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INTRODUCTION

PART 1: THE AMERICAS

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Introduction

Processing and Poetics, Examining the Model

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Just as the dead do not bury themselves (Parker Pearson 1999), the dead also do not manipulate or process their own mortal remains. The manipulation of human remains can be seen as a discursive act, communicating cultural information through actions that create social identity and memory. Manipulation of the body embodies symbolism relating to the construction of society, bringing order to the disorder of death, and giving meaning to the change symbolized by death. Though he was discussing violence, Whitehead's poetics model can be applied to this process as well, particularly when we examine processing and body manipulation as "socially constructive cultural performance" (Whitehead 2004b, 60). This volume arose out of a session organized by Anna Osterholtz and Debra Martin at the 2016 Society for American Archaeology in Orlando, Florida. For the session, we asked the contributors to consider postmortem treatment of the physical body through a poetics lens, to examine body-processing as a mechanism for the recreation of cosmology events and the creation of memory. The creation of processed bodies has the capacity to transform space, ritually close and open spaces, and reinforce relationships between the living and the dead. The session and this volume are focused on the processing of the body, in what ways it occurs, and how the physical body (and its manipulation) is used as a social tool. The contributors also focus on how the living manipulate the dead both literally and figuratively, using the physical and metaphorical transformation of their remains as a mechanism for the creation of social stratification and power.

Whitehead himself examined the role of manipulation of the body as poetic with his exploration of the *kanaimà* complex in Amazonia (Whitehead 2004b), the difference being that his focus is on the violence of the act, not the nature of the body (in that it is dead when the violence happens). This is a shamanistic process involving mutilation of the body. The fluids associated with putrefaction take on specific social meanings depending on the orifice from which they issue. That the victim of this violence is dead is seen as passivity, a lack of desire to stop the violence or mutilation. As Whitehead (2004b, 71) notes, "the poesis involved in the idea of *kanaimà* thus refers to the way in which knowledge of and ideas about *kanaimà* are creatively entangled in a wide variety of indigenous discourse-sexuality and gender, modernity and tradition, Christian religion and native shamanism, interpersonal antagonism and kin relationships, and ultimately human destiny and the cosmos."

THE POETICS MODEL

The focus of the volume centers on applying Whitehead's (2004a, 2004b) concept of poetics to various mortuary and skeletal assemblages. Whitehead famously applied the concept of poetics to the study of violence, noting the power that violence has in "expression and creation of identity" (Whitehead 2004b, 59). Contributors to the present volume look at the manipulation of the physical body as equally important. Whereas Whitehead asked, "Why are we so violent?" we ask, "Why do we manipulate bodies?" Violent interaction and body manipulation share elements that allow for the application of the poetics model to both. Violence can involve physical contact between the aggressor and victim, violence can also be performed in order to influence the behavior of a third group, the witnesses. This three-part model has been used to examine warfare and violence (e.g., Osterholtz 2013), but can also be applied to body-processing. This relationship can also be seen in the example of the *kanaimà*, where the physical contact with the body confers meaning on the processing itself. This physical contact is performed in order to influence the behavior or belief of the witnesses. The poetics model also argues that the performance and ritual components can be synergistic in their impact.

Whitehead argues that violence must be understood as an important cultural system. He says that this involves "recognition that violence is as much a part of meaningful and constructive human living as it is an imagination of the absence and destruction of all cultural and social order" (2007, 41). Violence is not a simple topic, it is both *con*structive and *de*structive. It is used to create social order and social identity as well as to create social differentiations and hierarchies. Processing and body manipulation can also be said to be both *con*structive and *de*structive, or both *de*generative and *re*generative.

Just as Whitehead argued that violence needed to be seen as historically and culturally contingent, the authors in this volume present numerous case studies showing that interpretation of body manipulation must be historically and culturally oriented. In the case of the historic chapters, understanding the context of the remains allows for a richer understanding of the stories these bones tell. Understanding the historicity of the assemblages, as the chapters in the volume show, allows for a robust interpretation of the relationship between the living and the dead.

Poetics, specifically, allows for any cultural activity—in the case of this volume, the processing of the human body—to be seen as regenerative and meaningful. The meaning comes not only from the activity itself but from the involvement of the community or witnesses to the activity. Involving the community or witnesses adds a performative element to the ritual of processing. It is the synergistic combination of ritual and performance that gives processing incredible power to impact social groups and to create social memory or as a "sanctioned means of collective communication and exchange" (Whitehead 2005, 23).

THE BODY AS MATERIAL FOR SOCIAL MEMORY

The idea of the body as a physical object that can be manipulated for social and political ends has been growing as a construct within bioarchaeology over the past several years. Sofaer's *The Body as Material Culture* (2006) takes this quite literally. The body can be viewed materially; this materiality of the body itself allows for the creation of identity and social memory. Social memory is an important element for the power of the model for creating meaning. How does processing the body lead to the creation of social memory? Through the use of physical manipulation, sense memory is created. Community witnessing of or participation in action helps create group identity and memory (Osterholtz and Harrod 2013). The act of processing itself creates legitimacy of the mortuary program and all that it entails (Whitehead 2007). Each is dependent upon the context in which it is used; again, historicity is important. The chapters within this volume offer numerous case studies about how physical manipulation of the body can be used to create social memory. Pérez (2006) also examines the use of the body as a political tool, with manipulation of the body being instrumental in the creation and maintenance of social hierarchy. In particular, his politicization-of-the-dead model has been fruitful for the interpretation of violent assemblages elsewhere (see Campbell, chapter 7, this volume).

The materiality of the body can be examined archaeologically and historically. Mortuary processes are at the heart of identity in many if not most societies. Mortuary treatment is indicative of social beliefs about social order, an afterlife, and the overall relationship between the living and the dead. Burial in perpetuity, as

happens commonly in the United States has persisted partly due to the creation through this process of a commemorative location. The processing of the body in preparation for burial and the selection of a coffin, burial clothing, burial plot, memorial stone, and so on create an expectation of future visitation. In keeping individual burial plots in perpetuity, we also acknowledge and honor the dead as individuals, not necessarily as part of a larger collective. This can be compared to modern burial practices in other parts of the world, such as Greece, where burial space is rented for a limited amount of time. At the end of this time, the bones are disinterred and placed in an ossuary with other family members. The focus for future visitation is on the family or community unit, not necessarily the individual.

These two different methods of remembrance would (and do) leave visible archaeological traces. Through a poetics approach, each method of remembrance could be interpreted to highlight different relationships. Why do we concern ourselves with identification of individual graves? Why is this important in American society? It could be argued that due to the particular historicity of American history, we are individualistic and tend to embody individuals with suites of characteristics that other cultures might attribute to groups or communities as a whole. The grave of Susan B. Anthony has long been used as a way to express solidarity with female candidates and feminism in general. In the first national election in which the nominee of a major political party was female, women and men stood in line for hours to place their "I Voted" stickers on her tombstone (figure 1.1). In this way, the creation of memory involved with her burial embodied much grander ideals than just her individual identity.

The use of the body as material with cultural meaning is multifaceted: such uses can be considerate or punitive, or can signal an alternative status. All create social identity and social memory for different reasons and signal different cultural values. Visiting the grave of a loved one reinforces links to family, whereas visiting the grave of a suffragette might reinforce a feeling of connectedness with larger social movements and imagined communities. Stewart and Strathern (1999, 650) note that a sorcerer's corpse would be "dishonored and abused before being returned to its home village, in the same way as might happen to a war casualty." The manipulation of the corpse carried meaning in a punitive way greater than just the return of the body to his or her home village.

This poetics approach is also linked somewhat to what Giddens (1984) described as "structuration." Giddens believed that societies should be viewed not just as large-scale structures but as "dialectics of structures and practices" (Bernbeck 2008, 396). Giddens defines structures as the "intersection of presence and absence [of social relations or social phenomena]; underlying codes have to be inferred from surface manifestations" (1984, 16). Social structures are formed through practice

FIGURE 1.1. Grave of Susan B. Anthony the day after the 2016 election. (Photo by Daniel Penfield, Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php ?curid=53579895.)

and form practice in a feedback loop. In effect, larger social structures can be used to infer practice. However, Bernbeck (2008) cautions against the examination of practice at the expense of considering the constraining effects of cultural structures. The poetics approach as used here examines this relationship between practice and structure as an important generator of identity and social memory.

ORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUME

The individual chapter's authors have taken different elements of poetics, based on the historicity and overall research questions being asked. In this way, they show the breadth of the theoretical paradigm.

There are three sections to the book based on geographic location of the case study. The first section comprises case studies from the Americas. In chapter 2, Beth Koontz Scaffidi examines the transformational power of feline trophy heads in the Majes Valley, Arequipa, Peru, and their inclusion in burials as grave goods.

The creation, use, and disposal of these trophy heads is important in negotiating supernatural dangers undertaken by the makers of human trophy heads. Feline trophy heads can therefore be seen as generative forces for the community. Chapter 3 examines performance and meaning at Paquimé, Chihuahua, Mexico. Kyle Waller and Adrianne Offenbecker discuss the presence of both primary burials and an upper layer of heavily processed individuals. They argue that the possible human sacrifices, as evidenced by the processing of the upper individuals, reflect a potent source of sociocultural power manipulated by ritual elites to reinforce social control and political power.

In chapter 4, Kristin Kuckelman examines patterns of ritual modification at several ancestral Puebloan sites of the northern San Juan region. She traces the movement of groups from pueblo to pueblo, arguing that the ritual processing was used by multiple groups at different times. Chapter 5 focuses on the same geographic region: Debra Martin and Anna Osterholtz examine processing at three different ancestral Puebloan assemblages, showing both the consistency and the changes that were occurring through time in the region. They argue that the extreme processing evident in the site was both regenerative and destructive. They also argue that it created social memory and influenced social behavior on a community level.

The second section of the volume involves case studies from Europe, Eurasia, and Africa. Chapter 6 addresses tomb usage in ancient Aksum, Ethiopia. Here, Dilpreet Singh Basanti argues that stelae served as a longer-lasting "body" for the family of the dead and held a sort of personhood of their own. Chapter 7 looks at violent death and processing in ancient Egypt. Roselyn Campbell examines state-sanctioned violence and the subsequent processing of those remains as indicators of social will and control, arguing that in some ways it was this manipulation that negotiated the power structure between the rulers and the ruled. In chapter 8, Marin Pilloud and colleagues argue that social memory was a key component at the site of Çatalhöyük, Turkey, centering around daily practice and some embodiment of the house as a repository for memory and identity. They believe that postmortem processing added to the already important place that daily practice had in reinforcing social structure and practice. In chapter 9, Megan Perry and Anna Osterholtz examine the use and reuse of tomb space at the Nabataean site of Petra as a way to examine concepts of the body, memory, and group identity.

The final section of the volume centers on historic postmortem processing (anatomization) in the United States as evidence of structural violence. In chapter 10, Christina Hodge and Kenneth Nystrom examine the role of medical students' rites of passage as student physicians in the dissection of cadavers, and how those cadavers were selected for dissection. The choice of groups such as African Americans or almshouse inmates illustrates the degree of structural violence present at the

time. These graves were not seen as worthy of protection and those bodies were not sacred: they were Other. In chapter 11, Carlina de la Cova examines the populations making up the Hamann-Todd Collection. The collection is used today by many bioarchaeologists and historians of medicine to understand the course of pathological conditions in human skeletal remains, but it is disproportionately made up of individuals who were impoverished, were deemed insane, or were people of color. As seen in chapter 10 (Hodge and Nystrom), de la Cova demonstrates that overrepresentation of these groups within the study collections illustrates the degree of social power present in those making decisions about inclusion in the collections and processing.

Finally, the concluding chapter by Eric Haanstad presents a social perspective on the creation of meaning through poetics. Written by a student and colleague of Neil Whitehead, this chapter summarizes the chapters within the poetics framework. Haanstad ties together elements of all chapters to highlight the concept that "death processing is not about the dead at all and is clearly focused on manipulating the living" (chapter 12, this volume). Haanstad looks forward and encourages researchers to highlight the tensions between legitimacy and illegitimacy in poetics and amplification of processing as a key to identity formation.

The case studies are broadly distributed, both in terms of geography and time period; the contributions illustrate the varied ways in which manipulation of the body can be incredibly culturally meaningful. Culture change can be spotted (Perry and Osterholtz, chapter 9), and we can see the presence of processing as a socially steadying and regenerative factor across time (Martin and Osterholtz, chapter 5). Processing of the bodies of community members as part of a mortuary ritual reinforces social ties and illustrates the relationship between the living and the dead. The houses of the dead become proxies for the dead themselves (Basanti, chapter 6, Pilloud et al., chapter 8). We can see status and hierarchy (Waller and Offenbecker, chapter 3; Campbell, chapter 7). Processing of the bodies of Others (Hodge and Nystrom, chapter 10; de la Cova, chapter 11), outsiders (Kuckelman, chapter 4), and prisoners of war (Scaffidi, chapter 2) illuminates social hierarchy and access to power. The model is therefore remarkably elastic and allows us to examine deeper meaning than a surface understanding that processing and mortuary processes occur. Through a poetics approach to processing and mortuary programs, we can see how multifaceted these processes really are. Processing and all that go into these complex mortuary programs are discursive and tend toward being recursive as well in that processing and body manipulation are "powerful and performative and [have] the means of creating the conditions of its own verification and therefore its own reinforcement" (Bourdieu 1998, 72). Whitehead described the poetics of violence as a process "whose symbols and rituals are as relevant to its enactment

as its instrumental aspects." It is "an indispensable aspect of being able to interpret, and not just condemn, violent acts" (Whitehead 2007, 44). These are not simple processes any more than violence is a simple concept. Violence also tends to act as a justification of violence, so it is also recursive discourse. The same could be said of the poetics of processing.

POETICALLY MOVING FORWARD

The chapters in this volume show just how diverse poetic interpretations can be, depending on research questions and additional theoretical perspectives employed by the authors. Poetics offers a way to examine the synergistic effect of practice and structure, the role that action has in group identity and social memory. The model has a significant amount of flexibility and is contingent upon the historical and cultural contexts of the group examined.

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