

Notes on the Challenges of Modern Archeology: Gender, Postcolonial and Queer Studies

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Since the nineteen seventies and eighties in England and the United States, gender studies, postcolonial studies and queer theories have arisen around and within women's liberation movements and sexual and ethnic minorities. These theoretical currents have made an essential contribution when pondering the objectivity and neutrality of science. From constructivist and post-structural positions, we know that science and knowledge are contextual, related to the cultural wisdom during each historical period, and that they transfer these interpretive frameworks to whatever they produce.

Gender, postcolonial and queer studies are interconnected. They overlap in questioning the apparent neutrality of social order, and knowledge as we know it. These disciplines problematize the naturalness of the categories that we use to order the world on a daily basis, they ask us if we are aware of them and whether they might be limiting our understanding of the world and its phenomena. They also share the ability to generate discourse around otherness, the construction of the "Other", which in turn defines one as white, male, Western, among other characteristics. This is no longer merely a vision separating the observer and the observed, but it questions the actual binary order. Post structuralism shares a general concern to identify and question hierarchies implicit in identifying binary oppositions, that not only characterize structuralism but Western metaphysics in general.

The combination of differences between gender and sex satisfies most explanations about differential behavior between women and men. The sex/gender system theory suggested by Gayle Rubin in 1975 was revolutionary [1]:

it denaturalized the differences between women and men, focusing a new interest on cultural constructions. This refers to types of behavior that societies prescribe to individuals of each sex. The sex/gender system reveals that overvaluation of men and undervaluation of women are not so much a consequence of physiological issues but refer to allocation of spaces (public/private) and marking out functions (production/reproduction) for each sex [2].

On the other hand, postcolonial theory has been vital in questioning the position of science from a Western and imperialist perspective. These studies were promoted by the Palestinian Edward [3] said, with his text entitled Orientalism, beginning with the genealogy of European wisdom concerning the "Other". For archeology, it is a vital starting point, since it questions the task of science around knowledge, situating the observer and scientist as an active subject of the science that was supposed to be "neutral" and "objective".

Queer theories arose from the feminist debates with Teresa de Lauretis, preceded by the works of Margaret Mead, among others, such as Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies, which analyzed gender differences in the Arapesh, Mundugumor and Tchambuli ethnic groups that help provide empirical material questioning the differentiation between "female" and "male" characters [4]. Her documentation of cultures in which men and women equally shared practices considered being exclusively virile in the West makes it easier to question the naturalness of these differences. Later, in 1991, Teresa De Lauretis [5], used the term "Queer" in her text Queer theory: lesbian and gay sexualities: An Introduction". It arose at the time of the

AIDS crisis, emergence of poststructuralism within the academic context (questioning essentialist identities, and speaking of discourses with productive effects), and part of feminism questioning notions of gender and sex. De Lauretis demonstrated that many of the most interesting feminist critiques revolve around differences of race and sexuality, and also class, ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences, and methodological, generational and geographical differences. Queer theories raise questions concerning classical binary classifications, with a theoretical resistance to essentialism, that are difficult to assimilate.

While these theoretical currents were being developed, Archeology of Gender was conceived within the field of Archeology from the works of Conkey MW and Spector JF, Gero J [6,7]; Influenced by postmodernist assumptions and in response to feminist thinking, this so-called Archeology of Gender began as a critique of androcentric presumptions, aimed to recover visibility of women in the past, through material remains. Since then, it has focused on demonstrating that gender relations are not a simple natural fact, but a social category. In other words, they are relations constructed from a social, historical and cultural point of view. However, aware of the methodological limitations, Gender Archeology has claimed that the study of gender does not merely consist of making certain correlations between particular material remains and one sex or another, but that it supports the importance of new issues and new ways of approaching archaeological data, integrating them dialectically into the real world [8].

This set of theories is the result of a specific moment in the philosophy of science, where there is a steady drop in fear of accepting that knowledge is constructed, is not neutral and requires honesty when situating its production. It is not so much the case that objective science is not possible but an awareness that science is situated, that it is possible to exclude women as the subject and objective of knowledge, and also other people who are socially excluded structurally [9]. Now is not the time to demonstrate these differences or discrimination. A large amount of literature is currently available [10-21], plus significant knowledge of these differences. Rather more, it is time to incorporate these contributions into performing our scientific tasks.

Gender, postcolonial and queer studies are situated in both the study subject and objective, making us aware of our interaction. This explains why it is so important to carry out multidisciplinary work that questions what has

been established and takes us forward in our scientific work.

As a consistent science, archeology must be able to articulate daily social and ideological changes in our societies. Archeology that seeks to appropriate reality as an objective form of knowledge has to be inclined towards the human aspect, without any type of discrimination by sex or sexual behavior.

Integration of diversity involves accepting the criteria of complementarity and integration of women in the critical exercise of knowledge. Consequently, construction should be dialectic, for the future of archeology free from discrimination.

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