Leave Taking: Materialities of Moving Over Land

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Drawing on recent theories of materiality and non-human agency, this article examines the aftermath of a compelling episode in American history, the Mountain Meadows massacre of 1857. In particular, I focus on certain 'extensions' of the massacre victims, as they encounter and become entangled with other material traces and embodied remembrances over the course of the twentieth century. An initial illustration of this process is drawn from the life history of an Arkansas native whose movements to and from his homeland have entangled him in the vast assemblage brought together by the events at Mountain Meadows. I then turn to the rupture in this assemblage that was triggered in 1999 by the exposure of human bones at the massacre site. Materiality theory highlights the ways in which some objects (or their parts) persist and remain inalienable, while others circulate with varying degrees of freedom. Patterns of persistence and circulation are analysed here by focusing on two kinds of objects with intimate ties to the massacre victims: the bodies of the 17 surviving children, and six buttons made of glass and metal.

In 1857, on the overland trail through southern Utah, some 120 emigrants from northwestern Arkansas were murdered. The massacre took place during the so-called 'Utah War' or 'Mormon Rebellion', a 16-month period when antagonism peaked between the Mormon-led government in the Utah Territory and the federal government in Washington, D.C. (Bigler & Bagley 2011). Besieged by a company of Mormon militiamen, the emigrants were tricked into surrendering and then executed — shot or bludgeoned to death. While the dead were buried at the massacre site, 17 young children were spared and eventually returned to the Arkansas hills. For more than a century, the Mountain Meadows massacre remained a notorious yet obscure event, whitewashed in official Mormon histories and eclipsed by the national trauma of the Civil War (Novak & Rodseth 2006).

In 1999, the accidental disturbance of a mass grave at the site unearthed a few artefacts and thousands of disarticulated bones. Though the bones were reinterred after only one month, the dead would persist in alternative forms, becoming entangled within a wider ecology of people, objects and stories. This persistence, moreover, takes shape within broader histories of migration to and from the American South.

In light of this case, I shall consider what the dead *do* in their various social and historical contexts. This approach seeks to avoid the dichotomous reification of subjects and objects, and directs our attention to the entanglement of humans in the material world (e.g. Hodder 2012; Ingold 2011; Latour 2005). Dead bodies, from this perspective, are not simply passive objects waiting to be endowed with meaning, but material agents that constrain and enable. My approach here goes beyond the study of mass graves and the often contentious politics that surround victims of collective violence. A rich and engaging literature has developed in this area (e.g. Fontein 2010; Renshaw 2011; Verdery 1999; Wagner 2008) and elsewhere I have drawn heavily on such work (Novak 2008; 2014). Here, however, I focus on the ways in which human remains, in the widest sense of that term, facilitate both the gathering or bundling and the disaggregation or circulation of human and non-human things. Rather than focus on discrete moments of 'togetherness' or 'apartness', I emphasize the 'generative potential of

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movement', as Rebecca Empson (2011) calls it — the capacity of things in motion to alter the way people engage with each other, the landscape and the past.

Objects, subjects and missing things

In the burgeoning anthropological literature on materiality, the relationship between people and non-human objects tends to be described in one of two ways. The first attends to people as they inscribe meaning onto passive objects, which in turn become animated through 'secondary agency' (e.g. Appadurai 1986; Gell 1998). Objects are seen as commodities, indices or signs through which meaning is made, knowledge constructed or power deployed. Such an approach has been criticized, however, for privileging the subject and excluding the potential for nonhuman agency (Navaro-Yashin 2009; cf. Chua & Elliott 2013). The top of the subject–object hierarchy is occupied by humans alone.

An alternative, 'symmetrical' approach emphasizes how material things affect other things, including humans, in their vicinity (Knappett 2011; Latour 1999; Olsen 2010). Personhood is seen as emerging through a network of social relations, including non-human forms (Fowler 2010). Subjects and objects are, therefore, considered symmetrical agents in social worlds, thus distributing agency much more widely (Robb 2004; 2008). This approach, however, has generally been pursued in a fairly ahistorical mode, often failing to address the contingent processes by which humans and non-humans become entangled over time (Navaro-Yashin 2009).

Rather than adopt one or the other of these approaches, Empson has proposed a more inclusive 'montage' to account for the often contradictory ways humans and things interact (2011, 22). Material objects can indeed act as subjects, influencing others in their presence, while still being materials upon which memories and meanings are inscribed. Understanding such dynamics requires attending to the political and historical contexts within which subjects and objects become assembled or 'bundled' (Pauketat 2013).

At the same time, some scholars have expressed concern about materiality in general, arguing that the concept of things, however nuanced, detracts from the equally important phenomena of lost and missing things (Crossland 2002; Fowles 2010; Rose 2011). 'My worry', as Severin Fowles writes, 'is that this new materialism tends to blind us to that more complicated world of relations in which, packed between the multitudes of self-evident things, are crowds of non-things, negative spaces, lost or forsaken objects, voids or gaps — absences, in other words, that also stand before us as entity-like presences with which we must contend' (Fowles 2010, 25). Absence can have a palpable presence in people's lives, Fowles argues, leading him to suggest that it should be considered 'a special kind of thing'. By placing demands on the senses and influencing bodily practices, absences also perform work.

In this regard, the approach taken by Fowles intersects with that of Empson who, in her study of Mongolian pastoralists, argues that there exists in daily life (as well as across the life course), 'a tension between that which is visible (or contained) and that which is hidden (or separated)' (2011, 28). This tension is created through movement — the constant hum of comings and goings, as well as the encounters that occur along the way. Such movement is characteristic of both human and non-human actors. Many material things travel, with myriad consequences along the way (e.g. Beaudry & Parno 2013). The mobility of things is rooted in their partibility, in Marilyn Strathern's sense (1988) — their tendency to fracture along the 'faultlines' of their relationships. People themselves, as Strathern argued, have partible properties and tend to leave 'residues' as well as absorb external influences.

In what follows, I draw on the insights of Strathern, Fowles and Empson to shed light on the historic sequence described above — the so-called Mountain Meadows massacre (Bagley 2002; Brooks 1962; Walker *et al.* 2008). In particular, I draw attention to certain extensions of the massacre victims, as they encounter and become entangled with other material traces and embodied remembrances. I begin by introducing a migratory pattern distinctive of the American South, the tendency of white Southerners to cycle back to their 'homelands' on a regular basis. This pattern is illustrated by a brief life history of a descendant of the massacre victims, an Arkansas native whose movements have entangled him in the vast assemblage of humans and non-humans brought together by Mountain Meadows. I then turn to the rupture in this assemblage that was triggered in 1999 by the exposure of human bones at the massacre site.

While my argument is rooted in an analysis of the skeletal remains (Novak 2008), it developed through a decade of ethnographic and ethnohistoric research in the western and southern United States.[1] Initially, I set out to understand how the resurfacing of the bones and their scientific analysis affected the narratives and relationships of the victims' descendants. I quickly learned, however, that by privileging the skeletal remains I neglected many of the central concerns of these descendants, who wanted to discuss their own experiences, family relations and community ties. The dead were never far from these conversations but

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were always present *in relation to* other things. Thus, my ethnographic interactions rather than my initial suppositions guided me to the argument presented here. At the same time, these interactions have drawn me into circulation with people, objects and stories moving to and from the American South.

Pulse of the South

One of the least appreciated demographic patterns of U.S. history is the migration of nearly 20 million white southerners, mainly to western states, throughout the twentieth century (Gregory 2005). This diaspora flowed especially from the 'Outer South', the uplands that extend from West Virginia through Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Historically, the Outer South relied on a mixed economy of small farms and extractive industries. The white migrants from this area, unlike their African American counterparts, tended to follow a cyclical pattern, returning to the South on a regular basis after months or years of living elsewhere.

Circulation plays an important role in the construction of a shared history and sense of relatedness among southern-born migrants (Neville 1987). Stories of the Gold Rush, the Civil War and the Dust Bowl are all invoked for this purpose, but here I focus on Mountain Meadows, a smaller scale but extremely compelling episode on the overland trail. The historical power of this event for a number of communities and extended families is illustrated by the life history of Burr Fancher, who was born and raised in the Outer South and traces his ancestry to the massacre victims. By drawing on his experiences, I emphasize how return migration can inform historical memory and establish relationships with material traces of the past.

Burr Fancher was born in 1927 in Osage, Arkansas. Raised on a subsistence farm, he was the youngest of five children. His father, Grover Cleveland ('Boots') Fancher, 'spent most of his life on horseback', according to Burr, running cattle, hogs, sheep and turkeys from the Arkansas River to markets in Missouri (Fancher 1999[2]). Like his father, Burr has spent much of his long life circulating to and from 'home'. By the age of 15, he began seasonal travel west to work hay, wheat and potato harvests in Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming and Idaho. These travels were anything but lucrative, since he would usually make just enough money to hitch a ride back home. His days as a 'harvest tramp' came to an end only two weeks after he turned 18 when, in his words, 'the Army got me'. After a short stint in Korea, he spent the rest of the war in the Film Corps in Europe as a photographer. When he returned to the States, the GI Bill allowed him to attend college and eventually earn a PhD in Education (Fancher 2008).

Burr learned about the massacre at a young age. 'I remember it well because my father, he wasn't great on reading, but that was the one thing he would read, out of a book called *Polygamy*' — one of the many anti-Mormon polemics of the early twentieth century. At this point Burr paused. 'I've never been able to find it: it was a huge black book with gold lettering, I remember that.' Returning to the story and childhood memories, Burr explains how his father 'would put us on his lap and would read about the Mountain Meadows massacre'.

In this act of remembering, there is a synergy between place, body and object. 'Memory cannot be confined to a purely mentalist or subjective sphere', C. Nadia Seremetakis has emphasized. 'It is a culturally mediated material practice that is activated by embodied acts and semantically dense objects' (1994, 9). The sensual process of learning his family history takes place while Burr sits on his father's knee, hears him read and sees traces of such tales in the print of the huge book. The fact that this book is missing troubles Burr to this day.

Burr's own children were also born in Arkansas, but raised in Oregon. The youngest, Scott Fancher, who now lives in northwestern Arkansas near the old family farmstead, tried to explain the movements of his youth. 'You have to understand, we kind a lived a dual life. My parents migrated to Oregon so my formative years were spent there, but we traveled back to Arkansas routinely for family reunions'. In the late 1950s, during one of the long drives east, Burr took his family on a side trip to a remote valley in southern Utah. The postwar proliferation of cars and highways — many of which continued to follow historic overland trails — allowed a new generation to visit more regularly and to expand their movements to new places and sites.

Winding down a bumpy, unimproved farm road, Burr drove his family to the site of the Mountain Meadows massacre. It was here that 11 of Burr's ancestors, all members of a wagon train en route to California, were murdered by Mormon militiamen in 1857. Their bodies were buried by the U.S. Army some 18 months later. The impressive stone cairn erected by the army was dismantled over the years by local farmers and ranchers. Merely rubble remained of the monument when Burr's family visited the site a century later. Scott was four or five at the time and recalled having 'to crawl under some barbed wire fences' to get to the stone pile. Burr, however, recalls that the visit 'was kinda like a pilgrimage in Spain'. It

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was his first trip to the massacre site, though the historic event, it seemed, had always been present in his life.

Relational revelations

What was *present* for Burr and others whose lives were linked to the historic event depended not only on their personal histories, but 'object histories' whose temporalities and tempos could be quite variable. The cairn visited by Burr and his family may have been in ruins, with stones tumbled down or deliberately moved out of place, but it remained on the landscape in a recognizable form. Yet other things were not so resilient. The wooden cross that had once capped and sanctified the cairn was long gone, destroyed by both non-human and human agents. Its presence today can be found only in historic etchings and texts. Thus what can enter an assemblage or is available to circulate depends on the specific, material properties of things.

Here I draw attention to two kinds of properties in particular: *persistence* and *alienability*. Persistence has generally been regarded in the materiality literature as the duration or legacy of an object, the ways in which things with their own temporalities 'stack up around the present' (Hodder 2012, 193; see also Olivier 2011). But each object can be disaggregated or broken into smaller constituents and each part in turn has its own degree of persistence (Ingold 2007). This leads to the concept of alienability, the ease with which objects or their parts can become unmoored and enter into wider circulation (Thomas 1991; Weiner 1992). Here I examine how some objects (or their parts) tend not only to persist but to remain inalienable, while others circulate with varying degrees of freedom.

In the case of Mountain Meadows, two kinds of objects will be analysed in particular: the bodies of the survivors, on the one hand, and six buttons made of glass and metal, on the other. In the remainder of this section, I focus on the 17 surviving children, before turning in the next section to the buttons.

In the aftermath of the massacre, little remained of the company from northwest Arkansas. Their wagons, cattle and other personal property were quickly looted and carried away. During a final act of desecration by the perpetrators, the corpses were stripped of their clothing, leaving them exposed to the wolves and the public gaze. Nearly 18 months later, when the U.S. Army arrived to investigate the massacre and bury the dead, eyewitness accounts were filled with images of clothing as well as bodily remains. As Brevet Major James H. Carleton described the scene in his official report: 'Parts of little children's dresses and of female costume dangled from the shrubbery or lay scattered about; and among these … there gleamed, bleached white by the weather, the skulls and other bones of those who had suffered' (1859 [1995], 36).

Meanwhile, the 17 surviving children had been taken into Mormon farmsteads in the surrounding area. While their parents' bodies were decomposing in the sun, their own had been kept intact, despite the physical and emotional scars of their ordeal. Housed by Mormon families, some were fed and clothed by the very men who had murdered their kinfolk. In April 1859, under the protection of federal authorities, the orphans were escorted back to Arkansas along the same trail by which they had travelled with their families. By this time, however, most could not recall their family names.

In September, a public gathering at the Carrollton Lodge welcomed the children home (though 'home', at this point, was a rather vague and abstract notion). 'I never will forget the day we finally got back to Arkansas', recalled Sarah Baker Mitchell. 'You would have thought we were heroes' (1940). While some of the orphans had been tentatively identified, there was still confusion about who was whom. Mitchell recalled that she approached one person after another, 'and every time I called a woman "mother" she would break out crying'. All of the orphans had been infants or very young children when they departed for the West, and over the ensuing two and a half years their physical appearances had changed considerably. The adults examined faces and bodies for any distinguishing birthmarks, scars or other clues, attempting to restore to each orphan a personal and family name. According to one newspaper account (*St Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 1893):

> Some of the children were recognized by their relatives and claimed at once. Others could not be clearly identified, as they were so young. The survivors found homes among kindred or the friends of their parents, and each one of them became an object of especial interest to all the people of the surrounding country.

The orphans had returned to Arkansas as anonymous and 'uneasy' objects, torn from the social and material networks in which they had once been enmeshed. Even as they carried residual qualities of their parents and other kin now dead, their return gathered people and things into new networks and established new linkages. The orphans, though human subjects, were nonetheless *materials* upon which new memories and meanings could be inscribed.

Even today, the effects of these children persist, entangled with landscapes, structures and family lore. Burr Fancher often refers to the role of his

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grandmother, who was herself a child of ten when the orphans returned to Arkansas and were greeted at the Carrollton Lodge. 'She helped the older ladies prepare the meal', recounts Burr with pride. Many others with connections to northwest Arkansas are drawn to places and objects touched by the surviving children. The houses in which the orphans grew up and the graves in which they are buried are all part of a small pilgrimage circuit in the area.

In September 2009, on the 150th anniversary of the children's return to Arkansas, the grounds of the Carrollton Lodge witnessed a remarkable commemoration. Many in the audience had made the journey from Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona or California, and in this sense were engaged in their own ritual homecoming to the hills. Meanwhile, 17 local children with purported genealogical connections to the Mountain Meadows massacre were dressed in period clothing, loaded into two covered wagons and sent forth to reenact the original celebration of 1859. Some of the participants openly wept as each child stood up to be introduced according to his or her identity as a massacre survivor.

The children's return, I argue, has come to serve as a model, a kind of 'mythic charter', for the ongoing process by which extended family members — living and dead — renew their identities as Arkansans, even (or especially) when they now reside elsewhere. Like the family reunions analysed by Gwen Kennedy Neville (1987), the Arkansas commemorations of Mountain Meadows draw together a widely dispersed network of kin to participate in open-air rituals accompanied by ceremonial meals. In this case, however, multiple extended families, along with many friends, neighbours and history buffs, gather to celebrate a dramatic historical sequence of departure, rupture, survival and return. Most in attendance are middle-aged or elderly, people who have already experienced an array of comings and goings in their lives. For some, like Burr and Scott Fancher, circular migration is a familiar part of their life stories. For others, however, such migration is an experience through which they are just beginning to feel their way. Like the surviving children before them, they are (re)learning who they are *in relation to* new collectives of things. Their own alienability is produced by moving away, even as their return, like that of the children, allows many varied things to persist — to 'stack up around the present' (Hodder 2012, 193). This is more than a nostalgic homecoming, which suggests a return to an enduring past. The 'doings' of these Arkansans, as Fowles (2013, 254) would put it, are a 'relational revelation', a transformative experience based on ever-emergent assemblages of people and things.

All we have left

In early August 1999, the skeletal remains of at least 28 of the massacre victims were accidentally disinterred from a mass grave at Mountain Meadows. There ensued a legal and political scramble to learn from the bodies, to come to grips with an undeniable, material reality and to incorporate this new, 'hard' evidence into one or another of the competing interpretations of the massacre. Just one month after the bones were 'disturbed', they were again 'laid to rest' at the massacre site. Though sealed in a desert grave (with a handful of Arkansas soil, of course), extensions of the dead persisted above ground and became entangled with new assemblages and streams of movement.

Some of these extensions, much like Burr's book, have become integrated into processes of intimate memory-making within domestic space.[3] Scraps of shroud, for example, that had covered the small wooden coffins were distributed to some of the victims' descendants. In some cases, these bits of cloth were framed and displayed in people's homes.

Other objects from the massacre site have developed a more public profile. Disinterred with the bones were a handful of artefacts: one metallic nut, thirteen ceramic fragments and six buttons. The rectangular nut, though badly rusted, was found to be made of iron, with an irregular shape that suggests it was hand-forged. The ceramic shards, probably from only two or three vessels, were wheel-thrown and glazed. While the buttons varied in size and style, five were made of opaque white glass and one of metal. All were mass-produced and those of glass were designed to imitate more expensive porcelain styles (Baker *et al.* 2003).

Of the thousands of such items manufactured in the nineteenth century, many would be scattered along the overland trail, but only these few would be transformed by their gathering at Mountain Meadows. The (re)emergence of the buttons along with the victims' bones produced not only a sense of synchronicity, of shared temporality, but also one of analogy, of shared position and function. Though constructed of glass and metal, the buttons were strikingly similar to bone in their historical persistence. Both buttons and bones had endured the ravages of time, while their surrounding cloth and flesh had rapidly decayed. In one case, a woman directly descended from a massacre survivor referred repeatedly to the buttons as 'bones'. Even after being corrected, she continued to remark that 'those little pieces of bone are all we have left'.

In fact, buttons might be described as the 'skeletal' remains of clothing. What we wear, in turn,

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is evocative of bodily experience and often 'laden with perceptual recall' (Seremetakis 1994, 10). The familiar process of dressing and undressing is an act that transcends the generations, as it is learned from one's parents and taught in turn to one's children. Buttons in particular would have been close to the living bodies of the ancestors and intimately involved in many of their daily routines. As we shall see, each button from Mountain Meadows would become something of a sacred relic, 'regarded as a fusion of body fragment and material object and possessed of emotive charge' (Ranum 1989, 246).[4]

Significantly, the buttons from the massacre site have a gendered appearance: the small glass objects evoke the presence of women and children and the larger metal button, that of men. This appearance seems to affect the way in which the buttons are perceived and treated. Descendants of the victims often describe the buttons in general as personal property — part of the plunder, including livestock, money, guns and wagons, stolen by the Mormons in 1857. Women in particular, however, have another way of talking about the buttons, especially the glass ones. They focus on their 'tiny', 'sweet' qualities, evoking a domestic intimacy with maternal overtones. 'It brings it home when you see these little baby buttons', remarked one woman. Conversations about the buttons shift easily to the topic of the mothers on the train and the horror they must have felt in watching their loved ones suffer.

Unlike the bones, which were expeditiously reburied, the buttons and other artefacts were retained by archaeologists at Brigham Young University. In their view, the artefacts were property of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the current landowner at the gravesite (Baker *et al.* 2003, 75). Most descendants of the victims, however, considered the Mormons to be holding on, once again, to things that were not theirs to keep. Many demanded that the Church relinquish the buttons immediately, either to be returned to the descendants or to be reburied at the massacre site. One proposal was to have the objects moved to northwest Arkansas, where they could be displayed in a local community setting. This reflected a general sentiment that the buttons in particular should be 'brought home' to be 'with family'. An opposing faction called for reburial, inasmuch as the buttons were funerary objects — inalienable extensions of the dead. To manipulate or display such objects was not only disrespectful but 'macabre', as Scott Fancher put it (Smith 2000). 'These buttons', he added, 'need to remain buried with the bones of those who wore them.'

What is interesting about this debate is how perceptions of the buttons and their geographic mobility reflected personal histories of attachment and movement. The leading advocates of reburial, including both Scott and Burr Fancher, have lived extremely mobile lives, not only circulating between Arkansas and Oregon but venturing overseas on multiple occasions. Such movement is explicitly described by Burr as a deep ancestral pattern, reaching back to his earliest forebears (Fancher 1999). Whatever its provenance, this mobility seems to have enhanced Burr's capacity for maintaining relationships with absent others, whether people, places or objects.

For many participants in the Southern diaspora, circulating widely from home, perhaps establishing multiple homes along the way, has been more than an escape from poverty or natural disaster — it has been a positive means of pursuing a livelihood and attaining prosperity. As in the Mongolian herding households studied by Empson, separation 'is a necessary means by which fecundity is ensured for the growth of people and animals' (2011, 13). By the same token, 'home' is not a uniquely secure or nurturing place but one of many vital assemblages within a sprawling yet familiar landscape. Despite extended absences, relations with these assemblages may be sustained over long distances and spans of time. As a result, not everything of value must be concentrated in or near home. Indeed, some assemblages 'out there' must *not* circulate but should remain together and intact. All of this, arguably, supports the position of those who would simply rebury the artefacts, including the buttons, unearthed at Mountain Meadows.

By way of contrast, those who would have the buttons returned to Arkansas seem to consider the massacre site a remote and alien place, beyond their own horizon of personal experience and attachment. And indeed, the most prominent advocates of return were two local women whose personal histories were embedded in the small towns and rural counties of northwest Arkansas. For them, circulating widely is not a means of attaining prosperity, but a threat to the prosperity already won and established at home. The buttons, with all their associations, ought to be carried home and safeguarded, not stranded 'out there' under the control of the Mormons. These women's feelings about the buttons are reminiscent of a more general longing for the return of the surviving children to Arkansas.

In the end, just as the children were retrieved from the Mormons and publicly presented at the Carrollton Lodge, the buttons were relinquished by the LDS Church and placed on public display in their 'homeland'.[5] In September 2000, the buttons moved

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from Utah to the Carroll County Heritage Museum in Berryville, Arkansas. Installed in an exhibit under glass, these so-called inanimate objects nonetheless exerted a palpable influence on people and things in the surrounding communities. 'Sometimes I go out there to see them', one woman made a point of telling me. 'We know those little buttons were touched by our people', she remarks 'Have you seen that little tiny one?'. Like the returning children before them, the buttons have become a tangible presence that gathers and bundles, while standing witness to what is absent or hidden — all that was fractured at the massacre site.

Conclusion

The dead have agency, I have argued, but so too do many other 'inanimate' things. The idea that dead bodies are imbued with a kind of personhood does not, by itself, address the real issue, which is how personhood emerges and circulates (and at times recedes or is lost) in a world of both humans and non-humans. Here I have used the case of Mountain Meadows to explore how 'human remains', including bones, artefacts, descendants and stories, carry along the qualities of persons, while articulating and extending those qualities in often surprising ways.

My argument is not that all elements are equally important: if this were the case, then the metallic nut or the pottery shards unearthed at Mountain Meadows would be just as compelling and have just as much agency as the children's buttons — or the children themselves. My argument instead, following Bruno Latour (1999; 2005), is that we cannot know ahead of time what will be compelling or agentic, but must follow the empirical pathways by which human and non-human 'actants' are linked. If Latour's approach is thoroughly historicized, it becomes possible to trace the bundling and unbundling of actants over many decades or generations. As Timothy Pauketat (2013, 55) puts it, 'Using the metaphorical language of a bundle, ... we might begin to see continuity and change as one and the same phenomenon, produced through the mediation of ever-changing relationships and intersecting rhythms of things-in-motion'. The things that were set in motion by the Mountain Meadows massacre include dead bodies, to be sure, but only in relation to other historical agents, whose own identities are themselves in motion.

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Notes

1. Though not elaborated here, my research follows Yannis Hamilakis's recent call for a new field of study — archaeological ethnography. He describes this field as 'a transdisciplinary and transcultural space, a locality and a ground that allows for multiple meetings, conversations and interventions to take place' (2011, 405).
2. Burr is a gifted storyteller and, over the years, has self-published many of his stories. Most of these writings were published after my fieldwork began in 2000, and the majority of the quotes herein were first shared with me as oral accounts. When my notes and Burr's publications align, however, I credit his writings.
3. For a parallel case in the context of the Spanish Civil War, see Renshaw's (2011, 182) discussion of the relocation of mundane objects from mass graves to domestic spaces for purposes of historical narration.
4. The familiarity of everyday objects in mass graves and their affordances as indices of 'daily routines and habits' is nicely illustrated by Renshaw (2011, 156–61). In addition, the transformation of such objects from mundane to sacred is reminiscent of 'second-class relics' or *ex indumentis* — objects touched by a living saint or martyr. For more discussion on Roman Catholic relic cults, see Angenendt (2010).
5. The relinquishment came with a caveat. LDS Church spokesman Dale Bills announced that the artefacts would be loaned rather than donated to the museum in Arkansas. 'Until the descendants are able to resolve any differences that remain', he said, 'they will be on loan' (Nii 2000). This excellent example of Weiner's concept of keeping-while-giving was not lost on Scott Fancher, who wrote: 'I want to remind everyone that it is legally impossible to loan what you do not own' (*MMMF Newsletter*, volume 11, May 2002).

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