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and illustrations are effectively accommodated for the reader. The text has been very well proof-read with rare typographic errors. Two large-scale maps with selected sites from Mediterranean, southeastern, north, and northwestern Europe placed at the beginning of the book are equally effective. As disadvantages of this book, I would describe the heavy weight that makes it difficult to carry and the high cost that will put off many of the potential readers from purchasing it. Overall, the *Oxford Handbook of Neolithic Europe* is a great scholarly achievement and a valuable offering essential to everyone interested in the archaeology of the European Neolithic.

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Alasdair Whittle and Penny Bickle, eds. *Early Farmers: The View from Archaeology and Science* (Proceedings of the British Academy 198. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 450pp., 12 colour and 86 b/w figs., 25 tables, hbk, ISBN 978-0-19-726575-8)

Archaeology has long had a tumultuous relationship with science. The opportunity brought about in the post-WWII era by the introduction of new scientific techniques, such as radiocarbon dating and tree-ring calibration, was quickly turned into an instrument by the New Archaeologists to 'destroy' (in Colin Renfrew's words) the old archaeological paradigm of diffusion and culture history, starting with the systematic undoing of its chronological foundations (Renfrew, 1973: 19). The strength of scientific dating—it was suggested at the time—derived paradoxically from its complete independence from archaeological assumptions. Science was presented as facts and pitted against at least the more traditional aspects of archaeology, which it was tasked to replace. The scene was set for the postmodernist critique and the 'Science Wars' that ensued, which brought about another two decades of academic infighting between processualists

and post-processualists (Hodder, 1982). Yet there are signs that the relationship between archaeology and science has changed, or is currently changing. In the field of radiocarbon dating, for instance, archaeological inferences about the stratigraphic structure of site deposits are increasingly used to constrain the statistical uncertainty of calibrated dates and produce finer, generational-scale chronologies (Bayliss & Whittle, 2007). As science is becoming routinely embedded in archaeological practice, new facets of the past become available and our understanding of the archaeological record is transformed.

Early Farmers is an important landmark to understand the changes at play within the discipline. The book focusses on how a more integrative approach of science, defined as 'a series of analytical, generally specialised techniques' (p. 15), can help to address big archaeological questions, such as the origins and spread of the Neolithic,

the nature of early farming systems, the impact of the Neolithic transition on human lifeways, and the role of materialities. It is based upon the proceedings of a conference held at Cardiff University in May 2012 and supported by the British Academy. The book works on several levels. At one level, the volume is a companion piece to Bickle & Whittle's *The First Farmers of Central Europe: Diversity in LBK Lifeways* (2013), which enables them to compare the methods and results of their 3-year AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) project with that produced by other specialists of the LBK (Linearbandkeramik) and the Neolithic in general. The volume is a broad (and at times quite specific) overview of current research on the European Neolithic, bringing together 21 original contributions by leading experts of the field, each providing a separate case study. With one exception (Ch. 8 by M.A. Tafuri et al. on the Tavoliere enclosures in south-east Italy), the articles are concerned mainly with the inland (or Danubian) route of neolithisation across continental Europe. Further case studies are drawn from the two extremities of Europe, south-west Asia on the one hand (J. Pearson and L. Meskell; W. Matthews et al.), and the British Isles and Scandinavia on the other (R.J. Schulting and L. Fibiger; O.J.T. Harris; J. Smyth and R.P. Evershed).

Yet the book has another ambition, to acknowledge and embrace a broader shift in archaeological interests and methods. The aims of the volume are perhaps best encapsulated in John Robb's chapter on 'The Future Neolithic'. Although the chapter opens up with Shakespeare, the term 'future' brings to mind another reference, the Manifesto of Futurism and its ambition to make art 'total' (Marinetti, 1909). For what is at stake here is the emergence since the years 2000s of a more holistic understanding of the Neolithic, brought about by

the gradual erosion of traditional dichotomies, between science and humanities, nature and culture, the Neolithic as 'an economy' and the Neolithic as 'a cultural orientation' (p. 22). The Neolithic becomes, in Robb's terms, 'a set of material relationships widely shared across Europe, a common repertory of practices and things' (p. 27). Other chapters in the volume can be seen to be reflecting this definition. Hence practices provide a central framework of analysis in a number of contributions. Amy Bogaard is concerned with early agricultural practices in Europe. Lamys Hachem and Caroline Hamon explore the relationship between food and residential practices in LBK settlements. Jessica Smyth and Richard Evershed deal with dietary and consumption practices. Christian Meyer and colleagues document a specific mortuary practice, represented by the LBK mass graves. Finally, Jessica Pearson and Lynn Meskell define a new representational practice, which they term 'enfleshing' (p. 247). In view of this, there is ground to assume, as Robb does in his chapter, that this revolution is already upon us. What sets it apart from previous turns in the discipline is that it arises from a desire to actually do archaeology and answer big questions, and not from the defence of a particular theoretical viewpoint or research agenda. It is, in this respect, a 'quiet revolution' (p. 21).

The question raised by Bickle and Whittle in the introductory chapter is how to integrate different approaches and scales of analysis, particularly when there is such an explosion of science within archaeology. In other words, how can archaeology and science profitably work together? Archaeology as it is practised today is about piecing together tiny shreds of archaeological and scientific evidence to address larger questions of the past. The coherence of the archaeological process derives not so much, the editors argue, from the methods used,

but from the questions asked. This is a view that I wholeheartedly support. Unless we draw attention back to the questions themselves, we risk losing sight of the 'archaeological end-game' (p. 426) and trapping ourselves in one type of explanation at the expense of another. The risks associated with an over-specialisation of research without adequate contextualisation have already been highlighted by other researchers (e.g. Özdoğan, 2006: 160–61). An example of how such an approach may generate new insights into early farmers is provided by the question of the exploitation of milk in the Neolithic. Addressing this question requires the mobilisation of a wide range of approaches and evidence. Paul Halstead summarises this in his final comments:

Organic residues in ceramic document heat-processing of ruminant milk, but not the scale or nutritional significance of milk consumption; culling patterns and weaning ages reveal the extent to which livestock management made milk available to humans and thus measure *potential* intensity of exploitation, but do not confirm use; and the genetic history of lactase persistence suggests that ability to consume milk conferred strong selective advantage on some early farmers, but leaves open whether milk was a routine dietary staple or a source of sustenance in scarcity (p. 420).

The organisation of the volume reflects this collaborative approach to archaeology. The chapters are divided along four main strands, which provide broad frameworks designed to answer specific research questions. As outlined before, these are the origins and spread of the Neolithic, farming itself, lifeways, and materialities. The volume is framed at both ends by more theoretical and interpretive chapters (Chs. 2, 3, 21 by J. Robb; J.C. Barrett; P. Halstead; also see Ch. 17 by O.J.T. Harris), exploring the opportunities and

challenges that emerge from the interaction of archaeology and science. Collectively, these chapters demonstrate that the divide between archaeological theory and scientific practice is dissolving, although many problems remain, due to our attachment to dichotomous understandings of the Neolithic, as an opposition between farmers and foragers (Harris), and our over-reliance on proxy measures which are still open to ambiguity of interpretation (Halstead). Each of the core chapters draws upon several approaches and/or results to reach conclusions. Although most articles are evaluative in nature, some outline questions arising from the application of a new scientific technique, for instance agent-based modelling of agricultural expansion (Ch. 4 by J.-P. Bocquet-Appel et al.), thin-section analysis of occupation surfaces and deposits (Ch. 14 by W. Matthews et al.), and compound-specific isotope analysis of lipid residues in ceramic vessels (Ch. 18 by J. Smyth and R.P. Evershed). A large emphasis is placed in the volume on biological markers (Chs. 5, 6, 12 by A. Szécsényi-Nagy et al.; G. Brandt et al.; C.S. Larsen, etc.). Some articles combine quantitative and qualitative data to challenge traditional narratives of the Neolithic as a state of peace (Ch. 15 by R.J. Schulting and L. Fibiger), revolving around a cult of fertility (Ch. 13 by J. Pearson and L. Meskell). Almost all chapters are concerned with issues of scale and how to integrate the micro, for instance a single grave, with the macro, e.g. the spread of farming. A few articles are more critical of science and alert us to its limitations (Ch. 19 by A. Sheridan and P. Pétrequin). The volume also contains a witty *détournement* by John Chapman, who offers a prehistorian's perspective on Neolithic sciences (Ch. 20).

Overall this is a very impressive selection of articles, covering almost all aspects of the Neolithic as it appears today. In terms of

readership, *Early Farmers* will be of use to any specialist of the Neolithic in Europe interested in new approaches and material to compare his/her own results. The compact format of the book and its specific research focus also make it an ideal resource to train archaeology students and make them aware of the different methods of reconstructing the past. One regrets the absence of a chapter on Bayesian modelling of radiocarbon dates, which has revolutionised our understanding of the Neolithic (Bayliss & Whittle, 2007). As suggested above, absolute chronology has played a central role in the redefinition of the relationship between archaeology and science, and it is regrettable that it is not better represented in this volume. I am also slightly surprised that the volume does not address the division of labour within archaeology between archaeologists and specialists. V. Gordon Childe warned in his Valediction that ‘archaeologists will abandon responsibility for chronology or themselves become nuclear physicists’ (Childe 1958: 2). It is eminently clear what archaeology has to gain from a more collaborative or integrative approach of science, put so to speak ‘in context’ (p. 14), but how does this translate in terms of disciplinary specialisation? Are the editors suggesting that archaeologists are specialists in their own right or that the two categories of researchers are blended? *Early Farmers* is an optimistic volume, which gives faith in the

archaeological process, and perhaps that is all that matters in these times of crisis.

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