COMMENTS

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY, PRACTICE AND MEMORY: A RESPONSE TO STEPHEN SILLIMAN

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Stephen Silliman's article in American Antiquity *(74:211–230) addresses a key issue that has been in quiet circulation for some time, examining the connections between archaeological data, traditional persistence, and postcolonial ways of understanding diachronic variability. This is a fundamental problem not only for archaeology but for American social scientists researching colonialism and traditional cultures (Alfred 1995; Harrod 1995; Stover 2001). Silliman orients his understanding of historic Eastern Pequot settlement through the lens of a theoretical approach to memory and practice as has been taken up in archaeological circles by a number of practitioners (cf. Silliman 2009:213). He acknowledges the existence of other perspectives, not least that of past Native people themselves, but the article focuses primarily on the application of current thinking on these topics of identity.*

El artículo de Stephen Silliman en American Antiquity *(74:211–230) trata un tema clave que ha estado en circulación silenciosa por algún tiempo, el examen de las conexiones entre los datos arqueológicos, la persistencia de tradiciones, y las formas postcoloniales de comprender la variabilidad diacrónica. Este es un problema fundamental, no sólo para la arqueología sino también para los científicos sociales americanos investigando el colonialismo y las culturas tradicionales (Alfred de 1995; Harrod 1995; Stover 2001). Silliman orienta su comprensión del asentamiento histórico Pequot oriental a través de la perspectiva de una aproximación teórica a la memoria y la práctica, y que ha sido incorporada en los círculos arqueológicos por un número de profesionales (cf. Silliman 2009:213). Reconoce la existencia de otras perspectivas, como la no menos importante visión de los nativos de su propio pasado, pero el artículo se enfoca principalmente en la aplicación del pensamiento actual sobre estos temas de la identidad.*

The very good questions Silliman asks, and the conventions he challenges, however, fall short of producing the necessary linkage between hypothesis and the past lived experience. In order to move between the macro and the micro scale, and to posit generational change in Native contexts, rather than linear increments of archaeological time, the approach needs to be reoriented so that both time and space are referenced to traditional frameworks, and to the ways in which Native philosophies structured the human experience. If persistence and change vary qualitatively according to context (Thomas 1996), understanding their complexities is partly dependent on following the scale relating to context (family, clan, people, region) and on understanding how variability plays a normal part in human choice within that spectrum. Meaning is also more likely to be released through a more creative approach to material culture that follows frameworks derived from traditional philosophies, which enables the archaeological patterning to reflect such frameworks. This is a marriage of methodologies and data that begins not with classification (which Silliman rightly eschews), but with the proposal that the objects themselves are signposts to radically different worlds (Henare et al. 2007:15) which we cannot conceptualize without adopting a new language for ethnographically-derived experience.

There are methodologies that I would suggest provide alternative narratives and are able to withstand critical scrutiny by demonstrating stable behavior through independent lines of evidence (Wylie 2007:117). I offer the following comments as a contribution to the dialogue, based on my own anthropologically inspired reinterpretation of more than a century's worth of mortuary archaeology and related primary source ethnography for the south-

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ern New England region (Vitelli 2009b) of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I should add that an ethnographic approach to southern New England Native archaeology minimizes many of the cognitive and material differences that have been constructed by archaeologists between life and death practices (e.g., Nassaney 2004:341). Mortuary practices in particular crystallize a set of behaviors in a visibly intentional way (Gilchrist and Sloane 2005) and can provide us with a platform for meaningful discussion of change and continuity.

Not only is there a need for New England archaeology to reconsider alternative interpretations for objects, or, more neutrally, "things" (cf. Latour 2004) that are encountered through the archaeological process, but for a framework that sheds more light on the nature of the relationship between the collective and the individual, and how knowledge of things and their meanings is transmitted and regenerated through time. I would suggest that the transmission of knowledge through practice, and the philosophies underlying Algonquian-speaking peoples' understanding of their environment, are hypothesized in particular through a critical engagement with ethnographic sources, both localized (Bragdon 2009; Simmons 1986) and cross-cultural (cf. Silliman 2009:216). These sources, if approached with a different idea of their value, can inform our archaeological understanding of material culture through methodologies that reflect the radical alterity of the concepts (e.g., Viveiros de Castro 1998), while providing us with an essential way in.

By localized critical engagement in the northeast, I mean the acceptance of the limitations of authorial standpoint in favor of incidental and often misunderstood recording of gestures, practices, and social and seasonal rhythms of northeastern peoples (cf. Ferris 2009:30). While a historian's knowledge of context can provide valuable insights on early colonial experiences of encounter (in New England, Demos 1982; Rivett 2006; Staveley 1987), by and large these exercises are unable to provide other than an early modern Euro-American platform for the interpretation of Native existence. The information embedded within these sources cannot be interpreted coherently without a counterbalancing framework, one that will have to be constructed through alternative sources. The resulting perspective may only serve as an approximation of Indigenous philosophies, but it can serve as a valuable counterpoint to prevailing modernist constructs.

Working alongside the Eastern Pequot, on their own archaeological sites, gives Silliman an unparalleled opportunity to develop a methodology of observations that weaves together informants' perspectives, ethnohistorical pasts, anthropological studies, and archaeology. As he moves away from issues purely "about" material culture, he has the opportunity to move toward developing a language about the material past that may better reflect its relational scales and meanings rather than more Westernized notions of memory or segmented practice. If, as Miller believes (Miller 2007:25), material culture always emerges as processual and relational, the dynamic relations between things and people are also at the heart of our archaeological interpretations: however diluted or fragmented our perceptions, the methodologies we develop must find a way to reflect alterity and not modernity.

Developing constructs through a shift in our engagement with ethnographic material encourages a move away from a modernist fragmentation of the human experience toward a more joined-up approach to aspects of past identity. Where there is no ethnographic record, for example with early prehistoric sites in Europe, it has been suggested elsewhere (e.g., Thomas 2004) that meaning could nevertheless be allowed to reveal itself through patterns that are present in the materials that we study, with minimal externalized categorization. The challenges that this approach poses to prehistorians ironically may be lessened by attending to the methodologies that are opening up within the field of "historical" archaeology in precisely this multidisciplinary context of Indigenous archaeology. But with or without multiple source materials, our work necessitates a reorientation of thinking, and a particularly thorny revision of the notion of identity construction. In this abbreviated response I will limit myself to an outline of where I believe the potential lies, and how it might be possible to reveal fragments of possible Native perspectives by adopting cognitive contexts for the archaeological data.

Scale

Silliman's article is framed at the scale of individuals operating within households or family units,

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and is used as a link between the Eastern Pequot archaeological evidence and larger notions of the performance of tradition (Silliman 2009:216), looking at the idea of continuous elaboration within generational cycles of memory. There is historical evidence elsewhere in southern New England (Mandell 1996:118) that by the early eighteenth century households were atomized and reduced in size to a much greater extent than had been the case only a couple of generations earlier. But a critical approach to those same sources suggests a tenacious retention of the idea of communal existence through, for example, the persistence of extended-family dwelling forms such as the wigwam (e.g., Alden 1798) and through evidence of continued seasonal subsistence patterns (e.g., Biglow 1830:24; Shurtleff 1968[1854]:165).

Eastern Pequot persons are theorized by Silliman as being parts of families or kin groups, but are charged by Silliman with the tasks of choosing and using objects in a way that can be fragmented into "who" and "how" (Jones 2007) and discerned through practice (Silliman 2009:215). The "who" that Silliman wishes to identify through the material cultural evidence is an individual referenced to hypothesized social frameworks; yet it is the individual, imagined as interacting with a diversity of enumerated objects (of which more later), that emerges as the most clearly perceived; the social group(s) encompassing the individual are more obscure. In the way that these individual sites could be placed within their cultural landscapes, so too the persons that are accorded agency are not making their decisions from an undifferentiated sea of variables, but from within a defined relational universe. The challenge is to elucidate what those cognitive and relational connections might be (James 1999), how they play out at varying scales of practice, and how they relate to the archaeological data.

Silliman states that it is individuals who make and remake history, but that notion of time in which these histories were created needs to be recalibrated in order to privilege "human, lifecycle scales" (Silliman 2009:216). The relational character of traditional existence (Strathern 1988; Thomas 1991), which Silliman stresses, in fact troubles the idea that people are self-sufficient and internally motivated units ("social agents") who can be assessed independently. For an archaeologist to perceive these human patterns, which lie at the heart of the continuity and change debate, there has to be an understanding not only of what constitutes generational time, but of the web of human relationships within the generational continuum. It is particularly challenging to conceptualize ethnographically, in non-Western frameworks, the relational universes of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century southern New England Native peoples. The limited archaeological data require a parallel ethnographic interpretation of the prodigious archival evidence in a manner advocated, for example, by Beaudry (1995) and accomplished by Clements (2004).

As I discuss in more detail below, the exercise of personal choice within eastern Native societies is usually linked through cognition and practice to unique variations of detail and emphasis selected from within a flexible collective repertoire, whether philosophical or material (e.g., Donaldson 1995; Hill 1997). The person is able to exercise choice within a framework that has temporal and cultural context, and is always fluid. The way in which a choosing individual draws down from a repertoire or archive of collective knowledge (James 1999) contributes to the transformation of the repertoire from within; embedded within practice and knowledge of practice are the templates for the assimilation of supplementary information, and thus for the incremental transformation of knowledge. When practices associated with the meanings of things are identified in this way, the interpretation of the archaeology begins to acquire a different shape.

An example of variability within the collective repertoire can be found in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century burials in southern New England. The localized mortuary data across most of the seventeenth century, if studied in the aggregate, reveal patterns that can be linked to traditional metaphorical concepts related to states of being, through the use of material attributes such as surface qualities, color, directionality, and number. The dominant Native metaphors (of which more later) connect ideas of balance, equilibrium, well-being, and possession of "wisdom"; by understanding how these concepts might have been expressed materially, and by linking artifact patterning to information about practice, it is possible to suggest how practice and knowledge may have cohered. In a significant number of burials across this period (e.g., Gibson 1980; Simmons 1970; Turnbaugh 1984), glass and shell beads form an

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important component of mortuary assemblages. What is striking is that no two burials contain similar numbers, sizes, colors, or shapes of beads, nor do these beads correlate evenly to assemblages of either traditional, hybrid, or European objects. Purely functionalist analysis fails to find any correlations (Turnbaugh 1984). Yet by identifying an ethnographically derived traditional patterning, a consistent overarching set of concerns manifests itself through the variable repertoire from which personal choice has been made: concern about states of being or well-being (colors, patterns, numbers), prophylaxis and curation (through materials such as shell and copper, with known preservative properties), channeling of wisdom and energy (through placement and directionality of things and people), preservation of animacy and value (through careful wrapping and containment), representations to, and petitioning of, ancestors for a "return" of wisdom (through evidence of gift exchange), to name some plausible examples (Vitelli 2009a, 2011). The patterning is discernible through careful triangulations (Wylie 2007) across compatible sets of information, wherever possible entering into traditional philosophies in order to be guided by their frameworks. Further examples of this approach are embedded in the discussion below.

The Idea of Memory as Knowledge

Silliman expands on the ideas of a number of archaeologists (Silliman 2009:215) in exploring the role of memory in cultural transmission, and the way in which things help societies remember (Jones 2007). His focus is on aspects of memory that underline the continual and dynamic process between the subject and the inhabited material world expressed through practice, and on the way that objects can be seen to express or embody concepts such as generational time. In the intensely relational world of traditional societies, the intentionality that is extended through objects to practices reflects something of the individual as well as something of the relational context (LiPuma 1998). Yet commemorative practices, the individual activation of experience through materials and objects, recurrence and repetition of collective tradition, and creative (re)production of cultural practice should not just be defined as memory, but rather as the expression of collective knowledge, which is simultaneously anchored in the past as it is in the present (Garroutte 2003). In the case of southern New England Native pasts, the ascription of much of the weight of cultural transmission to memory, as opposed to a broader source of experience, inhibits a better understanding of the nature of the very concepts that Silliman is problematizing, because they should reach beyond the commemorative to embody traditionally segmented time (Ingold 2000). Traditional concepts of time in historical northeastern Woodland cultures incorporated memory as a tool in the (re)presentation of different stages of time. Mythic-cosmological time, common across the Native world, constituted a porous universe of sensation linked to the coming into being of the universe. The time of traditions overlay myth, and offered explanations for the creation of this world and how it operates. Present time encompassed phases of change and response, in particular to colonial encounter (cf. Barbeau 1960). These layers were a device to interpret pasts at different degrees of remoteness, a form of memory, but were not an indication of the past itself (Fentress and Wickham 1992:31).

The authenticity of memory at any level lies in its performance (Vansina 1997:54), which makes Silliman's argument for meshing memory and practice a sound one. Yet memory is part of larger patterns of orality and identity, collectively the interpretations of experience that are a stage in the elaboration of historical consciousness (Vansina 1997). Religion, ritual, and most traditional spiritual expressions are primarily expressed through practice (Bragdon 1996; Donaldson 1995; Hamell 1981; Morrison 1986). Common to all of these is the use of dynamic interpretation by individuals of the archive of knowledge (James 1999:3–4). The historic ethnographic evidence for New England Algonquian peoples is full of references to "wisdom" (cf. Hamell 1981; Ronda 1981; Silverman 2005; Simmons 1986; Whitfield 1651), knowledge that is continually reworked and remade from within (Donaldson 1995). Both memory and collective knowledge have been defined as the process of changing while staying the same (James 1999:145–146; Jones 2007:87). The continual regeneration of identity that occurs at this human, present time scale echoes Silliman's "human, lifecycle scales"; the ongoing adaptation by persons

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of their knowledge base encompasses memory—yet because memory is not only synonymous with remembering, but also with interpreting, it is therefore part of the complex of transformative and regenerative practices that constitute cultural knowledge. I emphasize the alignment of memory and knowledge because of the way in which the latter can contribute productively to the diachronic aspects of change and continuity and the roles of material culture in the ongoing persistence of community (Silliman 2009:222). It also takes us away from modernist notions of memory as subject to loss (Wonderley 2009:41) rather than regeneration. Below I offer an archaeological example of how the transformational aspects of knowledge through time are principally visible to us in this sphere of "present time," that is, as intensified responses to colonial encounter, but with profoundly anchored reference to traditional antecedents.

Reorienting Continuity and Change

Along with Silliman, we must continue to question the troubling narratives of Native American existence in the region that marginalize eighteenth- and nineteenth-century evidence of cultural persistence (e.g., Mandell 1996; O'Brien 1997). However, partly in response to the "failure" narratives, both recent (e.g., Morrison 1998) and antiquarian (e.g., Prince 1907), of southern New England Native existence, a great deal of effort is now expended in defending de facto change within cultural continuity (cf. Silliman 2009:213). Again, the difficulty as I perceive it is that the relationship between change and continuity is being approached archaeologically rather than ethnographically, that is, externally framed as an aspect of human experience rather than perceived metaphorically through proprietary structures (Thomas 2004:238): the evidence for relationships between things and people, and the Indigenous templates of adaptation and regeneration that are everywhere discernible through the evidence, are not being taken up. For some time now identity persistence in the northeast has also been defined through attachment to place and "homeland" (Rubertone 2000; Sanger et al. 2006; Shoemaker 2004) as evidence of cultural continuum; an equally important but less understood derivation, in this region of continual resettlement and removals (Mandell 1996:39), is from shared cultural knowledge (whether inherited or learned) (Garroutte 2003) and connects to ideas of place through adoption, habitual use, and recreation of landscapes (Ingold 1986, 2000).

How would we attempt to understand past Native concepts of time and belonging in a way that enables a coherent interpretation of material culture? Rather than with a research question, we might begin with a fundamental cognitive frame of reference, such as the traditional device of metaphor (Thwaites 1898 [1636]:218), as used within both historic and present Native societies to conceptualize their universe. Contemporary Eastern Native American writers have used material metaphors to give shape to community, for example through ideas of weaving (Hill 1997) or ceramics (Brooks 2008), but perhaps the most common overarching metaphor is that of equilibrium (Deloria 1994), which forms the basis of historic Native belief systems (Vitelli 2011). Very briefly, the metaphor of equilibrium has pervasive deep-time (Echo-Hawk 2000) antecedents and is intimately linked with its social end product, well-being (Strigler 2001). A significant body of archaeological and ethnographic data from southern New England, when engaged with through anthropological methodologies, reveals a close connection between the maintenance of well-being (and the preservation of the collectivity) and the ability to preserve "wisdom" and knowledge, essential in coping with dynamic phenomena such as habitat and subsistence change (Vitelli 2011). The continuity of knowledge paradoxically was achieved through practices involving assimilation and neutralization of new potencies, mimicry, and a cycle of transformation and regeneration (making and unmaking) (Bragdon 1996; Donaldson 1995; Hamell 1981; Rubertone 2000). The most effective cognitive filters for this continual process were the metaphors associated with this maintenance of balance, metaphors expressed through language and practices that were intended to render new things safe and usable (Donaldson 1995; Hamell 1981).

Practices for neutralizing and assimilating animate beings and things were essential to protect well-being and wisdom from destabilizing forces (Bragdon 1996). Crossing thresholds between the known and the unknown, or between one state and another, was an essential ritual, insisted on not only for the initiated, but for strangers or strange things.

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The need to neutralize potentially threatening potencies and rebalance their forces is recorded in more recent Native practices, for example among Lakota women using Western-made glass beads (DeMallie 1992:107), but similar concepts are also incidentally present in historic accounts in the Northeast. For example, in liminal spaces involving encounters with Europeans, and in transitional stages between life and death, the importance of ritually crossing thresholds in order to undergo or produce transformation can be identified through localized references, but the associated practices remained elusive until a comparison with cross-cultural examples (Vitelli 2011) produces the notion of transformational "lubrication": bodily essences such as tears and saliva are commonly noted as used to unite, heal, and renew (Fowler 2004:103; Ingold 2000:132; Meskell 1999:47). Within northeastern ethnographic accounts, incidental recording of Native leaders "weeping" over European visitors (cf. Hamell 1981), stylized grief before battles (Vaughan and Clark 1981), or lamentations in mortuary contexts (Williams 2004[1643]:140) in intensely liminal settings such as the forest's edge, river banks, village margins, and gravesides, have spatial and material implications for archaeologists.

Through the early colonial period, however, the increasing intensity of encounter with Europeans and the rapid, cataclysmic, changes affecting Native wisdom and lifeways (Cronon 2003) proved to be beyond the healing capacity of the normal transformative templates (Donaldson 1995); this time of culture stress is when archaeologists have been especially interested in ascribing change to traditional groups. Silliman's suggestion of what amounts to a rolling baseline that no longer is connected to the "precontact" period is no doubt derived from this concern, but rather than uncoupling later periods from their pasts, it is possible to understand in what ways an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Native southern New Englander's knowledge base evolved from ancestral antecedents (Bragdon 1996, 2009). By identifying the metaphors that shaped the perceptions of previous generations, their influences on material culture and practice manifest themselves in patterns that are outside the expected range of classificatory schemas found in New England archaeology. Rather than our inherited processual correlates of gender, age, or status (O'Shea 1984), the ethnographic evidence suggests that it is adjustments over time to the communal perception of individuals" "value" as mediators with ancestors that influenced the ways in which material culture was implicated in everyday practice (Vitelli 2009a). The Eastern Pequot practices are not only "grounded in household experience" (Silliman 2009:223) but in a much larger and more anchored cosmological dynamic. The objects and materials encountered are signposts to surprisingly different ways of thinking and are evidence of variable transformation and assimilation of European lifeways over a very long term.

Ethnographers have been especially sensitive to how settings and place encode values and indeed history itself (e.g., Stewart and Strathern 2003). Yet in southern New England, where colonial-period upheavals and resettlement were frequently imposed on fragmented Native groups (Shurtleff 1968[1854]), place may have become more of a conceptualized ideal than a reality, with the performance of subsistence and spiritual practices overlaid on a succession of landscapes made recognizable and safe through practices that assigned meanings (cf. Jones 2005:212). Ethnographic studies of colonial identity have articulated the nature of this knowledge, which enabled responses to colonization to demonstrate cognitive coherence (e.g., Thomas 1991). Furthermore, a diachronic understanding of these responses is present in cross-cultural ethnographies such as that of James (1999) in which the construction and maintenance of material identity is ongoing through a flexible and assimilative archive of knowledge that envelops the collectivity, while being continually transformed and regenerated from within. The dynamic quality of the knowledge archive was a result of the way in which individual choice (James avoids calling it agency), always decentered, actively produced variability while at the same time remaining recognizably embedded in tradition. So where Silliman posits variable response, he can also rightly assume a continuing social experience of the familiar (Silliman 2009:223).

While Silliman states that forgetting is a key component of memory, in the particular case of colonial southern New England I would suggest that entire arenas of traditional detail and practice were not so much forgotten as *obliterated* through

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epidemic mortality (Salisbury 1992; Simmons 1986); as a result, they were actively rethought and reconstituted through the use of new components as substitutes for missing or imperfectly recalled detail. The active work that was undertaken was shaped by the metaphorical imprint of existing knowledge and was used to create well-being by the assimilation and transformation of new ideas, of new materials and practices that could become part of a knowledge archive and continue to be selected and interwoven by the choosing individual. To repeat, what Silliman views as a shifting baseline is actually a paradox: incremental transformation continually obscures its own material and performative origins in the process of responding to changing needs, but is nevertheless visible through more studied attention to the scales and rhythms of earlier periods. The material cultural detail of "present time" may change and be continually renewed; the underlying philosophies are deeper currents and operate at a different rhythm (Echo-Hawk 2000).

Another way to "enter" (Garroutte 2003: 107–108) and recognize traditional scales of existence is to allow the patterning and detail of those scales point to cycles of transformation. Silliman refers to generational memory (Silliman 2009:216), but it appears that at this stage the Eastern Pequot data cannot support such a statement. However, the extensive mortuary data from southern New England contexts of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries can be reinterpreted as the product of several successive generational cycles (Vitelli 2011) that demonstrate the relationship between the knowledge archive, personal elaboration, and incremental transformation through evolving practice. These cycles, which are affirmed as patterns in the archaeological evidence, are revealed through the interpretative lens of traditional metaphorical constructs. The cycles (approximately two generations, or about forty years) can be referenced to anthropological studies of knowledge transmission (e.g., Allen 1995) and cross-cultural studies of the cognitive effects of religious conversion (Hefner 1987, 1993; Horton 1971) applied to the archaeological evidence. Rather than requiring a shifting baseline and a repudiation of the precontact universe in order to minimize change, generational cycles are linked to long-term antecedents for their cognitive coherence. The cycles of transformation that can be discerned through this approach are a platform for projecting developments into later periods, because accepting the presence of deep time creates a winding tail of antecedence that mimics that of retained mythic and traditional knowledge. Change and archaeological variability thus can be examined as a coherent and referenced response, rooted in long-term practice.

Materials and Materiality

The Eastern Pequot material culture illustrates the hybridity of lifeways that is in the archaeological and ethnographic evidence across most of southern New England for this period (e.g., Bragdon 1986; Mrozowski et al. 2005). Silliman notes that the Eastern Pequot sites display predominantly Euro-American parameters in their materials and technologies (Silliman 2009:219). He makes the point that the sequence of three sites should be compared to each other for evidence of change more than to some "precontact baseline," knowing that as the archaeological database grows, there are opportunities to fill in the gaps with *comparanda.* The approach to the site material culture, however, needs to be further examined.

The excavation and analysis of several well-known historic period southern New England mortuary sites (e.g., Gibson 1980; Simmons 1970; Turnbaugh 1993) fostered an archaeological approach that privileged European material culture over Native, for both cultural and depositional reasons that it is not possible to elaborate on here. The cumulative effect on historic period material cultural studies has been to create an illusion of accessible, functionalist artifact identity that has carried over into the realm of Native things, with two prime results: the first is that the wide range of (mainly perishable) Native artifacts was marginalized through lack of considered attention and understanding, and the second is that Native artifacts, when recorded, were shoehorned into Western categories in order to be made comparable to European artifacts (Vitelli 2011). The archaeological bias against traditional material culture has left us with an impoverished understanding and a failed interpretative schema, one that particularly affects analysis of sites of later periods such as those under discussion in Silliman's article. It is precisely this failure that Silliman addresses by juxtaposing com-

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mentary about "potential meanings" of tangible European things, such as redwares, with possible meanings of imagined Native things, such as baskets and beads (Silliman 2009:225). But he then notes that these "remain contextual questions," that is, the context is Eastern Pequot and the interpretation should therefore remain firmly within Native parameters. How to reconcile European "material parameters" with imagined Native "contextual parameters?" Silliman suggests that if these settlement sites had been situated anywhere else but within a longstanding reservation, they would have been interpreted as Euro-American dwellings through conventional approaches. But not even with certain Eastern Pequot provenience are the "parameters" able to be elaborated without further context—ethnographically derived context. How else would their meanings be discerned?

As part of an ethnographic approach, I suggest that the use of terms such as "materials," "substances," and "materiality" should be differentiated and more rigorously defined: not only is there debate among archaeologists about their meanings (e.g., Ingold 2007; Jones and MacGregor 2002; Tilley 2007) and their depositional contexts (Tilley 2006:70), but historic Native perceptions of things also seem to attribute value to meaningful characteristics (Hamell 1983, 2008; Martin 1999; Saunders 2002; Welters et al. 1996) such as states of being (animate, inanimate); properties or qualities of materials such as textures, colors, and effects (lustrousness, transparency, luminosity, density); and biographies (Gardner 1993; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hoskins 1998). The archaeological evidence for persistence of these meanings into the eighteenth century is closely tied to the persistence, at times discernible in ethnographic sources, of practices centered on maintenance or prophylaxis of traditional well-being, which although inflected with African and English folk medicine (Coffin 1976), continue to be embedded in Native identity. Everyday traditional practices in the eighteenth century continue to be referenced to the past as well, for example, through the manner in which new domestic spaces are placed, arranged, and utilized (Little 1981; Mrozowski et al. 2005), not only in southern New England but more widely in the northeast (Ferris 2009). By virtue of its constant regeneration, the choosing individuals are still operating in within a knowledge framework that is recognizably "theirs," even if the details appear to be "ours." These relationships can only be gleaned from localized perspectives generated from within their own worlds (Henare et al. 2007:2, 15): otherwise, it is not possible to say something meaningful about the way "the specific character of people emerges from their interaction with the material world through practice" (Miller 2007:26).

Of course, that character also has a diachronic component. The generational aspect of change, if reconnected to the notion of place as a collective ideal and carried forward both in time and space through that collective understanding, has the capacity to regenerate meanings of the things to be found in those landscapes. The continuity is found in the consistency of properties and material energies of things, which even at much later dates have the capacity to evoke states of being, even in everyday contexts (Bragdon 1996; Hamell and John 1987; McBride 2008; Steckley 1992). Thus, as Silliman himself suggests, analysis of a ceramic assemblage, of tools or domestic organic artifacts, would not be classified functionally but, for example, would be assessed through metaphorical perceptions of the value of color, texture, animacy, or efficacy, any of which may have influenced individual choice as referents from within a common cognitive system.

Let me offer an illustration of how cognitive continuity of material and practice, and of its intimate referencing to metaphor, might be accessed. From seventeenth-century mortuary evidence in New England, it is possible to detect a pattern whereby a number of very small ceramic pots (often as small as 2" in dm.) were associated with burials of children and young women. These traditionally produced vessels are often referred to in the literature simply as "miniatures" (e.g., Bradley et al. 1998; Luedtke 1985; Mrozowski 1980; Taylor 1982; Willoughby 1924). The pots begin to appear at a time when traditional ceramic production is in decline, and are at times associated with other, scaled-down objects such as small European wine bottles and very small copper kettles (Bradley et al. 1998). It is likely that small (perishable) traditional objects were present as well (Vitelli 2011). Through referencing to a long tradition of archaic antecedents for out-of-scale mortuary objects (Heckenberger et al. 1990; Petersen et al. 2004; Robinson 1996; Walthall 1999) that appear to have

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"stood in for" functional items, the use of very small replicas strongly suggests place markers in practices designed to invoke the potency of reality through ceremony. An ethnographic memorate (Simmons 1986:6) from a southern New England Native informant of the period, which appears on the surface simply to be a fragment of folktale, explicitly refers to collective practices intended to promote well-being that incorporate small objects (Basset 1806:139–140). The informant speaks of a practice that appears to be a redistribution ceremony to heal disease through the correction of imbalances of social wealth between "rich" and "poor": he describes a seated inner circle of "rich" persons who toss outwards into the air small copies of their most valued goods, for the "poor" in an outer circle to catch, hold, and possess "for ever." Connecting the various strands of data, the following sequence can be suggested summarily: the potency of out-of-size markers can be traced back to early prehistoric mortuary and ritual contexts; their later incorporation specifically into practices of redistribution becomes metaphorically linked to cycles of regeneration of (social) well-being and wealth; these cycles can also be interpreted as being connected to early agriculturalist metaphors of sowing (small things) outwards in order to reap (larger benefits) inwards (Salisbury 1982:44; Williams 2004[1643]:92–93); the possible significance of the pots' material, size, appearance and so on, carries forward through the cognitively consistent adoption of European slipware mugs in later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mortuary contexts (Clements 1999; Gibson 1980), which mimic earlier examples and yet also point forward toward an evolving interest in assimilating European wares for new qualities (cf. Ferris 2009). Given the social context of these small pots (burial with young and promising members of the collectivity killed by disease) and wider environmental context (debilitating endemic mortality, destruction of habitat, damage to knowledge base), the prevailing metaphors of equilibrium and cyclical regeneration appear to be invoked; the pots are tangible representations of the redistribution of social wealth (health).

Diachronically, such analyses may indicate the attenuation of one sphere of perceptions, in favor of another—as in the late seventeenth-century focus on the regeneration of well-being through the intensification of a material culture indicative of the well-being metaphors of "light," "white," and "clear" (Hamell 1983; Saunders 1999; Vitelli 2009a), and the growing interest in hybrid material culture (e.g., in Gibson 1980) that assimilates, adopts, and neutralizes. The presence of common Euro-American ceramics or metalwork, ostensibly classifiable as domestic items, nevertheless can signal profound alterity in selection, relationship to Native material culture, and possibly even in ultimate function. Carrying knowledge of one place to another and transferring detailed practice and knowledge of materials was a challenging task that drew on old and new ways, as nineteenth-century Cherokee removals have demonstrated (Hill 1997). Silliman's "precontact baseline" would have been reinscribed and transformed; yet the Eastern Pequot sites are producing assemblages and contexts that, if approached through the lens of thematic ethnographic context, will not run the risk of being confused with those of Euro-American settlers.

Summary

The modalities of Native American persistence in colonial New England will continue to challenge both Western and Native researchers. The source materials available to address the theme are extensive, if variable, and Silliman covers the theoretical ground admirably. He is able to suggest the presence of connective practices, of scales of relational existence, of the relative significance of classes of materials and artifacts, and of the likelihood of diachronic, cyclical behaviors with their own internal frames of reference. As a summary of the potential for Eastern Pequot reservation archaeology, it suggests that there are doors to open that will lead somewhere fruitful. Yet the hypothesized presence of all these phenomena will fall short of being actualized without indexing to traditional experience, whether of the past or the recent present. While it may not be possible for Silliman and his colleagues to work with localized ethnographic sources, the Algonquian world offers a recognizable mythic and traditional platform (Bragdon 1996; Hamell 1983; Simmons and Aubin 1975) that can be accessed in the search for historic variability. What is even more critical, however, is the need for a reorientation in how we approach the material of the past, developing a language and

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methodologies for conceptualizing non-Western meanings. Without developing more ontologically sensitive methodologies through imaginative interpretations of the sources, issues of choice, practice, and persistence cannot be illuminated. The archaeological study of Native pasts, if isolated from their philosophical components, can only reveal to us what we already know.

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