropology” has tended to neglect' (D. Miller 1998d: 3). In such a view, material culture, and especially the study of consumption, provided a distinctive set of data, the study of which could penetrate many taken-for-granted aspects of the everyday. Miller argued that consumption studies held the potential to ‘transform’ social anthropology (D. Miller 1995). By trying to focus less on what informants say they do than on their everyday material engagements, these new studies aimed to uncover anthropological ‘matter’ within field research; and insisted that material culture should not be viewed as a passive subject or object, but as a potentially active agent in social life.

The precise methodologies of fieldwork in such material culture studies remained undefined and open. Uncovering anthropological ‘matter’ within fieldwork contexts involved developing an ‘emic’ and contextual perspective, seeking out a more diffused, almost sentimental association that is more likely to lead us to the concerns of those being studied than those doing the studying. It put the burden of mattering clearly on evidence of concern to those being discussed’ (D. Miller 1998d: 10). The methodological openness of this work was fruitfully combined with a concern with
the production of socially and politically relevant anthropological research. Examples include Barbara Bender’s work with the contemporary travellers’ communities and their relationship to the prehistoric monument at Stonehenge (B. Bender 1998), and Daniel Miller’s work on contemporary shopping practices in north London (D. Miller 2001a, 1998c; D. Miller et al. 1998). By focusing on material culture as actively involved in the construction of social identities and community values, Bender and Miller allowed their research to be guided in part by the groups that they were studying.

The notion of the ‘active’ role of objects in social life has been extended in recent archaeological and anthropological literature through the notion of material agency. Influenced especially by the work of Alfred Gell (1996, 1998), anthropological material culture studies have considered material culture has the potential to act as a ‘quasi-agent’ in everyday social life (cf. Knappett 2002; Latour 2000b). In such a view, material culture has the potential to shape our experiences of the world – not only in terms of physicality or materiality as we move through and negotiate material forms in everyday life, but as metaphor. Christopher Tilley’s reading of West African Batammaliba houses and Victor Buchli’s reading of the Narkomfin apartment building in Moscow (Buchli 1999; Tilley 1999) are both fine examples of the active role of material culture in social life. Both scholars explore how material forms such as the home come to manifest particular social ideologies and worldviews centred on the body’s relation to the material. The curvilinear architecture of Batammaliba houses is read by Tilley as metaphors of the body that shape and reinforce ontological structures of the family; while the shifting conceptualisations of Soviet interior design within the Narkomfin apartment building are interpreted by Buchli as physical manifestations of ideological conflict centred on the dialectic of modernity and tradition. Material culture as material and metaphor can hence be seen as reinforcing ideologies, shaping family structures, and acting in a very real sense on the body. The home in this sense becomes a model by which the body is construed.

INTERPRETING MATERIAL CULTURE IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The new anthropological material culture studies, especially as practised by Daniel Miller and the material culture group at University College London from the early 1990s, has been characterised by engagements with a very wide range of materials. Miller and Tilley argue that
the study of material culture may be most broadly defined as the investigation of the relationship between people and things irrespective of time and space. The perspective adopted may be global or local, concerned with the past or the present, or the mediation between the two. Defined in this manner, the potential range of contemporary disciplines involved in some way or other in studying material culture is effectively as wide as the human and cultural sciences themselves. (1996: 5)

Contemporary material culture studies aim to create transdisciplinary scholarship, to disable conservative boundary-maintaining devices within the academy and to avoid rigid and totalising social theory. Its protagonists argue that in many ways ‘material culture [studies] is better identified as a means rather than an end’ (D. Miller 1998d: 5). In this section we want to underline five areas in which anthropological material cultures studies have especially focused: consumption, landscape, architecture and the home, heritage, and art and visual culture.

As described above, consumption studies represented a key element in the emergence of anthropological material culture studies (Appadurai 1986; Douglas and Isherwood 1979; D. Miller 1987). Challenging views of consumption as based in a chronic, inward-looking ‘imaginative hedonism’ (C. Campbell 1986: 77), such work presented consumption as meaningful and creative social action. Thus, Daniel Miller’s work on shopping practices in a north London neighbourhood (D. Miller 1998c, 2001a; D. Miller et al. 1998) explored how shopping strategies comprise patterns of value, thrift and sacrifice within specific social contexts. Such work demonstrates how the consumption of material things can be very important in constructing highly personal social relationships, as people ‘make love in supermarkets’ through shopping (D. Miller 1998c: 15–72), or conceptualise the ‘local’ through consumption of globally itinerant goods (D. Miller 1998a).

Landscapes – both contemporary rural and urban cityscapes and the remains of past landscapes that survive – have also been studied by anthropological material culture studies. In such work, landscapes have been conceived as ‘open-ended, polysemic, untidy, contestational and almost infinitely variable’ (B. Bender 2002: 137) and are read as malleable. Researchers often intentionally strip them of naturalistic connotations to examine landscapes in terms of cultural and social interactions. Landscapes have often been studied as sites of conflicting views of local and national heritage, of memory and forgetting, of tourism and of negotiation of identity politics (Basu 2001; B. Bender 1993, 2001, 2002). As noted by De Cunzo and Ernestin (this volume), many recent studies address the phenomenology
M. D. Cochran and M. C. Beaudry


The study of the materiality of architecture, households and the home has been common in anthropological material culture studies, as in historical archaeology (Hicks and Horning this volume). The negotiation of architectural spaces as part of daily social practices has proved a fertile field (Froud 2004; Tacchi 1998), while relationships between architecture, conceptualisations of the body, and social ideologies (Low 2003), and experiences of ‘home’ and memories based on personal relationships with material culture (Daniels 2001; Young 2004) have also been studied. These studies take nuanced approaches to the materiality of architectural spaces and social negotiations of those spaces. One development of this work on architecture and the home was the founding in 2004 of a new interdisciplinary journal Home Cultures (Buchli et al. 2004), which is an increasingly influential force in the open-minded exploration of alternative approaches to the materialities of homes.

Heritage studies within anthropological material culture studies transcend neat categorisation. Conceptually the focus on the materiality of heritage can be read in diverse areas such as the Neolithic landscape of Stonehenge (Bender 1998), the architectural space of the Acropolis (Yalouri 2001) and the production of banners used during Orange Order parades in Northern Ireland (Jarman 1997; McCormack and Jarman 2005). What has set this area of study apart, however, is not only its focus on the materiality of heritage, but also an emphasis on how ‘we live in an era of unprecedented concern with preserving and restoring the past’ (Rowlands 2002: 105). These perspectives have led to studies of the role of objects and monuments in cultural memory and loss (Forty and Küchler 2001); the construction of local and national identities via relationships with monumental architecture (B. Butler 2001; Rowlands 2001; Van der Hoorn 2003) and the exploitation of a ‘sense’ of heritage to create new attractions and destinations for ‘heritage tourism’ (Basu 2001).

Lastly, the anthropological study of art and visual culture has developed, especially through the influence of Alfred Gell’s Art and Agency (1998), which examined ‘distributed agency’ in material art objects (cf. Gell 1996). In this tradition, Nicholas Saunders has studied the ‘trench art’ made by soldiers in World War I from recycled shell casings (N. Saunders 2003a). Suzanne Küchler has studied the ephemeral ‘Malanggan’ figures from the Pacific (Küchler 2002) and Christopher Pinney has examined contemporary portrait photographs from India (Pinney 2002). By examining how art and visual culture can ‘act’ as a quasi-agent – expressing senses of intentionality
Material culture studies and historical archaeology

within prescribed social contexts in a view akin to Walter Benjamin’s notion of the *auratic* (Benjamin 1969) – these studies have focused the study of art upon materiality, in relational, rather than aesthetic, studies of art objects and people.

**INTERPRETING MATERIAL CULTURE IN HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**

In this section, we want to explore how historical archaeologists are starting to work with this body of anthropological work on materiality. First, we consider how the ‘social archaeology’ of historical artefacts is increasingly examining issues of identity, gender, sexuality, age, and other aspects of social difference in relation to materiality and the body (Meskell et al. 2001: 5). This is followed by a discussion of Cochran’s new study of Annapolis, Maryland. These examples bring different epistemological perspectives to bear, but share much in terms of approach and interpretive sensibilities (compare Buchli 2004: 182).

**‘Small finds’**

Historical archaeologists have become increasingly aware of the interpretive potential of all manner of small, excavated finds for comprehending the construction of personal identity (White and Beaudry nd.). Their research into artefacts related to dress and personal adornment have proved especially fruitful despite the obvious challenges in interpreting dress and personal appearance in the present, which are multiplied by the lens of time and the inevitable scrappiness of the archaeological record of apparel and the presentation of the self.

Historical archaeologists have been successful in interpreting ‘small finds’ such as buttons, buckles, beads, and jewellery because they are able to link such items to a broader literature on clothing, embodiment and cultural biographies not just of objects but of individuals through the objects they own and use (e.g. Burman and Turbin 2003; J. Hoskins 1998; Küchler and Miller 2005; Küchler and Were 2005). For instance, Diana DiPaolo Loren’s research has explored how groups interacting on colonial frontiers employed items of dress as a means of personal expression as well as of contesting colonial hegemony by adopting ‘social skins’ in defiance of orthodoxies around appropriate dress (Loren 2001; Loren and Beaudry 2006). Carolyn White has analysed artefacts of personal adornment to explore how colonial New Englanders constructed visual appearance in ways that
M. D. Cochran and M. C. Beaudry

‘communicated a host of information about class and status as well as ideas about gender’ and age (White 2004: 63). In her work, Laurie Wilkie has deftly linked the interior furnishings of a late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century fraternity house to changing notions of masculinity (see Wilkie this volume). Beaudry’s research into the artefacts of needlework and sewing has led her to examine ways in which close readings of archaeologically recovered sewing implements provide insights not just on the task of sewing but also upon women’s presentation of themselves as embodied beings as well as upon how sewing and its accoutrements were used by reformers to promulgate notions of industry, cleanliness, and spirituality (Beaudry 2006; Loren and Beaudry 2006).

This kind of research on ‘small things’ has led historical archaeologists to realise that despite several decades of artefact studies, we still lack critical information for making useful statements about many categories of material culture. This is because ‘small finds’ have simply been dismissed as having little value for addressing issues such as status and consumer choice that long dominated research in historical archaeology, and as not amenable to statistical analysis. The new trends in interdisciplinary material culture studies have encouraged some historical archaeologists to abandon quantification and generalisation in favour of close, critical analyses of artefacts that, while not recovered in abundance comparable to ceramics, glass, and architectural fragments, are nevertheless interpretively potent once the contexts or social fields in which they once operated are understood. The result has been a move towards the production of a new genre of artefact guides that stress interpretation as well as identification (Beaudry 2006; C. White 2005) and has spurred the inauguration of a new series of such guides to be published by Left Coast Press. The development of specialist methods in material culture studies in historical archaeology holds enormous potential if combined in this way with the interpretive approaches of anthropological material studies.

Annapolis

In Annapolis, Maryland, Cochran has employed an anthropological material culture studies approach to the changing object worlds of the Annapolis Historic District since the eighteenth century, and the ways in which those changes have been conceptualised as part of the historic environment and are enacted in the contemporary world. The Annapolis Historic District forms a one-square-mile core of the city of Annapolis, with its late seventeenth-century Baroque town plan (Leone 1995; Leone and Hurry...
Material culture studies and historical archaeology

Located near major interstate highway systems, and in close proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, the Historic District’s picturesque Main Street, lined with stores and restaurants and bordered by side streets containing many restored eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historic buildings, is a popular tourist destination for day trippers and boaters within the Washington DC–Baltimore metropolitan region (Anderson 1984; Miller and Ridout 1998; Moose 2001). Tourists and new residents alike often cite the Historic District’s quaintness and apparent sense of historical integrity as a reason for coming to Annapolis.

The Historic District was the focus of the Archaeology in Annapolis project (see McGuire this volume) from the early 1980s. The project researchers emphasised the importance of ethnographic enquiry as part of historical archaeological research, and have called for its application within a broader scheme of public archaeology (Leone et al. 1987; Potter 1992, 1994). Cochran’s research at Annapolis aims to respond to such calls. Ethnography within the Archaeology in Annapolis project was initially conceived as a means of uncovering ‘ideologies’ in the present, and as a guide from which to undertake archaeological excavation and the public dissemination of archaeological interpretations (De Cunzo and Ernst this volume). This strategy has been applied on a range of sites over the project’s history (e.g. Matthews 2002; Mullins 1999; Potter 1994).

In contrast, Cochran’s fieldwork aims explicitly to focus upon the materiality of the Historic District in the present, and the ways in which diverse experiences of that materiality construct overlapping and divergent senses of place and the past. Through written phenomenological descriptions of the Historic District, participant observation, structured and semi-structured interview techniques, and analyses of local history and tourist-related material culture (including architecture and the built environment, local magazines and postcards), Cochran seeks to explore the materiality of how the past is enacted in the present. Represented in the fieldwork are residents of the Historic District, tourists, and administrative groups including local preservation organisations and city officials.

One focus of the study has been the use of different kinds of brick paving within the Historic District’s many streets and sidewalks by the Public Works Department (Figure 11.1). The Annapolis Public Works Department is part of the city’s managerial administration responsible for constructing and maintaining many of the Historic District’s physical elements and public ‘viewsheds’. During an interview and walking tour, the director of Public Works described to Cochran the varying types of brick pavers, commenting on their colour and texture, and the bond patterns in which they
were laid. The director commented on what constituted acceptable types of brick pavers within the Historic District: comparing multi-coloured clay-brick pavers with uniform coloured concrete pavers, and discussing what constituted an acceptable bond pattern (herringbone versus a running bond pattern).

At issue here were management practices within the Historic District that aimed to achieve bricks arranged in self-consciously random ways. Acknowledging the mandate to make the Historic District into a recognisably coherent whole – texturally distinct from areas outside of it – the director repeatedly emphasised that in creating the brick-paved pathways through the District there was a need to avoid regular patterns. Large swathes of single coloured brick and areas made up of regularly patterned running bond pavers would result in ‘predictable’ spaces, a practice deemed appropriate for shopping mall-style architecture and wholly inappropriate for the Annapolis Historic District. The director described the artistry required in managing the Historic District: creating visually random patterns balanced by texturally coherent surfaces. This had nothing to do with recreating the way Annapolis looked in the past: ‘No. None of this looks the way it used to. If people wanted I could open up the sewers. It looks better now than it ever did.’
Tourist guidebooks often refer to the Historic District’s scale, and its ‘walkability’: and material culture studies, by combining anthropological and archaeological methods, can highlight the essential role of objects (in this case, bricks) in the creation of ‘walkability’, from the practice of which in turn particular pasts emerge. By focusing upon the materiality and material practices of Historic Annapolis, we expose how important objects are in the creation of the past in the present. The focus upon bricks is revealing: these are objects that guide the walking tourist around the sites through sidewalks, engaging with the walker in enacting the past. Thus, for the director, ‘getting it right’ did not mean restoring the Historic District with historical authenticity, as ostensibly advocated by the city’s Historic Preservation Commission, but rather bringing people and things together for the past to be enacted, through the varied textures and layouts of pavers and bricks, and through the soles of shoes (compare P. C. Adams 2001; Tilley 2004).

**Conclusion**

The increasing interdisciplinary interests in material culture, and in particular the analytical perspectives that have emerged in anthropological material culture studies, hold great potential for historical archaeology. In the work sketched here, the transformative relationships between individuals, groups, and material forms in the practice of everyday life have been exposed, in the past and the present. By acknowledging the active role of objects in everyday life, historical archaeologists avoid the limitations of rigid classificatory schema that segregate objects from people. By studying things, we reveal situations that do not fit patterns, and in which we can come closer to understanding what people really hoped to accomplish through the production, consumption, collection, display or use of material goods. This can be achieved by integrating our highly developed empirical methods with interpretive approaches, integrating these ‘two cultures’ in a manner similar to that proposed by Andrew Jones (2002: 1–22). Historical archaeologists studying material culture are beginning to achieve such creative integrations.

For instance, in their highly detailed technical study of goods and food remains excavated from sites occupied by working-class households in West Oakland, California, Mary and Adrian Praetzellis also combine material and documentary sources to write the material histories of individual households. They note that ‘there was no neat correspondence between a family’s wealth and the purchase of high-quality cuts of meat in nineteenth-century Oakland’. The frequency of these people purchasing commodities above
their conventionally assigned status leads the Praetzellises to conclude that residents of Oakland were ‘seeking to advance goals that had less to do with nutrition or class emulation than with pride and identity’ (M. Praetzellis and A. Praetzellis 2004: 83). Just as the historical archaeology of household material culture is rich and complex (2004: 116), so too the potential for analysis of the material culture of place and space, of private life and public personhood, is great. Historical archaeologists have only just begun to realise the full potential of integrated archaeological and anthropological material culture studies for illuminating and interpreting the relationships between people and their material worlds.