Representational Approaches to Irish Passage Tombs: Legacies, Burdens, Opportunities

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Leonard Bilsiter was one of those people who have failed to find this world attractive or interesting and have sought compensation in an "unseen world" of their own experience or imagination—or invention.

—Saki

After spending time in his tool shed, C.S. Lewis (1971) stated that there was a profound difference between looking *at* and looking *along* a particular idea. By looking along, one could bypass scientific realism and appreciate more experiential modes of being. In a similar vein, and with some Neolithic passage tombs from Ireland, here we will move along and through some things in the world. Such an approach is stimulated by reactions to the dominance of representational narratives within archaeology.[1] This chapter moves beyond mere representation and the idea that things are passive, and instead offers a narrative of the Fourknocks complex that is more compositional and collaborative. Fourknocks is superb in that it presents opportunities to discuss images with archaeologically contextualized materials.

Improper Stories

Since the seventeenth century, the past has been understood in terms of a politics of display and visual documentation—for example, cabinets of curiosities, woodcut

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iconographies, paintings, archives, publications, private collections, and museum exhibits (see Perry, in this volume). Indeed, many of the origins of archaeology lie in art historical traditions, sharing commonalities for visualizing the world. Archaeological practice has progressed through modern visual technologies and scientific revolutions, such as section drawings and single-context plans, that have created standardized media. Such developments, however, have often generated a perceived gap between the "objectivity" and "subjectivity" of images (Thomas 2009). Since the nineteenth century, many practitioners have sought to observe and objectively document the world, be it the changing colors of soils or similarities of form. Archaeologists are trained in technical practices as a means of rendering things objective and allowing comparative analyses (e.g., Westman 1994). After the acceptance of positivism in archaeology during the mid-twentieth century, image-making tools (e.g., photography, LiDAR, laser scanning) have increasingly been used to truthfully represent and document elements of the past (see Cochrane & Russell 2007; Bradley 2009; Jones 2012a; Russell 2013; Perry, in this volume). Such visual movements are not only persuasive but also essential to contemporary archaeology. They have, however, helped create a situation whereby representational interpretations of *all* things in the past dominate; to end with a representational interpretation is understandable, to begin with one is problematic.

That representational approaches are used in archaeology is not a bad thing; for instance, they are integral to fieldwork. I am, however, concerned that some researchers approach data with the expectation that all things represent things not present—invisible and intangible conceits.[2] In such models, materials are passive and inert, patiently waiting for meanings to be overlaid onto them by thoughtful people (see Cochrane &

Jones 2012; Jones 2012b; Fahlander, in this volume). The encoding and then decoding of things is deemed a universal human activity, being as popular in the past as it is in archaeology today. That things do represent is a *fait accompli*. In many accounts, people seem to step from intangible worlds in order to represent their experiences as visual symbols. In such proposals the material world—separate from humans—influences little in the process of representation. What would archaeology look like if we did not *start* with such conceptions of imagery? What happens when we consider different elements in the world as influential partners in the process of expression? Would we still draw the same conclusions, or would other narratives be possible? In attempting to answer such questions, instead of promoting a "non-representational" approach to archaeology (which is tempting), I collaborate with the dominant positions to help compose new narratives that are "more than representational."[3] Such movement draws attention away from the differences between what things or images symbolize or do not symbolize. It also means that I am not a representational iconoclast.

Fourknocks

Named from the Irish words *fornocht* or *fuar cnuic*, meaning "exposed place" or "cold hills," the Fourknocks I passage tomb, Fourknocks II tomb, and Fourknocks III mound/barrow are located near the modern village of Naul, County Meath (Hartnett 1957, 197, 272; see Figure 17.1). These sites form a complex and are located on the summit of a broad-backed ridge orientated northeast to southwest and situated at 152 meters above sea level.

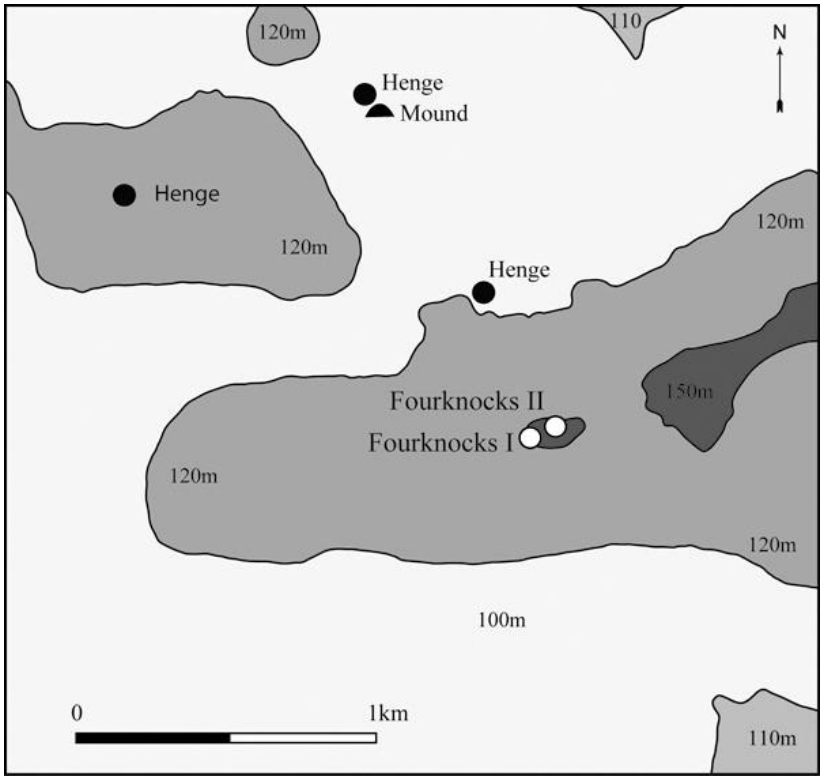

Figure 17.1. Schematic map of the mounds Fourknocks I and II (adapted from Cooney 1997, 19).

The views from the summit are spectacular; on a clear day one can see the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains to the south, the Cooley and Mourne Mountains to the north, and the distant Loughcrew passage tomb complex to the northwest (Hartnett 1957, 198; Herity 1974, 39). Although closer in distance, the Hill of Tara with the Mound of the Hostages passage tomb in County Meath is harder to see, and the Bellewstown Ridge conceals the more immediate Boyne Valley complex (e.g., Newgrange, Knowth, and Dowth), which is c. 15 kilometers away. The hills also overlook the Delvin River to the south (Shee Twohig 1981, 220); such proximity to water is reminiscent of the Boyne Valley complex. The siting of the passage tombs suggests a desire for visual dominance, and this effect is particularly enhanced if one approaches the summit from the lower

grounds to the north, and to a slightly lesser extent if one comes from the south (Cooney 1997, 17, 19).

I will explore the personality of the Fourknocks complex (see also Robinson 2012); this is something that I have investigated elsewhere, in Loughcrew, County Meath (Cochrane 2012a). Such an approach is equally viable at Fourknocks, because here too we can witness relationships among the varied elements present (e.g., the architecture, the mound, the imagery, the cremations). The emergence of the complex was an ongoing process and it involved things that needed to be worked with. My primary focus will be on Fourknocks I, as it is the only feature on the hill that is currently known to contain motifs. I will, however, also briefly consider the nearby Fourknocks II, to enhance some of the complex histories that these mounds may have experienced (see also discussions in Cooney 1997, 19; 2000, 106). In doing so, I introduce some of the impacts that the imagery produces and stimulates, and consider the differences that it makes.

Fourknocks I is dated to c. 3000 BC. The passage tomb itself was re-brought to the public attention by Mrs. Liam O'Sullivan in the mid-twentieth century and was excavated by Hartnett (1957). It was later (re)constructed by the Office of Public Works, with a concrete covering dome topped with turf, designed to protect the interior and simulate an earthen mound. Upon entering the passage tomb from the northeast, one soon traverses the passage and is led into a central pear-shaped, beehive-fashioned roofed chamber (c. 5.5 to 6.4 meters in diameter), which has three smaller chambers in a cruciform plan with linteled roofs (Hartnett 1957, 201; Herity 1974, 39; Shee Twohig 1981, 221; see Figure 17.2).

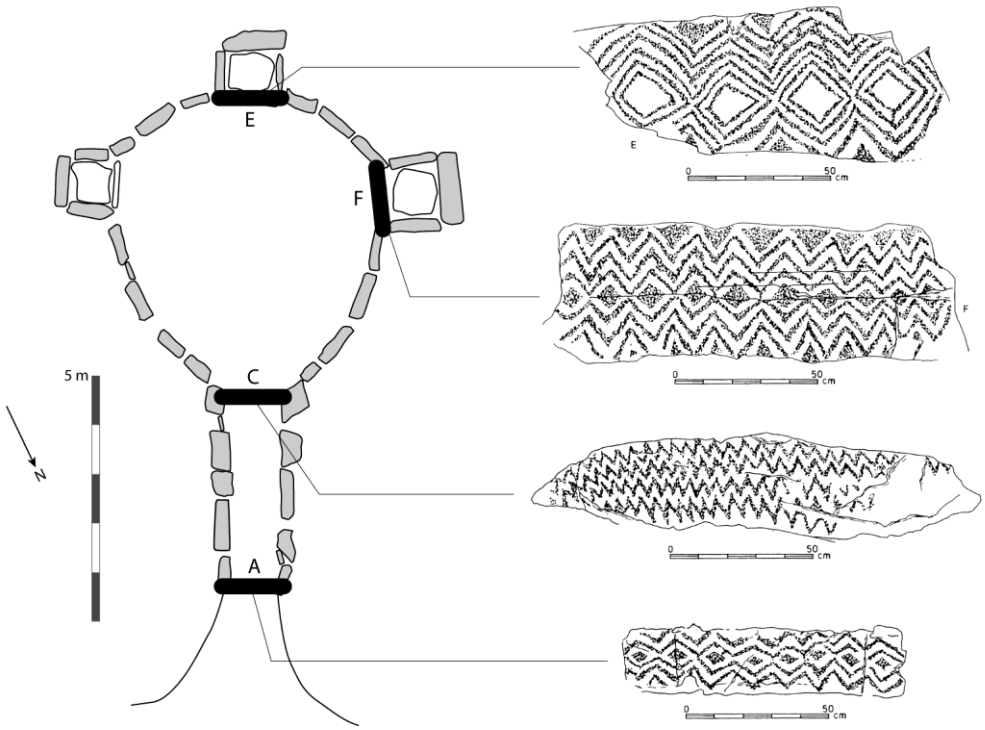

Figure 17.2. Plan of Fourknocks I highlighting the decorated lintels (with kind permission of Guillaume Robin).

There are corbel stones above the orthostats of the central area that were originally kept in place by retentive clay, reaching a height of 2.75 meters; it has been proposed that the main roof space was not completely corbeled, and that instead the structure contained a framework of radial wooden rafters forming a roof, supported by a timber post (Hartnett 1957, 201; Herity 1974, 39). Evidence for this rests with the discovery during excavation of a posthole 0.65 meters wide and 0.40 meters deep, located in the center of the main chamber, to the east of the passage and near the inner side of the stone that forms the east wall of the southern chamber. Impressions on the floor were also interpreted as marks left by fallen timbers that decayed in situ (Hartnett 1957, 212; Herity 1974, 40). Hartnett (1957, 212) argued that if there was indeed a wooden structure, it was

likely conceived to be temporary and impermanent. It has also been suggested that the post pre-dates the passage tomb, providing a focus within the environment (Cooney 2000, 104). Either way, its spatial relationship to the structure of the passage and the southern chamber suggests a degree of importance (Cooney 2000).

The hill itself incorporates outcrops of blue carboniferous limestone containing nodular concretions of chert, from which the structure of this passage tomb (i.e., uprights and roof corbels) was built, with grey/green gritty shale being used for the decorated stones[4] and thus creating distinctive color differences (Hartnett 1957, 198, 228; Shee Twohig 1973, 164; 1981, 222; Herity 1974, 41; Cooney 2000, 109). The mound (20 meters in diameter and c. 4 meters high) was composed of earth and grass turfs and was demarcated by a low dry-built sandstone curb (Hartnett 1957, 200, 203; Herity 1974, 39; Shee Twohig 1981, 221).

So How Are Things?

The closure of Fourknocks I passage tomb was marked by the deposition of materials in the passage way, including inhumed bones of children and cremated bones, held in situ by covering stones. The human remains can broadly be split into two groups: with children occurring as inhumations (only three children were cremated in Fourknocks I) and adults as cremations (Hartnett 1957; Cooney 1992; Finlay 2000). There are deposits of human bone in all three chambers and the entrance passage, with evidence of human bone placed above the pre-excavated and restored roof over the central area of the mound. Inside the chambers there were cremation layers, c. 10–25 centimeters deep, covering the flagstone floors and sealed by thin stone slabs. The cremations were possibly washed or

cleaned, and therefore the pyre debris is mostly absent. The deposits did, however, contain stone and bone artifacts, including miniature hammer-pendants, chalk balls, and bone pins that were heat damaged. This may suggest that they were burnt with the bodies (Herity 1974, 124). These smaller assemblages have previously been interpreted as personal objects that were worn by the dead, dressed as in life (Herity 1974, 126). Yet, instead of being just personal goods for a particular person, or functional fasteners for hair buns on the back of the head or "ceremonial cloaks" (Herity 1974, 134; Eogan 1986, 181), they may have performed in alternative fashions. This is not to suggest that some people did not adorn themselves in life, but rather that in the context of Fourknocks, in association with human remains and decorated stones, these things may have operated in more complex ways (Cochrane 2008, 139). Very few things occur in the tombs by chance, coming together instead through deliberate acts. What we might be witnessing therefore are episodes of deposition that may have been related to the construction/disruption of identities and the personalities of place (Pollard 2001, 316).

Cremation dominates as a way of depositing human remains within passage tombs in Ireland (Eogan et al. 2012, 40). That non-burnt human bones were incorporated not only highlights the particular personality of Fourknocks, but also suggests alternating modes of illumination. The cremation of human bodies may not have been accomplished merely for functional perseveration and ease of transportation (e.g., Herity 1974, 122). At some level, the mixing of substances in differing states may reflect the beliefs that human bodies are porous, with elements, sensations, and emotions continually flowing (Grosz 1994, 165; Fowler 2004). We may at some level be witnessing the residue of performances that sought to express how some things were enmeshed within

relationships. By blending, circulating, and depositing fragmented human remains, such connections may have been magnified. The act of de-totalizing the body into fragments via cremation may have brought a new integrity to the dead as a whole, with the placement in the tomb completing/commencing transitions. In such scenarios, cremation is cosmogony, with death being assimilated in the processes of transformation (Parry 1982, 76). Such fluid practices would have been intimately linked with sensations, emotions, and being with Fourknocks in general.

Cremations can create numerous performances. At Fourknocks, these may have included: preparing and purifying the body via hair removal, excoriation, and washing; collecting the correct fuels to burn; constructing a trench (e.g., Fourknocks II); collaborating with things (e.g., bone pins and pendants); burning and breaking up the parts; washing the cremations; and transportation with eventual deposition (Bloch 1982; Parry 1982; Gell 1995; Parker Pearson 1999; Fowler 2004). Ultimately, the reshaping of the deceased via the cremation and depositional processes may have created interconnected relationships that punctuated how some saw and expressed themselves. If the human remains were thought of as powerful, then their inclusion within enclosed spaces that inhibit movements (especially the recesses and passage) may highlight attempts to make them less disturbing. Scale and architecture can often reassure (Doss 1977).

The minimum number of persons found in is 65, with 31 of these being cremated and 34 unburned (Hartnett 1957, 269–70; Eogan 1986, 138; Cooney & Grogan 1994, 68; Cooney 2000, 108–9). The cremated bones occurred mostly on the lower layers, whereas the unburnt children bones appeared mostly on the top deposits. These upper child/infant

deposits included seven neonates, six infants in their first year, three in their second, a child of approximately five years, and one of indeterminate age (Hartnett 1957, 270; Finlay 2000, 414). That the passages were deliberately blocked with human remains, a high proportion of these being children, may mark a change in the ways in which some people may have thought about the site in its later stages of use, and may have created new narratives and conversations about the place (Cooney 1997, 19; Finlay 2000, 416, 419; Davidsson 2003, 240). In considering these possible situations one should not, however, automatically assume that they incorporated the perpetuation and presentation of "individual" persons within particular burial activities (see Gell 1999; Whittle 2003; Fowler 2004; Hofmann 2005; Jones 2005). Nor should we regard the cremated remains as passive objects merely operating within representational systems of citation and memory (be it the remembrance or forgetting of past people or "ancestors"). Instead, it may be more profitable to consider the cremated elements as affecting, even after fragmentation and dispersion. These (re)active acts could possibly stimulate new tensions that dislocated and supported various frames of reference (Bailey 2005, 33). Articulation and disarticulation, composition and decomposition: here we have the montage.

Some of the pendants have been interpreted as miniature facsimiles of larger stone technologies, such as pestle hammers or axe heads (Herity 1974, 126–29; Eogan 1986, 142–44). If, indeed, they are small-scale versions of something else, many interesting proposals can be explored. For instance, they may have actively influenced particular people in novel ways, rather than being merely passive ornaments of the deceased. As such, the miniaturization of things might be less about accuracy through representation and more about experimentation (Bailey 2005, 29; see also Bailey et al. 2010). Scale

often works as a series of impressive strategies that charge things with psychological tensions, generating intense sensory and emotional experiences. It can also influence understandings of time and enhance cognitive speeds (Delong 1981, 1983). This can result in feelings that are empowered and engaged, but also unsettled or alienated (Nakamura 2005, 32). With the smaller scale, only certain traits of the full size are ever present, rendering the diminutive a compressed and powerful version of the larger one. These interactions operate within an intimate sphere and offer different ways of experiencing (Bailey 2005, 32; Cochrane 2007, 143; Jones 2012a, especially chapter 3). The pendants invite being picked up, held in the hand, turned around, and felt (smelt and tasted?), allowing many of their textures and details to be absorbed. Such an encounter immediately distinguishes itself from performances with the larger passage tombstones, since once the latter were set within the structure it is unlikely that they were moved again (although see discussions of Stone A below).

According to such a perspective, the chalk balls that have been discovered may have been more than "marbles," or specifically "children's marbles" (Harnett 1957, 235–37; Herity 1974, 136), and may be better understood instead through tactile habits. For example, it has been suggested that the ball shapes found at the relatively close Loughcrew complex were involved in performances with the motifs on the orthostats, being often inserted into cup marks (McMann 1993, 28; 1994, 541). The lack of cup mark motifs in the passage tomb suggests that such acts were not a character trait of Fourknocks. Their form as durable, portable, possibly miniature, three-dimensional things does, however, create corporeal choreographies. These engagements can result in the handlers feeling empowered as they easily manipulate a pendant or chalk ball, but at

the same time being uneasy, as they may feel gigantic in relation to it (Tilley 2004, 137; Bailey 2005, 33; Nakamura 2005, 33).

Animal remains were also present, and included cattle, sheep, pig, bat, and dog (Hartnett 1957, 271). The presence of bat is most likely the result of roosting inside the tomb, rather than being a deliberate anthropogenic deposit. If indeed this is the case, it suggests that the tomb was accessible and roofed for a season, at the very least. Pottery is almost absent, with only two sherds being found in the body of the mound (ibid., 270). Interestingly, and uncommon for passage tombs in Ireland, unburned or inhumed human bones are also present in the form of skulls and long-bone fragments. The lack of pottery and the inclusion of inhumed human bones highlight that although specific amalgamations of materials regularly occurred within passage tombs, apparently there were no universal imperatives governing precise combinations. This suggests that although general principles were at play, particular assemblages were mostly interacted with and juxtaposed in improvised ways.

Voyages en Zigzag

I curse and bless Engraving alternatively, because it takes so much time and is so intractable, tho' capable of such beauty and perfection.
—William Blake

The flat-surfaced stones within this passage tomb are mostly decorated with distinctive angular motifs, which are often referred to as the "Fourknocks style" (Hartnett 1957, 227),

whereas curvilinear motifs are found when the surface is convex (O'Sullivan 1993, 27). The imagery was created with flint engravers and quartz pebbles (Hartnett 1957, 221). The process of production was probably a sensual engagement involving vision, hearing, touch, and maybe smell (Cochrane 2008, 2009; Lamdin-Whymark 2011a, 2011b). The finest examples of imagery are arguably found on the lintel stones (O'Sullivan 1993, 27). With the exception of Stone G, all the decorated stones are sandstone. There are only five orthostat stones decorated with motifs in Fourknocks I (L4, R2, R5, C1, and C5). Other decorated stones in the passage tomb include stones A, B, C, D, E, F, and G (Hartnett 1957, 224–28; Shee Twohig 1981, 221). Rather than detailing the motifs on each particular stone, I will briefly illustrate specific images and their location in the passage tomb.

Orthostat C1 is one of the most famous stones in Fourknocks I, and possibly Ireland in general. The front face of the stone is crossed near the top by two long lines. The top of one line turns downward at its terminal and connects with the top of a double lozenge shape. Below the apex where the two main lines cross is positioned a wide V incision, forming another loose lozenge. Directly beneath this is a wide crescent that turns upward at the ends. Under this are positioned several short lines and curve shapes (Shee Twohig 1981, 221). Some have suggested that this imagery may demonstrate anthropomorphic qualities, representing a face with eyebrows, hair, mouth, torso, possibly limbs, and a belt (Hartnett 1957, 222; Herity 1974, 94; O'Sullivan 1993, 28; see Figure 17.3). This resemblance might or might not have been intentional (Shee Twohig 1981, 221). Interestingly, the excavators of Fourknocks I often referred to this stone as

"The Clown" (Hartnett 1957, 222), possibly evoking subversive notions, albeit modern, within the passage tomb.

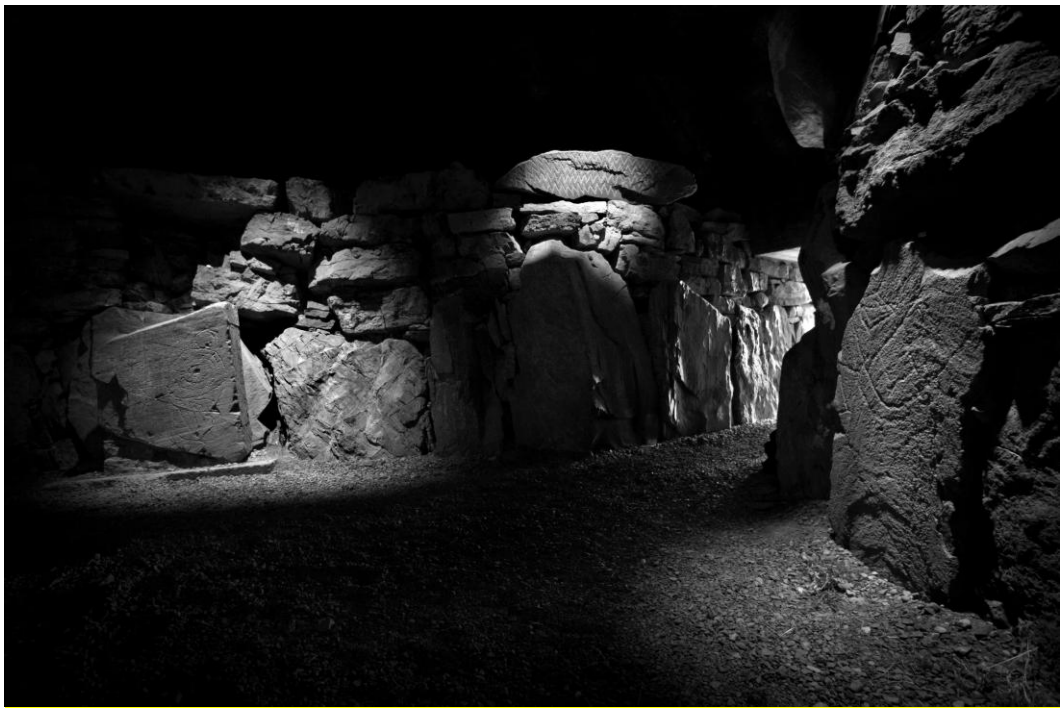

Figure 17.3. Architecture as process. Looking out along the passage way; Orthostat C1 is to the right, with Stone A and Stone C in their current locations (digital photograph: Ken Williams).

Stone A was rediscovered by Hartnett (ibid., 224) lying decorated face-down, situated northwest on the outside of the mound; apparently, twenty years before Hartnett's excavations it was located further north of the mound. The stone is roughly rhomboidal shaped, with parallel flat smooth sides, both of which are decorated. On the side, which is sometimes considered as the main surface, there are three joining motifs, comprising circles, spirals, cup marks, bent zigzags, short lines, and angular lines; all the composite designs are poorly executed, with no effort made to smooth the edges of the lines (Hartnett 1957, 224; Shee Twohig 1981, 221). Interestingly, Hartnett described this

ambiguous image as "an 'impressionist' representation of a … rather animated female figure" (1957, 224). Although I agree that the image suggests fluid movements and actions, I fail to see this as representing a female form (and I have really tried). The long-axis edge of this stone is covered in imagery, comprising eight heavily picked lozenge designs that are flanked by double lines of zigzags. Based on the assumed importance of the "female image," Hartnett (ibid., 225) suggested that both sides of this stone were intended to be seen, with Stone A being originally set vertically as an orthostat near the entrance. Similar to the roof-box lintel at Newgrange Site 1, it is more likely that this stone was part of the missing passage lintels, with the more ornate edge being designed to be seen and the other images remaining hidden in the architecture of the passage tomb (see discussions in Shee Twohig 1981, 221–22). Hartnett (1957, 225) was unsure of its original position; it is now firmly located within the passage tomb. It would appear that some decorated stones were apt to move around, thus defying static and concrete interpretation.

Stone B rests upon the dry-stone corbelling above Orthostat L6. The exposed overhanging part of this stone is decorated. The imagery consists of four groupings of concentric circles sequentially positioned across the stone, with smaller circles embedded in the angles of the connecting points. Located on the left portion of the stone are three parallel lines. All the main circles are linked via a continuous line that doubles itself at the left terminal. The overall design is very precise, and its definition is enhanced by raised bands between the picked areas (Shee Twohig 1981, 222), resulting in a kind of bas-relief. Due to the effects achieved by the meticulous execution of this piece, Hartnett (1957, 226) suspected that a metal punching tool was used to produce the design. Recent

experiments, however, have demonstrated that similar results can be achieved with sharp pointed flints or quartzite implements struck with a stone, wooden mallet, or hammer (Shee Twohig 2004, 45).

Stone C is another stone that has moved around; it is thought that is was positioned as a lintel that rests on R5 and L6, spanning the passage (see Figures 17.4 and 17.5). It currently resides off to the right-hand side of the chamber as you enter (see Figure 17.3 above). It was discovered at the inner mouth of the entrance passage, with one edge dipped downwards into the materials that filled the passage (Hartnett 1957, 226, Plate LXVII).

Figure 17.4. Fourknocks I with its recessed chambers
(digital photograph: Ken Williams).

Figure 17.5. Stone C (digital photograph: Ken Williams).

Architecture is a fluid and ongoing process. A medium point was possibly used to execute the majority of motifs on this stone. The imagery comprises four tightly nested horizontal bands of fairly parallel angular zigzags. Their combination can create an experience that is unsettling—I think this is because they project confidence, agitation, and frenzy. For a less subjective interpretation, it may be because they form dense optical patterns, which can cause the neuro-visual system to malfunction. The extreme intensity of the pattern of zigzag lines overloads the contrast/orientation neurons of the primary visual cortex (area V1), causing them to "leak" and cross-stimulate neighboring neurons; this is termed the "contextual effect" (Wilkins et al. 1984; Zeki 1999; Hoffman 2000). If viewed for sufficiently long periods, this effect can cause optical illusions, headache, and dizziness. Furthermore, it can result in migraine and epileptic seizures in photosensitive sufferers (Wilkins et al. 1984). When the motifs were fresher, there may have been

greater contrasts between line and space, heightening such effects (Cochrane 2008).[5] These might have been further magnified if the engraving interacted with flickering lights. Such illumination may have come from the fires lit on the extensive spreads of charcoal around the center of the chamber and in front of western recess (Cell 3) (Hartnett 1957, 210, Plate LXV).

That all these angles meet at their apexes suggests that they are not entoptic motifs (subjective visual phenomena) as defined by Dronfield (1994, 1995, 1996). Regarding other passage tomb images in Ireland as possibly representing entoptic motifs, I no longer believe this is the case (contra Cochrane 2001). I still think that it is possible that some people engaged in altered states of consciousness and that particular images collaborated in these experiences. I do not, however, think that the images represent entoptics *per se*. Some may have the active ability to remind us of entoptic motifs (especially the earliest ones), but they do not passively represent such motifs (Cochrane 2006a, 83; see also Jones 2004, 202; Hensey 2012, 168; Robin 2012, 166). The images are things in their own right, rather than mere facsimiles or auras of other things that humans have experienced elsewhere. What we do have here are episodes of application over time. The motifs are incomplete near the right-hand edge due to the possible flaking of the surface; these were poorly restored with images applied at a later date (Hartnett 1957, 226; Shee Twohig 1981, 222; see Figure 17.3 above). We can also witness re-pecking overlaying the second line of zigzags—an example of the removal of surface to create surface, or additive subtraction (Cochrane 2009). That reimaging occurred may suggest that existence precedes essence (Latour & Lowe 2010), meaning that for images to have ongoing substance they need to be able to subsist (as with many things in the

world). Such a proposition regarding passage tomb motifs is not as esoteric as it might appear at first. The fact the motifs are still present today is contingent upon many complex engagements over time. These include the flaking of the surface, the overlaid pecking, the sealing of the tomb, the collapse of the roof, the late twentieth-century restorations, and the current management plans. Such collaborative ecologies are part of Fourknocks' personality.

Stone E (Figure 17.6) is the lintel over the southern recess (Cell 2), the innermost chamber that faces the passage. The largest amounts of material were found here, including burnt fragments of an ornate antler pin, made from the shed tine of a young red deer (Hartnett 1957, 214–15). Although damaged on one end, the stone is still impressively decorated in the angular "Fourknocks style" (ibid., 227).

Figure 17.6. Stone E (digital photograph: Ken Williams).

The imagery is formed by four large picked double lozenges, which are flanked by five rows of parallel zigzags above and two below. Inserted into these zigzags are picked triangular shapes; the central lozenge designs are solid, and the surrounding ones are formed by false relief bands (Hartnett 1957, 227; Shee Twohig 1981, 222). Here, the lines are harmonious with each other and the surface of the stone (Hartnett 1957, 227), delivering a sense of surety and confidence. The zigzags are sublime—their elegance is matched only by their violence. Interestingly, the motifs on the antler pin are reminiscent of the angular zigzags. That the pin was broken before being burnt and deposited (ibid., 242) may attest to its potency. Certainly, emotional commitments are often involved in deliberately fragmenting things, together with the sounds, sensations, and affects of the breakage. After fragmentation, and especially after burning, these disjointed elements may have provided cognitive indecipherability, helping to confuse the spectator (and excavator), who is unable to distinguish at once parts and wholes.

Similar in detail is Stone F, the lintel capstone of the western recess (Cell 3) that is visible on the right-hand side upon entering the chamber; it is the largest of the three cells. The imagery comprises ten independent solidly picked lozenges that form a central band. Above and below the lozenges are positioned three parallel rows of angular zigzags, which have solid triangular shapes inserted into the external edges of the composition (Hartnett 1957, 227; Shee Twohig 1981, 222; see Figure 17.3 above). The images here appear rapid - they suggest adaptation. Although worn from exposure to weathering (Hartnett 1957, 197–98, 227), the lines themselves have depth, and this allows them to act as a sculpture. They create a feeling of texture, suggesting rather than rendering. Here,

we have flexibility with resilience, possessing a character of life; there is not a limp or dead line in sight.

If we accept that the current locations of the lintel stones reflects their positions during the later stages of the life of Fourknock I in the Neolithic—which I do, with the possible exception of Stone A—then the motifs within the architecture of the tomb are collaborating. Robin (2010, 389) terms such images threshold motifs, occurring at significant junctions or liminal crossings (see also Sharples 1984, 116–17; Cochrane 2006a, 169). Such relationships are powerful and enhance a feeling of movement within the tomb (Thomas 1990, 1992; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1993; Cochrane 2006b, 2012b). It can also be humbling and overwhelming—visual saturation. Decorated lintels can stimulate senses of isolation (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1993, 60; Robin 2012, 390). Interestingly, the easternmost chamber (Cell 1) to the left as one enters, has no decorated lintel and contains the lowest comparable quantities of cremated bone and artifacts (Cooney 2000). This may be part of the preference for *dexter* over *sinister* in the passage tombs of Ireland (Herity 1974, 123; see also Eogan et al. 2012, 36). With Fourknocks I, things are involved in processes of adaption and change. The diversity of archaeological narratives surrounding the place attests to this aspect of its character. Such fluidity means that static interpretations of what the site might represent become inappropriate. Instead, creative acts with placements and displacements take center stage.

Fourknocks II

The excavator Hartnett (1971, 38) described the site as a "composite monument." The ruinous and un-restored mound of Fourknocks II is located c. 100 meters to the east of

Fourknocks I, and it is built on slightly higher ground; it is ovoid shaped and measures 28 by 24 meters (ibid., 35–36). The mound, which was surrounded by a ditch, covers several features: a bell-shaped cairn, a cairn ditch, a megalithic passage, and a trench (ibid., 35–42). The elongated trench (10.6 by 1.6 meters) was constructed before the mound and is possibly contemporary with the cairn. This was an open-air location where bodies were cremated (ibid., 44, 63); the fill also included worked antler, burnt clay, and charcoal produced from ash (*Fraxinus*), hazel (*Corylus*), oak (*Quercus*), and willow/poplar (*Salix/Populus*) (ibid., 42).[6] The trench may have been developed to aid protection from the elements during the performance of cremation. Fourknocks is after all an exposed place, and cremations are generally acts that can be only partly controlled, with weather, wind, and the body's reaction to heat all interacting in unpredictable ways (Hofmann 2012, 232). The minimum number of people identifiable in the human remains is circa 21, with about 11 children and 10 adults (Cooney 2000, 106–8). Sometime after the last cremation was deposited, a megalithic passage roofed with limestone and blue flag (4.3 meters long and c. 1 meter wide) was erected; this was orientated to face northeast, dipping down to terminate at the cremation trench and creating a T-shaped plan. The passage was constructed from seven undecorated orthostats on the southeastern side and six undecorated ones on the northwestern side, and it was filled with stone, shingle, and earth with deposits of fragmented and cremated human bone; the fill included adult and large amounts of children deposits (Hartnett 1971, 40–41). Inhumation and children seem to dominate this passage area (ibid., 63). Burnt antler and bone pins were also discovered that may have been associated with a sheep's metacarpal. The final addition was an earthen mound placed to cover the entire feature (ibid., 44). The mound consisted

of: boulder clay, rock chippings, redeposited sods with associated vegetation, blue-colored soil, cairn material, occasional pieces of quartz, fragmented pottery, and some stone tools (ibid., 47–62).

Internal Rumors

Always there was this feeling … a fine net drawn round us with infinite skill and delicacy, holding us so lightly that is was only at some supreme moment that one realized that one was indeed entangled in its meshes.

—Dr. Watson

Fourknocks I and II face northwards, and both are located on the northern extreme of the hill's ridge; this renders them more visible when approached from the north (Cooney 1997, 17; 2000, 111). The original earthen covers over the mounds would have made them appear similar in stature and size; for instance, Fourknocks I was c. 20 meters and Fourknocks II was c. 28 meters in circumference (Hartnett 1971, 35; Cooney 2000, 111). The reconstructed Fourknocks I is still noted for being striking (Kador & Ruffino 2010). In both mounds access through the passages was eventually impeded by the packing of human bone. Collaborations between the mounds are also threaded through the proposition that the sites were contemporaneous. It has been suggested that during the earlier phases, the deposits of human bone discovered in Fourknocks I had been originally burnt within the open-air cremation trench (Hartnett 1957, 250; 1971, 63; Herity 1974, 163; Cooney 2000, 111). At some point it would appear that Fourknocks II

was transformed into a structure that resembles a passage tomb in order not to remain exposed to the elements. Both sites were demarcated by specific yet different features: Fourknocks I by a low kerb and Fourknocks II by a ditch. The ditches may at some level play a delineating role similar to megalithic kerbs (O'Sullivan 2005, 236). Interestingly, in both these sites closure was accompanied by the placement of human remains. The usage of the passage at Fourknocks II parallels that at Fourknocks I; for instance, both contained child remains (Hartnett 1971, 63). At both sites children under five years old were mostly inhumed. One of the most striking differences between the mounds is the presence or absence of imagery on the passage orthostats. Fourknocks II is undecorated, and this may be a result of the placement of the orthostats to indicate the closure of the feature rather than its perpetuation. By contrast, it would appear that repeated engagements occurred within Fourknocks I, which necessitated visual stimulation and regeneration.

Such performances involving mixtures of mixtures (e.g., motifs, cremated bones, animal bones, burnt things; see Cochrane 2007) and the closing of the mounds at Fourknocks might be about more than forgetting pollutants or commemorating the dead and the "ancestors" (see further discussions in Mullin 2001; Fowler 2010; Harris 2010). We should not reduce these actions to mere acts of remembrance or forgetting. The two processes are not necessarily oppositions; repeated performances can sometimes assist in actively remembering to forget. Within such actions, remembering and forgetting are not clashing imperatives; rather, they are differing perspectives collaborating simultaneously (Russell 2012, 252).[7] Such movements may account for repeated and similar activities over time. Although not contemporary with Fourknocks I and II, it is interesting to note

that the later Bronze Age monument at Fourknocks III (Hartnett 1971, 81) mimicked the mound shape of its predecessors. It may have been attempting to imitate them at some level, thereby enhancing the significance of the ridgeway. Such emulation in itself might have been part of ongoing and staged performances (ibid.), and might also account for the series of late Neolithic pits containing grooved ware pottery and burnt matrices located c. 550 meters east of the complex (King 1999, 176–77). Such motivations may explain why Fourknocks I and II also acted as cemeteries during the Bronze Age (Hartnett 1957, 1971; Cooney 2000).

The mounds were not merely protective covers for the tombs (Robin 2010, 373–74); the tomb architecture, the kerb, the ditch, the images, the things within, and varied layers of mound material were part of working nets of performances. Harnett (1957, 203) commented on the symmetrical relations of tomb and kerb at Fourknocks I, and of cairn and trench at Fourknocks II (Harnett 1971, 64). Although the mounds appear less symmetrical, they are not asymmetrical, since there are no overarching divisions suggesting a predominance of right over left, as seen in the passage tombs (Robin 2010, 400). The mounds were composed of deposits including: yellow clay, brown, red, shingle and sandy soils, cairn material, and turf layers (Hartnett 1957, 209; 1971, 44). It appears that the construction of the mounds was not random; some elements may have been incorporated for their abilities to stem water percolation (O'Kelly 1982, 22; Robin 2010, 383), and others for their smell, texture, and visual impact (e.g., the yellow clay). Why would people invest so much time and effort into developing a sequence within a mound that could not be seen? One answer might be that it was the performance of creating the mound that was important. It was the interaction with different things that brought forth

particular significances, beyond what could or could not be seen when it was "finished." These engagements may included: stiffness from exertion, hot sweat on a cold morning, the stone that cuts the finger, and emotional satisfaction. Such events move beyond representation and involved things coming together, collaborating, and building a common world.

Composing Fourknocks

What's interesting about you is you.

—Alonzo King

By looking in detail at the assemblages and blending of essences in Fourknocks, we have "looked along" some of the threads that permeate these amalgamations. My aim in this chapter was not to present a critique of representational approaches—to deconstruct, break, or wipe the slate clean. Instead, I wanted to create and compose, to work with and collaborate; in essence, to feel that there are other ways to talk with Fourknocks. Sometimes this is best achieved by acknowledging that things are what they are, that images are what they are, and that life is often messy. The compositions at Fourknocks are not merely matters *of* symbolic meaning that humans determine; rather, they live *within* matters of ongoing concern.

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Notes

1. It is also stimulated by Cooney (2000), Ingold (2007), Jones et al. (2012).

2. Such approaches to passage tombs have been dominant for over 150 years. They are representational and stipulate that things and meanings lie behind or just beyond the image—through the cracks, if you like. They mostly subscribe to textual understandings, and can often be very expressionistic and poetic. Ultimately they are based on the idea that an image can represent something else—be it an ancestor, text, creature, hybrid, language, face, god, swastika, plant, celestial phenomenon, worldview, or another image, like a hallucination. The following list of proponents of these approaches is by no means exhaustive: Wilde (1849), Deane (1889–91), Coffey (1912), Breuil (1921), Macalister

(1921), Mahr (1937), Crawford (1957), Herity (1974), Brennan (1983), Thomas (1992), Lewis-Williams & Dowson (1993), Dronfield (1995), Tilley (1999), Nash (2002), McCormack (2012). For a comprehensive review see Hensey (2012, 161–68).

3. For further reading see Baudrillard (1994), Lorimer (2005), Thrift (2008), Anderson & Harrison (2010).

4. Stone G, the non-orthostatic limestone found outside the passage on the eastern edge of the mound, is the possible exception. Although Hartnett (1957, 228) once saw faint incised lines, few have been able to see them since (e.g., Shee Twohig 1981, 222).

5. Such affects would be further enhanced by the application of color. For discussions of the possible occurrence of pigment on stone see Breuil & Macalister (1921, 4), Shee Twohig (1981, 32–35), Bradley et al. (2000), Card & Thomas (2012).

6. Such floral remains indicate that there was considerable scrub in the area at the time of construction. Hazel was also the predominant wood found at Fourknocks I (Hartnett 1957, 271–72; 1971, 64).

7. For instance, in Michael Madsen's documentary *Into Eternity: A Film for the Future* (2010), we are introduced to "Onkalo," a depositional project in Finland. Onkalo is a deep mine created to store nuclear waste. The intention is that the placed material will remain undisturbed for 100,000 years, after which time it will no longer be harmful. The greatest threat to the success of the material being left alone is human curiosity. As contemporary representational signs and markers are unlikely to be decipherable over such time spans, other methods are being sought. These include repeated performances of actively remembering to forget about the place (see detailed discussions in Russell [2012]). Dead children may have been considered dangerous for some during the

Neolithic (Finlay 2000). The infant remains placed into Fourknocks I/II, and the later creation of Fourknocks III (which also had a child burial) might respond to perspectives similar to those highlighted by the Onkalo project.

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