The concepts of material engagements and materialisation have come to the fore in archaeological debate about past societies. Renfrew has argued that these concepts provide us with a more rounded understanding of the nature of the human engagement with the world by seeking to overcome the duality implied in the contrasts of mind:body, cognition:material world.

Hence this engagement is seen as not only being based on informed and intelligent action but also involves the use of symbolic values with a social dimension that is specific to time and place. Such an approach also resolves the problematic divide between time and matter, which might otherwise be seen as hierarchical, with the former imposed on the latter. As inseparable entities thinking, expressing and feeling takes place in the material world.

Blaze O’Conner, Gabriel Cooney and John Chapman have selected and commissioned a total of 18 papers largely derived from the Materialitas conference held in Dublin described as one of the best meetings in terms of intellectual comment ... with a variety of topics drawing both on the local academic tradition of the international scholars involved, but also to a broader set of discussion and thoughts of how to approach stone and stoneworking. Human relationships with the material world are seen by many to be humanities and social science at present and this volume really taps into this. It makes progress not just in understanding the direct issues raised, but also by thinking of the broader issues of materiality.

This volume employs an entirely fresh approach that breaks new ground on several levels. It makes a substantial contribution to the major burgeoning research theme of materiality. Importantly, it does so in a manner which extends significantly beyond the confines of existing discussion by:

- collating leading edge research on diverse forms of lithic material, megalithic sites and stone-working practices, which highlights the connections that cross-cut what are traditionally seen as disparate research areas within the archaeological discipline,

- drawing together the work of prominent authors who derive their approaches from a wide range of theoretical and methodological standpoints, thus enabling a broad and critical contribution to the study of materiality,

- presenting diverse studies from across the Atlantic zone that focus on the central issue of the relationship between stone working and identity, placing this theme within a broader regional and intellectual context.

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