

## **Masking Moments**

The Transitions of Bodies and Beings in Late Iron Age Scandinavia

Ing-Marie Back Danielsson



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Stockholm University

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The Transitions of Bodies and Beings in Late Iron Age Scandinavia

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BA in Archaeology and BSc in Economics and Business Administration

Maskerade ögonblick. Förvandlingar av kroppar och väsen i skandinavisk yngre järnålder.  
(Med en svensk sammanfattning).

### **Abstract**

This thesis explores bodily representations in Late Iron Age Scandinavia (400–1050 AD). Non-human bodies, such as gold foil figures, and human bodies are analysed. The work starts with an examination and deconstruction of the sex/gender categories to the effect that they are considered to be of minor value for the purposes of the thesis. Three analytical concepts – masks, miniature, and metaphor – are deployed in order to interpret how and why the chosen bodies worked within their prehistoric contexts.

The manipulations the figures sometimes have undergone are referred to as masking practices, discussed in Part One. It is shown that masks work and are powerful by being paradoxical; that they are vehicles for communication; and that they are, in effect, transitional objects bridging gaps that arise in continuity as a result of events such as symbolic or actual deaths.

In Part Two miniaturization is discussed. Miniaturization contributes to making worlds intelligible, negotiable and communicative. Bodies in miniatures in comparison to other miniature objects are particularly potent. Taking gold foil figures under special scrutiny, it is claimed that gold, its allusions as well as its inherent properties conveyed numinosity. Consequently gold foil figures, regardless of the context, must be understood as extremely forceful agents.

Part Three examines metaphorical thinking and how human and animal body parts were used in pro-creational acts, resulting in the birth of persons. However, these need not have been human, but could have been the outcomes of turning a deceased into an ancestor, iron into a steel sword, or clay into a ceramic urn, hence expanding and transforming the members of the family/household. Thus, bone in certain contexts acted as a transitional object or as a generative substance.

It is concluded that the bodies of research are connected to transitions, and that the theme of transformation was one fundamental characteristic of the societies of study.

**Key words:** Masking practices, masks, transitions, Iron Age, Scandinavia, *kuml*, body, metaphorical thinking, miniaturization, queer theory, feminism, sex, gender, personhood, rune stones, gold foil figures, oral literacy, food preparation, burials.

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## PART ONE – FOUNDATION

This thesis analyses representations of bodies in miniature and human form from the Scandinavian Late Iron Age. It consists of three parts. The first part serves the purpose of explaining, and discussing, general attitudes to bodies, corporealities and bodily practices. Although the bodily materials to be discussed are diverse in character, they are tied together by the theoretical framework, presented in this, the first part, of the thesis. This part includes in-depth analyses of the concepts of gender and sex, bodies and oral literacy, disembodiment, and masking and performance, all themes of the greatest importance for a discussion of the body. The following two parts of the thesis specifically investigate, analyse and interpret the bodies of research.

# Levelling

## Buto dance, quantum physics and the absence of disorderly archaeologies

In January 2001, Buto dancers performed before a group of quantum physicians. Buto dancing realizes the distance between the human body and the unknown; it belongs to both life and death (NE). It has its roots in post-war Japan, and grew out of a reaction against traditional Japanese and Western dramatic art (*ibid*). Quantum physics, however, has replaced the intrinsically deterministic character of classical physics with intrinsic uncertainty (BE). However odd a mixture the performers and on-lookers, or participants, may have seemed, the Buto dancers and physicians teamed up with the understanding that both professions sought the cracks and irregularities seemingly absent from, but still affecting and luring in the background, foreground or midst of, their orderly, symmetrical and “normal” disciplines and discourses (“the normative” – see Part One): regulated, aesthetic and graceful movements in the case of (classical) dancing, and mathematical–physical formulae with precision in the case of physics. The present thesis belongs at the cross-over point where Buto dancers and quantum physicians meet – at the acknowledging, producing and embodying of unpredictable states of being. In that sense it may be said to be an example of a disorderly archaeology, striving both to interpret the allegedly irregular features of bodies and bodily expressions and to contribute to an archaeology of bodies.

The body as a theme of investigation within archaeology has been explored previously, for instance in the works of Tim Yates (1993), Lynn Meskell (1996), Brian Knapp and Lynn Meskell (1997), Eva-Marie Göransson (1999), Ben Alberti (1999), Rosemary Joyce (2000a, b), Yannis Hamilakis, Mark Pluciennik and Sarah Tarlow (eds) (2002), Chris Fowler (2002, 2004) and Joanna R. Sofaer (2006). The time/area under investigation is part of the Scandinavian Iron Age, *ca.* 400–1000 AD, and especially cases when representations of bodies<sup>1</sup> in different forms are discussed. Specifically, a

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<sup>1</sup> For a definition of “representation of bodies”, please see heading *Images and representations of bodies* below.



number of normative foundations, such as dualistic sex/gender institutions, comfortably and commonly set as unquestionable within the archaeological discipline are thoroughly scrutinized and analysed to the effect that these too are exposed as suppressing tensions, cracks and pluralities within bodies and beings. (Though note that exceptions to this description of course occur, see for instance Nordbladh and Yates 1993).

Research within philosophy/rhetoric, feminist studies, anthropology, culture studies, *etc.*, has pointed out the asymmetry and inequality within the dualistic concept of man/woman (*e.g.* Haraway 1985, 1991, Moore 1988, Strathern 1988, Butler 1990, 1993, Thomas 2002, Derrida 1998). Another interesting point of information is the work of Thomas Laqueur (1990), who has shown that concepts of sex and definitions of genitals have varied over the centuries – a manifestation that certainly should be of interest to archaeologists. The works of Michel Foucault (*e.g.* 1965, 1990) have also unravelled how bodies, including their accompanying “natural genitals”, are produced through the continuous and forceful structural changes. In short, there is much research in different fields of academia to suggest that bodies as well as sex and gender identities are constructed through culturally specific performances and that they are dynamic, variable and contextually produced. Another way of expressing this is to state that definitions of sex and gender are discursive<sup>2</sup>. However, the categories of sex and gender may not even have been applicable in all prehistoric contexts (*cf.* Boyd 1997, Hodder 1997). With a few exceptions (*e.g.* Hjørungdal 1996, Alberti 1999, Strassburg 2000, Fowler 2002, Thomas 2002, Back Danielsson 2002), explorations of the exciting interpretative possibilities of such thoughts are absent in archaeological work. The possibility that sex is historically constructed has been argued by Ian Hodder to hold “an enormous potential for archaeologists...” (Hodder 1997: 76). The present work will delve deeper into these challenging issues and may thus be described as a contribution to disorderly – but in my view essential – archaeologies.

## Purported purposes

The main purpose of the thesis is to expand and to explore the potential of an archaeology of bodies through the interpretation of bodily representations in Late Iron Age Scandinavia. More specifically, this purpose will be achieved through a questioning of natural givens, such as sex. This kind of questioning is considered fundamental. Instead of asking what sex or gender a repre-

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<sup>2</sup> By discursive is meant systems that control the production of knowledge and meaning (from Liepe 2003: 16). Donald E. Hall describes Michel Foucault’s discourse as comprising “language, images, unspoken beliefs and prejudices, laws and scientific concepts, and all other means by which human values are communicated, “naturalized”, and reproduced” (Hall 2003: 65).

sensation of a human body is, whether represented through physical bodily remains or by other material means, of interest is how people in varying contexts constructed, sorted and produced manifestations of human bodies in relation to prevailing cultural settings, and why. In the process, broad issues of variability and categorisation – from the construction of data bases to value judgments – are also addressed. Thereby, to some extent, the thesis comments on, discusses, and serves as a mirror for the archaeological discipline in general and especially its relationship with, and contribution to, modernism (*cf.* Thomas 2004 on archaeology and modernity). In the process the thesis offers a few reflections on bodies in present-day Western societies.

## How the thesis works

The thesis consists of three parts. The first part, *Foundation*, presents the material to be analysed in the thesis, which includes physical remains of human bodies and non-human bodies that come in miniature form, such as gold foil figures. I account for how previous research in archaeology on these bodies has largely interpreted them within an androcentric and heteronormative sphere. The very same bodies are later re-interpreted in this thesis, without reference to a dualistic sex/gender mode. Necessarily, with a focus on (Late) Iron Age bodies, the first part also discusses oral literacy and medieval texts, sex and gender, embodiment and disembodiment, person and personhood, and masking practices.

The selection of the notion “masking practices” is made in recognition of the fact that such practices were at hand at the period of investigation. I show that masks work by bridging gaps between old and new, death and life, past and future. They are transitional objects, which make them especially suited for rites of passages. Examples of transitional objects from the Late Iron Age include, apart from the more obvious facial masks, burial mounds and rune stones, which guided and directed deceased and living bodies to their respective destinations in landscapes. Importantly, during the period of research, rune stones and mounds shared the same name *kuml*, and *kuml* also meant mask or sign.

Apart from the concept of the mask, two other analytical concepts are selected in order to interpret the chosen bodily representations, namely miniature and metaphor. Whereas the notion of the mask is utilized to describe and interpret facets of Late Iron Age bodies in all parts of the thesis, the concept of miniaturization pertains to Part Two, *Directing Microcosmic Bodies*, and metaphorical thinking mainly to Part Three, *De-Parting Bodies*. Both the topic of masking and miniaturization are connected to the theme of metaphorical thinking. To think metaphorically is a prominent and common way

of thinking during the Late Iron Age, I assert, whereby conceptual links between diverse materials and/or actions are established.

Part Two, *Directing Microcosmic Bodies*, deals with bodily representations other than through physical, bodily remains, primarily as represented through gold foil figures, that is, bodies in miniature. In this part, I focus on questions such as how and why the figures worked, and exercised agency. I further highlight how the meanings of the performed embodiments of the gold foil figures are paramount to understanding how certain parts of Late Iron Age worlds were made.

Part Three, *De-Parting Bodies*, in contrast specifically treats human bodily remains. I place an emphasis on how these remains not only are unearched within burials but are likewise recovered in other circumstances. Seemingly, fragmented bones and body parts were circulated within diverse societal and cosmic spheres. By utilizing the concepts of person and personhood accounted for in Part One, together with the theme of metaphorical thinking, I demonstrate how a person was created, constructed and constructive in certain contexts. Also in this last part of the work, the theme of masking practices is brought into play, and is proved to be of analytical value for interpreting other than human bodies, such as manipulated objects deposited in burials, connected to rites of passages.

## The moving needle in the seamless web

A number of archaeological materials are used and interpreted in the thesis, all tied together through their connections to bodies, masking and transitions. Although an enumeration of the materials to be discussed follows below, there should be no doubt that what is of interest is the moving needle in the seamless web (*cf.* Leach 1965: 169, Latour 1988: 29) – how material culture and humans were tacked together, integrated and associated. Our bodies are of course central in this process of incorporation. Within several fields of academia, the connection between human beings' bodies and artefacts has been explored. For instance, philosopher Merleau-Ponty has argued that the body is not in time and space like other objects; it inhabits these dimensions (1999: 102). It is through our embodiment, through the amalgamation of our bodies in space that we also may imagine space as a geometric object. Merleau-Ponty gave an example of what it might mean for the body to inhabit space. For a blind person, a stick is not an object amongst other; it is part of the person's ability to orientate. It is not an object with which to perceive the world, but instead a part of the ability to orientate (1999: 107). The stick enables an extended corporeality. By incorporating and devoting things these cease to be mere objects, since they have become means through which we

shape or form our lives. Interestingly, Merleau-Ponty thus presents an interpretation of habits that does not make them a process without consciousness outside of the real subject. To know how to bicycle, to handle a toothbrush, a car, *etc.*, is to have knowledge which has sedimented itself in the body (*ibid*). I would like to describe this as a somatic memory. A further example may be presented. Before paddling a kayak, you may be instructed to sit in the vehicle on dry land, and demanded to remove the “skirt” of the kayak, that prevents the lower part of your body from getting wet. By repeating this movement on land, the body, or the somatic memory, may help you at sea if your kayak is turned upside down and you need to remove the “skirt” in order to get out of the kayak.

When things are no longer referred to as mere objects there is a breakdown between the division of a subject and an object. In this context Donna Haraway’s concept of the cyborg can be introduced. A cybernetic organism (cyborg) is a hybrid of organic and non-organic components (Haraway 1985, 1991). An example would be the performing technobody of athletics, where complex combinations of pharmaceutical substances and medical expertise, and sophisticated techno machines supervise the metabolism and fluids of the bodies (*ibid*). Here too the boundary between nature and culture, subject and object, or technology and human being can be said to break down. Further, the concept is not restricted to organisms that are equipped with mechanical proteases or organisms that are shaped and controlled by technical apparatuses (such as the genetically manipulated mice that are used in today’s medical research) but also includes you and me, stuck as we are with eye glasses, pacemakers, hearing devices, cosmetic surgery, day and night moisturisers for perfect skin, protecting dental plates at night, *etc.*, and the web of information we live in (*ibid*). However modern these items may seem, it is possible to suggest that human beings have been cyborgs since the day we started to live in houses, used tools, *etc.*, that is as far back as the Stone Age (*cf.* Eliassen 2001: 21).

Anthropologist Marcel Mauss has, in his classic work *The Gift* (1970 [1925]), investigated how objects may extend or diminish a person. Further, objects may make you do things (*e.g.* Latour 1988 on the spreading of cameras, and how heavy hotel keys “force” you to leave them at the hotel reception instead of bringing them with you). This is not due to the object itself, but rather depends on the socio-cultural setting in which the object is created or emerged (we are not fond of having heavy bulging things weighing down our pockets). Alfred Gell has likewise emphasized the agency of art/objects, where “the anthropology of art is constructed as a theory of agency, or of the mediation of agency by indexes, understood simply as material entities which motivate inferences, responses or interpretations” (Gell 1998: ix, foreword by Nicholas Thomas). Not only objects, but also relations may affect your being. Marilyn Strathern (1988) has argued in her studies of so-

cieties in Melanesia that people under certain contexts are understood as hybrids of relations and substances of different sorts, rather than as coherent, self-identical beings. The possibly partible and divisible aspects of bodies have also been cleverly elaborated in interpretations of south Scandinavian Mesolithic contexts by Jimmy Strassburg (2000) and British Neolithic contexts by Chris Fowler (2001, 2002). Partibility and dividuality refer to the partible and divisible sides of agency, where, for example, aspects of one's identity may be strategically or haphazardly attached or detached by someone or something else (*cf.* Strassburg 2000: 26–27). It is within such webs of contexts and connections that the bodies to be interpreted in this thesis are perceived to have lived.

I would like to point out that excavated prehistoric material culture is of course not silent or mute, but is created by us today (in contrast to the opinion of Malmer (1963: 13–4), who considers artefacts to represent objective truths, see also *e.g.* Binford 1977). This is not to say that an object did not exist prior to its excavation, but that this is not relevant since all of its characteristics are ascribed at the moment of its discovery (Holtorf 2001: 78).

The common denominator of the archaeological materials is that they are perceived of (today) as representations of human bodies, recovered within a time span of *ca.* AD 400–1000 in Scandinavia. During this period of time, they come in many different forms and materials. Let me however start by declaring which categories are not included. Probably, the most well-known or obvious representations of human bodies from Late Iron Age Scandinavia are found on gold bracteates and Gotlandic picture stones. Humanoid figures<sup>3</sup> may also occasionally be found on rune stones. Golden bracteates and Gotlandic picture stones are not included in the thesis, merely mentioned in a few examples. It is the belief of the author that to do them justice for the bodily purposes present in the work would require such thorough analyses, and take so much time, and require so much space at the expense of other material categories, that it would be unrealistic and unwise to include them here. Due to these circumstances, and to the materials' vastness and presumed bodily complexity, they are excluded from the thesis. Occasionally, interpretations of the materials are however referred to in the text.

Regarding gold bracteates, I would like to refer to Märit Gaimster who recently (1999) published a thesis on the category in which she gives a summary and review of the research conducted on bracteates to date. Mats Malmer (1963) has also discussed earlier research on gold bracteates, from C. J.

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<sup>3</sup> By humanoid figure is meant a human-like being having a masked appearances and features that often hinge on what we in the Western world of today would ethnocentrically describe as the supernatural.

Thomsen's work in 1855 to Mackeprang (1952) and Moberg (1952). Further, Karl Hauck has in a number of works made thorough and detailed iconographic analyses of the bracteates (e.g. 1983, 1985a, b, 1986a, b, 1992, 1993a, b, 1994). Covered in the current thesis is, however, a bracteate called the tenth bracteate of Söderby, from the parish of Danmark in the county of Uppland, Sweden, which was recovered fairly recently and displays humanoid figures resembling gold foil figures (Lamm, Hydman and Axboe 1999). Other cases included here are the occasions on which bracteates are found together with gold foils, namely in the deposit from Nørre Hvam, Ringkøbing amt, Jutland, Denmark (Mackeprang 1952: 132) and the deposit from Hög Edsten, Sweden (Andréasson 1995).

Examples of archaeologists who have carried out research on Gotlandic picture stones are Lindqvist (1941, 1942), Nylén and Lamm (1987, 2003), Varenius (1992), Andrén (1993), Burström (1996) and Göransson (1999), to whose work interested readers may turn.

Representations of human figures also occasionally occur on rune stones. The bulk of rune stones are erected during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and some 2,500 rune stones are known from this period of time (Gustavson 1981: 215). Of these, ca. 1,250 come from the county of Uppland (*ibid*). Recently, a thesis on rune stones (and treasure deposits) from Uppland and Gästrikland was published by Torun Zachrisson (1998). Interested readers may also consult Larsson (1990), Palm (1992), Johansen (1997) and Andrén (2000), to name a few other works on rune stones. Nonetheless, rune stones are analysed in the current work, since it was discovered during the research that they have a connection to masking practices and bodily transformations. Examples of material categories that also are included are gold foils, figural pendants and bodies in burials.

Some of the bodily materials are found throughout Scandinavia, such as the gold foil figures (fig. 1). Their extension in time (some three hundred years) and place (Scandinavia), their varying find contexts (deposits in human activity areas, in a bog, on dry land seemingly outside of everyday activities, in (post-holes of) buildings, in burials, *etc.*), and the fact that previous interpretations by and large have totally neglected discussing their potential embodiments/disembodiments and similar questions about how and why they worked, make them especially suited for research within an archaeology of bodies. Bodies in burials are primarily taken from the Mälaren region (the county of Södermanland) due to the fact that this research area has a great deal of well-published and researched material from the period under investigation.

There is of course a possibility – it is perhaps likely – that people in prehistory recognised other material features as bodies as well. For example, in Ireland before Christianity, bards described the country as a voluptuous female, where twin-mountains were connected with breasts and valleys with vulvas (Cherici 1994). A similar line of thought is present in the medieval text *Hákonardrápa* in the Nordic Edda, where, according to Olof Sundqvist (1997: 98–100), the poet relates the ruler’s union with the land, and the land is envisioned as a female entity. Further, the Maori meeting-house embodied ancestral presence – when entering you penetrated the belly of ancestors, the ridge-pole was the ancestral backbone, and the rafters were the ribs of the spiritual guides (Gell 1998: 253). What is more, deposited human and animal bodies and abandoned houses have been suggested to be analogues in the Maglemose (early Mesolithic) (Strassburg 2000: 106–9). Ceramic pots may also, in some culturally specific circumstances, be acknowledged as bodies (Barley 1994). Consequently, some materials might not be obviously gestated as “humans” or bodies but perhaps at the time were considered as such. It would make my task far too difficult to take all these possible materials into consideration. Included in the thesis are what we today may define as bodies or body parts in the archaeological material from the investigated period and place. Simple human/humanoid faces are discussed briefly. However, the contexts in which the prehistoric bodies and body parts were retrieved are of course of outmost importance, which means that various archaeological materials are woven together in the interpretative parts of the work. Despite the fact that not all humanoid figures from the Late Iron Age are included, I consider the current and recovered materials to be, in both number and quality, sufficient for the purposes of this thesis.

Given the fact that humanoid figures occur on various materials such as preserved stone and metal, it is reasonable to think that figures were made of and on wood and other perishable materials too. Very few figures made of wood have been preserved however from this time period. The few conserved objects of such elements have survived due to favourable environmental conditions, such as bog deposits. This is true for the humanoid sculpture of wood from Rude Eskildstrup, Denmark, presumably dating to the Migration Period, 400–550 AD (Klindt-Jensen 1957: 90) and the humanoid figure on the staff from Hemdrup, Denmark, probably dating to the Late Iron Age (Back Danielsson 2001 and cited works therein). Loose facial masks of textiles are known to have been preserved as well, such as the two animal masks from Haithabu (Hägg 1985) and the anthropomorphic and the zoomorphic masks from Novgorod, in strata dating to the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Thompson 1967: 82, 84, Ovtjinnikova and Kopnina 2000).



Fig. 1. Map of Scandinavia with geographical locations of the gold foil figures, of which some are discussed in the thesis. After Watt 2004: 168, fig. 1.

Although the bodily materials are diverse in character, they are tied together by the theoretical framework, which is presented in Part One of the thesis, where in-depth analyses are made of the concepts of gender and sex, disembodiment, and masking and performance, all themes of the greatest importance for discussions of bodies.



## Scientific reproaches and approaches

In the thesis I discuss, analyse, and in a few cases eventually discard, a few words that I conceive to be rigid and normative institutions. To help in this process, I will use perspectives connected to queer theories, described below. A deconstruction of certain words is, of course, not unproblematic. Why are some words, and the possible consequences of their applications, meticulously scrutinised, and others not? I maintain, through the work of others, that the two sexes were invented in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and that the words hetero-, and homosexual were made up at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A deconstruction is not a mere questioning or replacing of words, but here involves a much-needed analysis and highlighting of their institutional effects and consequences for interpretation (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1966, Derrida 1978, Ong 1990). A questioning of specific givens, such as sex, renders the so-called natural, normal and everyday procedures – in present times and in prehistories – possibly uncomfortable, but likewise possibly liberating, queer twists. As expressed by Hayden White: “The normal is a myth” (White 2001 in Rossholm and Viklund 2001: 1). As will be elucidated in the following chapters, once the givens are challenged, alternative interpretations may be launched, and other realities may in fact be generated. For instance, in Part Three the notion ‘a grave’, with associated ideas of a buried person, the automatically sexed person’s identity, *etc.*, is in a certain context replaced by the concept ‘vehicle for cosmic transportation’. A more dynamic approach to the assemblages of burnt human and animal bones, and fragmented objects, that are so common in Late Iron Age Scandinavian burials, is thus offered. Consequently, a thorough analysis and critical examination of common notions such as ‘graves’ may in extension contribute to a much needed (d)evaluation of our ideas connected to ‘graves’, including our methods of approaching them (*cf.* Johansen 1997: 9, Strassburg 2000: 17). Thereby, alternative interpretations may be formulated, strengthened and enhanced. Thus, an attempt to clarify the effects of the usage of specific words starts a process through which readings of the archaeological materials change too. Again, here lies the possibility of acknowledging a plurality of bodies and beings not only in prehistories but also in today’s societies (*cf.* Burström 1999 on cultural diversity and how archaeology can make the world a better place).

The concepts that we use, and the classifications we make, are thus never neutral, but always convey, implicitly, an interpretation – a special creation of reality (*cf.* Lévi Strauss 1966, Johansen 1997: 20–21, Hodder 1997). It should be obvious that it is not possible to assume, without more in-depth analyses, that the classifications we use today correspond to prehistoric realities. Although words are not innocent, they are of course needed as building blocks for communication and interpretations of material culture. A ques-

tioning or deconstruction of every word, or many words, would be impossible. And strictly speaking, I am obviously not writing words but signs that we have learnt to interpret as representations for certain sounds and notions (Saussure 1983). Hayden White (1973) has ascertained that every piece of writing is in the last instance decided by rhetoric and poetry (*cf.* Clifford 1986, Terrell 1990, Jameson *et al.* 2003). Not only are ideas and ideologies present in the work, but also a deep structure that is largely poetic (White 1973, *cf.* Cixous (1976) and Irigaray (1985), on relations between gender and writing). However, I cannot and will not go deep into the thoughts of the philosophers and researchers that have dealt with these topics. I have found that solely focusing on, for example, one philosopher, or presenting and analysing his/her works in great detail tend to leave little room, if any, for interpreting material culture (see for example Håkan Karlsson's thesis (1998) focusing on Heidegger). There are also cases where the theories presented are not used, or do not seem to fit the succeeding interpretations of material culture (*e.g.* Thomas (1996) in *Time, Culture and Identity*). This is not to say, however, that archaeologies should not or could not be expressly devoted to certain philosophers, but rather that the aim in the current work is to try to apply some of the thoughts of, for instance, Judith Butler to the specified bodily materials. I realise that I thereby run the risk of treating the philosophers too lightly or to have missed out on the enlightening depths of their works. On the whole, though, it is my belief that the bricolage chosen and created will be of good enough service for the purposes of the thesis.

Within the thesis, as mentioned above, research from other fields of academia such as anthropology, philosophy, performance studies, queer theories, feminisms, and gender and cultural studies, to name but a few subjects, is used. The utilisation of these different fields of research, as well as the common employment within studies of Iron Age Scandinavia of medieval Nordic literature, for direct analogy, or equivalence of meaning, is (hopefully) avoided throughout the work. Instead, an effort is made to include larger chunks of contexts and networks of connections in the comparative analogy from these academic fields. I will thus refrain from identifying, for example, a figure from the Late Iron Age as Odin or Wodan, where the later medieval sources act as keys, and stop the interpretive process at this point.

### Queer theory – not quite as queer as the queer of the normal

The use of the words normative and normal is a very deliberate choice of words, in that they adhere to a body of texts or views of realities that can be said to be connected to queer theory. At this point in the manuscript, one might expect large chunks of text that account for the invention and development of queer theories within academic disciplines. Before taking the compulsory track, however, let me jump ahead a little and declare that here

their use is certainly not restricted to allegedly queer matters, but rather that the heart of the matter is to elucidate how normal matters are queer. It is the appraisal and labelling of certain behaviours and beings as normal and others as deviant that is queer and subsequently will be scrutinized.

Let me present an example. In general, the normal procedure when approaching (Late Iron Age) burials is to try to attribute an excavated body, or its remains, to either of the two sexes or genders. During the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia, as previously stated, the most prominent way of disposing of dead bodies was through the act of cremation. Of course, the skeletal remains are consequently difficult to interpret for physical anthropologist as regards sex, age, height, *etc.*, due to the combustion techniques of the pyres. This is also the case since a large proportion of the cremated bones generally seem to have been removed from the pyre and buried for so far unknown purposes<sup>4</sup>. Usually some 70–80% of analysed grave materials with reference to cremated skeletal remains cannot be sexed, or human characteristics may be hard to discern (*e.g.* Petré 1984, Dimfors 1987, Sigvallius 1994). It is consequently the remaining 20–30% at best, which by no means represent “whole, sexable” beings, and is also scientifically shaky as well (this topic is thoroughly analysed and discussed in the upcoming chapter *Categorisation and Variability*), that forms the basis for the dualistic sex/gender matrix that hence is supposed to be applicable for Late Iron Age burials in general. To exclude large proportions of burials and to allot to a rather small portion of them the significance of representing either THE Iron Age man or THE Iron Age woman is in my view rather strange. As if this were not enough, within the sexable “scientifically safe” groups there are often so called exceptions – the “body” and/or burial may have been equipped with materials or characteristics that it was decided belonged to the other sex or gender (*e.g.* Brunstedt 1999: 88). Then what is left of the Late Iron Age man and woman that were so eagerly sought after? And above all, why is a large part of the material left uninterpreted? Since we today seem to “know” that you bury either a) a woman or b) a man with corresponding materials, then that is what you look for. It is as if a strai(gh)tjacket or a corset has been put on the bodies and materials, but the strai(gh)tjacket/corset is almost infinitesimally small, leaving huge shapeless and unmoulded parts of bodies/materials sticking out of it, untranslated. Little attention is thus paid to possible alternative ways of assessing and (de)constructing bodies, persons, identities and/or individuals that might have been at hand at various stages of metamorphoses in burial contexts. The issues of sex, gender and identities are thoroughly dealt with in the following chapters. This short excursion merely serves as an

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<sup>4</sup> Terje Gansum has elegantly suggested (2004a, b) that removed burnt bones might have been used as bone coal when tempering iron. See also *Part Three – De-Parting Bodies*.

appetizer – to briefly show that queer theory indeed may be a tool to disclose the abnormal of the normal, or the disorderly of the orderly.

Despite the growth and acknowledging of queer theory in later years within academic disciplines, there is as far as I know only a few archaeologists (e.g. Alberti 1999, Solli 1999a, b, 2002, Back Danielsson 1999, 2002, Strassburg 2000, Schmidt 2000, Dowson 2000, Voss 2000, Berggren 2000, Fowler 2002, and Cobb 2005) who have used the perspective in their works. To my knowledge, only Brit Solli, Alexander Andreeff and I are devoted to queering the Scandinavian (Late) Iron Age. At the EAA conference in Krakow in 2006, a session was organised by Lotta Fernstål and Tove Stjärna, where queer archaeologies were discussed and presented.

The concept of queer theory was first used by Teresa de Lauretis at an academic conference in 1990 and published in a feminist journal in 1991 (Hall 2003: 55). Queer theory is, however, an inapt label in the sense that there are so many varying perspectives included in the concept that we must instead speak of queer theories. Donald E. Hall has rightly pointed out that the emerging queer theory in the beginning of the 1990s within academia “was only describing, analysing, and giving a certain intellectual nuance and depth to an already existing phenomenon” (Hall 2003: 54). He refers to the fact that the reclamation of the word queer had started much earlier, and was made by groups such as Queer Nation<sup>5</sup> (*ibid*). However, the queer theories within academia differ from what was earlier described as a homosexual perspective on reality by not focusing on the creation of a theory of homosexuality (Eman 1996: 32). Instead, of greatest concern is the many different perspectives and interpretations that can be made of reality and of normality (*ibid*). Performance artist Sue-Ellen Case has exclaimed that queer theory does not work “at the site of gender, but at the site of ontology, to shift the ground of being itself” (Case 1997: 382). The practicalities and performances of the normal, everyday social being are scrutinized rather than those of the heterosexual (Hall 2003: 56). Why are some performances deemed normal and others deviant? What is gained by the creation and upholding of certain normalities? Questions such as these are of interest to queer theoreticians (*cf.* Eman 1996: 32). Don Kulick, Professor of anthropology, has recently exclaimed that we, for Sweden’s part, have reached another stage of research using queer theory, where we do not have to account for what Judith Butler has written, or apply her theory of performativity to the material of interest (Kulick 2005: 13). Nor do queer theorists necessarily have to focus on gender benders (*ibid*). Refreshingly, instead he claims that the many

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<sup>5</sup> Queer Nation: a militant homosexual group of activists with roots in ACT-UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), who in the beginning of the 1990’s got organized in New York and created headlines by announcing in public the names of homosexual celebrities.

perspectives that are connected to queer theory constitute a generous background against which any material may be chosen, and analyses may be developed and nuanced (*ibid*).

Queer theories, as well as feminisms, are indebted to several French speaking thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous. Jacques Derrida proposed that much of Western thought is built on oppositions, such as good/evil, white/black, heterosexual/homosexual, man/woman, where there is an asymmetry between the terms; they are not equal opposites (Derrida 1998). Usually the first term is thought of as being better or having a greater social value than the second term (read: “good, white, heterosexual, man”) – but all the same the first term needs the second to validate its superiority (*ibid*). We will return to their ideas and thoughts, in particular to those of Michel Foucault, in the chapter *Categorisation and Variability – the Control of Gender and Sex and the Resistance of Material Culture*. Here we will also meet other inventors and employers of queer theories such Judith Butler, Donna Haraway and Eve Sedgwick. An excellent introductory guide on the subject is the recent book *Queer Theories*, written by Donald E. Hall, published in 2003.

Lastly, I would like to point out that the following research is not about being right or wrong, but rather about the implications of different realities. A further step towards understanding different realities comes in the subsequent section where the connection between bodies and oral communities, which were at hand during the Iron Age in Scandinavia, is discussed. The presentation serves to enlighten the reader about how the use of the body may differ between oral communities and literate dittos.

## Oral communities, medieval texts and interpretations of Iron Age bodies

Iron Age Scandinavia largely consisted of oral civilizations. Therefore, it is of importance to consider what researchers on oral communities have concluded in their work, to see if their findings may contribute to the understandings and interpretations of archaeological materials. Researchers within archaeology and the history of religion frequently refer to medieval texts for interpreting Iron Age and in particular Late Iron Age Scandinavian materials. The connection between the medieval texts and oral communities is the assertion by several researchers that these texts stem from and no doubt show traces of oral communities, or contain performing elements (*e.g.* Phillpotts 1920, Scheub 1977, note 2, Meulengracht Sørensen 1989, Ong 1990, Snædal 1995, Gunnell 1995). This is surely the case, but the question that remains is: How far back in time may these narratives be used for interpret-

ing varying Iron Age material culture, without being singularly medieval (Icelandic) narratives and interpretations of distant or rather present pasts and ancient stories? May findings and results from research on oral communities suggest other ways of interpreting the material culture? Obviously, it is not my purpose in this section to be exhaustive on these matters. The topics are far too complex and far beyond my expertise (for further discussions on the subjects see for example Meulengracht Sørensen (1989), Clunies Ross (1994, 1998), Kristjánsson (1997), and Schjødt (2003)). Rather, I will present some of the ideas on oral communities that have a bearing on perceptions and productions of bodies, the main focus of the current work. Further, results of research from other disciplines relying on the medieval texts will be referred to, including the history of religion and literary history.

By medieval texts I am referring to the manuscript Codex Regius, handwritten in *ca.* 1280 in Iceland, and containing most of the Edda poems (Kaliff and Sundqvist 2004: 12), the skaldic poetry mainly surviving to our days through the medieval Icelandic royal sagas and finally the mythical traditions written down by Snorri Sturlason *ca.* 1220 AD in his work the Edda of Snorri and his Ynglinga saga from *ca.* 1230 (*ibid*). Medieval ecclesiastical sources such as Adam of Bremen as well as Scandinavian medieval legal texts such as Grágás are also included. I believe they can be described as structuring texts with multi-layered androcentrism. They were written and re-written by a few upper-class men in medieval times, and have been interpreted and translated continuously through out the centuries by like-minded men. The sagas may recapitulate women as aggressive bitches, whose advice and knowledge is said to be of poor quality and little value (see examples in Breisch 1994: 87). This condescending tone is not unique to Scandinavian medieval men, but is likewise found in the works of their continental predecessors. For instance, Jordanes in his *Getica* (V, 38) declares that he, like Cassidorius, for example, only believes and reproduces stories he has read, rather than listening to, and forwarding, the stories of old women (Hedeager 1997a: 48 though Hedeager does not notice this condescendence towards women and indeed orality). The declaration on the dependence on literal sources, and the avoidance of listening to possibly illiterate women and men, hint at the existence of alternative stories circulating within society. Although it may seem obvious, it deserves to be said: the medieval texts are not representative of whole Scandinavian medieval societies, as one is often led to believe, but are characteristic of certain people's perspectives of the medieval world in which they lived. Should women of different backgrounds and belongings (such as thralls) instead of upper-class men have written down stories that were recounted in the medieval period, the telling could have been radically different from the tales that are presented to us now. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen maintains that within medieval society there was a prominent militant masculine moral (Meulengracht Sørensen 1980:

24–29 in Breisch 1994: 90). At least, that is what is presented to us in the medieval texts, but what of the significance and structuring effect of this moral on the contemporaneous society? Why are the medieval texts mainly used for analysing and describing medieval society (e.g. Breisch 1994, Clunies Ross 1994, 1998) and to such a lesser extent discussing their possible structuring effect within the same society (through see Clunies Ross 1994, 1998)? How, when and why were the stories performed? As previously stated, I will not even attempt to discuss these issues; they are distinctively outside the scope of the current thesis. Let me instead start by discussing the differences between oral literacy and medieval texts.

### **Oral literacy and medieval texts**

There is a significant difference in the psychodynamics of orality and that of literacy. The Professor of English and French and of Humanities in Psychiatry, Walter J. Ong has in his groundbreaking work *Orality and Literacy. The technologizing of the Word* (1990 [1982]) thoroughly elucidated this to be the case.

Oral cultures are complex and involve not only the performer or the person delivering the story, but also engage the listeners as co-performers in various ways. Such insights have been presented by for instance Harold Scheub (e.g. 1977); see also Bauman (1984), Foley (1995, 1998), and Broth (2001). Harold Scheub has emphasized that an oral performance may certainly not be only oral, but (necessarily) involves the whole body in the storytelling – not only the narrator’s body, but also the partakers (Scheub 1977: 349–50, see also Ong 1990: 83). More importantly, the narrator is not alone in deciding what is to be told and how, but the audience affect and may co-control the development of the story (Ong 1990: 82, cf. Chagnon (1992: 118) on how storytelling in the oral community of Yanomamö is at times interrupted by villagers who want to hear a certain version of a story, and therefore correct the storyteller). What is more, a story within an oral community cannot survive if it is not told or performed, therefore one might say that the stories delivered are continuously subject to change and/or negotiation between performer and co-performers (Ong 1990: 82). In fact, in order to live on, Maria Ehrenberg (2003) has concluded in her thesis on sagas, stories continually change, where each era has its own audiences and new media. A story, myth or a narrative that was performed by someone during the 6<sup>th</sup> century would thus have had to have been told and expressed bodily countless times before it could be written down centuries later by for example Snorri. As if this is not enough, usually the sagas in the form of texts were copied many times before they ended up in manuscripts that still are available to us today. As Preben Meulengracht Sørensen has expressed it: “A text transmitted in manuscript is to be regarded as a fluctuating text, which may have been altered from generation to generation. We must therefore reckon with several strata in a text of this kind. Some part may be old, another part new,

some part omitted and another added in the passage of the text from one copy to another. We have no sure means of distinguishing between these different historical layers in the text..." (Meulengracht Sørensen 1983: 12).

It has been concluded that within oral communities, an emphasis is put on the present rather than the past, through putting away those memories that no longer are relevant (Ong 1990: 60). In other words societies tend to be homeostatic. An example may be taken from the Tiv people of Nigeria. It was discovered that the genealogical tables of this people were remembered orally, and during the course of time actually changed radically despite the fact that they were claimed by the Tiv to have remained unchanged for generations. (It was established that changes had been made through the written recording of the same genealogical tables some forty years earlier by the British). The crux of the matter here is to see what purposes the reiteration of the tables had – namely, to bring order to the contemporary society, not exactly document families. Subsequently, the integrity of the past was subordinated to the integrity of the present. (Ong 1990: 62–3).

Another characteristic of oral literacy is its specific psychodynamics. For instance, attributing certain figures with special characteristics, such as one eye, may have been ways to organize experiences in some permanent memorable form (Ong 1990: 85–6). The unusual characteristic of a figure consequently serves to aid the memory. In Scandinavia archaeologists generally assume that a figure with one eye is the god Odin, whereas a one-eyed ancient character in Greece may be recognized as a Cyclops. The point I would like to make in this connection is the possibility that the identification by archaeologists of a figure as Odin, is as enlightening as to say "memory helper". Most probably, instead of a single character, the figure stands for events and narratives. These thoughts have been developed by, for instance, Henry Pernet (1992) and are thoroughly discussed in the chapter *Masking and Performance* in the present part and in Part Two, *Directing Microcosmic Bodies*. Likewise, the use of formula based groups of figures, such as the three Norns, and the structuring of the runic alphabet into three different families are similar modes of assisting reminiscence (Ong 1990: 85–6.). The Mari, formerly the Cheremis, people that well into recent times largely were an oral culture frequently used, for instance, the number nine as a memory-aid (Holmberg 1926), as well as the number three and seven (Sebeok and Ingemann 1956: 315). Structurally, some aspects of this oral community seem to be reminiscent of parts of Late Iron Age communities, especially when it comes to deaths and burials. I will consider these structural similarities briefly further on (in the chapter *Masking and performance* in the present part and in the chapter *The Connections between the Preparation of Foods and Burials* in Part Three).



Walter J. Ong maintains that illocutionary acts such as hellos, assurances, bragging, threats, commands, and protests, and perlocutionary persuasive speech-acts, intended to arouse emotions of for instance fear or courage, do not mean the same thing in social relations in oral communities compared to literate counterparts (1990: 194). This means that our Western literate eyes may regard the foul play in *Skírnismál* to be surprising, as stated by Margaret Clunies Ross (1996: 174). She suggests instead that what can be expected of social groups are open and sincere negotiations (*ibid*). I would argue that this reflects our literate view on these stories. In order to explain the threats and curses that strike Gerd in *Skírnismál*, Clunies Ross (1996: 171) turns not to research within oral literacy, but instead to socio-biological studies and human ethology (!) from Sack *et al.* (1982) and Grammer (1986). Consequently, violence and threats of violence from men in dating situations is rendered a natural, biological background and flavour. When a man acts violently or threatens to violate a woman, she is assured of the sincerity of the man's dating intentions according to Clunies Ross' socio-biologists/human ethologists.

The predominance of orality within Iron Age Scandinavia also affected the way in which the cosmos was explained, experienced and created. Within oral cultures, due to the fact that sound is a centred movement (the sound does not unravel like sight before you, but surrounds you), the cosmos is an ongoing event with the human being at its centre (Ong 1990: 89). Not until the extended knowledge of maps and the printing of books, were human beings able to perceive of the cosmos or the universe as something that was before their eyes – an area ready to be explored (*ibid*). Stefan Brink has recently developed these thoughts by stating that it is impossible to create a for us spatial logic corresponding to the places that Snorri writes of, simply because in the oral cultures at hand (read: Late Iron Age Scandinavia) there was no need for a coherent, logical, spatial, mythological system (2004: 295–6). Such a system only corresponds to our present day demands (*ibid*). Consequently, along with Clunies Ross (1996), he is critical to the use of the concepts *Midgård* and *Utgård* in the works of, for instance, Gurevich (1969) and Hastrup (1985) and of course correspondingly to archaeologists who in turn use their thoughts on *Midgård/Utgård* (*ibid*: 292–3). I would argue that the distinction between *Midgård* and *Utgård* rather expresses the standard Western way of forcing or producing two categories as opposites into a dualistic mode (*cf.* Butler 1990: 2). Likewise, Gro Steinsland has commented on the lack of systematics in the medieval sagas as regards concepts of the soul (1990a: 62). She has further concluded that there is no dualistic anthropology within Nordic heathenism, despite her own certitude that a human being consisted of a material and an immaterial part (1990a: 62, 64). The immaterial part according to Gro Steinsland was quadruple, consisting of spirit, thought, blood and good (or godly) looks (*ibid*: 60).

The fact that reminiscences of oral communities, as presented by Snorri Sturlason, were produced in Icelandic medieval settings, of course also affects the stories. The applicability of the medieval stories to Late Iron Age Scandinavian materials may thus further be questioned. Snorri lived in Iceland, a country that was inhabited by Scandinavians that to a great extent had emigrated from Norway generations before Snorri's own time (Lamm 1995a). Iceland and Icelanders were not the same thing as the Scandinavians and the Scandinavian areas that were left behind. Stefan Brink has rightly observed (2004: 300–1) that the Icelandic sagas show signs of describing the forest as something dangerous, which might be considered odd given the very forest like character of most parts of (Iron Age) Scandinavia. If, however, one takes into account that Iceland does not have any forest at all, the description of the forest as something unsafe becomes logical and what is more, highlights the sagas or stories as Icelandic readings of the world. In the text of *Are*, it is claimed that Iceland was ritually cleansed from dangerous forest and thereby made civilized by the first Icelanders that came to the island. Stefan Brink suggests that this in fact is a later logical adjustment made by the people living in Iceland in order to explain the forest free island (2004: 301).

Despite all these troublesome facts, the medieval written sources are used to some extent in the thesis, but in the same way as anthropological materials, that is larger contexts of connections and networks of connections are preferred instead of using direct analogy and equivalence of meaning.

### **Oral literacy and bodies**

When a narrative is told in an oral community, or rather when a story is performed, the whole body of the narrator/performer is set in motion (Scheub 1977: 349–50). The bodies of those receiving the story are also involved, and they may even be described as co-performers or partakers (*ibid.*, see also Ong 1990: 83 and below, chapter *Masking and Performance – Bodily Metamorphoses*). As co-participants of a narrative, they may, as previously stated, also influence the way a story is unfolding (Ong 1990: 82). Within oral literacy absolute immobility is in itself a most powerful gesture (*ibid.*: 83). Conclusively, the human body is pivotal for the memory of spoken language since it contains a considerable element of somatics, thus significantly different from textual memory which requires the use of the body to a far lesser extent (Scheub 1977: 345, Ong 1990: 82). The narrative and the narrative's different parts emanate from the human body, revealing structure and texture through the body's nuances of gestures, the music of language and the combined rhythm of performance (Scheub 1977: 349). A present day, Western example can perhaps exemplify this. I believe that strands of oral literacy echo in most stand-up comedy performances of today. The comedian often uses bodily gestures in combination with certain utterances and/or sounds

that recurs during the performance. These returns structure the performances and likewise create a recognition with(in) the audience (or co-performers), *etc.* In oral societies, the rhythmical movements of the body alone may show the underlying pattern of a narrative (Scheub 1977: 350). Harold Scheub has stressed that, “The rhythm that makes up the patterns has its objectification in the body of the artist and not in her words” (Scheub 1977: 350). This means that patterns may be created by the music of words (not necessarily the words *per se*, but their sounds).

I would like to suggest that the ancient Nordic rune inscriptions on varying objects, sometimes with performing bodies (such as golden bracteates), and sometimes made of pieces of once performing bodies, such as the Lindholm amulet (a piece of bone) with vowel and consonant repetitions may express the music of words, whose purposes was to create a pattern or patterns to a narrative. Such a perspective does not render these inscriptions as peculiar or odd, otherwise a common claim among archaeologists and other scholars for the category (*e.g.* Kaliff and Sundqvist 2004: 42). Rather they are meaningful and necessary components of a narrative. Other suggestions contend simply that they are associated with magical practices (*e.g.* Jacobsen and Moltke 1942). By contrast, regarding inscriptions on gold bracteates Anders Andrén (1991: 253–5) has evinced that certain bracteates had “correct inscriptions” and that bracteates in general worked as political media. Out of 900 known recovered finds, 160 have runic inscriptions where 22 bracteates can be connected to (for us) legible words such as *ladu*, *laukaR* and/or *alu* (alleged literal meanings: invitation, onion, and mead) (Andrén 1991: 249). These bracteates are mainly recovered within hoards, and come from what has been suggested as a central region of distribution, and from a literate environment (Andrén 1991: 255). As attractive, refreshing and elegant his interpretations are I cannot refrain from pointing out some issues that would benefit from further discussion. Since a limited number of bracteates have correct inscriptions, this must mean that the bulk of the material has incorrect orderings of letters: indeed they are gibberish and pointless (*e.g.* Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 491, Moltke 1976: 88–92), a circumlocution for describing and perceiving of Iron Age people as lacking in knowledge and ignorant, and their material culture as faulty. I would argue instead that this rather expresses the ignorance of we Westerners, how little we understand of how letters, humanoid figures/bodies, and the metal gold – all amalgamated in the golden bracteates – were experienced, used and treated by Iron Age people, and indeed most probably how different apprehensions of the bracteates were from one Iron Age person and context to another. Considering the small number of “correct” spellings, perhaps it could be argued that statistically, the ordering of letters occasionally would produce to us readable (that is interpretable) words.

It can also be noted that several of the bracteates with readable words likewise have so-called non-readable words. Further, although Andrén (1991: 249–50) chooses to translate the word *alu* as signifying beer (*Sw. öl*), the reader is not enlightened of the fact that the *alu* interpretation is only one out of several suggestions made by philologists (see for instance Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 629 for references and Elmevik 1999). Andrén suggests that the bracteates had different functions in different areas (1991: 255). As previously declared it is not my intention to discuss or interpret golden bracteates in the thesis. Here I only wish to emphasize that the letters sometimes occurring on bracteates, as well as the performing humanoid bodies of the objects, could be connected to somatic experiences. Often the humanoid figures, commonly interpreted as gods, experience or perform bodily actions that arouse bodily sensations (for example riding, breathing/yawning, possible shape-changing, the penetration of a twig into a body, being stuck with the hand in a wolf's mouth *etc.*). Karl Hauck (*e.g.* 1985a, b, 1986a, b) among others has been both persuasive and insistent that the bracteates mediated certain stories in which gods acted and directed<sup>6</sup>. Further, holding, watching, wearing, and interpreting the luminous gold with figures likewise created somatic responses. Even within oral cultures with limited knowledge of literacy, it is probable that letters could be recognized and to be known to belong to certain sounds, vibrating within the body. Children in our societies, who do not know how to read, live in an oral culture although in a literate context. My three-year old son when confronted with letters in varying contexts slowly (thereby imitating grown-ups trying to teach the art of reading) pronounces vowels and consonants, distinctively knowing that letters are sounds. (Often the sounds turn out to be “Milton”, “mine”, or “birthday party” words that are important and contextual to him). Returning to the golden bracteates, if *ladu*, *laukaR* and *alu* can be connected to invitations/feasts, onion and mead, these words necessarily also imply bodily encounters and sensations – indeed I would suggest they assisted in commemo-

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<sup>6</sup> Andrén (1991: 250–1) suggests that the Latin *dominus*, *pius* and *felix* (ruler/host, pious/just, and fortunate/blessed) inscriptions of Roman coins and medallions served as a model for the inscriptions of the bracteates, where the Scandinavian roughly should correspond to the associations of these concepts. However, there is only one bracteate out of 160 inscription filled materials that has this combination of words (or one out of 22 with *ladu*, *laukaR* or *alu* inscriptions), and only two that contain two of the three words (Andrén 1991: 251, figure 6). The remaining 19 carry only one of the three words, sometimes in combination with other “incorrect” words. To me this suggests a very weak link to the wordings of the Roman coins. Importantly, the words of the Roman coins are clearly connected to the represented emperor, where they are to create the desired feelings for the ruler within subjects. But what of the connection between the bracteate inscriptions and its representations? How are the narratives that according to Hauck (1985a, b, 1986a, b) are represented on bracteates, connected to the inscriptions of letters? Are there any particular stories or representations on bracteates with letter inscriptions? Without analysing the bracteates further I still contend that the inscriptions would benefit from being analysed together with what is represented on/through the bracteates, as well as taking into consideration the possible significances of the metal gold.

rative practices (Connerton 1989, *cf.* Hamilakis 2002: 124 and there cited references on the mnemonic significance of the consumption of foods), accomplished through coming together, eating, drinking, listening to and participating in stories delivered and performed. In such practices the body and its orifices are paramount for comprehending, experiencing, and indeed making the world (*cf.* Devisch 1994, Hamilakis 2002).

In this context, it is also worth mentioning that inscriptions of letters also occur on medieval Christian paintings, where they, in their literate context, were intended, as within the illiterate, to create vibrations and rhythms in bodies. The letters 'IHS' found on many medieval panels, for instance on the 'Man of Sorrows' by Meister Francke, refers to Christ's name (Camille 1998: 197). The "Man of Sorrow" portrays Christ with mortal wounds and a crown of thorns, a popular motif among the Dominican Order during the 15<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid.*: 185). Although these paintings and panels were created in literate contexts, it is worth stressing that the mentioned panel according to Michael Camille (1998: 197) certainly was meant to create bodily sensations within the viewer. Specifically the three letters 'IHS' "suggest a repetitive 'mantra'-like sound, a kind of acoustic mandorla that shimmers here like a sign of divinity around the all-too-human flesh" (Camille 1998: 197). It should be emphasized that during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, at which point the panel was painted, it was believed that knowledge was gained through the senses (Camille 1998: 197). Images with religious motifs could therefore be executed as to invite and involve bodily sensations through seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling rather than communicating theological ideas (*ibid.*). (On the significance of recognizing the impact of orality within Romanesque art, and likewise an increased literacy within Gothic art, see Camille 1993).

Although there is a profound difference between orality and literacy there is of course no reason to think that all oral communities are alike or structured in the same way (the same argument is valid for literary cultures). Constance Classen has in several works (*e.g.* 1993, 1997a, b) illuminated how people in oral societies may involve other sensory organs (apart from the eye and ear) to recognize, for instance, smell and temperature as distinguishing principles, whereby your mind becomes structured, affecting the way your world is perceived and justifying present power relations. I will return to these topics again when discussing masking practices. It should also be noted that there are intermediary levels between oral and literate societies that is when societies are transformed into literacy. How this change from oral to literate culture takes place is naturally different from one society to another, but it is not uncommon that writing in the beginning becomes associated with extraordinary powers and magic, and is foremost used by, for instance, religious specialists (Ong 1990: 109–10). This was probably the case with the runic inscriptions in Scandinavia, starting as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD,

then primarily used for religious and/or magical purposes (Gustavson 1981: 213). In fact, the word rune (*Sw. runa*) in one sense means “secret, secret conversation, whisper” (Gustavson 1981: 213). After writing has been introduced to a culture, it is also frequent that there develops a sort of craftsman like literacy, where writing has become somewhat of a profession, and craftsmen might be hired to write documents of different sorts (Havelock 1963 in Ong 1990: 110–1). Perhaps this was the case with the many runic inscriptions in Scandinavia, the bulk of which were raised during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, where runic masters worked as craftsmen (Gustavson 1981: 215, 217, Snædal Brink 1981c).

Apart from the fact that the body, its senses, and orifices are important tools for understanding and structuring the world in oral societies, it is interesting to see if there is any information to be gained regarding the physiology of ancient Scandinavians. Ingjald Reichborn-Kjennerud (1927) has discussed ancient Nordic notions of the physiology of humans. Bodily senses could be engaged and affected not only by the person her-/himself, but also in other ways. What you ate could affect your appearance, and it mattered what the clothes you wore were made of, since the characteristic of what it was made (sheep, bear skin, *etc.*) were transferred to the wearer (1927: 31). Yawning, itching, drowsiness, hick-ups, *etc.*, were all bodily sensations that could be caused by an alien power outside of yourself – possibly a foreign power – a *fylgja* in operation, perhaps also affecting your soul (*ibid*: 33). A *fylgja* is a dimension of the soul, which could be observed either in a female or in an animal shape (Steinsland 1990a: 62–3, Price 2002: 59). Such sensations could likewise signify the arrival of someone, or that someone was thinking of you (*ibid*). Thus, the somatic reactions were premonitory signs in the there and now (*ibid*). The body could moreover be affected by witchcraft (*ibid*: 31–2). Drinking was associated with a variety of bodily transitions. The effects of sorcery could be annihilated by drinking (*ibid*: 32). The drinks could equally have been created by adding body fluids. Spit and saliva were considered creating and life-bringing powers (1927: 36). Both contain diastase ferments which transfers starch into yeast consuming dextrose, which can be used to produce beverages with an alcoholic factor (*ibid*). Especially the morning spit, before it had been diluted by drinks or foods, was believed to be extraordinarily powerful, in fact so pungent that it could even be poisonous to the person swallowing his/her own saliva (*ibid*). The consumption of alcoholic beverages could also invite other bodily journeys – possibly offering visits to other worlds. Several humanoid figures, discussed in Part Two, have what has been interpreted as drinking horns in their hands. Actual drinking horns or beakers have likewise been retrieved from the period under study (figs 2–4), at times in contexts closely associated to those of the figures. Occasionally, they have been adorned with golden strips, in themselves expressing transitions and transformations since they engage human and

animal bodies mutually including and excluding each others' body parts (see further discussions in Part Two and Part Three on the consumption of liquids and the mixing of animal and body parts in pro-creational acts).



Fig. 2. The embossed foil band of the Uppåkra metal beaker, with engaging human and animal bodies. Similar interactions between a human and a possible horse (or animal) are found on the mountings of a drinking horn from Söderby Karl, Sweden (fig. 3), and is thought to be represented on the mouth-pieces of a pair of drinking horns from a 6<sup>th</sup> century grave at Taplow, UK (fig. 4) (Kendrick 1938: 76). Drawing: B. Nilsson. After Hårdh 2004: 64, fig. 14.



Fig. 3. Bronze mountings for a beaker from Söderby Karl, Sweden. At the beaker's end was likewise a mounting ending with a plastic head of a bird in bronze (Holmqvist 1951: 37). The body parts of the mountings are mutually including and excluding – rendering the human body with the possible horse's hooves (or animal feet), and legs, and the horse (or animal) seemingly with human hands. The two fragmented beakers from Söderby Karl are dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, probably the century's latter part (*ibid*: 60). Drawing: Faith-Ell. Source: Holmqvist 1951: 38, fig. 5.





Fig. 4. Mouth-pieces from the Taplow drinking horns. As with the Söderby Karl example, the top band do not only engage human like body parts (head/face and hand) but equally possible animal like elements. After Hårdh 2004: 50.

Returning to Reichborn-Kjennerud, he was also able to conclude that blood and the heart were considered the residences of life, and that these as well had magic meanings (1927: 29). Gro Steinsland (1990a: 61) has further concluded, through analysing medieval written sources, that no part of the body was considered shameful or connected to thoughts of impurity. Rather, body and erotic acts were embraced in a positive spirit (*ibid*). There is only one exception to this rule, and that is the rear of a man. Being accused of acting as the passive, receiving partner in an homoerotic act, was the worst accusation a man could ever experience (*ibid*). However, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1983: 19–20) has argued that it is not (only) the sexual act that is connected to shame, but instead the lack of manliness and morality within the accused. The degrading component of *argr* – being the receiving partner in a sexual act – serves to express a sense of immorality (*ibid*). Most analyses and discussions of *argr* are made from readings of medieval literature, the overwhelming part belonging to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (for example Strömbäck 1935, Meulengracht Sørensen 1983, Breisch 1994, Solli 2002 on the matter). However the word *argr* or *ergi* is known already on rune stones (Stentoft and Björketorp) from the Migration Period (400–550 AD). The

meanings and contexts in which it was used could have been altered during the course of time. Meulengracht Sørensen contends that the *ergi/argr* as described in medieval writings could have had an ancient, heathen origin, but likewise that “there is no strong evidence that the surviving medieval examples are derived from older tradition...” (Meulengracht Sørensen 1983: 80). He instead chooses to analyse the concept fruitfully in literary terms, and focuses on the apprehensions and workings of the concept within the contemporary setting. Further, when it comes to bodily functions, it was also considered immensely shameful to be connected to faeces and dirt (Breisch 1994: 94). What is more, to relieve oneself on someone was punished by outlawing (*ibid*). Bodily organs and senses during the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia are discussed further in Part Two (see also chapter *Essential Engagements* on the word *argr/ergi*).

### **What was told, when and why?**

Harold Scheub (1977: 352, 366, note 2) has concluded that oral performances frequently occur at transitional periods, when society’s members are adopting new roles – during the rites of passage (*cf.* van Gennep 1960 [1909]) see also the chapter *Masking and Performance* in this thesis). The narrative plays an active part in assisting to define, adapt and adopt the new roles. An example may be taken from the Xhosa women in southern Africa. In many of their oral narratives there is a shift from the secure and the familiar home to the wild, dangerous and unfamiliar out-there. This pattern of spatial movement corresponds to the journey all Xhosa women must take when they marry, from the house of birth to the house of marriage (Scheub 1977: 351–2). Other oral performances may focus on potentially stressful situations such as the transition from puberty to adulthood (*ibid*). Jens Peter Schjødt has recently argued (2003: 275–6) that reminiscences of ancient Nordic initiation rites can be discerned in the medieval *Hrólfs saga kraka*. He interprets the saga as describing how an initiand becomes a member of a band of *berserkr*, or put differently, how a boy is transformed into a warrior. A *berserkr* was a term used for a fighter or group of fighters who ecstatically raged and rampaged, presumably under the influence of drugs (Thunmark-Nylén 1995a). Initiation patterns are also clearly discernable in the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur* according to Jens Peter Schjødt (see Schjødt 1994, 1999 and 2000). These rites of passages may be described as concentrating on an individual, but oral performances also serve(d) to aid societal transitions. For instance a passage in a massive epic again among the Xhosa considers how the ability to cure people is moved to traditional doctors from leaders with supernatural and magical skills (Scheub 1977: 366, note 2). Such dislocations within society are also found within the Nordic medieval texts. According to Scheub (1977: 366, note 2) we see how an old religion dies and a new one is accepted in Beowulf, where the new religion layers on the old. The Norse saga of Njal discusses how the system of blood feuds is replaced by a

rule of law, a more humane way of dealing with disagreements (*ibid*). Ultimately, the narrative serves the purpose of creating, processing and implementing new roles of identities.

Conclusively, one might argue that oral performances are ways of creating new roles, dealing with change, weaving old and new together into coherency, or in other words producing and directing a new story (*cf.* note 10). During these performances – enabling rites of passages – bodies are pivotal. When the old is mixed with the new, the body helps in this process since its movements, both by the performer and the participants, combine time and space (Scheub 1977: 351)<sup>7</sup>.

## Images and representations of bodies

The bodily representations in this thesis are at times in other archaeological works referred to as images of bodies (Hauck 1983, 1986b, 1992, Göransson 1999). However, a one-sided interpretation of an object or a body as a trite image of something suggests to me that the object or body itself somehow is unaccounted for, or stands in the background – it becomes passive and an emphasis is put on the number one sensing principle of the modern West: vision (Back Danielsson 2006). Even though earlier studies have been very thorough and contained advanced iconographic studies (*e.g.* Hauck 1985a, b, 1986a, b, Gaimster 1998), and have presented contextual interpretations (*e.g.* Hedeager 1997a, b), in my view they missed out on the possibility of exploring the theme of bodily representation, and similarly, recognizing the agency of these objects (*cf.* Gell 1998). An exception is the study Eva-Marie Göransson made in her thesis (1999) of Gotlandic picture stones. Nonetheless, despite the title *Images of women and femininity* it lacks a discussion of what an image is. In the work the image is unreflectedly used as something stable and static, an EAN code, or bar code to be read. Thomas Mitchell (1986: 13–14) has convincingly argued that proper images are not in any important way exclusively visual, and that they as such have a great deal in common with mental and verbal imagery and thus involve an act of interpretation and multisensory apprehension. This is true not only of “images” from illiterate societies but also valid in literate contexts, exemplified above with the “Man of Sorrows”.

In her analysis of Bronze Age rock-carvings Åsa Fredell has emphasized that “[w]e need to treat the picture as an active material in its contemporaneous

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<sup>7</sup> Harold Scheub expresses his thoughts in this way: “In the plot, spatial relationships exist between actions, and between repeated patterns. The space between a set of patterned image sets can be as significant temporally as the patterns themselves. Space in this sense becomes indistinguishable from time.” (Scheub 1977: 351).

society and not just as an expression of something else, which pacifies the image and transforms it into an illustration” (Fredell 2004: 138). Pictures and images within oral communities must thus not be regarded as photos, or as a text waiting to be read. When used in performances, it is important to recognise that an object, including images, can become an actor (Veltruský 1964 in Proschan 1983: 16). Whereas Fredell (2004) has suggested that one of the problems within Bronze Age research consists of avoiding a discussion on the iconographical purpose of the image, one of the problems with interpretations of Iron Age images of bodies is the opposite. Iconographical studies of gold foil figures, gold bracteates, and Gotlandic picture stones are instead in abundance. My guess is that this is mainly (or only?) due to the fact that alleged keys to interpretations are available through (later) written sources, as described above. In the present work, the foci are instead on the finding contexts, the importance of the material with which the representation was made, the possible bodily response the materials gave echo to, and so on.

The bodies that are analysed and discussed in this thesis are referred to as *representations of bodies*. Let it suffice to explain the meaning of a representation here, namely, as in the etymological sense, to cause something to be present again, to make something reappear that had disappeared (e.g. Lévy-Bruhl 1936: 123–4, Pernet 1992: 117). Of importance in this work is likewise the fact that the something disappearing or being absent did not have to be exactly the same thing that reappeared. A representation of a body thus has connotations to the meanings of the word figure, and also to the concept of masking. Both a figure and a mask may contain elements of displacement which contribute to troubling both beliefs and recognitions (see *Masking and Performance: Bodily Metamorphoses* in Part One and *To figure out figures* in Part Two and also Haraway 1997: 11 on the word figure). Conclusively, in the thesis I avoid using the word and concept image (of bodies), and refer instead to either representations of bodies or simply prehistoric material culture – both conceived of as having agency. It must be emphasized that the choice of the concept “representation of bodies” in no way excludes the possibility of such prehistoric materials being actualizations of, for instance, certain entities or deities as suggested by Mark Pluciennik (2002: 228). The notion “representation” is thus not employed to pacify the “bodies” and turn them into illustrations or something referred to (cf. Hamilakis, Pluciennik and Tarlow 2002: 11–13). On the contrary, “re-presentation” is supposed to invite the paradoxical traits that I argue reside in the chosen bodily expressions and manifestations of (Late) Iron Age Scandinavia. As will be thoroughly elucidated below, paradox making and to be able to relate to paradoxes ultimately involves power relations. A manifestation of a body may well be an actualization of some sort, but by choosing to call it a representation I wish also to put an emphasis on the pluralism that must have been at

hand in prehistory – how differently these bodies may have been interpreted and created from one person, context and society to another.

In this context I need also mention the recent work by Douglass Bailey (2005) on prehistoric figurines. Largely, he uses studies and theories from visual culture to discuss prehistoric figurines (2005: 16). The theoretical chapters of his book focus on miniaturization, anthropomorphism and the socio-politics of representation (2005: 25). Although my methods for encountering and interpreting the figures under investigation in the thesis have gestated for a long period of time independently of Bailey, my work has no doubt, although in a very late stage when most of the thesis had been written, benefited from his book. My own points of view have become clearer since his arguments and analyses offered something against which my feet could be braced, leaving me in agreement with some of his ideas, and equally contributing in disagreement with others. In sum, it is his emphasis on the visual – leaving other sensing principles with little, if any, structuring value – which I find problematic in regard to prehistoric material culture. The unremitting weight on the visual constantly represses other bodily sensations, that in prehistory could have been equally or perhaps even more important in certain contexts. For instance, he argues (2005: 40) that one paradox with three-dimensional objects is that they can never be viewed as a whole – a spectator cannot view the rear and the front at the same time. But that argument is also valid for two-dimensional figures; these figures (or any object for that matter) cannot be viewed in their entirety at one and the same time either. It is just our Western habits and history of viewing images, paintings, photographs, *etc.*, that makes us recognize only one side as “the right side”, the side on at which to gaze. In fact, I would argue that the paradox Bailey describes resides not in three-dimensional objects, but rather with the sensing principle known as sight. It *per automata* presents the world two-dimensionally, not offering sight in the round – it is only our previous and accumulated bodily experiences and encounters that lead us to believe that, say a house, has three dimensions. Such bodily establishments have been manipulated not least within the film industry, where houses may be represented as false fronts (*cf.* Bailey 2005: 40–1). Sight unravels in front of your body, whereas for instance sounds may be experienced where ever they come from – behind, above, below, *etc.* (Ong 1990: 89). Although a three-dimensional figure may not be viewed in the round, they may be experienced in a more encompassing way according to whatever sensing principles are engaged, such as if a person hold it, caress it, or smell it.

Undoubtedly, visual studies, from where Bailey’s theories originate, and as far as I have been able to understand them, are of outmost importance for a much needed theorizing of our Western ways of structuring the world and our minds, and consequently for interpreting ourselves and material culture. However, when studying illiterate societies, sight has rarely been recognized

as the over-arching or dominant structuring principle in society (see Ong 1990) and above on oral communities and also section *The complex of masking* in the chapter on masking). The ways in which the world and categories are created, perceived and experienced through the body is pivotal for understanding the interplay between humans and material culture. The agreements and disagreements between my work and that of Bailey are currently commented on in appropriate places in the thesis.

## Images and sex

Lena Liepe (2003: 205) has concluded that within the imagery of medieval times, the body itself was of no value. Instead bodies and body parts were (re)presented and/or accentuated when it was decided necessary, that is when a certain story or episode was to be recounted and experienced. The way a body was represented was thus always contextual. A human being would not always be “naturally” portrayed with sexual markers for instance (*ibid*). Consequently, in a few examples the Virgin Mary is seen as only having one breast, exhibited in her cupped hand, whereas the other side of her chest is completely flat (*ibid*). Lena Liepe maintains that the single breast is an attribute, without a relation to a consistent view on the body’s anatomy underneath the clothes. In the medieval written sources, a parallel way of describing bodies is at hand. Seemingly, the clothes and certain paraphernalia were used as gender markers (Breisch 1994: 82; *cf.* Jochens 1991). Equally important, when the concepts man and woman occur in these writings, it must be recognized that what is described is not sex, but a performing embodiment as in gender. Further, in analysing bodily representations in the form of images of the Knossos palace in Minoan Crete, Ben Alberti (1999) has found that sexing into the categories of male and female is not regarded as the “natural” way of categorising bodies, nor that genitalia are considered central to a body’s identity. A natural body according to that specific palace culture’s world of ideas consists of what we would describe as a sexless body – bodily sex is here only produced through what we would term a cultural mark –the clothing (*ibid*).

It should likewise be noted that during the 17<sup>th</sup> century the physical male prowess was found in the calf (and not in the penis, which was only illustrated in anatomical books for students in medicine) according to George Rousseau (2002: 77). By the 18<sup>th</sup> century another piece of the body came to rival the calf as the main focus for male competence, namely the wig. Not only was the wig a primary male focus, but varying compositions of a wig could capture and express different aspects of the wearer’s personality (*ibid*:77–8). From this we can learn to be less phallocentric when analysing or discussing “men” from other than recent modern times. What is more, clothes and objects may be perceived as integral or indivisible parts of the

person who wear them, and as expressing facets of a personality. In this context, I would also like to make reference again to the stick with which a blind person orientates in the world, where Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1999) has maintained that the stick for the blind person is not an ordinary object, but rather an example of an extended corporeality. How objects may be part of a person and perhaps the other way around is discussed in the pursuing chapter *Essential Engagements*, where concepts such as individual, person, and dividuality are also discussed.

In a recent study, Eva-Marie Göransson (1999: 35) develops something she calls as a sexing method, which she uses to analyse Gotlandic picture stones. On the basis of different hair-styles she claims to see that there are two groups that are mutually exclusive, namely characters with a beard (men) and characters without a beard (possible women) (*ibid*). One of the problems with her analysis of the pictures stones and two points she misses are the arguments made in the current work,

- that bodily representations are contextual and
- that figures appearing on/in different materials should be interpreted as characterising events (see more below), not certain figures with an exact sex.

In order to re-cast specific events, the choice of attributing figures with particular hair-styles, gestures, clothes or other paraphernalia is regulated by the story or event that is represented. Let me present a few examples of how hair length may relate to stories. The law of the Langobards, Edictus Rothari, equally contains a short description (Origo Gentis Langobardorum) of how the Langobards received their name (Hedeager 1997a: 43). The name “Langobard” means long beard, and this long beard was achieved by women who took their long hair, pulled it in front of their faces, and formed it into a beard (*ibid*: 1997a: 43–4). Hair length may well also be related to a dynasty, known for instance through the Merovingians, who treasured long hair (Gansum 2003: 198). The length of hair could also be connected to other issues. Within Norse medieval literature there are several examples where promises are made to not cut the hair until a deed has been accomplished or a revenge has been taken care of (*ibid*: 200). Strands of hair have as well been unearthed in Late Iron Age burial contexts. Hanna Rydh, who excavated the huge mound Skopintull at Adelsö, Uppland, recovered a lock of hair deposited in a ceramic urn amongst burnt bones (Rydh 1920, 1936). She presents numerous examples of different cultural reasons for cutting the hair, especially in contexts associated with transitions, such as deaths and burials (Rydh 1920). She concludes that no matter what the intentions of cutting the hair were, the hair could have represented power and life (*ibid*: 242). Conclusively, hair length (whether on the head or in the face) may be associated

with a number of *cultural* reasons, not reflecting some underlying prehistoric assumption of a division of bodies into two sexes.

When one acknowledges the fact that representations of bodies are contextual, the ground for the immediate “neutral” and “objective” sexing of bodies – frequently and automatically done by archaeologists – is shattered. For the sake of clarity, I also emphasize that it is impossible to sex images of bodies, since there really are no bodies to sex, mere bodily representations perhaps executed in gold, silver or stone. As such they are considered to have participated in stories and events, thus hardly represented to indicate or mediate expressions of two biologically separated sexes. This is rather a modern Western wish, thought, and invention.

In the following chapter of Part One, *Categorisation and Variability – the Control of Gender and Sex and the Resistance of Material Culture*, the concepts of sex and gender are thoroughly analysed and deconstructed. The chapter further centres on questions on bodies such as: What do we as archaeologists do when we without much of reflection, or perhaps with a great deal of focus, analytically sex human bodies? Why do we believe, or take as a starting point, that bodily sex, as it is defined in our time, was relevant in the prehistoric context studied? What consequences may these estimations or productions of sex and bodies have for our interpretations of representations of human bodies from Late Iron Age Scandinavia – and indeed what might their possible influences be on our societies today? Through numerous examples from a variety of published archaeological writings, the delimiting aspects – as regards interpretations – of under-theorized or taken-for-granted concepts of sex and gender are discussed. The name of the pursuing chapter, *Essential Engagements*, points to the fact that bodies in certain contexts may indeed be disembodied and not only embodying practices, and that these disconcerted bodily practices are just as essential as embodied experiences. It is also argued that the concept of the individual needs closer scrutiny, and along with this discussion other concepts such as dividuality and partibility are introduced. The final chapter of Part One, *Masking and Performance – Bodily Metamorphoses*, tries to accommodate and open up alternative ways of discussing prehistoric representations of bodies.



# Categorisation and Variability – the Control of Gender and Sex and the Resistance of Material culture

- 'And what is "sex" anyway?'

Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* 1990: 6

The main focus of the present chapter is the categorising of sex in representations of prehistoric bodies. A focal point is also the workings of other categorisations that also act to limit or control possible interpretations of material culture and consequently prehistories. In most cases, however, it is shown that these ultimately spring from the ontological distinction between body and soul within the philosophical tradition. This Western institution supports political and psychological relations of subordination and hierarchy expressed through the division of sex into two opposing and hierarchically organized categories. Interpretations of archaeological bodies are also flavoured by modern perceptions of how the performing sexed body would, could and should appear and be equipped. The archaeological material itself, however, offers resistance to such categorisations, in the sense that large quantities of material do not fit the binary classifications, and are subsequently not interpreted, excluded from further research, go unmentioned, or are forcefully fitted into the dominant two-sex model.

The chapter starts with an historical background of the inventions of the sexes, descriptions of the dominant heterosexual matrix as well as its workings at a general societal level and most specifically at an archaeological level. It further serves to introduce the archaeological material to be investigated in the thesis, by showing how earlier interpretations of the material are enmeshed within these asymmetric webs of dominance. To sum up, earlier interpretations and earlier research of the archaeological material are interwoven with comprehensive theoretical readings of the effects of categorisations.

It is concluded that both the dualistic concept of sex and the concept of gender – which in the end depends on the sex dualism – are inadequate concepts for the purposes of the thesis and limit possible interpretations of the materials. The notions woman/man and female/male are therefore substituted and/or supplemented in the following with the exact feature that is deemed

to be that of a female or male. For instance, should burnt human bones be estimated or determined by a physical anthropologist as belonging to a man, due to the fact that the individual had large eye holes, that specific bodily feature will be mentioned first hand. Thereby, it is shown how little value these labels have and in addition it is highlighted how fuzzy and like pieces of scenery the concepts man and woman are. It likewise underscores how underutilized the archaeological material is as regards contextual interpretations. The chapter also includes a few pointers about how related readings of the material will be made in Part Two and Part Three of the work.

## The discursive limits of sex – especially in archaeology

One of the most prominent and powerful mechanisms by which we sort the performing and appearing bodies of people today is that of sexing through the two categories of male and female. The pervasive production of two sexes also follows archaeologists in their interpretations of prehistories. Seemingly endless lists of authors of archaeological excavation reports, papers, books, *etc.*, like automata determine the sex of prehistoric people – that is whether the alleged human body, be it physical inhumation, cremation remnants, or other representations of bodies, was of either the male or the female sex (*e.g.* Axboe 1999, Brunstedt 1999, Watt 2001). However “natural” the sex categorisation may seem, the production of two sexes is indeed culturally specific, and is enmeshed with asymmetrical power relations (*cf.* Butler 1990, 1993, Foucault 1990, Derrida 1998), and has also, since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, been set within a normative heterosexual matrix (Butler 1993). Butler describes the heterosexual matrix as

“a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and to make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender...that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” (Butler 1990: 151, note 6).

Far from a neutral, observable concept, sex does have a history (or rather histories), where conscious or subconscious expectations of how the male and the female body is supposed to appear, perform, interact and be equipped. Nonetheless, interpretations resulting from a shattering and/or deconstruction of the two sexes are introduced in Part Two and Part Three. Thus, I here take the necessary liberty of delving deeper into these matters of sex.

As will be seen from examples in earlier archaeological interpretations, the unreflective, automatic sexing of prehistoric body remains shake and bake

only certain bodies and beings. By extension, this limits and diminishes not only socio-cultural elaborations, or possible stories on prehistoric bodies and societies, but likewise pluralism of our own bodily beings today. This is the case since archaeological interpretations of the past may be used – consciously or subconsciously – to further justify present power relations (*e.g.* Arwill-Nordbladh 1998, chapter 1), or indeed to work as active and dynamic instruments for creating and shaping the characteristics of a sex in our contemporary society (*e.g.* Camilla Caesar 1999 on interpreted prehistoric primitive manliness as being part of a present day male personality project, *cf.* Alberti 2006). Archaeological discourses act as both creators and applicators of sex ideologies (Hjørungdal 1994: 70).

## The constraining order of gender dualisms

In this chapter I will scrutinize the use, application and interpretational consequences of the sexing of prehistoric bodies in a variety of shapes. The main reason for not discussing gender attributing at greater length is that gender, no matter how successful feminists, above all, have been in arguing that genders are socially constructed (Hird 2004: 30), usually they are only two in number – a male and a female gender (*cf.* Nordbladh and Yates 1990). Cheryl Claassen (1992) remarks along similar lines that archaeologists often reason in a circle when it comes to gender analyses. Should there be some specific objects, or combination of objects, for different genders, then these accompanying articles will be assigned to the sex of the buried body and subsequently to the gender that is assigned to that sex. It becomes impossible to identify gender independently of sex. It must be remarked however, that there is research conducted within archaeology where non-binary genders are found and investigated, for instance in Native North America (Hollimon 2006, *cf.* Geller 2005). By not discussing gender issues, although having bodies as a main focus, it is not my intention to devalue gender studies in anyway; it is simply outside the scope of the current work. The vast importance gender studies has, and has had, for interpretations of archaeological materials and cultures within the archaeological discipline is illustrated in, for instance, the “Handbook of Gender in Archaeology”, edited by Sarah Milledge Nelson (2006).

Although gender as a concept was “developed to contest the naturalization of sexual difference” (Haraway 1991: 131), the use of the idea of two cardinal genders is as inhibiting as woman/man, since it in a sense is imitating and thus hopelessly linked to the notion of sex dualism (*cf.* Strassburg 1997a, b, 2000, chapter 4, Lorber 2000, Hird 2004). Instead of this rigidity, where bodies and identities are stable and fixed, the categories are considered transient and unstable and as well as linguistic and cultural creations (Butler

1990, 1993). (For criticism of Butler's arguments see for instance Moi 1997, Sjöqvist 1998, and Sofaer 2006). The concept of a coherent inner self, whether innate or social, inhibits productions of agency as something complex (Haraway 1991: 135). Judith Lorber (2000) has further pointed to works of multi-cultural and postcolonial feminists who assert that there are complex systems of subordination and domination in regard to women's oppression, leaving the Western division into two genders as substantially flawed and inadequate to describe these systems. Lorber (2000) has in a most straightforward way demanded a degendering movement.

Within Scandinavian archaeology gender studies are plentiful (*e.g.* Arwill-Nordbladh 1998, Berglund 1999, Göransson 1999, Strassburg 2000, Thedéen 2004) whereas works critically examining the sexing of bodies (or the two-gender structure) are scarce (though see Strassburg 1997a, b, 2000, *cf.* Å. Carlson 2001, Fuglestad and Skogstrand 2006). These are the reasons for including the word gender in the title of the current chapter. Finally, not only is the two-sex model scrutinized, but as a result of the interdependence of gender and sex, the two-gender model is likewise questioned.

## The sorting of bodies through centuries

Over thousands of years people have always sorted themselves and their surroundings into different relevant categories, or repeatedly made efforts to see that the order of things is correct, the cause of which, according to structuralism are said to be psycholinguistic (*e.g.* Leach 1976). All the same, each cultural epoch has its own specific discourses of sorting, where assessments of different noted and constructed patterns within bodies or materialities of bodies are unique both as regards the character and the strength (Foucault 1970). Thomas Laqueur has further elucidated how definitions of sex and genitals have varied through the course of centuries (1990). In his research on bodies and genders from the Greeks to Freud, he claims that up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century the ideas about the anatomy of human beings and the differences between the sexes were expressed through a one-sex model. Two new opposite and distinct sexes were read into the body in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid*). Instead of regarding women as lesser bodily versions of men along a vertical axis of infinite nuances, that is, only one sex with differences in degrees rather than of a kind, a woman came to be a different creature altogether at this period of time (*ibid*: chapters 2, 4). Joan Cadden has, however, maintained that the one-sex model was not as universal as Thomas Laqueur claims (1993 from Liepe 2003: 145–6). In her study of sex differences in the Middle Ages she found a heterogeneity as regards the view on sex differences in varying phases and between various discourses such as medicine and Christian theology (*ibid*). What becomes clear, despite the differences in opinion between Thomas Laqueur and Joan Cadden on how sexual differ-

ence was perceived during the Middle Ages (and thereby created, I would like to add), is the fact that – as Liepe (2003: 146) also concludes – a definition of sex is always discursive (see also Strassburg 2000: 153).

The bodily differentiation between women and men that was constructed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when a woman was not only conceived of as different but as distinct altogether, was however not an isolated phenomenon caused by the changing of views. Michel Foucault argues that the modern human being, as we know it today, was invented a century later (1970: 386–7). This invention should be seen as a result of the complex intertwining, connecting and symbioses of androcentric scientific societies, European upper classes and a protestant influenced bourgeois over the course of some three centuries (*ibid*). At the same time, the socio-biological world-view of the West was founded (*ibid*). When a body is viewed from this perspective, the natural or socio-biological body defines its capacities and limitations (Shilling 2003: 37). As such, a naturalistic perspective would contend that, for instance, gender inequalities are due to men's superior bodies. In contrast, the opposing view holds that the body instead is socially constructed, shaped and engendered within different discourses (*ibid*).

Professor of Theory of Science and Research Kerstin Berminge (1998: 55) maintains that the socio-biological world-view is still dominant and that we today may be in the midst of a transitional period in which physics and biology will form a new world-view, a new macro paradigm. The biologism<sup>8</sup> was only interrupted by the Second World War, when Hitler's politics made biologism/evolutionism impossible for some four decades (*ibid*). In fact the 17<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a larger bodily and societal revolution: the relations of humans to themselves, their bodies and their surroundings were engaged and reshaped. During these centuries a body technological politics evolved, comprising many facets of society (Foucault 1991). Bodies became integrated in the political spheres, and were invested in, trained, tortured and made to perform in certain ways through institutions such as schools, museums, mental institutions, hospitals, *etc.*, most of them invented during the last three centuries (Foucault 1991: 24–31). Tony Bennett (1995) has explained the birth of museums in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a new educating institution, largely replacing the “educating”/apotropeic public executions. In Sweden the public executions of sodomites stopped at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to be replaced by executions with few witnesses (Rydström 2003: 10). Coincidentally or not (“not” according to Foucault), the birth of the controlling establishments came to operate on, and have a huge impact on, bodies and their performances. Since these procedures aimed at social repro-

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<sup>8</sup> By biologism is meant “the explanation of human behaviour and social and political activities as the results of our biological nature” (Berminge 1998: 55).

duction, a most artful focusing on humans' reproductive organs was a necessity (Foucault 1991: 24–31). Hence, the articulated sharp divide between two opposite kinds of humans/bodies – those with female genitalia, and those with male ones, which accordingly are able to procreate (Foucault 1990, Laqueur 1990). The invention in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century of the word heterosexual, should be seen against the above background. The concept of heterosexuality became the norm and guidelines for how the two sexes were to behave, perform and procreate accompanied the notion. Other constellations, where two opposite sexes could not be defined, or at least would not result in proliferation, required at the same time the invention of other abstractions such as exhibitionism, fetishism, sadomasochism, paedophilia (Hekma 1994: 213), and of course the concept of homosexuality (Halperin 1990). The correct social order was monitored by medicine, juridical, psychologists, writers, and other societal institutions, *etc.*, which at one and the same time stigmatized and defined others outside a heterosexual matrix – social misfits requiring treatment, physical and/or psychological (Foucault 1965: 259, 272, Sedgwick 1990: 2).

Michel Foucault has argued that as soon as homosexuality was categorised in the 1870s, it also gained its medical, psychiatric and psychological constitution (Foucault 1990: 43). In Sweden it was considered a mental illness by The National Board of Health and Welfare until 1979. There is no doubt that the word homosexual was used in print for the first time in 1869 by the Hungarian writer Karl Maria Kertbeny (NE), but words denoting couples engaged in homoerotic acts were employed far earlier. Professor Bernadette Brooten has written an innovative and detailed book titled *Love between women. Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (1996). She declares that female homoerotic acts could be described as monstrous, worthy of death and contrary to nature and that certain words were used in a derogatory manner to describe women engaged in homoerotic acts (1996: chapter 5). And more importantly, women performing homoerotic acts were considered to require medical treatment by medical practitioners already in antiquity (*ibid*), contrary to the above assertion of Foucault. Perhaps Foucault, like so many other (male) writers (*e.g.* Boswell 1980, 1994), concentrated on describing male homoerotic acts or the history of male (homo)sexuality, since Bernadette Brooten (*ibid*: 361) also shows that certain male homoerotic acts during the same centuries were not considered unnatural or requiring treatment.

During the period Bernadette Brooten studied, much of the Greek and Roman societies/thoughts used dualism as a governing principle or structure (Kärfve 2001: 25), though note that they had a matrix of erotic orientations including not only the dualistic active/passive constellation, but also gender, age, legal and social status of the partner (Brooten 1996: 3). Within Greek

materialism, a human being was considered as being split into two parts; one material body and one psyche or soul, which consisted of the finest thing thought possible, namely air (Kärfve 2001: 25). The division into two units lived on through the Middle Ages (*ibid*), but was further enhanced during the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the thought of Renée Descartes, who before his death in a wintery Stockholm, had written that a human being consisted of a body and a soul. According to Judith Butler, the constant ontological distinction between body and soul within the philosophical tradition, starting with Plato and continuing through Descartes, Husserl and Sartre, supports political and psychological relations of subordination and hierarchy (Butler 1990: 2, *cf.* Derrida 1998). And indeed, Bernadette Brooten (1996: 361) concludes that during the Roman period she studied, hierarchy between women and men (where women were subordinate) was the standard order of things. During the much later Middle Ages in Sweden (*ca.* 1050–1500 AD) the very same thought on hierarchical relationship among women and men was prevalent. Man and woman were created differently, and women were physically and spiritually weaker, physiologically colder and more humid (in a context where dryness and heat since antiquity had been considered the vital and life giving power of an organism), and intellectually inferior (Liepe 2003: 147). Bernadette Brooten (1996: 1–2, chapter 5) continues that this order at the same time epitomised women as passive (subordinate) and men as active, making this constellation (superior/subordinate) the foundation of what was considered to be natural. The cases where no hierarchy could be exercised would be considered unnatural: for instance, if two women – always deemed as the passive partners – were involved in an homoerotic act (*ibid*). The very same mechanism of hierarchy did not condone male homoerotic acts, as long as the engaging couple consisted of one superior and one subordinate, such as a man and his slave (*ibid*). This further highlight how our modern stigma of people engaged in homoeroticism differs from how the “problem” was defined during the Greek/Roman period she studied. Today homosexuality is often considered faulty or unnatural since it ultimately does not result in procreation. In antiquity, the issue was not the default of reproduction but instead the impossibility or rather unnaturalness of two passive objects involved in homoerotic acts since erotic acts were considered natural if, and only if, the equation contained an hierarchical structure (*ibid*). Two women performing homoerotic acts were considered unnatural altogether and medical literature of the time contain descriptions of how this ailment should be treated (*ibid*). Since hierarchy was the guiding principle of the world, the two women constellation must mean that one of the two in the homoerotic act aspired to be a man and be active, clearly a course of against the nature of the world. Therefore, the clitoris of the active woman must somehow be unnaturally large (read: approaching a penis), and a clitoridectomy was subsequently recommended to take place (*ibid*: 162–171, 360–1). Another sug-

gested prescriptions to cure the unnatural behaviour were to use mind control (Brooten 1996: 360–1).

I would like to add that the asymmetric power relations between women and men, where men were/are allowed more space to manoeuvre in a variety of socio-political roles contributed to making women to a greater extent subjects to the same regulating social orders. Examples of these structures and the effects of them on bodies can also be taken from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, Maja Runcis has concluded in her excellent but at the same time horrifying thesis that the sterilization project in Sweden, operating from 1935 up until as late as 1975, was applied to women to a far greater extent than to men (Runcis 1998: 355). The start of this project must be seen as part of the biologism that likewise was a prominent feature of Nazi Germany. However, in Germany the focus was on a general racial hygiene, whereas in Sweden the primary aim was to ensure purity within one's own group. 63,000 beings were sterilized during the forty years the laws were in operation, of which, stunningly, 95% were women (*ibid*). One purpose of the law was "to improve human beings for the common good of society" (Runcis 1998: 355). Thousands of women who were perceived as "feeble-minded" due to, for example, an alleged greater interest in sexuality or eroticism than was deemed appropriate by the representatives of authority and social power, were sterilized (*ibid*: 367). During the 1930s and 1940s the feeble-mindedness or "abnormality" of these women could consist of having looked often in the mirror, to have been seen with male friends in public or for having shown interest in men at dances (*ibid*: 369). Men who were sterilized would be so because of their immorality consisting of criminality or homosexuality, but also if they failed to live up to the economical standards set out for men, such as the ability to support a family – then they too were labelled "feeble-minded" (*ibid*: 367–8). Not until the late 1990s did the Swedish government admit these acts of cruelty committed for four decades. In 1999, a law was passed regulating a compensation of 175,000 Swedish crowns (*ca.* 17,500 Euro) to be paid to each individual who had been sterilized against their will or on someone else's initiative (*Law 1999: 332 on compensation for sterilized in certain cases*).

The (hetero)sexual practice mode not only operates in schools but pervades almost all aspects of our societies – in the work place, museums, shops, *etc.* (Foucault 1965, 1990, Butler 1990, Sedgwick 1990). Even TV programmes spend a considerable amount of time on showing how animals do it – cutting out the segments that do not match the office of human sexual discipline. Bagemihl (1999) concluded this to be the case in a study. Lately, educational sexing (and "sexing" in more than one sense) seems to have reached children at lower ages: female 9-year-olds may find themselves wanting thongs and bras (with built-in breasts, of course) readily available at department stores



(Ekselius 2001). In an experiment the artist Palle Torsson re-cut scenes with of children playing from Pippi Långstrump movies. A girl gliding down a handrail, her panties showing, Pippi on a ladder with legs apart while two policemen below stare at her naked legs *etc.*, scenes that today have been (mis)interpreted as pornographic, and blame has been put on the artist for such a porn-sequel, whereas his purpose was to make visible our own viewing of the film images, and how this viewing changes over time (*ibid*).

Then what has the discussion above got to do with interpretations of bodies within archaeology? For one thing, on a general level it illustrates that the governing principles of our Western societies are largely androcentric (a fact for centuries) and heterocentric (heteronormativity being the guiding star since the 19<sup>th</sup> century). We are all stuck with the Western way of structuring our thoughts, actions and performances, procedures that in all likelihood were not used during the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia. A starting point is therefore the opportunity offered by the possibility that the sorting and categorising during the Iron Ages may not at all have been primarily connected to and built around Western literate dualisms. In particular, Scandinavian Iron Age societies should most probably be seen as orally based, a fact that influenced the way beings and things were apprehended, or differently put, how the world was structured (Ong 1990, see also above). An awareness of our ways of thinking and structuring the world may be a first step towards undoing the same structures – or at least opening up a window of possibilities to think differently about bodies, things and beings – in non-Western prehistoric times.

Research in the history of religion in Scandinavia may further contribute to an alternative understanding of the Iron Age worlds, where we most likely do not find dualistic structures to the same encompassing extent as in the Western paradigms. Gro Steinsland (1990a) has elegantly interpreted and analysed the anthropogenic myth<sup>9</sup> as it is presented in the Edda poem Voluspá. As within the poem Voluspá itself, it is only when explaining what is not in the creation process of the ancient couple Ask and Embla (possibly paraphrasing Adam and Eve), that it is revealed what it meant to be a man and a woman, or rather a human being in this context. At first in Voluspá (verse 17) it is stated that Ask and Embla were lifeless and had neither breath nor thought nor blood nor good (or godly) looks. But when the triad of gods Odin, Höne and Lodur arrive (verse 18), it is declared that they give the couple the necessary life giving components of breath, thought, blood

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<sup>9</sup> An anthropogenic myth is a myth that describes the creation of (wo)man. Many researchers are of the opinion that the perception of a human being, its constitution and nature, is most clearly expressed in this myth of culture (Steinsland 1990a: 59). Another myth in the Edda poem Rigstula describes the creation of the social classes slave, farmer, earl and king. See also Steinsland 1983 for anthropogenetic myths in other Nordic written sources.

and good (or godly) looks. Thereby the human beings are fully created and are given destinies, are placed in a context and may work in an established cosmos – they are given a place in time and space (Steinsland 1990a: 60–1). These properties Gro Steinsland claims are vital for human beings and that they are concepts that express soul powers (*ibid*: 60). She further deduces that the myth contains neither a hint of superiority or subordination between the sexes as in the Genesis myth, nor a description of human beings as part of a higher existence which due to improper behaviour was lost, nor that ethical aspects (showing a purpose for human beings or the purpose of life) are presented and present in the myth (*ibid*). Gro Steinsland concludes that a human being consists of two parts – a material and an immaterial part. The material part consists of Ask and Embla as lying lifeless on the ground, prior to the arrival of the gods. However, the immaterial part cannot easily be reduced to a simple concept of a soul, but is multiple showing the full range of life potency criteria that must be fulfilled in order for (human) life to exist: breath, thought, blood and good (or godly) looks (*ibid*). She likewise maintains that man and woman are from the moment of creation equipped with the same life qualities (*ibid*). Recently, Anders Hultgård has suggested that the referral of Ask and Embla as lifeless, or rather as two tree-trunks, could “reflect mythic ideas on the origin of mankind from trees that were part of a common Indo-European heritage” (2006: 62).

There is also the question of the consequences of the structuring of categories. I subscribe to viewing identity as something fluid, something that is not fixed but instead performed and negotiated. The performative acts are not acts in isolation originating solely from a person but are contextually performed where the acting and performativity of other people and be all means even things, substances and relationships may affect or even control the way you perform (see below). The Polish social psychologist Sylwia Bedynska has in her doctoral thesis found that mere reminders of disparaging stereotypes, such as reading jokes about stupid blondes, immediately affect a person belonging to that category, who achieve less (Zaremba 2004). Even expressing an hypothesis such as, “it has been claimed that women are worse than men at doing math – let’s test to see if it is correct!” make women students perform poorly, according to Bedynska (*ibid*). Sylwia Bedynska has concluded that even joking about someone being stupid contorts the person’s perception of the self. A stupid blonde becomes a stupid blonde.

Another book on harassment (Häggkvist 2001 in Peterson 2001: 2) explains how the oppressing agent’s use of derogatory words, such as stating that a person has bent legs, ultimately results in the person being, or performing, as bowed. And as described above, in some cases when your performing is deemed as totally inappropriate, the normal may want to operate (on) you to reinstall you in a better shape in society (*e.g.* Runcis 1998). I would like to emphasize that I do not want to portray the oppressed as vic-

tims, but as Michel Foucault argues (*e.g.* 1980), that where there is power and control there is also resistance. However, resistance or agency may not be open or a realistic alternative to all agents.

In the following, I will first consider how bodies have been categorised within archaeology in general and for the archaeological material in this thesis in particular, presented through a number of examples. The first steps to interpreting Late Iron Age bodies anew will follow this brief exposé.

## The sorting of bodies within archaeology

Archaeology as an academic discipline was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At this period of time there was a sorting frenzy in society in general, when bodies were categorised into normal and deviant categories, and the dividing line for normality was specified by the heteronormative order, as described above. A common characteristic of archaeology was and is, however, that of sorting. Not only are bodies fitted into one of the two sex slots, but material culture is also sorted into different categories. The Montelii typology is in truth an archaeological discourse of sorting which was, and is, of great importance to archaeologists. The sorting has none the less resulted in universal and essentialist categories such as hunter-gatherer, farmers, warriors, traders, TRB, *etc.* (Back Danielsson and Strassburg 1998b). The socio-biological world-view of the West in itself engendered an increased interest in sorting and distinguishing alleged differences between people, such as measuring skull sizes, a compulsory task for scientists interested in race biology at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to which archaeology actually contributed (During 1992, Lundström and Pilvesmaa 1996, Baudou 1997, Welinder 2003, Bettina 2006). In recent years DNA analyses of skeleton remains are increasingly used within archaeology, but mainly with the purpose of sex determinations of immature skeletons (Sofaer 2006: 91). However, treading old paths, the new technology is also applied to distinguish bodies with what has been labelled as deviant DNA<sup>10</sup> (*e.g.* Wenman 2005). Within this new research tradition there seems to be an absence of a discussion how archae-

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<sup>10</sup> I would like to suggest that the increase of DNA analyses within for instance archaeology may actually be described as part of the macro paradigm shift in society mentioned above, where physics and biology merge. In fact, the apparent need to verify old phenomena in new ways, for example to investigate if buried gender benders have deviant DNA (*e.g.* Wenman 2005) or to examine the skull of Sacred Birgitta (AD 1303–1373) to see if a possible tumour or partial epilepsy could explain her godly visions (Landtblom 2005), may be seen as stories (however scientific, neutral and objective it is argued that they are) that we need in order to deal with the paradigm shift. The paradigm shift may even be characterized as a transitional period. The stories enable and assist in our societal rite of passage, from physics as the main paradigm to biology and physics together as the new paradigm (*cf.* forthcoming chapter on bodies, masking and performances).

ology was part of the race biologism during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, implying a lack of awareness of the political implications the research had. More acutely, what is missing is a self-reflection and a wider socio-political perspective that clarifies how the modern DNA research differs (if it does) from the race biology of the last century (*cf.* Gosden 2006). None the less, the main focus in the work is on how bodies have been sorted as regards sex, and to a lesser extent on other sorting and distinguishing bodily criteria (which are rarely used for interpretations anyhow).

In the following I will critically examine the different ways bodies are and have been sexed within archaeology – through body anthropology (osteology) and through archaeological sexing (certain objects are deemed feminine and masculine respectively). Sexing through DNA is discussed briefly. I will start with the archaeological sexing and investigate how men have become connected to swords and women to jewellery and needlework. I will also comment on the fact that large parts of the archaeological materials at burial grounds frequently are not commented on, since they contain objects that are not easily sexed.

### The never-ending story with manly swords and female jewellery – the not-so-hardcore sexing

The first time bodies and beings explicitly are sorted according to sex within archaeology is probably in 1837, when German antiquarians wrote a manifesto for how excavations of burials should be executed (Hjørungdal 1994: 67). A number of objects were consequently used to define the female and the male sex – what was invented was the archaeological sexing (*ibid*). However, the researchers also commented on the characteristics of the examined burnt bones, contending that slender and delicate bones belonged to women (*ibid*). Of interest here is the fact that the manifesto contained description of alleged female and male objects before the very many and extensive investigations of burial grounds in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had started. The antiquarians stated, as a matter of fact, that swords belonged to men and needles to women (*ibid*). Tove Hjørungdal shows that this division and allotment of objects ultimately were the results of the everyday context the antiquarians lived in. At this period of time, a movement started which amongst other things had as a purpose to explain and verify that it was in the nature of women to do needlework (*ibid*: 69). The antiquarian sexing method is also used in a work by Sophus Müller from 1876 (Metso 1999: 27–8). He stated that men were equipped with swords that were used in battles, whereas the long garments and jewellery of women testify to their

peaceful and quiet lives (*ibid*). The pattern with attributing men to swords and women to jewellery has continued and persisted from there on.

Almost 200 years have passed since the policy statement of the German antiquarians. Up to the present day, there seems to be a preoccupation verifying the pattern with men accompanied by swords in burials, and women with needlework and/or jewellery. Let me mention a few examples from the last one hundred years (but see also *e.g.* Müller 1933, Gebühr 1976, Petré 1984, Bennett 1987). In Professor Sune Lindqvist's well-known and much cited work *Uppsala högar och Ottarshögen* ("The Mounds of Uppsala and the Ottar mound") it is declared in a condescending tone that women's burials often contain jewellery gewgaws (1936: 205). However, when beads are recovered in the "wrong" places, that is, in monumental mounds, it is claimed that these at most testify that female thralls had accompanied their masters in death (*ibid*). The internationally renowned professor in physical anthropology, Nils-Gustaf Gejvall, in the first scientific bone estimation, executed on the burial ground from the Early Iron Age of Kyrkbacken in the parish of Horn, Västergötland, concluded that the burial objects support the findings on sex he had done on a morphological basis (Gejvall and Sahlström 1948: 169). In detail this meant that one (1) grave with a sword out of 224 could be attributed pieces of skeletons where fragments of the curve of the eyebrows were found to be "more rounded" and/or the caput humeri (the joint head of the upper part of the arm) was relatively larger, that is the sword belonged to a man (*ibid*: 162, 168–9). The women's burials (featuring burnt fragments of less rounded curves of eyebrows and relatively smaller caput humeri), however, that had objects recovered from the graves (a total of 9) were accompanied by such items that were/are deemed feminine, that is, needles, beads, and sickles (*ibid*). I would like to stress that it is not the estimating of alleged male burials on the basis of swords and women's burials according to needles/jewellery that is the main problem, but instead the singular focus of certain objects as connected to a certain sex. The total number of excavated graves from Kyrkbacken amounted to 224, where 196 of them had retrievable burnt fragmented bones (Gejvall 1947: 39). Among these 196 Nils-Gustaf Gejvall was able to estimate the sex of 56 burials. Due to the scientific method used within osteology, a larger number of skeletal fragments are attributed to the male sex (Shennan 1975, Strassburg 1997a, Arnold 2002, *cf.* Kjellström 2005). This is discernable in the Kyrkbacken material, where 34 burials were estimated "male" and only 18 were "female" (Gejvall and Sahlström 1948: 169). Of the 56 sex estimated graves just 13 had recoverable objects. So, out of a total of 224 graves, we are left with some 13 of 224, or 5%, that convincingly supports the "knowledge" of male attributes (such as a sword) to certain fragmented bones ("men") and female attributes (such as needles/jewellery) to somewhat different fragmented

pieces of skeletons ("women")<sup>11</sup>. Needless to say there were of course several burials where the "feminine" or "masculine" objects were accompanied by fragmented pieces of skeletons that could not be estimated as belonging to either of the sexes. Although Karl Esaias Sahlström (1948), as well as Eva Bergström (1980) later analysed and described the Kyrkbacken burial grounds, there is an evident lack in these reports of in-depth discussions on sex/gender relationship issues. Correspondingly, Tove Hjørungdal (1992) argues that from the 1910s through the 1970s the classification of sex was in itself an objective, leaving questions about social relationships unanswered. Not until women's research began within the archaeological discipline (during the 1970s for the Scandinavian part) were more elaborate interpretations presented, based on objects in burials (*ibid*).

In a more recent work on Iron Age Gotlandic burials Martin Rundkvist (2003a, b) puts weight on the same male-sword and female-jewellery constellation as a standard pattern. Here, as in the earlier cases referred to, the number of graves where there is a match between feminine objects and women and alleged male materials with men is low in comparison to the total number of excavated and analysed burials. However the work merits attention since it is one of very few that observes and calls attention to (but unfortunately only to a lesser extent interprets) the large group of burials that contain "unsexable" objects.

Within archaeology I argue that it is as customary today as a century (or two) ago to assume that weapons such as swords automatically indicates the existence of a buried man. However, as stated before, it is not the attributing

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<sup>11</sup> Nils-Gustaf Gejvall's groundbreaking work should be contextualised. At this period of time there had been and was an ongoing discussion whether or not the burnt bones from burial grounds were of any scientific worth and should be kept at all (Gejvall 1947: 46, Metso 1999: 29). Professor of anthropology Carl Magnus Fürst, for instance, considered them to be of little scientific value (Metso 1999: 29). Through his work on Kyrkbacken, Nils-Gustaf Gejvall did indeed prove the worth of analysing (burnt) human bones. However, there are some peculiarities as regards his methods, in my view. For instance, to his assistance in a late stage in the bone determination process he gained access to pieces of skeletons from 99 cremated beings from the year of 1947, where 49 were from women and 50 from men (Gejvall and Sahlström 1948: 155–6). He explains that he was not told anything about the bones, neither the age of the deceased, nor the sex, until he himself had determined age and sex from the advocated and worked out scientific criteria (*ibid*). Remarkably enough he does not in one word reveal the result of this determination; how many of his assumptions/determinations that were correct. He explains that his written notes on the modern material are excluded in the account, since they only served a controlling function at a late stage in the analysis of the prehistoric bones (*ibid*). It should also be noted that the later much scolded concept bone determination was introduced by Nils-Gustaf Gejvall. However the reason for the introduction of the concept has been lost. When his texts are read, it is quite clear that he is aware of the uncertainty involved in bone determination, but that the reason for his choice of words is the fact that within genetics at the time, the notion sex determination was used (Gejvall and Sahlström 1948: 154). Only to avoid extensive circumlocution did he use sex determination, that is, for practical reasons (*ibid*; note 1). Therefore, I prefer to use the concept sex estimation when discussing the work of Nils-Gustaf Gejvall.

of "women" to jewellery and "men" to weapon that I find the most problematic, but the fact that in doing such categorisations, a large number of burials are commonly not interpreted, namely those that contain objects without our modern sex/gender characteristics. Also, there is a general lack of discussion of what was meant by the adding of a sword or jewellery to a burial – its symbolism in the specific burial context, and so on (though see Nicklasson 1997). Seemingly, when swords in burials are attributed "male" skeleton parts, the burials do not need further comments or explanations. However if weapons are unearthed in burials with "female" skeleton pieces, questions on the certainty in the sexing methods are raised (Svenfelt 2002: 8). Likewise the body parts may in such instances be suggested to belong to a female slave of a powerful man, where his bones (not the slave's) unfortunately had disintegrated within the burial mound (Svenfelt 2002: 9).

### The hardcore sexing: skeletons and genes

Discussions on gender as socially constructed have been successful within academia and within public discussion for decades (Hird 2004: 30). However, critiques of binary genders have also been offered (*e.g.* Claassen 1992, Strassburg 2000, Lorber 2000), since the dualistic gender concept of man/woman ultimately falls back on the sex-dualism. What certainly needs closer examination is the sexing of bodies, where biological notions are used to create sexual difference (Hird 2004: 30). When the centre of attention is on two groups' differences, instead of their intravariability, structures of hierarchy with far-reaching consequences are easily created and maintained (Hird 2004: 29–31). I would like to return to the citation in the opening of the chapter, taken from Judith Butler. What is sex? How is sex determined? It is only when these questions are scrutinized and along with them the sciences that produce the answers to them that cracks in the alleged impenetrable smooth surface are evident. Recent feminist studies focusing on the social construction of science have successfully been able to offer such a stripping scrutiny (*e.g.* Hird 2004: 30 and cited references therein).

Myra J. Hird (2004) has recently critically reviewed the facts of sex in the shape of skeletons, gametes, hormones and genes, where she elegantly has highlighted "the mechanisms through which scientific knowledge is constructed" (Hird 2004: 30). In essence, this means an investigation of how science is socially constructed around the two-sex model, and as such therefore advocates and emphasizes differences between the sexes rather than their similarities (*cf.* Strassburg 2000: 153). This one argument I have put forward previously, namely not only the immense impact that the two-sex model has on our societies but also how highly influential the heteronormative grid is. For archaeology's part, skeletons and genes are of course most current.

Of special interest in regard to skeletons is the recent book “The Body as Material Culture. A Theoretical Osteoarchaeology” (2006) by Joanna Sofaer. Although I am convinced that osteological analyses are more important and informative than archaeologists in general may think, there is still a need to discuss the sexing methods and issues within the discipline. A declaration such as “[o]verall, males and females do fall into two distinct groups because they are dimorphic” (Sofaer 2006: 92) is simply not satisfactory. The meaning of this sentence seems to be that females and males are different because they are different. Contrary to her statement Novotný *et al.* (1993) assure us that “the skeletal features are not binary” (Kjellström 2005: 371). Further osteologist Berit Sigvallius has rightly pointed out that there really is not that big a difference between the skeleton of men and women (1994: 1 in Fahlander 1995: 10). Sofaer’s statement is accompanied by a reference to a diagram (figure 5.2, page 94), which is supposed to illustrate how females and males are distinctively different from another. In the figure the ischium-pubis index is plotted against the angle of the greater sciatic notch. However, the very same figure illustrates perfectly the immense differences that occur within one “sex” or rather between human beings. Further, an individual in the “female” group may have values that are very far apart from another “female’s” value, but be closer to a “male’s” value. Equally, there is no certainty in deciding where the border lies between the sexes in the diagram – where the dots/squares cease to be “male” and the “female” start. The figure is stated to be showing the “sexual dimorphism in the human pelvis” (Sofaer 2006: 94). The sources for the diagram are Hanna and Washburn (1953) and Brothwell (1972). However, the original diagram stems from Hanna and Washburn (1953), where the sex difference in “the Eskimo pelvis” was assessed. Sofaer points out that “...some populations display a greater degree of dimorphism than others” (Sofaer 2006: 91). Unfortunately, the reader is not enlightened as to how the “Eskimo” pelvis (cloaked by Sofaer as “the human pelvis” in said figure) relates to other populations’ pelves. Are they bigger, smaller, display greater or smaller differences between the alleged two sexes? What can be said about the pelves of prehistoric populations, perhaps represented with scanty skeleton materials? And what of the ethical dimensions of the investigation made by Hanna and Washburn – what are the stories behind the *ca.* 100 “Eskimo” skeletons that were “available” at a North-American museum – how did they end up there? Even back in the 1950s, when Hanna and Washburn published their sex article, their methods were criticized. Don R. Brothwell declared that “...the landmarks for these measurements are somewhat ill-defined and may lead to inaccuracy” (Brothwell 1972: 55) referring to criticism from Stewart (1954) as well as Thieme and Schull (1957).

The determination of sex, as Sofaer chooses to call it, is (and can) only be made with reference to observations made on now living people (or rather



dead, of course, but recently dead as opposed to prehistoric bodies). “Modern” skeletons may however have a morphology that is different from those of prehistoric populations. Anna Kjellström has shown for instance that it is plausible that the medieval skeletons from Sigtuna, Uppland, Sweden, that she analysed had a slightly different morphology “than that of the modern comparative populations” (Kjellström 2005: 371).

According to Sofaer, “[d]etermination of sex is...a vital service provided by osteoarchaeologists for interpretative archaeologists” (2006: 90). Knowing the sex of a skeleton enables archaeologists to examine patterns of distributions of objects, it is argued (*ibid*). It is exactly this pattern that I have described as putting a straightjacket on Iron Age cremated bodies, where *ca.* 20–30% of the discussed Late Iron Age Scandinavian materials at best may be estimated as regards sex (see above and below).

### **Skeletons**

As late as the 1500s the most prominent anatomist, Vesalius, drew skeletons that were labelled “human skeletons”, instead of male or female. The possible sex differences were thus perceived as only going skin deep. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *nota bene* the same century as the two-sex model was invented anatomists started drawing female and male skeletons. However, anatomists of the time probably considered nature to produce imperfect differences in bodies. It has been proven that, in order to present typical ideals of masculinity and femininity in skeletons, parts from many people were picked and chosen in order to create a perfect skeleton belonging to the respective sex. A typical female skeleton could consist of parts from both male and female people, and vice-versa for male skeletons. However, the (created) differences between male and female skeletons were not restricted to visible features; they were also given meaning. The purposes of women in life (child-bearing, living a sedentary life, *etc.*) could thereby also be explained and rectified. (Hird 2004: 34–5).

Within osteoarchaeology, it is declared that sex is most reliably assessed in regard to the skull and the pelvis (Sofaer 2006: 91, Kjellström 2004: 360). Even today, the differences between women and men are functional – the variations in the pelvis between women and men is declared to be related to childbirth (Sofaer 2006: 91, Geller 2005: 598). Needless to say, the pelvis show great differentiations between human beings, not only between “men” and “women”. Further, not all women may have children for an assortment of reasons; cultural, social, biological, political, *etc.* The same argument is valid for men. Of course these reasons may not manifest themselves in the skeleton so to speak, but that is exactly the point – we have no way of knowing how the body appeared, performed and interacted with its flesh (clothes and other paraphernalia) on, regardless of the shape, form, and size of the pelvis. To assume that prehistoric people sorted themselves in accordance

with reproductive strategies emanating from their skeleton forms, which a sexing of the pelvis indicates, is not unproblematic, but rather a modern and presumptuous claim. For instance, prolific qualities are known in some specific cultures to be displayed through the colour of the eyes. Among the Nuu-Cha-Nulth Nation living on Vancouver Island, Canada, stories are told where women with green eyes are considered especially prolific (Cameron 1987). Consequently, Pamela Geller maintains that we should not "...automatically presume in our studies of those cultures distant in space and time from our own...that sex represents a biological given predicated upon anatomical difference and/or reproductive capability" (Geller 2005: 599).

I will now briefly touch on the methods of physical anthropology or osteology within the archaeological discipline of today. Firstly, let me recall again the common finding circumstances for the (late) Iron Age body parts discussed in the thesis. Most commonly, bodies were cremated, although variations occurred, and due to the degree of fragmentation, it has been concluded that the bones were handled in some cultural specific ways after the cremation (*e.g.* Gejvall 1959 in Sigvallius 1994: 28, Artelius and Arcini 1996: 38). Bo Petré describes the bones as usually being crushed "in centimetre-large flakes" (1993b: 149–50).

Berit Sigvallius has analysed the burnt bones from nine burial grounds dating from *ca.* AD 400–AD 1000, including 488 burials from the parish of Spånga, the county of Uppland, Sweden (Sigvallius 1994: 7). There is no reason to think that these burials and burial grounds differ substantially from other cemeteries in, for example, the county of Södermanland, from the same period of time. According to anatomist Per Holck (1997) an adult human being produces *ca.* 2,000–2,500 grams of burnt bones when cremated. In contrast, the burials of Spånga, thought to represent only one human, contained 3–1,363 grams of human bones, with an average of 267.9 grams (Sigvallius 1994: 28). These (few) grams constitute the material which consequently is sexed. In the sex analyses executed by Sigvallius on the material, the method developed by Gejvall accounted for above was used (Sigvallius 1994: 9). It might be argued that the weight alone need not be decisive for whether a sex estimation can be made. If the "right" body parts are assembled and put in a grave, they may indicate the sex of the deceased. However, the pelvis, favoured as the "safest" body part to sex, is usually blown into pieces during the cremation act (Iregren 1991: 102–3). Commonly, only pieces of the skull and a few roots from teeth are put in a grave and left to be studied by an osteologist (Iregren 1991: 103). Professor Elisabeth Iregren has ascertained that cremated bones cannot be examined in isolation, but a whole burial ground must be investigated, and by the same experienced osteologist (*ibid*). These, and other difficulties with cremated materials, has led

Professor Iregren to maintain that the biological knowledge that may be obtained from cremation burials is minimal (1991: 104). She suggests instead that focus should be on the social or economical status of the deceased, the amount of deposited bones from humans and animals, and details about the slaughtered animals (*ibid*).

As if these sexing difficulties were not enough, it has been shown that the methods used for sexing usually favour skeletons as belonging to males (*e.g.* Shennan 1975, Arnold 2002), as mentioned earlier. Anna Kjellström (2005: 69) suggests that poor preservation of skeletons, with the effect that fewer traits can be sexually assessed, results in a more masculine product. She further points to the fact that, referring to Meindl *et al.* (1985) and Walker (1995), with age skeletons of women become morphologically more oriented towards male dittos. I wonder myself about the detail that robust skeletons commonly are judged as male, whereas robustness may be achieved during a person's lifetime by hard manual labour, thus not being (only) an innate quality of the pieces of bone. Since the ways prehistoric people lived (that is engaged their bodies) differed greatly from ours it should be equally problematical to claim that slender and delicate bones are always female and stalwart ones are male.

To make sex estimations, osteoarchaeologists may use different methods for sexing skeletons. Examples of such methods are described in Acsádi and Nemeskéri (1970) and in Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994). Other discussions on the differences between what has been labelled male and female skeletons can be found in, for example, Ubelaker (1989), Bass (1995), Cox and Mays (2000), and Brickley and McKinley (2004).

The classificatory system described in Acsádi and Nemeskéri (1970) focuses on muscle size evaluations and the robustness of the skeleton (or skeletal pieces), where hyper masculine traits receive the value (+2), masculine (+1), neutral (0), feminine (-1), and hyper feminine (-2). Although there are many ways in which observations of skeletons may be graded, I would like to focus briefly on this system, to describe how the methods may be interpreted as making the male skeleton the positive norm. According to Acsádi and Nemeskéri (1970) the ideal female is allotted a position on the far left of the scale, receiving negative value, and the sturdy, large, and ideal man belong to the right (in more than one sense) side of the scale. This system has been criticized for being usable only in its extremes, and even in these cases a large element of subjective arbitrariness is present (Celin 1994: 10, Strassburg 1997a: 164). Further, it is notable that those skeletons without typical sexual characteristics receive the significant zero, implying that non-sexable individuals are of little value (zero) but at least more than the inferior women. Another classificatory system, presented in Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994), concentrates on estimates of the os coxae and the skull (1994:

21), where the recording standards are as follows. As with the previous classificatory system, the non-sexable is given the number zero (0) (*ibid*). When there is claimed to be little doubt that the skeleton pieces represent a female they are assigned the figure one (1), and where there seemingly is no doubt that the skeleton parts are from a man, the figure five (5) is used (*ibid*). If the body parts are inconclusive of one sex, these ambiguous skeleton pieces are assigned the value three (3) (*ibid*). It should be pointed out that several features of, for instance, a skull are recorded and are given the numbers one (1) to five (5), and where the majority of these numbers fall (towards one, or towards five) lies behind the assessment of the investigated individual's sex (Sofaer 2006: 91). Sofaer disagrees that this reflects the possibility of sex belonging to a spectrum, but insists that an osteoarchaeologist instead presents different degrees of certainty in determination (*ibid*, cf. Novotný *et al.* (1993) on skeletons as not being binary in nature).

Let me present an example, where two researchers (the osteologist Nils-Gustav Gejvall and the anatomist Per Holck) independently of one another examined the very same archaeologically excavated (and cremated) material from a sexing point of view. Professor Stig Welinder published a very interesting scrutiny of sexing methods in 1989. Per Holck executed his examination far later than Nils Gustav Gejvall, but since the observations made by Gejvall had not been made public for some thirty years, Holck was unaware of the previous sexing made of the cremated bones from the Ula burial ground, Norway (Welinder 1989: 29). Importantly, Welinder concludes that "The agreement between the sex determinations by the two scholars corresponds to one or both tossing a coin" (Welinder 1989: 29–30). Welinder contributes by making an archaeological sexing, where possible, of the burials (though unfortunately only restricted to two genders/sexes). He then compares his archaeological sexing to that of the two scholars. Rather surprisingly, he finds that Gejvall seems to have specialized in finding the male sex, since this category was estimated to be found not only with Welinder's male gender/sex categories, but also with the cases Welinder had interpreted as females (1989: 36). With Holck it was the other way around, he was more inclined to estimate cremated body parts as representing females (*ibid*). It should be noted that Welinder (1989: 31) himself remarks that it cannot be established that all the bone assemblages from the Ula burial ground analysed by Gejvall were identical to those studied later by Holck. Some burials had increased in bone weight throughout the years, others declined and yet others had almost the same weight. Osteologist Ylva Svenfelt (2002: 26–7) convincingly argues for the possibility of the cremated bones to have been mixed up in the antiquarian handling through time passing. She does not dismiss however the likelihood that the criticism presented by Welinder is accurate (Svenfelt 2002: 26).

Finally, I would like to stress that I am criticizing the androcentrism of the methods employed when making sex estimations, the uncertainties as regards osteoarchaeological sexing. I question the goal of archaeologists who insist on sexing prehistoric bodies, and the apparent lack of discussion of the political implications of the sexing procedures. I do not criticize the fine work made by osteologists on other characteristics of human and animal skeleton pieces. Sofaer (2006: 105–16) usefully points to studies on skeleton materials that highlight how bodies have been engaged in their life times through various repetitive performances, leaving traces in their skeletons.

## Genes

Our genetic code is found in the DNA, the deoxyribonucleic acid. As I hinted above, DNA analyses have been growing in numbers and in popularity during the last decades (Hird 2004: 43). Within archaeology DNA analyses seem mostly to be an alternative for sexing skeletons that are immature (Sofaer 2006: 91). Seemingly, the genetic code can explain all sorts of behaviours and physical outcomes (diseases, homosexuality, *etc.*) which then, through the finding in the genes, can be labelled as natural or naturally deviant. Within archaeology in Sweden, DNA-analysis has foremost been used to analyse family structures, and to discuss aspects of inherited or acquired prestige (Götherström 2001).

Ninety-nine percent of the chromosomes in a human being is shared with all other humans, and of this 90 percent has no known function (*ibid*: 44). Only identical twins share the chromosomes 100 percent. Further, any person's DNA is inherited matrilineally (not equally from mother and father as is commonly perceived by the public) (*ibid*: 47). Of the 46 chromosomes humans usually have, there are only two that can be related to sexual difference (*ibid*: 47), though note that people with Down's syndrome have one extra chromosome. They are commonly termed X and Y chromosomes, and XX (homogametic) denotes females and XY (heterogametic) males (*ibid*: 47). However variations in these clear groups occur. Sex can be expressed as XXY, XXYY, XXXXY, XXXY and in many more ways (*ibid*). To complicate things further, our common way of assessing the sex of humans, through the presence of ovaries or testes and genitals "is not determined by the X and Y chromosomes alone" (Hird 2004: 48). There is a complex relationship between hormones and genes (*ibid*). So the question must be formulated: what does a DNA sexing mean when executed on prehistoric people? The knowledge of the sex achieved through DNA analyses does not automatically tell us if the human being had female or male genitals, which seems to be the divide for males and females today. What is the usefulness for archaeological interpretations of the past to know if the analysed human had a set of XXXY or XXYY chromosomes?

Myra J. Hird (2004) has maintained that scientific analyses and results must not be shunned by, for instance, feminists seeking equality between men and women. On the contrary, such results may instead be used to prove various socio-cultural points of importance. I agree, and hereby gladly refer to a fairly new branch of research called epi-genetics. Within epi-genetics, it has been found that the way a person lives his or her life actually affects the genes (Gustafsson 2005). Identical twins are born with matching sets of chromosomes. Studies of twins with identical DNA have revealed that the DNA structure only matches when the twins are born, that is, exactly the same sequences in the DNA are active from the start. Subsequently, however, different chemical groups are connected to the genes, with the result that genes may be activated or deactivated (*ibid*). Professor Tomas Ekström at the Department of Clinical Neuroscience of the Karolinska Institute claims that these differences are created by the ways the body is engaged and treated, depending on the environment in which one grows up, and what kinds of foods are digested (Ekström 2005 in Gustafsson 2005). Ultimately, this must mean that the socio-cultural values in which bodies partake affect the activating and de-activating of genes.

### Example one: gold foil figures

#### **Loving couples resulting in...**

Let us immediately look at an archaeological example of the possible consequences of the workings of the dominant heterosexual matrix. One group of materials that is (re-)interpreted in the current thesis are gold foil figures, a material category that is found within Scandinavia and dateable to *ca.* the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Their characteristics, as well as more detailed interpretations, are thoroughly accounted for in Part Two.

The gold foils may show a single figure or two figures on the same foil. A few gold foils also show animal representations. The ones showing two figures have been interpreted as showing a man and a woman that are kissing and embracing, and are therefore usually called “loving couples”, see figure 5. How surprising it is, then to find that when two people of, what has been interpreted as the same sex embrace, the label “loving couple” is not used and deemed inapplicable. Two such cases can be noted (figs 6 and 7), where the materials clearly resemble the gold foil figures in style.



Fig. 5. An alleged loving couple from Helgö, Sweden. Not to scale. Helgö 603, inventory number SHM 25075: 603. Drawing to the left by Händel, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 79.



Fig. 6. Following the categorisation for figure 5, this couple is also “in love”. Recovered as a loose find in Roskilde. Enlarged. Source: Mackeprang 1943: 69.



Fig. 7. Yet one more “loving” couple? Pendant retrieved from a burial in Norsborg, Botkyrka parish, Södermanland. Drawing by Faith-Ell. (Compare also with a re-drawing of the pendant, see fig. 50). Enlarged. Source: ATA.

A pendant in bronze was excavated in a grave in the Norsborg’s park, Botkyrka parish, in the late 1930s (fig. 7), showing two beings with big chests/breasts hugging each other by the arms. When described and interpreted by Wilhelm Holmqvist in the 1960’s he stated that “...one could never interpret this as a pair of lovers or a fertility scene” (Holmqvist 1960: 111). Mackeprang (1943) regarded a pendant in gold retrieved as a single find from Roskilde, Denmark, picturing two men embracing (fig. 6) that one of the two men was a woman, probably due to the fact that he thought it unthinkable for two men to be in such a position. He argues that the bearded character in fact represents a woman, where the beard would just be the unfortunate result of a primitive portrayal technique (Mackeprang 1943:69). In both examples, the possibility of two people of same-sex embracing and being lovers is completely rejected. This is highly inconsistent with the interpretation of an embracing man and woman as lovers. The classification of



the gold foil couples as loving couples is in my view unfortunate from another standpoint. Not all couples are as clear and easy to interpret as the example in figure 5. Large numbers of couples may be crumpled and hard to recognise, display figures that are not very human-like at all or display figures that only with great effort are forced to fit into the binary categories of male/female (figs 8 and 9). Further, not all couples seem to be kissing, but may be involved in other bodily transgressing activities (fig. 10).



Fig. 8. A humanoid couple from Helgö (2052, inventory number SHM 25343: 2052). Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 83.



Fig. 9. A couple from Lundeberg, where the gender-attributing is not clear-cut. Drawing by Eva Koch. Enlarged. Source: Thomsen *et al.* 1993: 88.

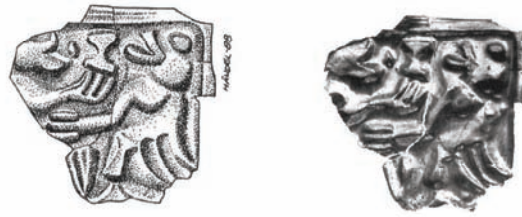


Fig. 10. A couple not engaged in a kiss – instead other transgressing activities involving orifices are discernable. The consumption of foods? From Helgö nr 962, inventory number SHM 25075: 962. Drawing by Händel to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 81.

The loving couple interpretation is likewise unfortunate from other points of view. The possibility of gold foil figures being connected to divine beings, otherworldly presences, their spatial connection to roof supporting posts and next to them the seats for a ruling couple implies the creation of a cosmic geography and divine communication as well as cosmological movement and seasonality (Back Danielsson 1999: 17).

I argue in the following chapters that the gold foil figures represent human beings that are masked, or exhibit manipulated traits. As such their interpretation cannot be limited to the representation of specific gods or deities. Rather they constitute the material remains of the recasting of certain events or stories. The choice of allotting the figures with, in our view, inhuman characteristics (figs 8, 10) would be a deliberate procedure for expressing certain aspects of the world. To sum up, the loving couple categorisation does not account for the variability that the archaeological material obviously suggests.

#### **...a happy family –**

Interpretations made of gold foil figures have on other occasions revealed the archaeologists' predisposition to advocate for the heterosexual matrix. Within the Eketorp enclosure, on Öland in Sweden, gold foil figures were encountered with three different human-like motifs, all retrieved within a context that can be dated to *ca.* 400–700 AD, that is the second of the three building phases of the enclosure (Engström 1991, Andréasson 1995: 80). In their small brochure on the enclosure, the National Board of Antiquities declares that the figures can be interpreted as a man, a woman and a child, thus implying a neat family photography (fig. 11).



Figurbleck av guld, s.k. guldgubbar. Dessa tre människoframställningar kan tolkas som en man, en kvinna och ett barn.

Fig. 11. Gold foil figures from the Eketorp enclosure, which are interpreted by the National Board of Antiquities to be that of a man, a woman and a child. Photo: Karl-Erik Granath. Enlarged. Source: RAÄ brochure “Eketorp. En levande fornborg – under 1000 år”.

This meagre and “hetero-procreative” interpretation is hardly correct or interesting. Why would the figure on the left be a man? Because it is the largest of the three foils? And the middle figure would be a child, because it is the smallest figure? And finally, the figure on the right is a woman because it wears a possible dress and is a size smaller than the “man”? The family interpretation further ignores interpretations made by other archaeologist, who have emphasized the gold foil figures’ probable religious character and suggested that some of them represent deities and a sort of temple currency (Watt 1991a, 1999b), representing cult masquerades or indeed shaman-like beings in action (Back Danielsson 2002, *cf.* Lamm 2004: 130).

#### **well-dressed and well-behaved**

The representations of human beings on gold foils have also been used by Margrethe Watt (*e.g.* 2001, 2003) and in particular Ulla Mannering (*e.g.* 1999, 2004) for studying Late Iron Age dresses, where the issue of sex was also examined. Ulla Mannering, in her 1999 work which concentrated on gold foil figures from Norway and Sweden, refrains from discussing the suitability of the material as reflecting “the dress” of the Late Iron Age (*ibid.*: 21). Although a number of gold foil figures have been recovered, the locations of their retrieval can surely neither be described as everyday places, nor can the material itself be regarded as something every person had access to. Even though the tiny gold foil figures are very detailed as regards the dress, compared to their small size, their motifs, find circumstances and the mate-

rial from which they are made in my view speak firmly against the possibility of describing, finding and discussing “the dress of the Late Iron Age”. Rather, a number of situations must be taken into consideration to establish what kinds of garments are represented, if indeed they may be extracted from the total context at all. A modern example may further explain my point. How representative of our modern societies’ everyday dressing would the garments worn at funerals be? A study of the clothes would of course be excellent for analysing dress codes during funerals as well as addressing other issues and perhaps to distinguish different personas during the funeral act – the priest, the mourners, the possible organist, *etc.* In a later work Mannering (2004: 72) persists in claiming that the clothes represented on the foils are “a useful source in the investigation of the Late Iron Age costume”, since elements from the garments have been retrieved archaeologically, that is in burial contexts. Although I agree with Mannering (1998: 67–8 in Lamm 2004: 59) that they presumably represent some form of upper class, nonetheless my point is that these clothes do not represent common (upper class) Iron Age costumes, but rather clothes, sometimes with accompanying paraphernalia, that were used in transitional circumstances. The fact that of similar attributes reminiscent of this garb have been retrieved from burial contexts supports the idea of garments worn at transitional events, involving transformations from one state of being to another. Equally important, this suggests that the attributes can not be analysed in isolation from the context in which they appear, including the complete representation and the context in which they were used and (later?) deposited.

Another unfortunate basis for research, in my view, is to sex the gold foils, claimed to be “a good starting point” (Mannering 1999: 21, my translation from Danish). It is unfortunate for several reasons. One reason is the fact that it is not possible to sex bodily representations on gold foils or Gotlandic picture stones, pendants, bracteates, *etc.*, simply because there are no bodies to sex, mere representations of bodies and at most a representation of a performed embodiment. One may recall René Magritte’s famous painting of a pipe with the text underneath stating in French that “this is not a pipe”. And of course, it is not. It would not matter if a representation of a body, say a gold foil, should display genitals – for instance breasts or vaginas, we would still deal with a piece of metal with a representation of a performing embodiment and as such not sex-able. The genitals may not have had anything to do with sex at all (*cf.* Alberti 1999), but instead in their context may represent something else – potency, power, intimacy, ecstasy, *etc.* A decaying, fragmented body in a grave may be sexed, but as discussed above, the different variants of sexing (by skeletal morphology, DNA or by using the archaeological material) ultimately contributes nearly nothing to the interpretational process of the burial and the deceased. And frankly, in my view, a sexing of the representations of bodies on gold foil figures does not con-

tribute substantially either to the interpretational processes of the material (see further in *Sexing as educating and self-explanatory*).

Another reason why sexing as a starting point is unfortunate is of course the fact that, as previously mentioned, the two sexes were not invented until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Bodies were most probably sorted according to other criteria than our modern ones. And indeed this may be discerned in regard to the earliest (written) interpretations of gold foil couples. The interpretation made by the scholar Otto Sperling, who was born in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and who as early as in the year of 1700 published a thesis, in which a gold foil pair was discussed, holds particular interest (Lamm 2004: 50, 115). What did Otto see, when he looked at the foil which was published in his thesis? The way he interpreted the gold foil couple can be discerned in figure 12, showing a drawing of the foil. He describes the figures as "...two human figures meeting each other, they are dressed dissimilarly, that on the left in secular clothing, the one on the right in priestly garb..." (Sperling 1700 translated from Latin in Axboe 1981: 98–9 in Lamm 2004: 115). The interpretation of the two figures as representing a bishop and a warrior meeting each other came to a halt at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when archaeologist Gabriel Gustafson for the first time suggested that the figures were a man and a woman, in fact a loving couple (Gustafson 1899: 88 in Lamm 2004: 116). Here it is obvious that the interpretation of Gustafson most probably has been flavoured by the currents of that time – the identification of two sexes instead of one, and their engagements as being that belonging to a love scene, instead of two people involved in other encounters.



Fig. 12. Gold foil couple as it was seen by Otto Sperling around the year 1700 that is before the invention of the two sexes. Sperling identified the characters as two human figures, in secular and priestly clothing meeting each other, not as a man and a woman expressing love. Enlarged. Source: Sperling 1700, fig. 24 on spread with figures, unnumbered page.

The loving couple interpretation has continued from Gustafson's time to ours. Ulla Mannering states that: "Most people would agree, that the gold foils with two figures display a man and a woman, because the fabric alone speaks this way: the men wear the trousers and the women the skirts. That is

the way things are, and surely that is the way things always have been.” (Mannering 1999: 21, my translation from Danish). However, when the gold foil figures are categorised in conformity with male = trousers, female = skirts, a number of gold foil figures go unmentioned or are discarded. This is true for the character with a feathered mantle or furry garment from Eketorp (fig. 13), that according to the clear-cut criteria just mentioned would be neither male nor female.



Fig. 13. A gold foil figure without a skirt or trousers from Eketorp, Öland, Sweden, (Eketorp B4, inventory number SHM 31597), meaning that it is neither male nor female according to Mannering’s criteria (*e.g.* 1999, 2004). See also gold foil couple in figure 39 from Slöinge, Sweden, where seemingly both characters have neither skirt nor trousers. Also note the exaggerated nose and large eyes. I refer to these facial manipulations as masking techniques (see chapter *Masking and Performance*). Drawing by Händel to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 100.



Fig. 14. Highly stylized gold foil figures recovered on Bornholm. These figures have loop holes, enabling them to be carried or worn, thus they would seem to come alive when in movement. The author argues that these figures ultimately allude to a sitting figure, having something in their laps. The wooden sculpture from Rude Eskildstrup is such a figure, which is less stylized in its representation (see figures 26 and 27). Enlarged. Source: Mackeprang 1943: 73.

What is more, gold foil figures at times display characters without trousers (e.g. fig. 13), and at other times it is very difficult to discern represented bodies and their possible clothes (figs 14–15). Using the two-sex system as a point of departure not only limits interpretations of Iron Age clothes and costumes, but also of the appearance, embodiment and context of gold foil figures and as an extension facets of Iron Age societies (cf. Back Danielsson 2002). Mannering (2004) has recently discussed the issue of sex and dress in regard to gold foils in greater detail. She claims that it is not possible to make a thorough analysis of the costume elements until the sexes of the figures have been identified (!) (Mannering 2004: 69). The sexing is made with reference to an archaeological sexing of bodies, that is, certain jewellery retrieved within a burial context imply a female body has been recovered. When the “same” jewellery is represented on the figural humanoids, then this means that the gold foil figure is of the female sex (*ibid*). Cheryl Claassen (1992) has described this line of thought as circular reasoning. I agree, and insist that the fine work of interpreting/identifying clothes and paraphernalia of the figures instead may be used to suggest different performing embodiments, as in genders, though not exclusively restricted to only two alternatives (man and woman). Abandoning the issue of bodily sex as represented on foils is also concurrent with observations and interpretations made by sex/gender researchers on Cretan Bronze Age figurative materials and Swedish medieval material. As previously mentioned, in the Cretan Minoan Palace of Knossos, bodily sex was only produced through clothes, leaving the body as we understand it as sexless (Alberti 1999), and in medieval im-



agery Lena Liepe (2003) has shown that the body itself was of no value, but instead was represented in specific ways depending on what story was associated with the pictures.

Margrethe Watt (e.g. 1991a, 1999a, 2001) has also on a number of occasions sexed the gold foil figures primarily from Bornholm, Denmark, apart from skilfully interpreting and suggesting different performance roles for the foil figures (see for example 1991a: 217). Although, note that she does not use the words “performance” or “roles” for the figures but rather divides them into mainly two groups – the princely group and the dancing group. A recent paper, entitled *Of ‘old wives’ and ‘frogs’. On sex determination of guldgubber* (2001), recognizes only two sexes, but at least includes costumes that “cannot” be sexed such as figure 13, and Watt suggests that these are sexually neuter costumes. Further, most of the single figures are argued to be “decently dressed and not very ‘sexy’” (2001: 227), as if our sense of indecency automatically would have been connected to little or no clothing in the period under investigation.

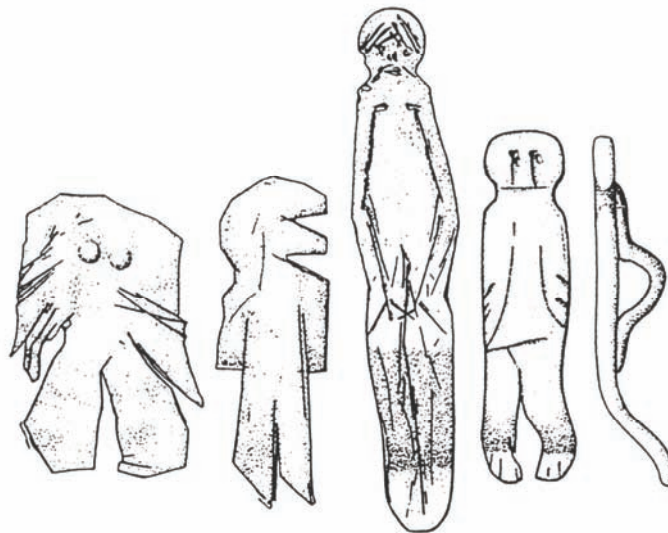


Fig. 15. Bornholm figures with few clothes, if any, discernable. (Please observe that this absence does not have to be interpreted as figures without clothes). Enlarged. Source: Andréasson 1995: 71.

Watt declares that it is a problem that certain gold foil figures cannot be sexed. She maintains that too specific claims of what is determined as male or female among the single gold foil figures render you an “...uncomfortably large group of “sexless” individuals [sic!] where not even a chromosome test



may solve the problem!” (Watt 2001: 219–20, my translation from Danish). Once again, in my view representations of bodies on gold foils are impossible to sex, since we have no (remnants) of a physical body (see section *Images and sex* in the current part). In Part Two, interpretations of gold foil figures are presented that do not take as their starting point sexing of the foils.

### Example two: the serving and waiting

A further example will be taken from the Gotlandic picture stones. Here a specific motif has been interpreted as a standard pattern, namely the scene where a rider (read: a man) is interpreted as being met by a woman, equipped with a drinking horn of mead, that she (supposedly) is handing over (Nylén and Lamm 2003: 70). The scene would correspond to the myth in the medieval sagas, where a warrior killed in battle reaches the realm of the dead and, as promised by the god Odin, rides on a horse to Valhall, where a beautiful Valkyrie greets and welcomes him (*ibid*). However, going through all the images that are categorised as having this welcoming scene (see index in Nylén and Lamm (2003) where they indeed are categorised as “welcoming scenes”) reveals that not all seem to portray the typical woman with a horn in hand (see fig. 16).



Fig. 16. “Valkyries” from Gotlandic picture stones. The top example from Bosärve, När parish, followed by Tjängvide I (to the left) and Hablingbo parish (to the right). The bottom scenes are from Broa IV, Halla parish (to the left) and Levide church (to the right). Not to scale. Source: Nylén and Lamm 2003: 73.

Some appear to be more man-like, should a sex-determined description be used at all (*e.g.* picture stones nos 199 (Bosarve above) and 90 (Hablingbo above) in Nylén and Lamm 2003), and the drinking horns are probably purposefully presented not only as horns but also as possible wriggling snakes (*e.g.* picture stone no. 4 (Tjängvide above) in Nylén and Lamm 2003). How close must a drinking horn be next to a(n alleged) woman, before the idea comes to mind that she actually could have taken a sip herself? Why is the thought of women drinking so utterly rejected? Even if the story of a Valkyrie was prevalent in the period investigated, why was this the case and is it not possible to think that other stories were in circulation involving drinking ceremonies? The Valkyrie interpretation of women – sometimes with something in their hands – has dominated interpretations made of other figural representations too. The humanoids in fig. 17, for example, single pendants of silver, have been retrieved mainly within burial contexts. Although only

two of the figures carries an assumed drinking horn, the others have also been named and categorised as being Valkyries in a routine fashion (e.g. Arwidsson 1989, Andersson *et al.* 2004: 91, Lamm 2004: 49). In my view such simple classifications are problematic on several levels. For one thing, they highlight how big a role the later medieval sources are allowed to play in interpreting much older materials. For it is of course here that we find descriptions of Valhall and the Valkyries. As discussed and criticized earlier, these sources must be treated within their context and attention must be paid to the fact that the works have been translated – mostly by men – living in centuries enmeshed with Cartesian dualistic thinking as well as within a heterosexual matrix. For another thing, one-sided interpretations of apparent females just standing there waiting to serve a man's arrival, are of course largely androcentric, not at all scientifically neutral and objective. What's worse, when the possible female representation does not carry a drinking horn to serve a male rider, yet they are still judged to be Valkyries (fig. 17). Rudolf Simek (2002: 479) has recently most refreshingly argued that women carrying horns do not have to be Valkyries, but instead may be representations of the lady of the hall, a Nordic goddess of plenty and fortune or a variety of female semi-deities or deities.



Fig. 17. Alleged Valkyries. These pendants have been retrieved in a variety of circumstances. Top: the left and the middle one from Birka, the right one from Klinta, Öland. Bottom: the left one from Tuna, Alsike parish, and the right one from Sibble, Grödinge parish; all from Sweden. Not to scale. Source: Holmqvist 1960: 114.

We will continue to examine the categorising of human beings into the two slots “female” and “male”. The starting point for the present study is an example taken from preparatory school in Sweden, which serves to mediate on how we from our earliest years are moulded in our thoughts and bodies to be and behave as one of the sexes. I argue that the very same practice taken from prep school to a large extent governs the way archaeologists in general sort remnants of bodies and burial goods to either of the sexes.

### Example three: sexing as educating and self-explanatory

For many years at prep school in Sweden, children were given a preparatory booklet called *Före Läseboken 1* (my translation: *Before the Reading book 1*), written by Inga Blomberg and Annie Dahlquist. It first appeared in print in 1963, and was printed in succeeding editions until 1994. I was given the book myself when I went to prep school. The book has no text in it, only figures that you are to connect to specific features – which have been determined to be ‘correct’ for, and thereby belonging to, certain figures – by drawing lines. There are instructions for each page. The instruction in figure 18 reads (my translation): “Discuss with the children what mummy needs when she is baking. Let the children draw lines from these things to the mother. Please observe that some things will not get lines drawn from them”. A woman in an apron, according to the short text a mother, I have correctly connected to an oven and baking utensils – all connected to indoor activities. For figure 19, the instruction reads (my translation): “Discuss with the children what daddy needs when he works in the garden. Let the children draw lines from these things to the father”. The man, a father, on the opposite side, is connected to a shovel, a wheelbarrow, and a rake by the lines drawn. Although ‘domestic’ in character, they clearly hint of outdoor activities. Not only are certain objects connected to one-of-the-two-sexes, but also spatial allotments: the woman/mother is stuck with the indoor activities (passivities?), and the man/father with outdoor activities. However innocent this prep school practice may seem, it is not. Rather, it is exemplary of the exuberant and persuasive practice of teaching and regulating the behaviour of two sexes into the urgent procreative heterosexual matrix. It tells you that there are only two sexes/genders, that are supposed to procreate (being a mother and a father), what things they are supposed to do, what to wear and also where their respective spaces are in the domestic sphere. The given examples are the only ones in the book displaying adults with objects. It is only till much later, as a grown-up, that I am able to read the back cover of the book. It is stated (my translation): ‘...It is of outmost importance that the written instructions are followed to the last detail, or else the desired effects of these practices will fail to come off.’ Well, I guess the text could not be any clearer than that – if we do not learn that mummy stays indoor baking, and dad is out in the garden shovelling, we could end up with less stereotyped sex and gender roles, which then again could be threatening to the procreative heterosexual matrix.

Compare this procedure with that of archaeologists, placed together in figures 20 and 21. The drawings are taken from a widespread teaching book in archaeology. Here the woman is sitting down, obviously pregnant (fig. 20). The man is somewhat more active, controlling dogs (fig. 21). In the figures I have also allotted the woman objects that are commonly described as belonging to a female, and the man with his respective objects.

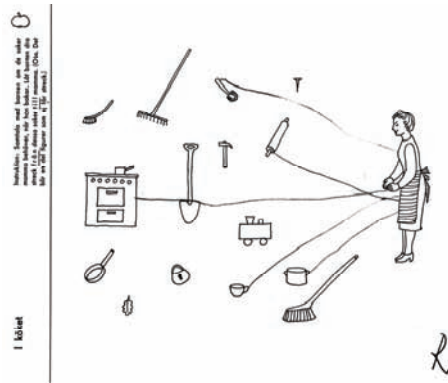


Fig. 18. The “mother”. Source: “Före Läseboken 1”, 1976.

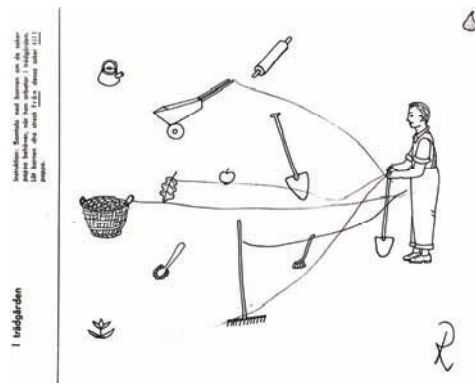


Fig. 19. The “father”. Source: “Före Läseboken 1”, 1976.



Fig. 20. An Iron Age woman. From Burenhult 1991. Drawing by Flemming Bau, source: Burenhult 1991: 212.



Fig. 21. An Iron Age man. Drawing of figure by Flemming Bau, source: Burenhult 1991: 215.

## Slamming doors to other worlds

Whether the analytical sexing of archaeological bodies is done through body morphological criteria (osteology), archaeological criteria or DNA analyses there are only two sexes. If the investigated body parts do not fit into either category, supposedly recognisable through certain criteria, there seems to be a problem (*e.g.* Watt 2001: 219 on the uncanny feeling non-sexable gold foil figures gave rise to in her). The analysed specimen remains sexually unidentified, with a resulting eerie or deviant touch to the preparation or to an exclusion of the examples in studies and interpretations (*cf.* Hjørungdal 1995), since there seems to be little to say without the binary categorisation. Or

rather, there is thereby a lack of descriptions, patterns of living and attributes that are perceived as complementary and necessary for either of the sexes. The labels are however empty labels; in fact I would like to describe them as pieces of scenery. When the sexing of bodies is done, it is as if a door slams – your culturally acquired preconceptions of what it means to be of either sex come into force and an opening to thinking differently is closed. Or even worse, when the sexing is done, the interpretational process stops, and the results are seen as complete. I argue, in contrast, that the two sexes are not innocent interpretational building blocks and they may hamper contextual interpretations and make it difficult to offer exciting, pluralistic and well thought-out interpretations of pasts (in other words non-normative interpretations).

## Conclusive thoughts on “sex”

In this section I have discussed what explanatory value the labels ‘male’ and ‘female’ have. I have argued that when the sexing is done, it is as if a door slams – your culturally acquired preconceptions of what it means to be of either sex, come into force, and an opening to thinking differently is closed.

I argue that:

- Firstly, there should be an awareness about the history (or histories) of the sexes. It has not always been considered the most ‘natural thing’ to have two sexes. Rather, as Thomas Laqueur (1990, chapter 5) has shown, it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that two sexes were invented. Before this, he claims there was only one sex (the differences then being not of a kind, but of a degree) (*ibid*: chapter 2). It might be argued that there are ample pre-Enlightenment texts which seem to refer to two sexes. For instance, in Nordic medieval laws and sagas that are referred to in this paper, there are explicit mentioning of ‘women’ and ‘men’. However, such sources express ideas about genders, which were considered primary, instead of epiphenomenal bodies (*ibid*: 8).
- Secondly, if the two-sex system is used in interpreting the past, there follows in its wake a great deal of politics, that one should be aware of. Through these politics, which pervade our society’s schools, work places, museums, *etc.*, occurs the regulation of what actions, appearance and bodies are considered normal (excluding, for example, transvestism and hermaphroditism), and which constellations of bodies (heterosexual relationships) are viewed as acceptable and normal (Foucault 1965, 1991, Sedgwick 1990: – see also the above section on *Sexing as educating and self-explanatory*). On the whole, there should be a consciousness of the fact that the way in which societies view, assess and sort the (apparent) bodies



of people might differ from one prehistoric context to another (*cf.* Alberti 1999, Liepe 2003). In the case of gold foil figures, the unreflexive application of the two-sex system has resulted in the exclusion of some figures that simply did not fit in to this system and its accompanying politics.

## Good riddance, sex!

On the basis of the discussion above, in the following, the concept of sex will not be used. In conclusion, I have argued that sex, despite its seemingly fixed state in the present, is a rather imprecise tool for analysis. Is sex hormonal, chromosome based, skeleton based, or DNA based? The alternatives for archaeologists seem primarily to be to rely on skeletons and DNA analyses, and of course the retroactive categorising through material culture (needles for women, swords for men). I have referred to several researchers who have concluded that sexing through examining and interpreting bones, material culture or DNA is far from unproblematic or “scientifically” safe. And even if the sexing through these procedures were to be “accurate”, how are we to know that the examined, often fragmentary, bones in prehistory constituted a being that we today attribute to either the male or the female sex? How do we know, or why do we take as a starting point, that bodies in different pasts were sorted according to our principles? And even if categories like man and woman were used, how are we to know what this meant, socially, culturally, or in terms of clothes, performance, *etc.*; and above all we do not know what kinds of bodies that performed in these categories. There are so many kinds of bodies – tall, overworked, ill, crumpled, short, coarse, *etc.*, that were probably cloaked and behaved differently according to the specific context. Rather than asking what sex a skeleton, or the remnants of skeletons, might be, other questions may be formulated. Could we find a pattern where actual different morphological characteristics of skeletons (well-kept, worn and torn, *etc.*) may be connected to other context specific features? I would also like to suggest that the absence of fragmentary pieces of skeletons, commonly burnt, in itself renders the questions of sex without much substance. Suggestively, in order to present other interpretations of the burnt bones retrieved in Late Iron Age burials, we need to find other ways of analysing these materials. One of the biases of this thesis is thus to take the standpoint that sex is bid good riddance.

Regarding figural representations (images, figural pendants), through my own analyses and through the work of others, I have concluded that it is impossible to sex these material categories. It would not matter should an image show something interpreted as a person with a large penis (*cf.* Yates 1993: 67), that is a man in our world of today, or if the presence of a beard is used as a sex identifier (that is, representing a man), as in Göransson’s

(1999) thesis on Gotlandic picture stones, there still would have been no body to sex. (*Cf.* the discussion above on Magritte's pipe: a drawing of a pipe simply is not the same thing as a pipe, that is a representation of a body through drawing a body is not a physical body). What is at hand, instead, is the socio-cultural elaboration of bodily representations – that is, one may interpret the represented figure in terms of gender. Equally, an illuminating example from today is that performances at theatres may present bawdy, bearded characters, although the actors' sex in our every day life – outside the theatre – may be either attributed as male or female, or is perhaps unknown to the audience. It is the performing body that the character engenders and enacts in certain performative contexts that may be assessed by the onlookers. It would therefore be point-less to attribute an image as belonging to a certain sex. Rather, a more re-warding way of approaching the material would be to interpret the figure's bodily aspects, features, contexts, and what material it was made of, *etc.* A usage of the dualistic concept of sex (and equally a dualistic gender concept – based as it would be on the dualistic concept of sex) hampers contextual interpretations that may be made of figural interpretations.

# Essential Engagements

## Introduction

In the previous chapter I scrutinized how bodies have been sorted within the archaeological discipline in general, and how the bodies under investigation have been interpreted in particular. I further discussed the processes by which identities became tied to, and were expressed through, the body. Above all, I did away with sex and (consequently) the dualistic gender system. In this chapter discussion of the complexities of bodies is continued, and ways of avoiding binaries are presented. This is achieved mainly through critically analysing concepts such as individuality, dividuality, person, personhood, and disembodiment. As previously recognised the body, as well as identity, are considered to be far from fixed and stable entities; rather, they should be seen as ongoing processes, things constructed, constructing and always contextual. What is more, bodies are also considered to be constantly intertwined and interacting with things, beings and relationships, creating a multitude of bodies, identities and personhoods. In this manner the production, perception, and conception of bodies and identities may vary according to time, place and community.

## Persons and personhoods

Recently, Chris Fowler (2004) has discussed notions such as person and personhood at greater length for the field of archaeology. Within anthropology these notions have been discussed, analysed and utilized for decades (*e.g.* Fortes 1973, Dieterlen 1973, Marriott 1976). A person need not be a human being, but may refer to any thing that is handled and conceptualized as a person (Fowler 2004: 7). “Personhood in its broadest definition refers to the condition or state of being a person...[it] is attained and maintained through relationships not only with other human beings but with things, places, animals and the spiritual features of the cosmos” (Fowler 2004: 7).

There are several fields of personhood that describe what kinds of relationships that are involved. In order to comprehend these different modes, the concept of the Western individual must be challenged. John Chapman

(2000: 27) has rightly argued that concept of the individual is historical and needs to be problemized in prehistory. For Western individuals, personhood resides in the body, which seemingly is an autonomous and closed (indivisible) unit (Fowler 2004: 8, 96). However it could be argued that as Western individuals we are not fixed and bounded but are as well dividuals, where dividuality is a mode of personhood. As dividuals we are composed of social relations with other people, things and substances and as such multiply-authored (Strathern 1988, Strassburg 2000: 26–7, Fowler 2004: 8, 20, *cf.* Haraway 1985, Latour 1988). Dividuality consequently refers to the partible and divisible sides of agency, where for example aspects of one's identity may be strategically or haphazardly attached, detached or permeated by someone or something else (*cf.* Strassburg 2000: 26–27). Accordingly, the boundaries of a body do not necessarily equate to the individual or person (A. Jones 2002: 161).

How a person is perceived and created, for instance as an individual or a dividual, has great consequences for the interpretations that may be made of the relations between for instance people, animals, and things. In turn, this has relevance for how the world and/or the cosmos and their parts are inter-related, and regeneration is achieved (Fowler 2004: 108).

As reiterated above, things may not be mere things but can under certain circumstances be conceptualized as persons. This could also be the case with the dead and spirits (*e.g.* Howell 1989). To complicate or enrich matters further, in performances human persons may become objects (Veltruský 1964 in Proschan 1983: 16, *cf.* Hamilakis, Pluciennik and Tarlow 2002: 11 and there cited references on bodies and body parts as objects).

Recognitions and distinctions such as these are claimed to be central for interpreting various aspects of prehistories, in this particular case (Late) Iron Age Scandinavia. Here body parts from both animals and humans seemingly are retrieved, and must have been used in a variety of circumstances, not at all restricted to burial contexts. I suggest in the first chapter of Part Three that (burnt) bones were considered a substance with generative qualities (*cf.* Fowler 2004: 108). Such substances “are not just circulated between human bodies but can be circulated among the world at large, and can be found contained in the bodies of buildings, objects, plants and animals” (Fowler 2004: 108). Flows of substances through persons and through out the world may be pivotal to maintain personhood and to transform it (*ibid.*: 101). It is here that one of the big differences between individuals and dividuals manifests itself. Whereas individuals are closed and fixed entities, dividuals, in order to continue to be persons, must relate to “the continual production, consumption and circulation of essences of which persons are produced” (*ibid.*: 101).

In Late Iron Age contexts, burnt and fragmented (ground) bones from animals and humans have been encountered for instance as temper in ceramic vessels and as presumably taking part in transforming iron to steel. I

suggest that crushed as the bones commonly were, their whitish colour and “powdery” stuff may have alluded to human semen or seed, a necessary ingredient for regeneration in the making of human and non-human persons. Chris Fowler (2004: 108) asserts that there is often a metaphorical scheme at hand, that links the different contexts where the generative substance is used. The act of regenerative transformation would in the Late Iron Age context consist of a cremation act, a “heated intercourse”, the firing of a clay pot in an oven or the making of steel in an iron forge. The transformational process, or the metaphorical thinking, thus involves heat/fire and air.

The white and crushed bone material could at the same time also have been connected to other regenerative thoughts as in sowing seeds, harvesting and grinding crops to make flour and then making bread. These thoughts are further presented and elaborated in Part Three. There I give examples of what constituted a person during the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia, and make suggestions about how the world/cosmos was created, built around and was reliant on relationships among human beings, animals, and things.

It must be stressed that the concepts presented here are analytical constructs. But by allowing other constructs and concepts than the (western) individual when interpreting prehistories, in this case the Scandinavian Late Iron Age, bodies, bodily practices and materials and their relationships can bring to light associations or connotations that were not previously noticed or reflected on.

## Essential disembodiments

So far, I have argued that for example the concept of the individual is inapt for describing facets of Late Iron Age persons and communities. Another common term in relation to bodies within academia is embodiment. Embodiment is a term that is used in many theories of practice, for instance in that of Pierre Bourdieu (1977). Embodiment is a concept that encompasses both body and mind, and is a result of their constant interaction (*e.g.* A. Strathern 1996, Strathern and Lambek 1998: 6). It further calls attention to how memory is marked and fixed in fashions that are somatic and somatized. Thus not only the mind is used as a mnemonic device, but bodily experiences are equally essential. Examples of bodily engagements that generate processes of recollection are for instance eating, drinking and bodily modifications (Connerton 1989: 22–5). The body and mind additionally incorporate or embody the socio-cultural world that they are a part of, the present as well as the past of this world (Douglas 1970: 68). An embodied person thus has large quantities of memories that constitute identities (Strathern 1996: 190, *cf.* Merleau-Ponty 1994, 1999).

Just as the concept of the individual may hamper contextual interpretations of prehistoric societies, the term embodiment likewise misses out on

describing and incorporating conditions of disembodiments. Following Baudrillard (1987: 25) it is also possible to claim that a socio-cultural body at the same time is an anti-body which may carry a revolutionary possibility. When Pierre Bourdieu (1977) discussed *habitus* he focused on the body, into/onto which society's whole cosmology, ethics, politics *etc.* were embodied, he also underlined how the body was both an agent and object of these structures. Most profoundly, through daily (and nightly) actions and interactions the division into two genders becomes natural and normal (Bourdieu 1977: 167). Judith Butler (1990) has emphasized that these normal orders are reshaped, challenged and resisted by gender trouble-makers. Judith Lorber (2000) has further pointed to works of multi-cultural and postcolonial feminists that assert that there are complex systems of subordination and domination in regard to women's oppression, leaving the Western division into two genders as substantially flawed to describe these systems. Foucault (1991) has described this embodiment as that of the powerful normativity that is born and bred through discipline and punishment. However, he also underlined the importance of what Bourdieu's concept misses, namely disembodiment – the bodily undisciplined and disconnected; the enduring incongruity of bodies in practice, and the way in which bodies go beyond the normative and remain unaffected by it (Butler 1997: 155, Butler 1993: 49).

Further, within anthropology the term disembodiment has been utilized to describe processes “in which bodies are taken apart and body parts and bodily capacities are removed from persons” (Lambek and Strathern 1998: 12). In contrast to dividuality, the disembodied practices are mainly connected to for instance sorcery, pollution and witchcraft (*ibid.*: 12–3, Bercovitch 1998: 210–1, *cf.* Wilson 1951). In this work disembodiment is regarded as essential as embodiment.

### Examples of disembodiments – *sejd* and shamanism

In the previous chapter *Categorisation and Variability*, I accounted for situations where bodies behave or perform in manners that are non-normative, and as such, are in most cases, undesired (by the beings primarily recognizing and advocating normative procedures). In close connection to these discussions are questions concerning shamanisms and its Nordic ancient expression, *sejd*. In these instances too, an alteration of the normal state of being is the outcome, a disembodiment. However this result is desired and acquired through different means.

I have earlier (1999 and 2002) used the word shamanism and *sejd* when discussing and interpreting a few gold foil figures, analysed in detail in Part Two of the thesis. I likewise used the notions in a 2001 article, where a Late Iron Age staff with runic inscriptions was interpreted as an instrument with the primary powers of curing disease. Since the first paper was published many works have discussed shamanism and *sejd* within (Late) Iron Age

Scandinavia (e.g. Solli 1999a, b, 2002, Hedeager 1997a, Price 2001, 2002, Raudvere 2003). In fact, *sejd*, as well shamanism, have been topics for over a hundred years, discussed if not within archaeology at least within cognate disciplines such as the history of religion, philology, linguistics, and of course anthropology. Within the discipline of the history of religion, Dag Strömbäck published a thesis on the subject of *sejd* in Scandinavia in 1935. This was accomplished through a thorough study of medieval Norse literature. *Sejd* is mentioned in several sagas, though the matter is dealt with most expressively in the Saga of Erik the Red. According to Professor Elof Hellqvist (1980), the word *sejd* comes the Icelandic word *seiðr*, meaning “a kind of witchcraft or sorcery”. The Icelandic verb *seið*, to practise witchcraft, is also related to the Lithuanian word *saitas*, which likewise alludes to sorcery, and the verbs *saitu* and *saisti*, denoting “interpreting signs” (*ibid*). It might also be connected to the Greek word (*h*)*oime* for song (*ibid*). Heide (2006) forwards the idea that the meanings of the word is connected to a cord, a string or a halter, and that *sejd* is connected to binding.

In connection to *sejd*, which in itself is an abandonment of the everyday order (or rather an example of practising disembodiment), there are explicit mentions of gender bending characteristics. *Seiðberendr* is occasionally used as a circumlocution for a person performing *sejd*, performing (exhibiting, gestating) two genders (woman and man) at the same time (Strömbäck 1935: 29). *Berendr*, a word in the neuter, is in its turn etymologically connected, in ancient Swedish, in Danish and Norwegian dialects, to the female sexual organs that hang out, especially of cows (Strömbäck 1935: 30). That *sejd* is connected to gender bending is also suggested by another source. The name Rognvaldr Rettilbeini occurs in one Norwegian saga of kings (Lindquist 1923: 178). Ivar Lindquist (1923: 180) interprets this name, with the support of Beckman (1925: 135), but in disagreement with Strömbäck (1935: 44), as Ragnvaldr “the one who entertains women like “*argr*” men, or is hospitable to people performing *sejd*”. Strömbäck in short discards this possibility and argues that Rettilbeini instead contains a description or characteristic of Ragnvaldr’s legs (Strömbäck 1935: 44). Jacobson and Moltke (1942: 702) are of the opinion that *reti-* is a word with a strong depreciatory meaning, though its exact meaning is unknown.

One of the most recent and thorough discussions on *sejd* and shamanism is found in the thesis of Neil Price (2002), *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (but see also Solli 1999a, b, 2002). It is necessary to discuss the work of Neil Price in greater detail for several reasons. One being the fact that *sejd* and sorcery are “scientifically” investigated, and deemed to only appear during the Viking Age (Price 2002). Due to his scientific (theory and) methods, which by the way are not readily accounted for, other researchers’ interpretations of *sejd* and sorcery prior to the Viking Age

are judged unscientific (including my own). However, his claim that other archaeologists are over interpretive and/or unscientific (*e.g.* Price 2002: 201) may be used against his own alleged more scientific research. For instance, concepts such as woman and man are left unanalysed and are seemingly self-evident.

Price declines to share with the reader his theoretical views or standpoints and instead maintains that they are evident in the text, and that they “do not need to be explicitly articulated in order to be meaningful, or for the reader to be critically aware of their presence” (Price 2002, p. 38). I, however, do not mind sharing how I have read and interpreted these intellectual seams. I would describe them as hypothetically-deductive within the processual sphere, spiced up with politically correct sentences here and there, such as declaring that feminist studies are to be welcomed, likewise queer theory (*e.g.* p. 215), which is not exactly demonstrated in the monolithic, macho and androcentric title. It must also be said, however, that it is excellent in its presentation on the written medieval sources that discuss *sejd*, in its exhaustive presentation of research on shamanism, as well as accounting for possible shamanistic burials and materials during the Viking Age, where the research of others is used and compiled. Nonetheless, it is unfortunate in my view that only the medieval written sources are allowed to act as keys in his interpretations of Viking Age material culture. Without these, there would be no “proof” of any shamanistic paraphernalia existing at all. Although he uses medieval sources, Price does not use any research on oral literacy, which could have shed some light on questions such as the following: “An interesting problem, rarely raised, concerns the application of source-criticism to the concept of oral history, the traditional narratives from which the saga legacy ultimately derives. Put simply, did Viking Age people believe their (hi)stories? How much trust did they place in their veracity, and how important was this to them?” (Price 2002: 30). In my view, the question itself is a Western, literate one, showing ignorance of how illiterate societies may have worked. From what I have understood of the work of Walter J. Ong (1990), one of the characteristics of illiterate societies is their emphasis on knowledge within a context of combat, both verbal and intellectual. This means that verbal exchanges may not be about believing what is said and presenting truths, but rather, the heart of the matter is to engage in interpersonal relationships by word of mouth, whether through friendliness or antagonism (Camille 1993: 53). Also, as previously discussed, stories or performances perhaps rich with metaphors may not be about accuracy, but about assisting in transformations. Neither is the word Viking scrutinized by Price, despite the title of the work and the fact that a large part of chapter one discusses the Viking Age and Viking Age research. Although the etymology of the word is debated, a presentation of the most common ideas on its meanings would have made Vikings less macho, singularly heroic and terrifying war ma-



chines, the ways in which they are portrayed in the work. Consequently, a Viking is not described as a less heroic being, perhaps hiding and lurking in bays (*Sw. vikar*) to attack any ship that approaches (Snædal Brink 1981d: 284), or as someone deviating from current norms (*ibid*), or as someone getting away with something (*ibid*). Nor is the possibility discussed, that the Vikings may be perceived of as acting cowardly in their western attacks on defenceless monasteries (*cf.* P. Sawyer 1982).

As regards shamanism, there is no shamanism in my opinion that is more genuine than another. The concept has been used within anthropology for a long period of time which, confirming its terminological worth (Whitley and Keyser 2002: 386; see Price (2002) and Whitley and Keyser (2003) for the history of the word shamanism). Morris and Peatfield (2002: 110–1) have recently suggested that the term altered state of consciousness (ASC) might be useful as a notion that refers to an array of performances for meditation and trance, including shamanism, ecstasy, trance state, *etc.* In the thesis I use the words shamanism, trance and ecstasy to describe altered states of consciousness. This does not mean that I am unaware of the fact that these (and other specialist) concepts have been the subject of debate in academic disciplines (*e.g.* Atkinson 1992 in Morris and Peatfield 2002, Raudvere 2003, J. Svanberg 2003). The different notions are used in order to create variations in the text. A constant referral to “ASC” would make the text less attractive to read, in my opinion.

In this thesis a shaman is defined as: “a religious specialist whose powers centred on curing, sorcery, and prophesy...exert[ing] control over weather, animals, and enemies and they are routinely sought as an intercessor between the lay person and the supernatural, especially at life-crises such as puberty, sickness, and death. Further shamans are reported to have undergone trance, soul flight, and transformations into their various spirit helpers in the conduit of their activities” (Whitley and Keyser 2003: 387, *cf.* Ström-bäck 1935). With such a broad definition, shamanism or *sejd* is certainly not restricted to the Viking Age, but may have been practiced during any period of prehistory.

### ***Sejd* and sorcery written in runes**

There are other places where *sejd* is mentioned, apart from the medieval sources presented earlier. A rune stone dating to the Viking Age from Denmark (Da 81, Skern 2) has the following inscription: “A *sejd*-man must the man be, who violates these stones” (*sidi: sa: manr: is : thusi: kubl: ub: biruti*) (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 117, my translation, see also Lindquist 1923 for further examples of rune stones with possibly apotropeic inscriptions). It is also noteworthy that this stone is empowered with a facial mask (for further discussions on the transitional characters of both rune stones and masks see

the chapter *Masking and Performance: Bodily Metamorphoses*). It is probable that *sejd* is also mentioned on a Viking Age stone from Sønder Vinge (Da 83, stone 2) (*ibid*: 119–20). When *sejd* is mentioned in these contexts the most common interpretation is that it has an apotropeic purpose, and thus is supposed to guard graves and/or monuments from violation and destruction (*ibid*: 806). The much earlier monuments from today's Blekinge in Sweden, namely Stentofte (Da 357) and Björketorp (Da 360), which can be dated to *ca.* 650–750 AD are also of special interest (*ibid*: 1035). Although the word *sejd* is not expressed in any inflection, disembodying practices are still mentioned. Both stones bear inflections of the word *argr* (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 805), a word that could be used in a derogatory sense to describe a man who had the receiving role in an homoerotic act (Meulengracht Sørensen 1983, see also a compilation on *argr* and witchcraft in Price 2002: 210–4). Neil Price (2002: 211) uses these earlier stones as indications of *sejd* without mentioning their early dating. In fact, he persistently maintains that interpretations of pre-Viking Age materials as indicative of *sejd* and sorcery made by other archaeologists are, as recounted earlier, unscientific or non-reliable (*e.g.* Price 2002: 201). However, in the current work it is proposed that transformations and the ability to shape-change and even shamanism were at hand from the Migration Period onwards, and that the Viking Age shamanism or *sejd* are mere sequels from earlier transformational periods. Perhaps suggestively, the very word Viking itself goes back at least as far as the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Snædal Brink 1981d: 284). The “obsession” with transformations during the Migration Period and Vendel Period could have found their expression through masking practices, evident in a variety of material expressions (see following chapters).

# Masking and Performance – Bodily Metamorphoses

This chapter explores masking practices. The archaeological material discussed is mainly from the Late Iron Age and consists of representations of human bodies – in the shape of bodily remains from burials, and representations of bodies in a variety of materials, such as gold, wood, and silver, all presented earlier. The main stress in the latter category is on the gold foil figures. Through a succinct survey it is argued that the figures, as well as a few representations of bodies in other materials, are mask-clad and/or have been otherwise dressed-up or manipulated. These procedures are referred to as masking practices. As will be elucidated further in Part Two, the figures appear in contexts that seem to be closely connected to different sorts of metamorphoses, such as transformations necessary for cosmic travelling, enacting cosmogenic events, and prophesy making. It is maintained that the masking practices were a means, mediators or carriers of desired changes.

Human bodies in graves are also claimed to have had a very clear connection to masking practices at several levels. One most obvious masking procedure involved preparing the body for the cremation funeral. Here another connection between human bodies and masks is investigated, namely the fact that the mound, where the dead body dwelled, was referred to as *kuml*, which during the Late Iron Age not only meant mound, but probably also could allude to mask, helmet or other important transitional paraphernalia. Significantly, the word *kuml* could also refer to rune stones which were commonly raised to bless the soul of the deceased. However diverse the material phenomena may seem, the analysis reveals that masks, rune stones and mounds are all connected to bodily transitions. The different metamorphoses are referred to as transitional events, and it is suggested that the word *kuml* during the Late Iron Age had the all-embracing meaning of guiding and enabling bodily passages and transformations for living as well as deceased beings.

The chapter starts off with an account of what is included in the concept of masking and what the complex of masking may be about. This is followed by a presentation of concrete examples of masks and masking practices discernable in the selected archaeological materials. Attention is then paid to the intriguing fact that the concept of a mask was apparently often alluded to during the Late Iron Age. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of rune

stones follows. The structural similarities between rune stones, mounds and masks are then discussed and conclusions presented.

## Masking and performance as socio-cultural practices

### Introduction

There are many surveys where masking practices are mentioned, foremost I should say, among ethnological/anthropological works, of which some are referred to here. Examples of such studies go as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when travellers and missionaries described societies using masks (Pernet 1992: 1, *cf.* Hodgen 1964). Studies on masking is not a specific field of research in itself, but is spread out through various disciplines. Writing on masks, performing objects<sup>12</sup> and puppets John Bell has maintained that the subjects "...often appear within the various literatures of folklore, anthropology, semiotics, art history, theatre history, drama and performance studies" (Bell 2000: 5). I have also found this to be the case, and therefore I have read works on masking from a variety of fields. The dispersal of the masking subject has impeded us "from understanding the intense and revelatory connections between performing objects as they have occurred in vastly different times and places" (Bell 2000: 5). John Bell neatly points to the fact that such vastly different theories as those of Karl Marx in *Capital* about "the commodity as fetish object (1972 [1867]) to Merleau-Ponty's consideration of subject-object relations (1994), Heidegger's sense of "thingness" (1971) and Winnicott's "transitional object" (1971) suggest ways in which theories of objects can take us far (or not so far) from the modest predicament of the puppet or mask." (Bell 2000: 6). I have found it most useful to discuss masking practices, and indeed material culture itself, during the Scandinavian (Late) Iron Age using Donald W. Winnicott's concepts transitional object and event, presented below. What follows is a condensed reading of masking practices that I have been able to find within the current research for the thesis.

### The complex of masking

Let me start by pointing out what the meaning of a mask is not: it is not restricted to a facial covering. Within anthropological discourses, Åsa Boholm argues, the mask concept is used to describe "any transformation of one's

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<sup>12</sup> Frank Proschan (1983) has defined the term performing object as "material images of humans, animals, or spirits that are created, displayed, or manipulated in narrative or dramatic performance" (Proschan 1983:4 in Bell 2000: 5). The concept is further used in Part Two.

appearance” (Boholm 1994: 64). John Mack, primarily focusing on mask wearing in parts of Central Africa, has maintained that masks are not necessarily discussed as individual creations, nor are they solitary and divisible objects (1994: 12–3, 16). Instead they may be involved in myth or oral tradition (*ibid*). A striking example of the multivocality of a mask can be found among peoples of Central Africa. Multivocality is a term that is used to describe how a symbol, in this case the term *makishi*, may stand for many things – it is polysemous (Turner 1967: 50). The generic term *makishi* not only refers to the facial mask, but also to the performance of which masquerading is an ingredient. Further, it also stands for the dead in a revived form, and even wider: *makishi* can also stand for amulets, charms and associated magical tools (Mack 1994: 15). The reasons why masking practices are not limited to facial masks is the fact that such a singular focus most probably results in shallow (mis)interpretations of the contexts in which they appear: in-depth interpretations of the operating contexts would thus be missed out.

The idea of masking is therefore used in the widest sense – ranging from effigies, in themselves perceived as mask-clad, actual recovered masks, to bodies and body attire retrieved within burial contexts (Pernet 1992, King 1994: 107–8, *cf.* Tonkin 1979). The definition is extended to head ornaments, a simple hood for example, and complete or partial costumes of the whole body or face (Pernet 1992: 10–1). It also includes tattooing, paintings and scarification, as well as effigies, figures and other features that have been sculpted or applied to vessels, buildings, *etc.* (*ibid*). To complicate things further, in some specific cultures and contexts – even totally naked individuals – have been perceived of as being masked (*ibid*: 132). In the particular case what has been defined as their apparition has been so characteristic, that it has been obvious that they were acting (*ibid*).

To ascertain whether material and/or bodily expressions may be perceived of as masks, the conventional ways of expressing identities and personhoods in a society or culture need to be investigated and known. It is only when ordinary behaviours are understood that modifications and manipulations of the same signs may be recognized. Such alterations often resonate with ambiguity, paradox, and representation (*e.g.* Tonkin 1979, Urban and Hendricks 1983, Emigh 1996). Donald Pollock has contended that masks work and gain their special effect by doing exactly this, “by operating upon the particular ways in which identity, or personhood, is expressed in any culture” (Pollock 1995: 584). He reaches this conclusion by analysing masking from a semiotic perspective. This is not the Saussurian semiotics, where there is an arbitrariness between, in this case, masks as signifiers and the signified mean-

ing<sup>13</sup> (Pollock 1995: 592). Rather, the opposite is the case – there is no arbitrary relation between the mask and its meaning (*ibid*: 582), and “[t]he form taken by masks is motivated...by their particular semiotics of identity” (Pollock 1995: 590).

I have previously emphasized that orality must have been a prominent trait in societies in Iron Age Scandinavia, as compared with today, when the literate conventions in which we live leave us to structure the world on a seeing basis (*e.g.* Ong 1990, Classen 1993, 1997a). In our culture one example of a mask is a piece of material covering the eyes, working as a way of transforming one’s identity (Pollock 1995: 585). In my view reflecting or opaque sun glasses can have the same effect, leaving the engaging partner with a possible uneasy feeling of uncertainty. Donald Pollock has argued that the reason for these masks being able to trouble identification is that they have modified the conventional sign of identity, which in our culture is the eyes (*ibid*: 585). For us eyes and sight are conventional and focal vehicles of identity – our semiotics of identity (*ibid*: 590). Among the Kulina, a people living in western Brazilian Amazonia, the conventional ways of expressing identities occur through the oral and aural (*ibid*: 591). Consequently, a mask in this culture may be delivered and experienced through a song, as in the curing ritual *tokorime*, which is also the major masking ritual (*ibid*: 591). The song is sung and performed at night, when the ritual expert sings a special song, representing a spirit animal, which is to enter the village and heal an ailing person (*ibid*). When villagers hear the song, not only pertaining to the sound but also to the imagery characteristic of the animal, they cry out the name of the animal (*ibid*). Since the ritual is performed at night, it almost entirely relies on the oral and aural. The example also shows that a transformation of a person’s identity is achieved through an alteration of the usual ways of expression, in other words, verbal performances. The transformation into a healer is made (possible) through the use of masks, which, in this specific case, consist of songs and sounds.

Donald Pollock himself experienced how the visual/sight and the face were of minor importance as identity markers during his research with the Kulina. One day he shaved off his full beard, of which the Kulina took no notice and paid no attention whereas his wife was shocked and dismayed to see his altered face (Pollock 1995: 595, note 11). Although Pollock is hesitant about the significance of his experience, he suggests that the Kulina semiotics of identity “draw attention away from the face” (*ibid*). It is my speculation that the Kulina probably could not detect any change in his personhood after the shaving, since his voice and soundings had not changed.

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<sup>13</sup> C. S. Peirce (1931) expanded the notion of the sign from Saussure, to include all kinds of coded behaviour, thus not at all restricting its usage to language. Also, the notion of the sign comprises a triad of terms – the Sign, its Object and an Interpretant (*ibid*).

Decisively, it is what is made of the masks, or rather, how and in which contexts a body makes use of paraphernalia or indeed of the body itself as in the case of naked individuals dancing and singing in a special voice in complete darkness, that decides if masking practices are employed by the wearer or performer (*cf.* Poppi 1994: 194) and experienced by the audience or co-performers. Further, as I have pointed out, the conventional means of expressing identities and personhoods, how the paradoxical and representational is created through masks must also be known. Consequently, knowledge must be gained of the criteria with which the world or worlds were categorised and sorted (*cf.* Leach 1976). How were the bodily senses and organs used to structure the world? Was there a reliance on the visual (as in Western culture), the oral and aural (as with the Kulina), or the olfactory (as with the Ongee of the Andaman Islands, Classen 1993), or on temperature (as with the Totzil of Mexico, Classen 1993, *cf.* Haaland 2004)? On colours (as with the Colombian Desana, Classen 1993) or on luminosity (*cf.* Herbert 1984)? Importantly, what must be recognized are also the power relations that are in operation within each discourse of sorting. Who acted as storyteller and co-participants in transitional stories, who gained, owned, used and transformed luminous objects, who had knowledge of where to get odoriferous substances, or special colours; who were allowed to tell, to show, to smell and to sing?

We know that orality no doubt was one directing principle, or one of the major semiotics of identity, during the (Late) Iron Age in Scandinavia. However, there could have been (and probably were) other bodily senses creating and structuring the world(s), engendering identities and personhoods. I will argue for the possibility that apart from a focus on the oral (and aural), identities and personhoods could likewise be articulated at certain periods in certain contexts through luminosity, colours and paradoxically through a mastering of transformations or masking techniques, whether through verbal performances, other bodily modifications, or even metal processing or ceramic producing. Such examples are discussed particularly in Part Two and Part Three below.

In the following, we will first consider in which situations masks occur, specifically in situations that are connected to transitions, whatever form the mask may have taken, as a song, a hood or a facial mask. I will then recount some general characteristics of masking practices such as how masks are connected to events, deaths and reversals. I also delve deeper into the matter of how mask and mask wearer create acts of revelation and likewise emphasize the importance of the audience, which are described as performing co-participants. Finally, before analysing in greater detail masking practices during the Scandinavian Iron Age, I discuss the purposes of masks.

## Masks in transitional situations

Based on studies conducted on masking traditions in different parts of the world, researchers have been able to conclude that masks in general seem to be connected to transformations and transitional situations (*e.g.* Tonkin 1979: 242, Napier 1986: 16, Pernet 1992, Mack 1994: 16, Emigh 1996: chapter one). Examples of such situations are ceremonies of birth and death, or ceremonies playing on the symbolisms of birth and death, like initiation into adulthood, and kingship succession (Mack 1994: 20). Masks may moreover have been involved in healing practices, as described above among the Kulina, where the mask comes as a special song. Masks may also mark yearly and seasonal changes, as well as sequences in a religious calendar (*ibid*). Borrowing from D. W. Winnicott (1971), masks can be described as transitional objects when they help to bridge the gap in continuity that is created by the death of someone, whether literally or symbolically, or by other bodily and social changes (Emigh 1996). The notions of transitional event and transitional object are further discussed in the section *Rune stones, mounds and masks, or the meanings of transitional events and objects*.

One of the most well-known results of an anthropological study is Victor Turner's argument (1967, 1969) that the liminal phase of van Gennep's three-part structure of rites of passage is of central importance. The concepts of rite of passage and liminality are frequently used within a variety of academic discourses, including archaeology. What is perhaps less well known – but in this context all the more significant – is the fact that in one of Turner's detailed studies of liminality, he used initiations rites of the Ndembu of Africa as an example of the use of masks (1967). Elizabeth Tonkin has argued that the reasons for masks frequently appearing in rites of passage are that since they are “themselves transformations they are used also as metaphors-in-action, to transform events themselves or mediate between structures...They are conductors, exemplars and operators...” (Tonkin 1979: 242). What is more, it is the mask working as paradox that is the metaphor, not the mask itself (*ibid*: 241, *cf.* Proschan 1983: 17). The paradox further generates emotions, within performer and co-performers, enlarging the repository power of masking practices (Tonkin 1979: 246). Importantly, John Emigh (1996: 267) emphasizes that the mask must also be recognized not as a costume element, but rather as vehicles for explicit sorts of communications, whether inside the performer or outside. Returning to the Ndembu initiation rituals, John Mack has rightly pointed out that the aspect of masking did not receive focused attention by Turner, nor were detailed interpretations delivered of the significance of masks (Mack 1994: 23).

Claude Lévi-Strauss's work “The Way of the Masks” (1988 [1975]) can also be mentioned in this context. In his book, masks contra the meaning of masks are studied among different traditions of northwest America. Despite



the promising title, the book does not exactly deal with the features of masking or what masks do in performances. Rather, kinship relations are investigated and how these form the structures of the same or similar stories, myths, rites or objects. Alfred Gell (1975) in his work on the Umeda of New Guinea, and specifically the Ira ritual, studied and analysed the transformations that were achieved through masks in the ritual performances. He found that the masks used in Ida rituals 'articulate the social status of the various figures' (1975: 307 in Proschan 1983: 24). This articulation is made possible when the masks form an indexical system (Proschan 1983: 24).

Jonathan King (1994) on the other hand, has studied the contexts in which the Tlingit of the Northwest Coast of America, studied by Lévi-Strauss, used their masks. These masks are either associated with rites of passage such as funerals, or else they are related to shamans and their spirit helpers (*ibid*: 126–8). Through complex and/or secret procedures, where masks play an important role, control is gained over forces of both natural and human origin to help individuals or the whole family (*ibid*). Within transitional circumstances the performer may use the mask as protection against possible evil forces, and the mask may also serve as a container or conduit for spiritual force and power (Pernet 1992: 57, Emigh 1996: 3, 14). Thus, a mask can be perceived of as making possible invitations to specific forces and their control, but likewise, perhaps in a modern way of putting it, the masking can bring out the other within (*cf.* Kristeva 1991), that is, your own many unstable and paradoxical traits. A performer may invite such forces or powers through acting, but the power may also come from the very material of the mask itself, or the treatment it has undergone, or indeed from the figure or event that is expressed through the mask (Pernet 1992: 128, *cf.* Mack 1995: 62–3). For example, among the Iroquois Americans some masks were carved on a tree, where they were allowed to grow with the tree for some time (Pernet 1992: 128). This strengthened the masks, but the procedure also let the trees live on (*ibid*). In studying ancient Egyptian masks, John Taylor (1994: 171) ascertains that the masks were made to serve religious intentions. The mask, in the form of an animal mask or a funerary headpiece, served as a medium for the wearer to be elevated to the level of divinity (*ibid*).

A note of importance is necessary regarding the studies of masks by anthropologists. It has been emphasized that not all members of a society share the same knowledge of masking practices. This means that the facts gathered on mask wearing, the ceremonies or rites in which masks are used, may come from informants that have limited or different understandings of masked performances compared to other people in society (Pernet 1992, chapter 3). Of course, informants' renderings of performances are not inaccurate, but the point I would like to make is that what is being presented by anthropologists may only reflect some – not all – views on masking procedures and performances within a society.

Although the general characteristic of a mask as present in transitional states may be accurate, I would also like to emphasize that masking cannot of course be interpreted along a single universal scheme, but that varying and different situations must be considered. The aspect of masks as present among transformational contexts may for instance be less prominent in some circumstances. For example, among the Aztec Anthony Shelton has concluded that masks were not mainly connected to transformational purposes, but that they were also used to “combine religious and political significance” (Shelton 1994: 98). Another example may be garnered from the research done by Harriet Flower (1996) on masks within ancient Roman culture. Here she claims ancestor masks are used to maintain aristocratic power. The life-like functional mask of wax represented a deceased family member who had held a high-status position (*ibid*: 59). If a family had inherited a mask, they could let an actor use it and display it in public during funeral processions, for instance; it could also be shown in the atria (*ibid*). Families could likewise use the masks to demonstrate a powerful ancestral iconography, a way of maintaining their eminence over a long period of time, often generations (*ibid*: 90).

Are there any examples of transitional situations where masks are not used? That depends on what is included in the concept of masking (and what is meant by transitional situations). In the present work masking encompasses a great variety of expressions – singing, dancing, facial masks, hoods, body paint, *etc.* Under the condition that such acts are modifications of the conventional ways of manifesting identities, I would contend that masks are always present in transitional circumstances, where they bridge gaps between different worlds and conditions<sup>14</sup>.

Urban and Hendricks investigated the relationships and differences “between masking and other semiotically prominent cultural forms” (Urban and Hendricks 1983: 211). However, they did not define what a mask is, or how it works, but concentrated on the functions of masks. For Urban and Hendricks mimetic behaviour and body painting are not masks, only their functions are mask-like (1983: 211–2). They mention the Yanomamö, who, according to the researchers, lack masks, but come into contact with the spirit world on certain occasions through the use of body painting (*ibid*). Further, a shaman among the Gê-speaking Shokleng of the Brazilian south, is likewise said to perform without a mask, although the shaman during the healing ritual act and sound like a monkey spirit – mimetic behaviour strictly consistent with masking (*ibid*).

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<sup>14</sup> Simply put, it could also be claimed that without masks, acting as transitional objects there are no transitional events, or at least none that are officially sanctioned or knowingly performed.

## Masks – events – deaths

A common belief seems to be that masks represent dead humans, spirits or spirits of the dead (Pernet 1992: 45, *cf.* Tonkin 1979: 242). In his study of ritual masks, Henry Pernet has nonetheless maintained that there are many cases where masks are connected to “primordial beings, mythic ancestors, culture heroes and gods...and not at all that of “spirits of the dead” since many such figures never died” (1992: 80). John Mack has also pointed to the fact that ancestors may be invisible, thus not able to be represented by masks (1994: 47). What is more, Henry Pernet also concluded that masks may recall events in which the represented being acted (1992: 62). Thus, what is enacted is the event, not the representation of the being itself. Masks may also “recapitulate the daily, historic, and mythic diversity of the community” (Pernet 1992: 64), as well as explaining a cosmos, or a world system (*ibid.*: 65). The events are generally the founding actions of the world, of humanity, of the clan or of a particular institution (*ibid.*: 78). Henry Pernet concludes the following about masks as events: “They are a remarkable audio-visual means of teaching about what this world is, and what it means to live in this world...they also express the type of social contract on which the society is based, which explains... the role played by the masking institutions in maintaining social control” (Pernet 1992: 78). John Mack (1994: 25) has also emphasized that masks are used in performances to explain and interpret historical and/or mythical events. When masks are used in performances, they may be perceived as gendered (Lévi-Strauss 1983) or even genderless (Kürti 1996: 158).

Despite what was said above, that it is not always the case that a mask represents a dead human, there are of course situations where masks are associated with funerals. Elizabeth Tonkin has suggested that masks can be used for reincarnation, where the continuity after death is achieved by using paradox and representation, that is, through masks (1979: 242). According to Henry Pernet, masks in funerals can be connected to two basic ideas. One is where the funerary mask has as its purpose to prevent the element of the spirit of the dead from wandering around among the living (Pernet 1992: 102). The other service of the mask is to make sure that the deceased easily reaches the correct dwelling place in the other world (*ibid.*).

## Masks and reversals

Another general characteristic of masks has been observed by several researchers. When masks are used in performances, very often the social rules and/or laws are altered within these acts by opposition, inversion or by the abandonment of prohibitions and normal rules (*e.g.* Napier 1986: 16, Turner 1969: chapter 5, Kürti 1996). The paradox of the mask in reversals consists of creating a locus for absurdity in contrast to regularity (*cf.* Turner 1969:

170, Napier 1986). László Kürti has maintained that when the traditional borders are crossed in performances with reversals, it is shown how limited, rigid and difficult the everyday categories are to change (1996: 158). In studying status reversals, Victor Turner (1969: 177) argues that the performance reaffirms the hierarchical principle, and what is more, since the reversal makes things absurd, what is underlined is the “reasonableness of everyday culturally predictable behaviour between the various estates of society” (Turner 1969: 177). Victor Turner suggests that the performing of rites with status reversal serves the purpose of maintaining the social order, since the irregularity created by the performance is perceived to have altered the ordinary balance between the otherwise permanently “high” or “low” statuses (*ibid*). The workings of this paradox may be exemplified by observations made during a carnival in Hungary. Here an inversion of the everyday gender roles is performed at a women’s carnival in village communities (Kürti 1996). The event is organized by and for women alone, where they dance, sing bawdy songs and perform male dances, sometimes dressed as males (*ibid*: 151). Through the carnival, a temporary reversal of the usually harsh patriarchal gender roles is created. In addition to what is stated above on reversals, I would like to suggest that performances with masks with reversal as a theme (be it status, gender reversal, *etc.*) may serve the purpose of letting go of pent-up emotions. Who would not feel like being the “superior” if only for a brief moment, or enjoy the possible pleasure with mockery of the same, when at all other moments you experience repression. But also, as Jimmy Strassburg (2000: 35) maintains, reversals are phenomena that must be taken as serious criticism against the normal orders, and they may carry a revolutionary potential and eventually transform rituals or even affect everyday life (*cf.* Baudrillard 1987 on body and anti-body).

### Creating acts of revelation: the mask and its wearer

It has rightfully been pointed out that the rituals, in which masks are used, often required enormous talents of diverse sorts, therefore the performer would have to be fully concentrated and aware of what he/she is doing (Pernet 1992: 126, Emigh 1996: 17– 8). John Emigh likewise stresses the complexity of the mask and its relationship with the mask performer (1996). This is how he describes how masks are made to work within Balinese contexts. When making the mask

“...move to silent music, he [the mask wearer, my remark] is assessing the potential life of the mask and searching for the meeting place between himself and the life inherent in its otherness... If he finds that place of congruence between his physical and spiritual resources and the potential life of the mask, then a living amalgam is created: a character, a persona. This amalgam is at best unstable – based as it must be upon paradox, ambiguity, and illusion – but “it” moves, “it” speaks, “it” breathes, “it” is perceived – by the per-

former and by the audience – as having organic integrity. If the performer fails to find such a meeting place within this field of paradox, ambiguity, and illusion the mask will retain its separateness: whatever its worth as an object, a “work” of art, it will at best function as a decoration, a costume element. The mask neither hides nor obscures – it is a revelatory device” (Emigh 1996: 275).

I am in accordance with John Emigh’s understanding of the mask working as a revelatory device. There are ample masking studies, however theorized and advanced, that keep emphasizing that masks work as disguises (*e.g.* Urban and Hendricks 1983, Pernet 1992, Pollock 1995, Bailey 2005). This persistence could possibly be connected to the belief that a true and stable identity can be found beneath the worn paraphernalia. But when identity is treated as something fluid and constantly created and creating through performances (see earlier chapters in Part One), it is obvious that it is insufficient to regard masks as disguises. Rather they are in fact components, parts that if successfully integrated by the performer will engender and reveal a new persona. Elizabeth Tonkin (1979: 240) has likewise emphasized that what is created through the mask is a new being, creating emotional responses within the co-performers. Just think of the fear that might be evoked when a person wears a robber-outfit, the face covered by nylon stockings. Anxiety and fear may also be aroused when confronted with a person wearing a dentist’s or doctor’s apparel. The feelings are generated by what has been revealed by the masks, not what the nylon stockings, the dentist’s or doctor’s paraphernalia have hidden. What must not be neglected is of course the fact that the emotional responses are also depending on the context in which the paraphernalia is used.

Let us turn to a couple of Late Iron Age masks or helmets, where I believe it is possible that a successful living amalgam or new personas might be represented. The well-known helmets from the boat-burials of Vendel and Valsgärde (figs 22–23) very often have plaques fastened upon them.



Fig. 22. The helmet from Vendel I. Source: Almgren 1980: 159.

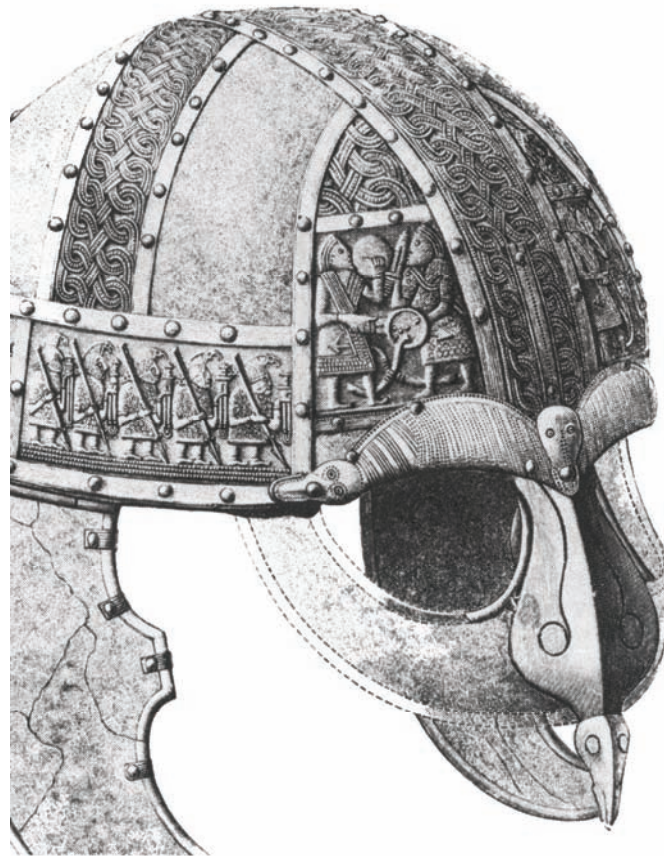


Fig. 23. The helmet from Vendel XIV. When worn, the animal/bird covering the human nose can be interpreted as receiving enough air “to come alive” through the constant inhalation and exhalation of air of the mask wearer. See figure 24 further on how the animal/bird has come alive. Source: Almgren 1980: 162.

The helmets may also have a crest, argued by Birgit Arrhenius (1994: 211) to have been partly detachable. I interpret the crest as a representation of an animal gestalt, at times a snake/dragon, bird or a wild boar. The animal stretches from the back of the helmet onto the front, where the animal’s face, beak or mouth reaches the wearer’s nose. Upon the plaques of the helmet humanoids wearing masks can be seen (fig. 22). Now, on these plaques (fig. 24), the ridge of the helmet, consisting of a snake or a bird appears to be alive, and has risen to some extent from the helmet, and now partakes in the action with an active gaze. In my interpretation, this means that the mask wearer has successfully invited powerful forces, whether exogenous or non-exogenous, and is able to control them, hence a new persona is created. This is discernable through the whole story of the plaque: the gazing animal, the mask wearer mounted on a galloping or trotting horse in full armour and the

god of war Odin (?) found on his/her right side. Perhaps the plaques on the helmets, displaying the correct or desired outcome of the mask wearing, were used as precautions or guides for the successful transformations into a warrior. The ridge, or animal gestalt, was surely regarded as an essential part of the appearance/performance, since it is disproportionately large on the plaque (fig. 24). Equally, it cannot be excluded that the animal gestalt of the helmet crest is given life when the helmet is worn, and literally life/air is supplied through exhaling air through the nose. I have already accounted for the fact that one necessary ingredient for life to be created according the anthropogenic myth of the time was the adding of breath (see *The sorting of bodies through centuries* and note 9).



Fig. 24. One of the plaques from the helmet of Valsgärde 8. Here the animal gestalt of the helmet (the crest), worn by a humanoid, is seemingly alive. Its significance is underlined by the fact that it is represented in an exaggerated mode. Drawing: Per-Olof Bohlin. Source: Arwidsson 1980: 58.

A parallel mechanism could have been at work with early Egyptian masks. The facial/funeral masks from *ca.* 2,000 BC included descriptions of how the body would be resurrected and would appear in the afterlife (Taylor 1994:



178–80). Returning to the Scandinavian context surely the task of going to war (actually or symbolically) or going *berserk*, suggested by the helmets, would be considered a hazardous and dangerous one, consequently needing guidance and precautions need to be taken. Etymologically, war is akin to the Old High German word *werra*, strife, in its turn analogous to Old High German *werran*, meaning to confuse (MW), thus underlining the extraordinary circumstances prevailing when the normal way of life can no longer be maintained. What must be remembered about the Vendel/Valsgärde materials are likewise that they are remains of funeral stagings<sup>15</sup>, that is, one of the major rites of passage in life. The point of the matter here is not to give an extensive interpretation of the Vendel or Valsgärde helmet materials or even touch upon the vast and complex material of boat grave burials (see Seiler 2001 for references), but rather to understand how some part of the mechanisms of mask wearing and subsequent bodily transformations might have worked or been perceived to work as concerns the use of helmets. Although not discussing the reasons why helmets had plaques fastened onto them, Anders Kaliff and Olof Sundqvist (2004: 67 and references therein) recently suggested that the bronze plaque from Torslunda, Sweden, could represent cultic activities, where the participants wore bear or wolf skin to accomplish a zoomorphic transformation.

A facial mask such as a helmet defines not only the helmet wearer, but also those who do not wear facial gear (Proschan 1983: 25). Likewise, a facial mask/helmet defines what is perceived as a normal or ordinary face, and the abbreviation, exaggeration or intensification of facial characteristics in the mask makes it “...another face, opposed to the human one” (Oguibenine 1975: 5 in Proschan 1983: 25). These contrasting effects are crucial, inviting and demonstrating paradox (see also below on faciality in section *Representations of facial masks*).

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<sup>15</sup> I deliberately use the word staging to emphasize the performing characteristics I believe to be a prominent feature of certain (boat) burials (*cf.* Herschend 2003: 53, 61). For instance, regarding the Oseberg ship burial, Terje Gansum (1999a) has convincingly argued and shown that the ship was open for visits and manipulations – a changing of the stage – for months. Once sealed, the ship was revisited and re-opened again a short period of time after the closure, objects removed, until it was re-opened (excavated by archaeologists) once more in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (see for example Arwill-Nordbladh 1998, 2002, Gansum 1999a). Also note that very few remnants of bodies (inhumations and cremations) have been recovered among the Valsgärde/Vendel materials, whereas skeletal material from animals is prominent at times (*cf.* the debate about whether a body had been deposited in the Sutton Hoo burial (Oddy 1980: 173–4)). Frands Herschend (2003: 47–9) has suggested for Valsgärde 8 that the construction was kept open until the human body had disintegrated, where upon the burial was covered.

## The importance of the audience

Equally important to masked performances is the audience. I have and will refer to the audiences as co-performers. Several researchers have pointed out that spectators are not at all passive recipients of a performance. For instance, Henry Pernet (1992: 156–7) has concluded that the addressees might be fully aware of the masked appearance, but react with genuine emotions as if they were not. The sincerity is then addressed to what is represented in the ritual (*ibid*). The onlooker would consequently take an active part in the ritual, instead of being conceived of as reacting to the ritual (*ibid*). The interaction between masked performer and co-performers is complex, but must be considered should the masking event be intelligible (Tonkin 1979: 243, 246).

Victor Turner uses a similar line of argument when claiming that ritual in comparison to theatre does not differentiate between performers and audience, since all are perceived of as sharing “the same system of beliefs and accept the same system of practices...” (1982: 112). But even at theatres, the audience cannot be considered passive. In a recent thesis on theatre audiences, Mathias Broth (2001) has concluded that even hawking, coughing and laughing from the viewers are structured, but subconscious, performances in response to, and in respect of, what is transacted on stage. Silent addressees are of course also active participants in what is being performed; to cite Marcel Mauss “Everything has a meaning, silence itself is a sign” (Mauss 1967: 238 in Pernet 1992: 157). Earlier in the chapter discussing oral communities I pointed out how stories are performed in concordance with the audience or co-performers, with an example from the Yanomamö showing this to be the case. Here villagers interact with the storytellers, by correcting them and wanting to hear a special version of a story (Chagnon 1992: 118). The central role of the co-performers was likewise described in the *tokorime* healing ritual among the Kulina. The ritual expert cried out the special song belonging to an animal (that is: wore a mask) at night in the forest while at the same time approaching the village. The villagers responded to the cry by recognizing the sound through shouting out the name of the advancing animal.

As previously touched upon, equally significant in connection to masks and transitional situations are the emotions and bodily responses the performances generate, both inside the performer and the co-performers (*e.g.* Tonkin 1979: 246, Urban and Hendricks 1983: 202–4, Devisch 1994). Excitement, merriment, fear, nausea, joy, pity, and sadness are only a few of the emotions that may be experienced. René Devisch (1994) has in his study of the non-literal culture of the Yaka of Zaïre emphasized that within healing and divination practices the physical body and its bodily functions act as key

symbolic material. Thus, not only the emotions of the body matters, but for the initiatory transformation to be completed the “human body, its boundaries and orifices, the senses, its oral, its digestive and genital functions” (Devisch 1994: 23) need to be engaged (*ibid*). It is through these enactments, sensing and bodily gestations that an initiand becomes learned – thus the initiation cannot “be comprehended as mere narrative or dramaturgical expression of social drama and pragmatical engineering; nor are they liturgical enactments of a world order which reflects religious truths. On the contrary, healing rituals *make* the world in that they generate relations within and between the provinces of knowledge that are the human body – senses, emotions – the social body of relationships, and cosmos” (Devisch 1994: 9 original emphasis). The human body as a metaphor and as a principal key for explaining and making the cosmos is discussed further in Part Two.

### The purposes of masking

To sum up, I would like to suggest that one of the purposes of masks is to assist in and act as a guide in transformational processes, of whatever kind. As such, masks are necessarily paradoxical. They work by playing and experimenting with the conventional ways of expressing identities, with which they capture and focus attention on certain aspects of being and the world/cosmos. A variety of channels, codes, and systems are used to contradict or complement one another in vigorous performances (Proschan 1983: 4). Masked performances offer glimpses and explanations of not only other worlds, but of the very world(s) we ourselves live in, by exploiting the unrealized potential that resides in systems of the familiar every day life (*ibid*: 3–4).

Elizabeth Tonkin has convincingly argued that “[m]asking is a demonstration case of the extremely complex and multiform expressions of Power...” (Tonkin 1979: 244, capital letter in the original). She claims that “Masks elicit and manage Power, which can include energy and dynamism as well as coercion and domination...Moreover, basic cognitive operations – such as paradox making – may themselves create experiences understood as power” (Tonkin 1979: 237). What must also be recognized is that it is not the mask *per se* that is powerful, but that the power resides in the “...interstices between persons and between things, that is to say in relations” (Leach 1965: 169 in Tonkin 1979: 247).

Masks are, together with performing objects and puppets, veritable treasure troves, to follow Frank Proschan (1983:4). Importantly, in semiotic terms masks act as symbols, as signs of signs and more seldom as signs of objects, with the crucial consequence that they often are abbreviated (Bogatyrev 1976: 33 in Proschan 1983: 14). Further, “[t]he Mask takes meanings on itself and appears charged with Power because it is the focus of concentrated symbolism, whose associated meanings and emotions reverberate off one

another” (Tonkin 1979: 246). Even though abbreviation commonly holds that certain marks or elements are only considered necessary in a specific context (Proschan 1983: 14), the abbreviation might likewise invite disparate significata, that is, opening them up to interpretational plurality (Tonkin 1979: 245). To be able to relate to such significata is to be powerful (Tonkin 1979: 245). An example may clarify this. Morphy (1999 in Goldhahn 2004: 133–4) shows how simplified signs are very rich metaphorically and transformable (*cf.* Proschan 1983: 22). In Australian Aboriginal art, signs can be carved in stones. A novice may be taught one meaning of such a sign in a first initiation. For instance, two parallel lines, symbolizing a creek, lead to a water hole, carved as a circle, where the creek and the place have specific names that relate to the Dream self of the novice. At a second initiation, the meaning of the carving is deepened, since the initiand is taught that the signs not only represents the specific place, but likewise that the two parallel lines in fact represent the stick and the tail with which an old kangaroo man dug out the water hole. Later initiations may reveal that the parallel lines represent a phallus, and the water hole a vulva, and so on.

I will now investigate the possible relationships between Scandinavian Iron Age people and masking practices. This is accomplished by, in turn, analysing mask-clad and manipulated effigies, facial masks, and expressions for masks in the spoken language. One such word, *kuml*, is proven to be particularly useful in expanding thoughts on masks as transitional objects, since the notion embraced such diverse material phenomena as burial mound, mask and rune stone. The chapter ends with conclusions on masking and performance. However, the topic of masking is a recurrent theme throughout the thesis. It is tentatively suggested that theories on masking may be used not only on bodies or representations of bodies, but likewise on material culture retrieved within specific contexts. The cases I am referring to involve foremost objects that are connected to burial practices. For instance, objects may have been manipulated in such ways that their ordinary identity or function was troubled or disabled. One example concerns the occurrence of bread in burials, where the bread distinguishes itself from everyday bread by not always being edible, since it may contain gravel, or, as in the example in Part Three from the Lovö parish, Sweden, a sharp edged stone, noticeable only when the bread was split into pieces. A further example is the case of the Gokstad ship, a boat burial from Norway, where a number of objects had been masked. The 32 shields of the ship, interpreted in Part Two as regards their colour symbolism, were proven to be too thin to have mattered for defensive purposes. Also, the mast of the boat had been chopped off prior to the burial (Montelius 1886: 179), and other objects were likewise manipulated in order that they no longer would work in their usual manner, for instance the cutting of a sledge into many parts and its subsequent deposition in two separate and distant places (Montelius 1886: 181). Other examples

are known where objects associated with travelling have been rendered unserviceable, for instance the wagon of state from Oseberg, that can only drive forward (Oma 2000: 107). In these instances masks, in the semiotic sense, work as symbols. I also argue in Part Three the possibility that (burnt) body parts, animal or human, in some circumstances may have worked like masks in the sense that they acted as transitional objects, used as they were in transformational events such as turning iron into steel or clay into a ceramic urn with good plasticity. Burnt bones have likewise been retrieved on physical threshold zones – between buildings, in post-holes and on property borders, underlining their transitional qualities.

## Masking practices during the Iron Age in Scandinavia

### Make up and doll up – figures of speech

There are several reasons why I deal at length with the concept of masking and consequently use it throughout the thesis. In one instance, masking captures the possible expressive diversity of prehistoric bodies – as representations of human bodies in a variety of materials (*e.g.* gold, wood, silver) and as masked-up, but, through the centuries decaying, human bodies in graves. These bodies usually have been modified and manipulated in certain ways, which in this instance are referred to as masking practices. I will now plunge right into a few archaeological examples, to discuss different sorts of manipulating or of making and dolling up.

I have elsewhere commented on the fact that some 6<sup>th</sup> century gold foil figures from Bornholm, Denmark, had been dressed up with added golden necklaces (Back Danielsson 1999). The silver figure from Kymbo, Västergötland, has likewise been dressed up with a golden necklace (Zachrisson 2003). The well-known Iron Age Buddha statue of bronze from the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD from Helgö is another dressed up figure, fig. 25. On the recovery of the statue, its neck and wrist wore very large leather straps with folded and bent borders (Holmqvist 1961: 112). These were unfortunately removed after the sculpture's discovery – perhaps for antiquarian aesthetic reasons (Zachrisson 2001). The leather straps only occur on one photograph in the Helgö publications – drawings as well as photographs are otherwise strapless.



Fig. 25. The Buddha figure from Helgö, with its two leather attachments, a necklace and a bracelet of leather. Not to scale. Photo: ATA.

I have already mentioned the helmets from Vendel and Valsgärde. These helmets could in themselves be modified and reshaped, through the adding of a partly detachable crest, in my interpretation representing an animal gestalt, perhaps a bird, a snake or a wild boar. Early helmets lack the crest – it is, according to Birgit Arrhenius (1994: 211), a supplement of the Vendel period (550–800 AD).

We also find cases where the props have been carved or painted right onto the body. The wooden sculpture from Rude Eskildstrup presumably from the Migration period (400–550 AD) has a carved neck collar, clearly reminiscent

of the three golden collars of the same date that have been recovered in Sweden, figs 26–27 (Holmqvist 1980, *cf.* Back Danielsson 1999, 2002). I have in a previous work maintained that this wooden sculpture has several features in common with single gold foil figures (Back Danielsson 1999).



Figs 26 (left) and 27 (right). Wooden sculpture recovered from a bog in Rude Eskildstrup, Denmark. Golden counterparts to the figure's necklace have been recovered on three occasions in Sweden. It is the belief of the author that the sculpture has in common with a few gold foil figures the seated posture, garments and an object in the lap (Back Danielsson 1999, see also Part Two). Not to scale. Source: Mackeprang 1935, plates IV and V.

Ole Klindt-Jensen (1957: 89–90) has remarked that the figure also has facial characteristics evocative of a facial mask. A few gold foil figures, cut out of a thick gold foil and recovered within a special building in Uppåkra, Sweden, show traces of carved patterns, indicating possible garments (fig. 28). Yet other strip-like figures (fig. 29) have golden features added to them. These attachments have been interpreted as phalluses (Watt 2004: 199–200). It is equally possible however that the piercing of the figures indicates and facilitates a penetrating movement. For the second figure from the left, this could have taken the form of an ongoing intercourse with a loose phallus which the caretaker could manoeuvre and direct. The third figure from the left could apparently be stabbed repeatedly in the heart-region. The striking object in this figure's lap area, could apart from a phallus likewise indicate an object, similar to the material the Rude Eskildstrup sculpture embraces in the lap with its hands. Also note that these strips are bent, possibly symbolizing a sitting posture (*cf.* fig. 14). Further, the 9<sup>th</sup> century figure from Aska, Hagebyhöga parish in the county of Östergötland, sitting in the midst of a

serpent, has a veil on her head, and other accoutrements (fig. 30) (*e.g.* Arbman 1941, Arne 1932).

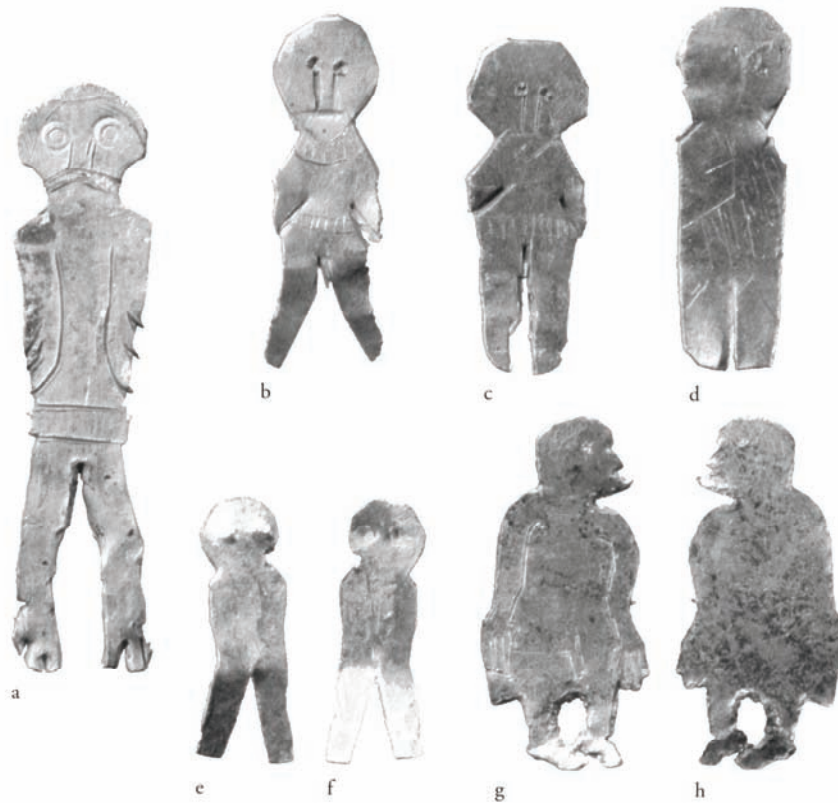


Fig. 28. Uppåkra gold foil figures that appear to have clothes, or other paraphernalia, engraved. Note that figure e has bent legs, perhaps symbolizing a seated posture, and that its face has suffered two blows with a sharp pointed object. These marks might equally be interpreted as the making of bulbous eyes, indicating trance and far sightedness (see Part Two). Also note the animal like qualities of figure a, where the tightly held arms may be interpreted as the wings of a bird, and where the marks at the end of the “wings” may symbolize feathers. Further, the representation of this figure’s feet may symbolize a tip-toe position, or perhaps an animal’s cloven hoofs (*cf.* figure 13 from Eketorp with tightly held “invisible” arms in a tip-toe position and with a possible feathered or furry like garment). Enlarged. Photo: Bengt Alm-gren. Source: Watt 2004: 198.



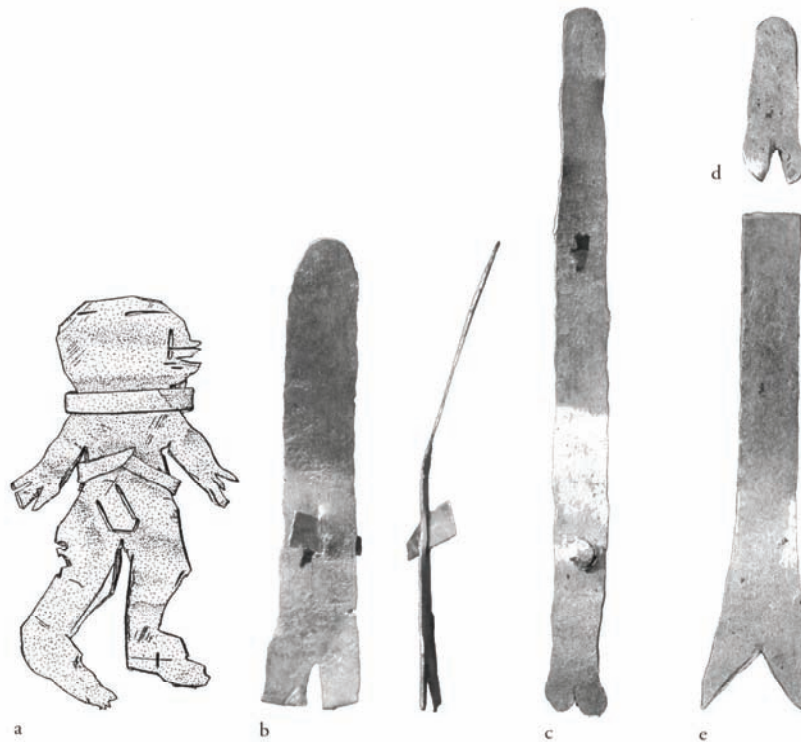


Fig. 29. Gold foil strips from Uppåkra (although the one on the left is from Bornholm). They (figures b and c) appear to have been pierced by sharp golden objects. Figure b has been “stabbed” in the lower abdomen by a golden object likewise enabling a penetrating movement, or indicating a manoeuvrable phallus. Margrethe Watt (2004: 199–200) has interpreted the protruding items of figures b and c as phalluses. However the figure c not only has an object in its lap region, but appears to have been stabbed in the heart region as well. Figure c’s object need not (only) symbolize a phallus, but could equally represent an item similar to the object the Rude Eskildstrup figure has in its lap (figs 26 and 27). Importantly, figures b, c, and e seem to be bent, like other gold foil figures (e.g. fig. 14), which I have interpreted as representing a seated posture (*cf.* figs 26 and 27, the Rude Eskildstrup figure). There are also noticeable similarities between the above strips and gold foil figures recovered on Bornholm, though these had loop holes enabling them to be worn (fig. 14). Enlarged. Photo: Bengt Almgren. Source: Watt 2004: 200.

Margrethe Watt has posed the question of how many of the gold foil figures executed in what has been described as a crude manner (fig. 29) can “be regarded as human figures” (Watt 2004: 105, fig. 31). I would like to rephrase the question mark into an exclamation mark. The fact that we find it difficult to separate between simple golden strips and, in our view, intentionally made human-like strips may perhaps be an entry to understanding how prehistoric people engaged with the material. Did they consider any golden strip, unidentifiable for us as human-like, as a form of (divine) bodily repre-

sentation? (For further discussions on the divine and godly aspects of gold, see Part Two). Were all golden strips potential or actual representations of divine bodies? Are we too restrictive in our requirements for interpreting only certain golden strips as representing humanoids? I would think that is likely. If we widen our modern ways of assessing these “waste” strips, it is possible to re-interpret them as potential or actual and operative agents, already perfect in their crude execution. The diving being is thus already present in the material gold, and it was the task of the smith/artisan, to deliver, to act as midwife, and to make possible the birth of the (artefact) life. The thought of manufactured objects passing through stages in life, equivalent to the stages a human being passes through, such as birth, adult-hood, marriage, and death, has been suggested for several artefacts and pre-historic contexts (*e.g.* Bradley 1990, Tilley 1996: 247, Strassburg 1998: 159, *cf.* Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986).

Similarly, I have focused attention on the fact that gold foil figures have had golden attachments, such as necklaces, phalluses, *etc.* Separated from the figures, however, these small golden objects if retrieved, for instance, in hoards or in proximity to gold foil figures could and most likely would be interpreted as waste of lesser importance. I would like to suggest that they might equally have been viewed in prehistory as attributes, jewellery, bodily prostheses, or stabbing equipment belonging to bodily representations in the shape of gold foil figures. This could imply that hoards with golden or other objects may be conceived of as not mere valuables/waste from a work shop or a smith, but instead as a variety of (offered) props for divine and perhaps miniature beings. Lars Larsson and Karl-Magnus Lenntorp have rightly emphasized that the gold foil strips from Uppåkra, Sweden, are certainly “not only waste from figure manufacture” and that they can be interpreted as highly stylized figures, reminiscent of other Iron Age figures (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 25). They reach this conclusion due to the fact that the distribution of strips within the house sequence of Uppåkra is similar to that of the gold foil figures (*ibid*). The same pattern of distribution is discernable for the fragments of golden bars, strengthening my suggestion that they were of importance and could have worked as possible props for figures and strips.



Fig. 30. The humanoid from Hagebyhöga appears to be sitting in a snake-like ring, wearing a veil/helmet of some sort and a button-on-bow brooch. Might her veil/helmet be similar to the nose/head gear that is represented on other figures (*e.g.* figs 4–5), though there seen in profile? I have described the noses as reminiscent of rolling pins. Enlarged. Source: Arrhenius 1994: 223.

Other manipulations of bodies can be noted. Apparently, body piercing of assumed vital organs has been observed for a few material categories. The recently retrieved so called tenth bracteate of gold from Söderby in the parish of Danmark in the county of Uppland, dating to the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, has been thoroughly analysed (Lamm, Hydman and Axboe 1999), and it displays a unique mixture of figures not previously known (fig. 31). The two humanoid figures in the outer disc have had the region of their hearts and private parts marked or pierced by a small and sharp-pointed object (Lamm, Hydman and Axboe 1999: 235). Likewise, one of these two figures in the outer disc seems to have had its throat cut, since a very distinct and deep tear is discernible right across it (*ibid*). The humanoid figure in the middle of the bracteate has likewise had its head, heart and possibly the genitals marked or stabbed by a similarly small and sharp-pointed object (*ibid*). In my opinion a few gold foil figures, apart from being dressed up both with golden collars and golden belts, have also been stabbed, marked or mutilated on organs liable to be vital. One example is the single gold foil figure nr 887 from Slöinge, Sweden, which seems to have had its face mutilated by “four stabs from the point of a (?) knife” (Lamm 2004: 72). Equally, the recovery of gold foil figures or patrices in halves might be interpreted as a dismembering. Half a patrix was recovered in Nebble, Zealand, Denmark, in 1985 where the lower part of the figure displayed feet and an ankle-length garment (Andréasson 1995: 55). Great care had been taken in the dismembering, since it could be shown that the fracture had been filed off to become even (H. Nielsen 1985 in Andréasson 1995: 56). However this procedure which I have chosen to interpret as a dismembering, has also been suggested to be a recasting of the material – the secondary use of the patrix being a weight, since it was found to weigh *ca.* 4.55 grams, that is almost as much as a Roman solidus (H. Nielsen 1985: 15 in Andréasson 1995: 56). A golden treasure retrieved in Nørre Hvam, Jutland, Denmark, contained not only one cut gold foil figure and other golden items, but likewise a half golden figure, now missing, seemingly maimed (Mackeprang 1952: 132 in Andréasson 1995: 40–1). Birgit Arrhenius (1994: 221) has likewise remarked that one gold foil figure from Ravlunda apparently had been mutilated, since its lower parts had been removed, making the figure look as if it is seated, instead of showing legs in movement as one probable stamp identical figure does.



Fig. 31. The so-called tenth bracteate from Söderby, the parish of Danmark, Uppland, Sweden. Source: Lamm 2004: 128.

It might be argued that the stabbings, markings or “wounds” of the figures described above are accidental or unintended results of using blunt tools, or that they occurred after or during the deposition in the ground, *etc.* Such explanations are in my view not at all satisfactory. For one thing, several researchers (*e.g.* Stenberger 1964, Holmqvist 1980, Burenhult 1991, Arrhenius 1994) have emphasized the great expertise artisans possessed during the period of interest, which clearly speaks against haphazardly made marks. Of course, it may not have been the artisans that made the markings, but later users or owners of the objects. These owners, or directors, nonetheless surely had enough knowledge of bodies to mark vital bodily positions (heart region *etc.*). Hubert Hydman, who closely analysed, copied and straightened out the in situ crumpled up Söderby bracteates concludes: “Of course each and every one of these small markings and tears may be coincidental, but when put together they do imply a deliberate destruction” (Hydman 1999: 235, my translation). Jan Peder Lamm suggests that these manipulations were desecrating and made just before the crumbling up and the depositing of the bracteate in the soil, and is comparable to voodoo practices (Lamm 1999: 230).

If these marks were incidental, we would surely find such marks elsewhere on these figures or objects, not just where they appear to be focused, on presumably vital organs. As previously mentioned, Reichborn-Kjennerud (1927) has discussed ancient Nordic notions on the physiology of humans. In his research he was able to conclude that blood and the heart were consid-

ered residences of life, and that these also had magic meanings (1927: 29). In the tenth bracteate just mentioned the heart region had been stabbed (apart from the head and possibly the genitals). Bodily organs and senses during the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia are discussed further in the section *Making sense of senses* in Part Two.

I would here like to draw attention to other circumstances that will not be discussed in this thesis, but in this context deserve mentioning. Both figural representations and human bodies were manipulated, and sometimes the same vital organs as those of the figures. Such conclusions can be reached due to the survival and excavation of Iron Age bog bodies, mainly from the Early Iron Age (400 BC–400 AD). For instance, a few corpses from bogs have had their neck region manipulated by strangulation or have had their throats cut (*e.g.* Glob 1966: 80, Fischer 1990a, b, M. Williams 2003: 94). In bogs, the otherwise perishable organic materials are preserved – indeed the sometimes extraordinary stabilizing features of the bog could be compared to a gigantic preserving reservoir. Since large numbers of (presumably) dead human bodies were cremated during the Iron Age, it is difficult to say whether these bodies were manipulated before the pyre. However, what has been ascertained is the fact that in some cases, human bodies were disarticulated before cremation. Per Holck has through detailed analyses of cremated animal and human bones concluded that both types of bones occasionally show cut marks, perhaps made by a sword or an axe (1997: 126). He likewise observed a great variety in the degree of burning of the bones, where imperfect cremation occurred due to lack of oxygen (*ibid.*: 131). In disagreement with the earlier suggestion by archaeologists that bones in graves sometimes are poorly burnt, Terje Gansum (2004a, b) elegantly suggests that “imperfect cremations” were ways of producing bone coal. Bone coal, Terje Gansum convincingly argues, is a possible ingredient for tempering iron to steel (*ibid.*). Through excavations of other prehistoric remains we as well know that cremated body parts were re-used and re-integrated into other material circles, or in new acts and performances. Fragmentized burnt bones were, for example, used as temper in ceramic vessels (Stilborg 2001: 400–1), and in post-holes of roof-supporting posts in buildings (Artelius 1999, 2000: 176). In fact, after excavating buildings in an area in the county of Halland, Tore Artelius suggested the possible existence of a complete structure for taking care of and grinding cremated bones (2000: 176–7). The recycling of burnt bones in different contexts is further discussed in Part Three.

The custom of saving and using body parts is also known from other cultures. Annette B. Weiner has noted that among the Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea parts of a dead body are kept for the living (1988: 41). Fingernails are removed and some of the hair may be cut and kept in small white cowrie shells, and then threaded on a long red shell necklace (*ibid.*). The

physical mementos of the deceased may be carried for several years as a sign of ongoing mourning (*ibid*). Portions of burnt and fragmentized human bodies may also be consumed by living beings (endocannibalism). Among the Yanomamö, portions of their own deceased are consumed (Chagnon 1992: 115). The bones from a cremation are ground by a relative of the deceased in a hollow log (*ibid*). When pulverized, the mixture is put into small gourds (*ibid*). The hollow log is rinsed with boiled soup which is then drunk by relatives and friends. The mixture in the gourds may be used in later, more elaborate ash-drinking ceremonies (*ibid*). Endocannibalism is also known among the Amahuaca Indians (Dole 1962) and within the Kula ring (Young 1989), and has been suggested to have taken place in certain contexts in Bronze Age Crete (Hamilakis 1998, 2002: 128–9).

Returning to figural representations of human bodies and Iron Age Scandinavia, there are examples where whole bodies have been removed from their earlier material context. Torun Zachrisson (2001) has remarked that many miniature block chairs (“thrones”) dating to the Late Iron Age, recovered from burials in areas such as Birka, or in deposits, had their seated occupant removed, and suggests that a dethronement occurred. Again, a parallel may be drawn with decaying human bodies, since inhumations are also known to have been removed from their funeral contexts. Such actions are known from the following inhumation burials in Norway: a grave in Storem in Nord-Trøndelag, a mound on the Borre grave-field in Vestfold, graves from Tranås, Hovsneset and Sandvika on Jøa in Nord-Trøndelag, as well as the mound in Gokstad in Vestfold (Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992: 86). Burial mounds are further known to have contained bodies (inhumations) in seated postures (*e.g.* Marstrander 1973, *cf.* Price 2002).

Here I have merely pointed out the fact that representations of bodies – both human and in other materials – were indeed manipulated in a variety of contexts and executions. The figural representations of bodies were not passive effigies, to be admired at a distance, but rather were created and creative participants in a number of plays, where an assortment of properties, or masks, were required, all depending on context, purpose and power relations. Sometimes the props were added on, demonstrated by a few gold foils and the Buddha from Helgö, taken off, as with the dethronement, or ready-made to go where, for instance, necklaces, veils and clothes were part of the figures (such as the humanoid from Hagebyhöga, fig. 30). Occasionally, the figures underwent other treatment, such as the inflicting of bodily wounds, discernable on the bracteate from Söderby. When we as archaeologists excavate these material remains, we find them in their last prehistoric act(ing) and scene. (The fact that they show wear and tear speaks to the figures having been used in different acts).

The materials I have mentioned may be perceived of as random findings within a large time frame, but I will argue that there is a sequence to be detected (fig. 32). Most of the few Scandinavian humanoid representations in metal that have been recovered from the Early Iron Age are not free-standing, but are integral parts of objects, whose form and function specified the contexts in which they were used. Such is the case with the horns from Gallehus, Denmark, the golden necklace from Möne, Sweden, the cauldrons from Gundestrup and Rynkeby, Denmark, and the silver goblets from Himlingøje, also Denmark<sup>16</sup>. Ostensibly, the bodies are structured within a certain world or worlds, or taking part only in certain stories. May the bodily representations of the silver goblets or the Gallehus horns be linked to rites where beverages were consumed, suggested by the forms of the objects? Were the representations of the golden necklace of Möne associated with stories that were retold or re-experienced when worn in a ceremonial context? Likewise, it could be argued that the figures on the gold bracteates most of which are dated to the Migration period, also pertain to certain stories, as suggested by Karl Hauck (*e.g.* 1983, 1985a, b, 1986a, b). However, the later gold foil figures under investigation from *ca.* 500–800 AD diverge from these circumstances in several respects. They are not an essential part of another object – fragile and tiny as they are they apparently were free-floating objects (although a few may have had a loop attached to them, enabling them to be added-on to other bodies, whether human or other material). Their forms differ from the golden bracteates; in fact, they are their opposites, expressing rectangularity instead of circularity. As “free” objects they may have also presented the possibility of manipulations – dressing up, stabbing, mutilating or crumpling up. (Though note that bracteates likewise occasionally may have been crumpled up and at least one bracteate shows signs of manipulation of bodies). Equally interesting, the motif of the quadruped monster of D gold bracteates had on one occasion been liberated from this context, since three such animals were discovered on the backside of a relief brooch from Hällan, Hälsingland, Sweden, from *ca.* 500–540 AD (Rundkvist 2004: 178–9). Gold foil figures have further been recovered in a great variety of circumstances – in burials, bogs, large buildings, places for the creation of handicrafts, *etc.* (see Part Two), whereas bracteates commonly are linked to hoards and burials. It is probable that it was the gold foil figures’ versatility that was considered most useful and made them work as

<sup>16</sup> The Gundestrup cauldron is estimated to have been made outside Scandinavia *ca.* 100 BC (Kaul 1990: 96), the Rynkeby cauldron in the same century (Albrechtsen 1990: 98). Both cauldrons were retrieved in bog areas (Kaul 1990: 96, Albrechtsen 1990: 98). The goblets from Himlingøje were recovered at a burial place from the third century AD (Hedeager 1990: 120). The Gallehus horns are dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Mackeprang 1935: 231), and the Möne collar may belong to the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Ørsnes 1990: 140, *cf.* Holmqvist 1980: 84). Note that a few free-standing figures have been recovered from Early Iron Age, or the 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century as well, for instance on Funen (Voss 1990: 138) and on Öland (Arrhenius 1994: 167–71, *cf.* Arbman 1936).



powerful expressive tools for different sorts of connections and conversations. Simply put, they could act in an assortment of stories, engendering many possible outcomes, communications, entrances and exists to the current and other worlds (see Part Two).

The emphasis on gold foil figures playing a part in stories is suggested also by their retrieval on/under roof-bearing posts in large buildings. These buildings have been interpreted as halls, where an effort has been made to assess the buildings as stages for certain performances (Söderberg 2005). Such performances included not only the transgressing of bodily orifices such as in ritual meals and drinking ceremonies and (other) repetitive movements of bodies when these were occupied in smithing activities and other handicrafts, but likewise accompanying oral performances. Both kinds of performances (festivities and handicraft actions) have been linked to such halls (Söderberg 2005). What I would like to accentuate here is that specifically stories, and thereby bodily movements and engagements, were probably integral parts of the production of handicrafts. Alex Gill (2003: 72) has recently explored the connections between different forms of material culture and their manufacture and the remembering and delivery of myths and knowledge. Inspired by Christopher Tilley (1999), he convincingly argues and shows that oral performances and the production of handicraft articles within oral communities may have had a great deal in common. Since the large handicraft places of the Late Iron Age are concurrent with the usage of gold foil figures (Hed Jakobsson 2003: 167), my argument that Late Iron Age “free” figures, as opposed to Early Iron Age object-dependent figures, imply a change in the delivery of stories, is substantiated. The Late Iron Age societies also manufactured new and different objects compared to the Early Iron Age (e.g. Burenhult 1991). This entailed the necessity of new memories and new bodily movements and actions, or put differently, new stories. Gold foil figures, halls and stories are discussed at greater length in Part Two.

The Vendel and Viking Age periods exemplify further loose or free standing humanoid figures or figurines, for example the figure from Kungsängen, Sweden, engaging with a wriggling snake (Ringqvist 1969), the figures from Sibble, Birka, Grödinge, Klinta, and Tuna (fig. 17) and Hagebyhöga (fig. 30) already mentioned, and the figurines from Lunda, Södermanland (Andersson *et al.* 2004) and Rällinge, Södermanland, Sweden (Price 2006), and the figure from Lovö, Uppland, Sweden (Petré 1993a). Seemingly, the figures have come out of a given object context, and are free to juxtapose themselves in and to whatever story (though the choice of context was of course not absolutely free, but was set within specific kinds of relationships of power, in comparison to figures that are part of other objects they nonetheless retained different communicational values). These matters are further elucidated in Part Two, *Directing Microcosmic Bodies*, where the topics of the relevance

of the body, miniaturization, the significances of the metal gold and a discussion on what kind of stories the figures acted in – and why figures were chosen for the purpose – are presented.

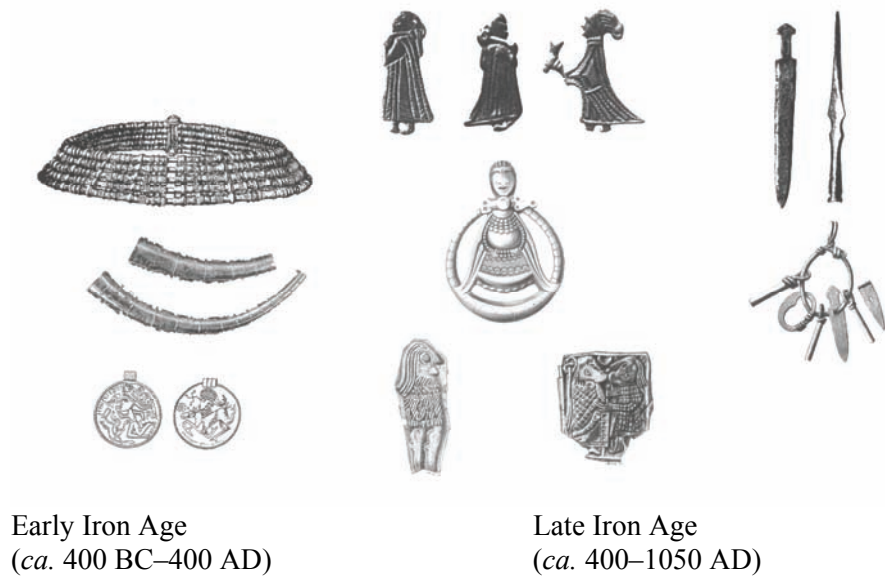


Fig. 32. The differences between the Early Iron Age and the Late Iron Age in terms of how miniature bodies or humanoids participated in varying stories are illustrated in the figure. During the Early Iron Age humanoid figures are integral part of objects to a large extent. These items dictated the scenarios or stories in which the figures were allowed to perform; for instance, in drinking or eating ceremonies, as implied by the horns of Gallehus or the cauldron of Gundestrup, or as part of a necklace (*e.g.* Möne), perhaps in a performance including a moment of sitting down in trance (*cf.* Rude Eskildstrup figs 26 and 27). Early Iron Age articles with humanoids have been recovered primarily as single finds/deposits. During the Late Iron Age, figures had been loosened from their earlier object-dependent contexts. They became free-standing items, allowed to participate in a variety of performances and stories. It is also possible, though far from certain, that these traditions suggest that performative actions took place in new locations. The figures of the Late Iron Age have been recovered in connection to, for example, buildings and burials. It is also noteworthy that during the Viking Age (800–1050 AD) the miniaturization is expanded to include not only humanoids, but also objects in miniature, such as miniature chairs, lances *etc.* For dating see note 16.

Fig. 32 must of course not be taken too literally. Rather it serves more as an analytical tool to show that humanoid figures over decades and centuries to a greater extent than previously (the Early Iron Age) were represented as portable objects. According to Birgit Arrhenius (1994: 220), there are no women represented in the native art during the Iron Age, not until the rising Vendel

style C (ca. 650–750 AD following Callmer and Stjernquist 1970). She claims that as early as the Pre-Roman Iron Age, men are represented in free sculpture and on images (*ibid*). However, she does not explain what criteria she has used to determine a bodily representation as a woman, or a man. If long hair and/or long garments are indicative of women (e.g. Göransson 1999), then Arrhenius’ assertion nonetheless rings hollowly when scrutinizing a few of the figures from the Migration Period and earlier Iron Age times, such as the humanoid from the Gotlandic Smiss picture stone, and a few gold foil figures. I have previously stated that the sexing of figural representations is unfortunate for a number of reasons. I would contend, instead, that humanoid figures as a whole (whatever etiquette one chooses to have for the figures) are represented less frequently during the Early Iron Age than the Late Iron Age.

## Representations of facial masks

In this section I show that facial masks during the period under investigation may be described as being represented in four different ways. Firstly, I argue that facial masks are indicated on certain figures by their enlarged or exaggerated eyes and noses. Secondly, “real” facial masks have in some cases been preserved through the centuries to modern times, thus indicating the usage of mask wear. Thirdly, facial masks or faces, are represented on objects, where they commonly act as bridges between different materials, or in other words, they occur on borders. Fourthly, mask wearing can be traced through the (Late) Iron Age words *grímr* and *kuml*, both meaning mask/sign, which are thoroughly discussed below (see section *The mask – a flavouring concept already in the Late Iron Age*).

Let us start with the observable traits of figural representations of humans that I interpret as facial masks. These traits are exemplified through figures 33–35. The bodily representations vary considerably in age, material, geographical distribution and recovery circumstances. Despite these differences, the figures have certain characteristics in common that I argue connote masked appearances. All figures have large, bulbous eyes as well as rolling pin like noses<sup>17</sup>. Still others have more blurred facial characteristics, fig. 36. I

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<sup>17</sup> There is a striking similarity between these facial characteristics and what Kendrick (1938: 74–81) has termed the Helmet style, recognizable on for example the mouth-pieces of the Taplow drinking horns (fig. 4). They were recovered from an early 6<sup>th</sup> century grave at Taplow (*ibid*: 1938: 76). He suggests that the figure on the mouth-pieces represent a human, though the “...human form is not recognizable...” (Kendrick 1938: 76), and it is suggested that the Taplow style is a mixture of a human and a horse, with inspiration from Late Roman (re)presentations of the emperor on medals (*ibid*: 77). The mouth-pieces show the humanoid’s head in profile, interpreted as “...wearing a helmet with a clearly defined brim...” (Kendrick 1938: 76). A few figure foils from Slöinge (e.g. nr 64, 1867, 2998, 2999, 3000, 3002, 3003, 3005, 3008, 3014, B and C in Lamm 2004) especially share these characteristics with the

believe that choosing to represent the figures with masks was an active choice by the manufacturers and users of the humanoids.

I am not alone in interpreting the facial characteristics of the gold foil figures as representing masks. For instance, Jan Peder Lamm (2004: 46) shares this opinion. The faces of the gold foil figures have likewise been interpreted in other ways. Charlotte Blindheim (1960: 84), for instance, considers some of the figures to display more animal like faces/heads. In fact, she suggests that in the most extreme cases the face resembles a pig's snout (*ibid*). Lori Eshleman (1983: 189) has also remarked on the human and what she interprets as the animal ambiguity of the figures. The characteristics thus attract attention and stimulate different interpretations in their manipulated form, in the present as well as in the past. The faces might well resemble animal heads/faces. I prefer, though, to describe the facial characteristics of the foil figures as representing masks or, in other words, displaying manipulations.

However, it is important not to stop at the recognition that masks were used during the period of interest, but rather to contemplate what the possible meanings of masks were. Based on the observations and interpretations put forward below, I think that the usage of masked representations most likely signalled the time and occasion for transformations.



Fig. 33. A gold foil couple from Slöinge (3005), where the participants appear to be wearing masks. This could be a possible transformative stage, perhaps signalling the merging of two human beings, as in a divine or dynastic wedding. Their noses (and eyes) are highly exaggerated – compare with fig. 4. Drawing to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 92.

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Taplow humanoids. See also *Making sense of senses* in Part Two for interpretations of the exaggerated nose.



Fig. 34. A mounting from Solberga, Östergötland, Sweden. The bodily representations may be interpreted as the decisive moment when someone fishing gets a bite. These figures likewise have enlarged eyes and noses. Source: Arrhenius 1994: 222.



Fig. 35. A stone from Skokloster, Uppland. A rider is also present on the other side of the stone, along with a traditional rune inscription. The rider has an accentuated nose. The transitional characters of rune stones are accounted for in the section about masking. Although its date is somewhat debated, the Skokloster stone belongs to the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Wilson 1995: 180–1). Source: Nylén and Lamm 2003: 154.



Fig. 36. Abbreviated or exaggerated facial characteristics of humanoids on a gold foil. Helgö 3500, inventory number SHM 25925: 3500. Drawing by Händel to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 84.

In Arthur Miller's play *Death of A Salesman*, flute music is used. When the Salesman Willy Loman dreams of the shattered past a flute is heard. The music of the flute signals the entrance of Willy into a dream or past world, as well as informing the listening audience. Returning to Iron Age Scandinavia, when a mask is worn, for instance in the form of bulbous eyes and rolling-pin noses, a parallel mechanism might be said to be at work. The representation of mask-clad Iron Age bodies would signal the time and occasion for imminent transformations, the purposes of which was most probably to perform certain events.

The figures are thoroughly discussed and interpreted in the following chapters; here I merely suggest and argue that the figures are mask-clad, or rather, display manipulated features, and that transitions are indicated. I also maintain that a typical feature of Late Iron Age societies was that of transformations and, equally significant, that such metamorphoses were accentuated. Examples of representations of metamorphoses are manifold from the period in question, ranging from subtle expressions in examples of material culture with animal ornamentation (e.g. Kristoffersen 1995, 1997, Hedeager 1997a, b, 2004) to certain characteristics of the spoken language itself, each perhaps enhancing the other. The spoken language was extremely elaborate



with frequent use of kennings and metaphors<sup>18</sup>. Terje Gansum (1999b:449, *cf.* Hed Jakobsson 2003) has rightly pointed out the similarities in animal ornamentation and other decorations with the equally elaborate ornamentation in language known through the medieval sagas and poetry. In Part Three I also argue that the theme of transformation was pivotal in the creations of persons – whether human or non-human. Within a society that was preoccupied with expressing transformations materially and orally, it is not surprising to find masking practices and performances to be part of the ways in which the world was perceived and enacted, or rather “made” as emphasized by René Devisch (1994).

Let me now present “real” facial masks from the Scandinavian Iron Age. One example of a facial mask from the Iron Age is the silver mask of Roman origin from the Thorsbjerg bog in Denmark, dating to the earlier part of the Iron Age (Petersen 1995). Other examples are the two bear/animal masks (fig. 37) of felt material from the Late Iron Age, recovered in Haithabu/Hedeby from a shipwreck (Hägg 1985: 69–72, *cf.* Burkett 1979, Sjöberg 1996 on prehistoric felt making). Carsten Bregenhøj (2000) has discussed these masks, and interpreted their representation and use. He suggests that they might have worked within the Yuletide mumming tradition of Northern Europe (*ibid*).

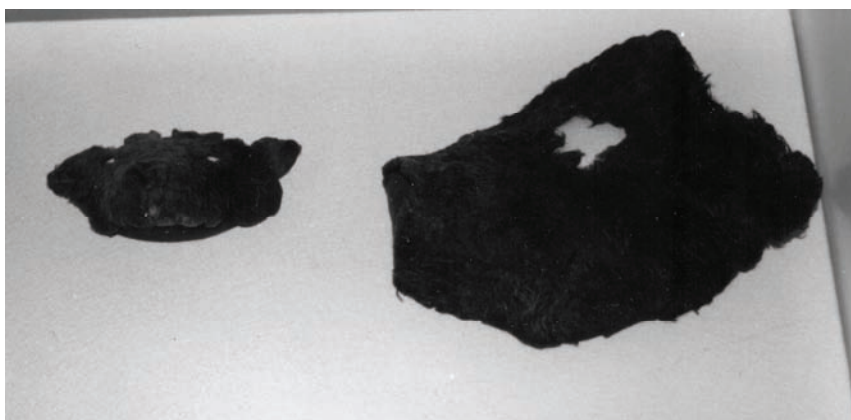


Fig. 37. Masks from Haithabu, Hedeby. The mask on the left seen *en face*, and that on the right in profile. Photo: author.

The main reason why these masks have survived throughout the tarnishing centuries, is the fact that they were drowned in tar and put between the

<sup>18</sup> Within the Edda of Snorri Sturlason, a *kenning* stands for a certain kind of imagery in language, particularly distinguishing the Norse poetry (NE, *cf.* Marold 1983). A metaphor literally means to “carry away to another place”, that is, speaking figuratively, where similarities or conformities motivate that something to be exchanged for something else (*ibid*).



planks of the hull of the ship, where the tar worked as a preservative (*ibid*). Outside of Scandinavia, masks dating to the Iron Age are also known. Masks of leather have been recovered in cultural layers in Novgorod (Thompson 1967). There are also examples of facial masks within burial contexts from the Late Iron Age in the vicinity of the Volga bend (Pljetnjeva 1981: 166). Other non-Scandinavian examples can be taken from the Celts, who used especially animal masks (Klindt-Jensen 1957:89). The Romans used masks as well; in their parades masks representing mythological characters could be either male or female, although always worn by men (Mack 1994:27).

From these few examples, it can be seen that there are not too many masks that have been recovered from the Iron Age. An obvious problem is thus to substantiate the use of facial coverings during the period of research. Henry Pernet (1994: 42), in his study of ritual masks, has concluded that reasons for the absence of such covers can be explained by the fact that they are sometimes fragile and perishable, clearly the case for masks made of organic materials. What is more, after using the masks they may often be ritually destroyed (*ibid*). Likewise, in his study of African masks, John Mack (1994: 35) has noted that many masks are constructed of less durable materials, and there may not be any special procedures to preserve them, but rather they are destroyed after use. Support for the idea of mask wearing can, however, be found in the later medieval sagas where humans as well as gods are told to wear facial masks, which is commented on in greater detail below. Further backing for the idea that masking practices were present during the period of interest can equally be found within the research of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Through his vast studies of cultures (living and dead) in Asia and America, he found that split representation was a trait common to certain mask cultures (1967: 258). According to Lévi-Strauss, an unmistakable attribute of cultures that employed split representation on objects is their usage of masks. He deduced that the splitting technique is a graphic representation of such an item, which is assigned a special meaning (1967: 256). The masks' "...function is to offer of a series of intermediate forms which insure the transition from symbol to meaning, from magical to normal, from supernatural to social" (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 256). He likewise concluded that not all societies employing masks expressed themselves through split representation (*ibid*). A number of characteristics are distinguishable for those societies that do use split representations and masks. These include a "chain of privi-leges, emblems, and degrees of prestige, which by means of masks, validate social hierarchy through the primacy of genealogies" (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 258).

Split representation is a feature recognisable in some Scandinavian objects from the Migration period (*ca.* 400–550 AD), such as on the sword-sheath fitting<sup>19</sup> from Tureholm, Södermanland, Sweden, shown in fig. 38.



Fig. 38. Sword sheath fitting from Tureholm, Södermanland, Sweden, demonstrating split representation. Photo kept at ATA (top), drawing by Allan Fridell (bottom). Source: Stenberger 1964: 153.

Split representation is also detectable on relief brooches from the period (Kristoffersen 1995). Although being of a later date, in my opinion the faces of a few gold foil couples can be interpreted as showing split representation as well (see Part Two and fig. 39).

<sup>19</sup> I am not sure how apt the notions "sword sheath fitting" or "scabbard mountings" really are for the represented object. These fittings, 15 in total from Scandinavia, have never been found on swords, have been interpreted as being too narrow to fit a real scabbard and have not revealed any use-wear (Kristoffersen 1995). Further they have not been recovered in burial contexts – only in hoards or as single finds (Wiker 2000: 66, *cf.* Haseloff 1981: 246). The seven known mountings from Norway come from four different hoards but with common denominators. The hoards only contained golden objects, of which several were gold bracteates (Wiker 2000: 66). The hoard from Tureholm, Sweden, also contained golden objects. Probably the fittings would benefit from being interpreted without the constant reference to weapons (and thereby male spheres), but focusing instead on the actual contexts of recovery and their probable use/application and/or symbolic/magical values.



Fig. 39. The figures whose faces in profile can be interpreted as one face seen en face. A complete union? See more in Part Two. Gold foil couple from Slöinge (428). Drawing to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 87.

Considering the fact that the Migration Period might be described as a transitional time per se between what we have labelled the Early and the Late Iron Age, it is not surprising to find masking expressions from this era. Examples of the changes that occurred include settlements being abandoned and moved (Zachrisson 2001), new names being given to farms and cultivated areas (Karlsson Lönn 1991), dramatic changes in Primitive Norse between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Gustavson 1981), and the treatment and deposition of dead bodies became more heterogeneous (human body parts to a greater extent than previously were accompanied in burials by animals and/or objects, Bennett 1987: 21).

Greta Arwidsson (1963) has remarked that facial masks become common during the Migration Period in Scandinavia and that they are an integral and prominent part of early animal ornamentation. The early animal art (style I), including examples of split representation, is characterised by jointed and adjoined animal and human body parts (*e.g.* Salin 1904, Vierck 1967: 137–39, Arrhenius 1994). These metamorphoses are analysed in Part Three, where I discuss how animals, human beings and things intermingled in cosmic exchanges and relationships. Here I also discuss the wider socio-cultural implications of masking practices expressed in metal and later in other materials throughout the following centuries.

Siv Kristoffersen (1995) has used the cited chapter on split representation in the art of Asia and America in the book of Lévi-Strauss to discuss animal art in the Migration Period. What is significant about the contribution of Kristoffersen is the recognition of the idea of transformation on Iron Age objects with animal art. She thus avoids a direct link or direct analogy be-

tween Lévi-Strauss' shifting examples, but emphasizes the centrality of the transition from one state to another (*ibid*).

Apart from figures equipped with mask-like characteristics, such as exaggerated eyes and noses, other figural representations seem to be mask-clad. I have already mentioned the helmet plaques of Vendel and Valsgärde, which appear to display mask-clad humanoids. Loose helmet plaques are also known from Torslunda on Öland, Sweden (*e.g.* Burenhult 1991: 55), which display numerous mask-clad humanoid figures (figs 22–3). Interestingly, the bear or animal masks recovered in Hedeby remind one of the animal-clad figures on the helmet plaques. This suggests to me that figural representations of mask-clad beings from the period of interest indeed may reflect that masks were used by performing human beings.

Other examples include the previously mentioned mask-clad humanoid dating to the Viking Age excavated by Olof Ringqvist (1969), the humanoid (fig. 30) from Aska, Hagebyhöga, Östergötland, with a veil covering part of her face and some figures on buckles. Facial masks are likewise encountered on handles for buckets, for instance the bucket in the Ottarshögen mound (Lindqvist 1936: 168), on saddles for horses (Norberg 1929), and further keys with facial masks have been unearthed from the Vendel period (550–800 AD) (Olsén 1951, *cf.* Arwill-Nordbladh 1990 on the symbolisms of keys). Masked humanoids can be found in addition, as mentioned earlier, on the Danish golden horns from Gallehus (fig. 40) (*e.g.* Axboe 1990a, b), some figures on the golden collars retrieved at Ålleberg, Möne and Färjestaden, Sweden (Holmqvist 1980) and finally facial masks are visible on golden bracteates (Lindqvist 1926: 20–23). A gilded facial mask of bronze is known from Helgö, the parish of Ekerö, Sweden (fig. 41) (Holmqvist 1961: 114, Pl. 26). Facial masks may also be found as separate but integral parts of representations of animals, such as in trotting or galloping horses (Gjessing 1943: 95, fig. 10: 2) and in birds (fig. 42). Sometimes they are hidden elusively in jewellery (fig. 43), and they may also be encountered on clasps.

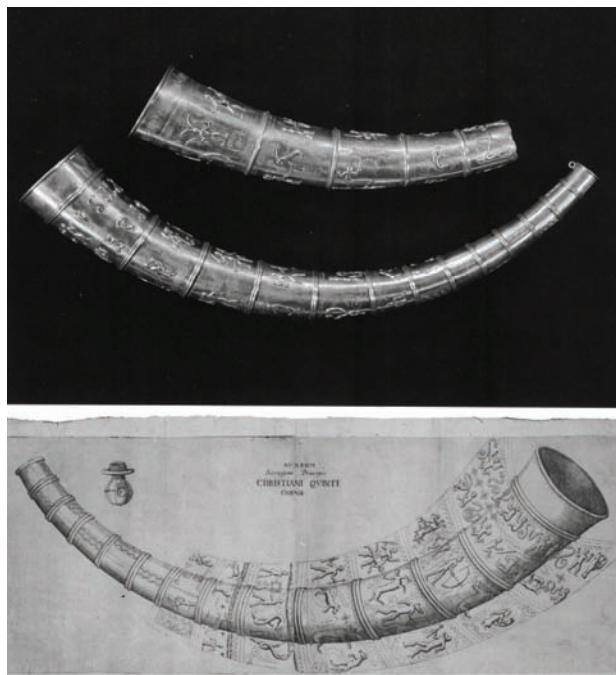


Fig. 40. Humanoid figures represented on the Gallehus horns from Denmark.  
Source: Axboe 1990a: 153.



Fig. 41. A facial mask made of bronze, from Helgö. Not to scale. Source: Burenhult 1991: 157.



Fig. 42. A bird equipped with a representation of a facial mask (or a facial mask with a bird addition). Source: Vang Petersen 1990: 163.



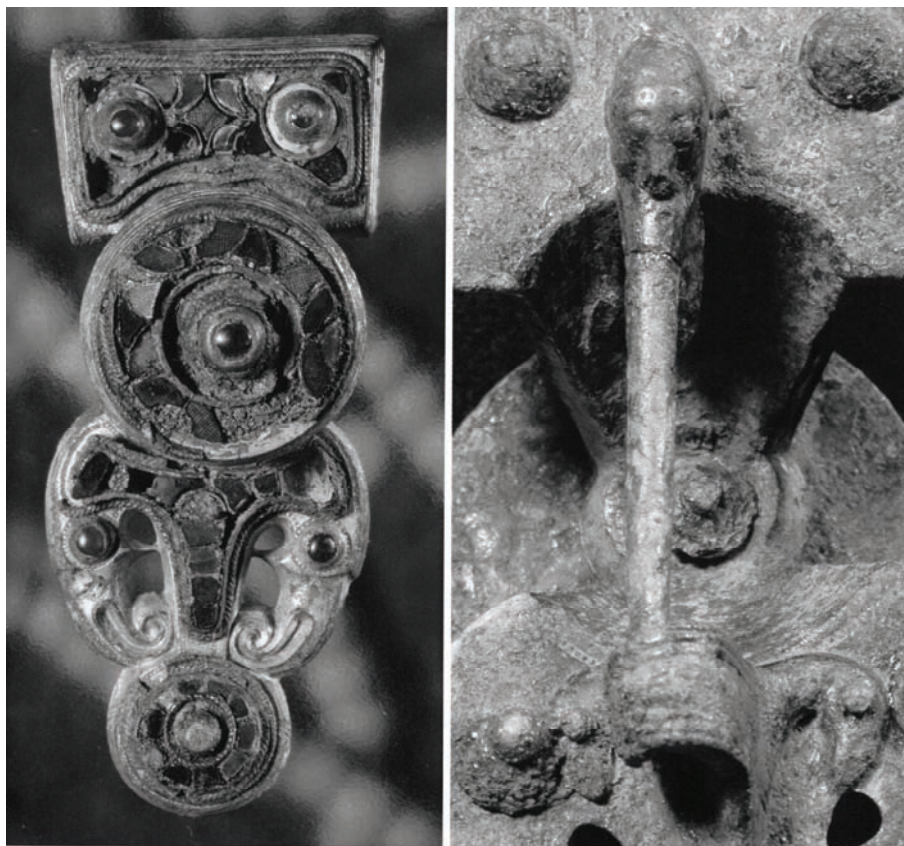


Fig. 43. Masks/faces are sometimes hidden elusively – here on the back side of a brooch. Source: Jørgensen 1990: 165.

A few rune stones in Sweden and Denmark are also described as having facial masks carved onto them. According to Jacobsen and Moltke (1942: 850) there are seven rune stones with masks in Denmark (remembering that the counties Skåne, Halland and Blekinge of today's Sweden are counted as Danish), and three from the county of Södermanland in Sweden. All seven Danish stones (Da 62 Sjelle, 66 Århus 4, 81 Skern 2, and from Skåne 258 Bösarp, 286 Hunnestad 5, 314 Lund 1 and 335 Västra Strö 2) are from the later part of the Viking Age (*ca.* 900–1050). The three stones from Södermanland, Sö 112, 167, 367, are most likely of the same date (figs 44–46). They are considered by most researches to be heathen (Johansen 1997: 159), and are suggested to have had their counterparts in real plaited masks (Snædal Brink and Wachtmeister 1984: 39, 73). All three stones have additionally been carved with shortened runes (*Sw.* kortkvistrunor).

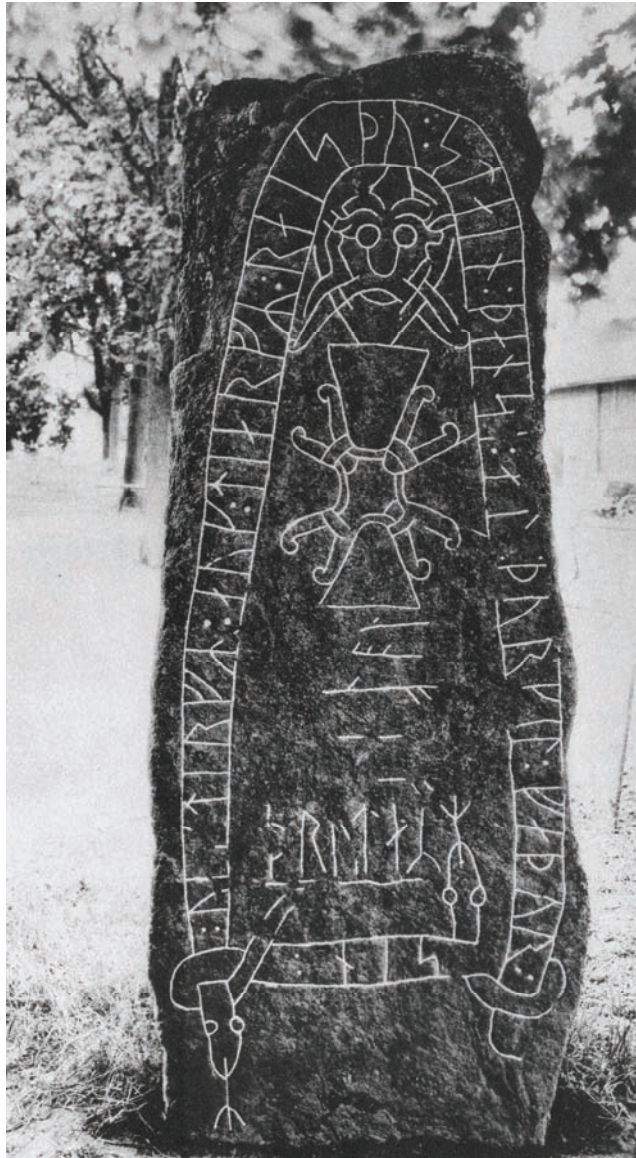


Fig. 44. Facial mask represented on rune stone Sö 112, Kolunda. Source: Brate and Wessén 1936, Plate 52.





Fig. 45. Facial mask represented on rune stone Sö 167, Spelvik, Landshammar.  
Source: Brate and Wessén 1936, Plate 74.



Fig. 46. Facial mask represented on rune stone Sö 367, S:t Nikolai, Släbro. Source: Brate and Wessén 1936, Plate 201.

I cannot be certain that all representations mentioned in this section were intended to be representations of facial masks. Neil Price argues, for instance, that the masks represented on rune stones, for instance, “may equally have been intended as nothing more than faces” (Price 2002: 174). However, he refrains from discussing why faces would have been meaningful to be represented on objects such as rune stones, and indeed what a face might have represented. Do they represent everyday faces, or do they have humanoid traits? In a recent paper, Michael Shanks (2001: 75) has discussed gorgon heads on vases. A gorgon was associated with marginal conditions such

as sleep, death, music and drinking (Frontisi-Ducroux 1984 in Shanks 2001: 75). Shanks also refers to Korshak (1987) who has analysed frontal faces on archaic Attic vases. These items display faces belonging to, for example, gorgons, dancers and fighters. According to Korshak (1987) there is a relationship between what she has chosen to label masculinity and sexuality, animality, death, lifestyle and the body, expressed through faciality (Shanks 2001: 75). To assist in the analysis of the frontal faces Korshak makes associations between the representations and masks used in drama, as well as connections between helmets and masks, and concludes that the frontal faces represent instances “when governance of the self is relinquished and nature takes hold” (Korshak 1987: 23–4 in Shanks 2001: 76). Shanks (2001: 75) also makes reference to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988: 168–9) discussion on the distinction between the face and the head. It is argued that “the head belongs with the body, corporeality and *animality*” (Shanks 2001: 76, original emphasis). In contrast, “[f]aces, or rather the process of facialisation, do away with corporeal co-ordinates to replace them with a system of plane and holes – the face and expression, just as in a bronze helmet” (Shanks 2001: 75–6). In sum, whether the representations discussed from the Iron Age represent masks or faces is not of the greatest importance. A represented facial mask, as well as a represented face, may be described as having significations and as such is part of neither a human nor an animal organism (*cf.* Shanks 2001: 75–6), but refers to “...the inhuman in the human...” (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 171 in Shanks 2001: 76), and to conditions of apartness (Shanks 2001: 76).

Terry Gunnell provides additional assistance in considerations of masked performances in Iron Age Scandinavia. In his book “The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia” (1995: 92) he argues that “costumed disguises must have been used in ritual activities prior to the advent of Christianity in Scandinavia”. He also suggests that faint memories of such ritual activities survived into the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and that it is possible that the ritual procedures through the centuries developed and transformed into folk games over centuries (*ibid*). Further, even objects without apparent facial characteristics have been interpreted as masks. Terje Gansum (2003: 211) has maintained that the shapes of certain brooches were transformed to resemble masks. Although I will not discuss or analyse in greater detail all of the material recounted above, I use it to further validate the claim that masking and/or transformations were prominent features of (late) Iron Age Scandinavia. It is noteworthy that in most contexts where (facial) masks occur, their placing is not haphazard but instead they are found on borders, seemingly as binding elements between two materials or states. They are literally bridges of/for transformations. The facial mask at the end of the handle of the bucket from the Ottar mound holds the bucket and the handle together. The mask in fig. 43 holds the relief brooch and cloth(es) together. One of the purposes of the buckles is to hold linen folds together. The pieces of a horse’s saddle are

likewise held together by masked iron. The clasp functions by holding a strap together. These facial masks seem to be found on borders or edgings, and on objects that in themselves are transitional, for instance keys enabling entrances and exits to for example chests, or houses (symbolic “other” worlds). Further, what I, along with other researchers, interpret as masks apparent on gold foil figures may also be connected to transformations, whether through the consumption of drugs, shape-changing into an animal or the possible sacred union or marriage of a couple (see Part Two). These statements are very basic, but significant. I will analyse and discuss gold foil figures at greater length in Part Two.

The origins of masking practices have not been (and will not be) discussed in the current work. It is likely that Scandinavians were in contact with other people and were influenced in a variety of ways that were expressed in the material culture. For instance, I have mentioned that Celts and Romans used masks at times preceding the Migration Period. Masking practices could have been inspired by these and other sources. The focus in the present work is, as previously declared, on trying to understand the contexts in which masks were used and their socio-cultural meanings.

### The mask – a favoured concept already in the Late Iron Age

The specific word mask (*Sw.* mask) was probably not used during the Late Iron Age. According to Hellquist (1980) the word comes from the French *masque* which in turn stems from middle age Latin *masca* dating back to about the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Mask is probably Arabic in origin where *mashara* means scorn or joker. Synonyms of the word mask were nonetheless used in several contexts in Late Iron Age Scandinavia. Apart from the traces of masking practices in the material culture, accounted for above, the idea of masking is thus supported linguistically. The innate word for mask was *gríma*, a word that was alike in Old Swedish, Danish, Icelandic and Norwegian (Hellquist 1980). In Old Anglo-Saxon the word *grim* also meant facial mask (*ibid*). It may further refer to a helmet, a carved figurehead (of a dragon) of a ship’s bow, a riddle, and a name for a woman sorcerer. It may in addition mean night (*ibid*). (For detailed descriptions of exactly where the different meanings occur in the saga materials, see Gunnell 1995: 80–7). Terry Gunnell proposes the idea that these different understandings of the word allude to the same idea of concealment, and that the word has its roots in ritual (*ibid*). *Grimnir* is also a name for the shape changing god Odin (Heggstad, Hødnebo and Simensen 1975), meaning “the masked” (Ström 1967: 110). *Grim* occurs as a prefix to names in a few medieval sagas, where it stands for a person that is hiding his or her face, or hiding his or her name (Hellquist 1980). For example, in the Saga of Erik the Red, a person named *Grimhildr* performs *sejd* or fortune telling where the name is translated as “Hildr with the mask or hood” (Strömbäck 1935: 35). *Grimr* can also be

found as a suffix to person' names in medieval writings. For instance, *torðgrimr* is a person in the Saga of Gisla who performs *sejd* (Breisch 1994: 125). *Sejd* has been compared to the trance and ecstasy shamans in Siberia achieved when performing healing sessions, fortune telling *etc.* (see earlier chapter in Part One).

It appears that *grim* can be connected to transformations. The sagas or songs in which the word *grim* is used are medieval. As forwarded by Hellquist (1980) the word was however used prior to medieval times in the Scandinavian languages. On one Late Iron Age rune stone, Sö 126, in Fagerlöt, Hamra skog in the parish of Bogsta, the county of Södermanland, the expression "the grimr of the people" (*fulks krimr*) was inscribed (Brate and Wessén 1936: 94). It is suggested that *grimr* in this context stands for chief of (or rather for) the people (*ibid*). An interesting and modern example of a mask-clad chief can be found among the Zapatistas of Mexico. Here Subcomandante Marcos appears and performs with a facial mask of cloth or yarn – his eyes and mouth are still visible and usable (Jonsson 2001). The mask has been interpreted here as representing not a singular identifiable person, but instead as a sign for all identities, deleting the particular, cultural, sex/gender and class related issues that normally separate people (*ibid*). It is possible that the inscription *fulks krimr*, the people's mask, on the Fagerlöt rune stone did not just mean chief, representing and expressing power and hierarchy, but also symbolised and included all people – their individual differences left aside, or rather incorporated within one collective person (*cf.* Fowler (2004: 48–9) on how a single person may embody a whole clan). Conclusively, *grimr* and *grima* elude to something/someone temporarily hidden, which/who through action is transformed into something/someone else, or which has the power to be a transformer. (See also how *grimr* is connected to discussions of the word "figure" in the section *To figure out figures*).

The meaning of the word *persona* is mask, which is a fact that underlines the transforming, performing and engendering character not only of persons or people, but of their bodies and beings. According to Hellquist (1980) *persona* possibly has its root in an Etruscan background, and stands for role, or the mask of an actor. It must be pointed out, however, that the idea of a person need not be the same thing as a body, which "can overlap and diverge from each other in culturally-specific ways" (Fowler 2002: 47). Earlier in Part One, I discussed the notions of person, body and identity.

Another word that I claim is connected to masks and transitions or transformations is the word *kuml*. It alludes to such seemingly diverse phenomena as a mask, a rune stone, and a mound. A closer examination of the *kuml* categories however will show that they all connect to bodily passages and trans-

formations. Before discussing *kuml* in greater detail I will account for the accompanying concepts of transitional event and transitional object.

### Rune stones, mounds and masks, or the meanings of transitional events and objects

The British psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott (1971) uses the term *transitional event* to describe the mechanisms at work when small children in the absence of, for instance, a parent experience “a gap in continuity” (Emigh 1996: 2). The discontinuity of the world as it is known creates a potential space that the child sometimes fills with an object – a stuffed animal perhaps, that has been invested with animate qualities. These invested objects Winnicott chooses to call “transitional” objects. They function by bridging gaps in continuity and effecting transits between what has been perceived of as the normal state of affairs (the presence of the parent) and the world as it appears to be temporarily (the absence of the parent). Ultimately, the transitional events and objects are ways of dealing with anxiety-ridden moments where the events/objects have been suggested to be necessary strategies for maintaining sanity. (Emigh 1996: 1–3).

The building of a mound and the raising of a rune stone in memory of someone who died may indeed be referred to as transitional events, where the actions taken by the relatives resulted in the said transitional objects: a mound and a rune stone. I have already accounted for how masks assist at transitions and act as transitional objects. Victor Turner considered the socio-cultural properties of the liminal period in van Gennep’s rites of passage in his book “The Forest of Symbols” from 1967. Although Arnold van Gennep (1960: 11) himself recognised the middle part of his three phases of the rites of passage as marginal or liminal, Victor Turner has particularly become connected to the concept of the liminal, above all through his later work “The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure” (1969). The three different phases Arnold van Gennep distinguished were the rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation (van Gennep 1960: 11). A person would go through these stages on certain occasions in life, such as at birth, puberty, death, or through entering a new status by being included in, for instance, a secret society (*ibid*). During the separation phase, the individual or group is detached from its set of cultural conditions. The liminal phase is characterised by ambiguity, a betwixt and between state, having little if anything in common with the person’s earlier state of being or the coming state of being (Turner 1967: 94). In the third phase the person is again in a stable, but new state of being. Obviously, this is a very reductionistic and simplified way of describing the phases a novice would go through during an initiation. It cannot be ruled out that the tri-part structure is inadequate in

describing the facets – emotional and bodily/social – an initiand experiences during an initiation. I will refrain from using the tri-part structure, but instead concentrate on the broad concept of transitions, where these may encompass a multitude of transformations, creating, created and experienced through the body. I would like to emphasize again that the case study through which Victor Turner (1967) primarily examined the circumstances of the liminal period was the initiation rites of the Ndembu in Africa, where masks were necessary guiding and revelatory devices. Masks are frequently connected to liminal periods during initiations, where their often strange or exaggerated compositions may serve to offer reflection on every day features, procedures or relationships otherwise not contemplated (Turner 1967: 104–5). In his 1969 book, he uses examples where masking practices were applied to study in greater detail the liminal phase of van Gennep’s three-step model in the rites of passage (*e.g.* chapter 5, “The Liminality of Status Elevation and Reversal”). Of central importance when using the term liminal is the accompanying transition the person or group of people would go through during the liminal phase or period. Victor Turner was very explicit in his interest in the transition (Turner 1967: 95), which he saw as “a process, a becoming, and in the case of rites de passage even a transformation...” (Turner 1967: 94).

All three material categories elaborated here are rolled into one through the word *kuml*; rune stones, mounds, and masks, all have connections to liminal periods. However, I refrain from using the word liminal, and instead favour the word transitional. The concept transitional, instead, has an intrinsic, attractive and appropriate signification of movement suitable for the archaeological phenomena studied in the thesis. Trans- in the word transitional comes from, or after, Latin *trans* meaning across, that is from one place or state or act or set of circumstances to another (COD). Liminal comes from the classical Latin *limes*, *limitis* meaning frontier (*ibid*), thus lacking the element of motion “transitional” has. A transitional event or object effects transits between the world as it was known to be and the world as it presently is perceived to be (*cf.* Emigh 1996: 2). Due to this reason, I prefer to use the term “transition” instead of the term “liminal”. Most aptly, Victor Turner uses the word “passenger” for the person who experiences the passages, say from child to adult, or from alive to dead (1967: 94). The building of a mound was a common way to bury a deceased and deal with the possibly anxiety-ridden death during the period and in the area of research. The death and burial of a relative or another person is like a transitional event and the mound a transitional object to which the living could and did return for various reasons. The burial and mound procedures can even be seen as gateways to the bodily passages and transformations the deceased went through: from somebody to a dead body to a buried body to a liberated soul and to a possible ancestor. I have previously (2003) likened a burial event to



a vehicle for cosmic transportation with passengers and passenger components – thoughts to which we will return in Part Three. The ideas of transitional event and object, notions presented and used within psychoanalysis, are most suitable when analysing rune stones, mounds and masks.

### *Kuml* – the guiding marks and masks for body passages and transformations

We know for a fact that the word *kuml* was used during the Iron Age, since we find it on several rune stones from the Late Iron Age. The oldest known inscribed stone to carry the word *kuml* is probably Da 17 Starup, which is dateable to *ca.* 750–900 AD, and has the inscription “airiks kubl”, meaning the *kuml* of Erik (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 42–3, 676–7). One of the youngest stones with the word *kuml* is in all probability the rune stone Da 383 Vester Marie 1, which can be dated to the later part of the period *ca.* AD 1050–1150 (*ibid*). It must be concluded that the word *kuml* was used for several hundreds of years – certainly before the appearance of the first inscription and then continually to the present. When written on rune stones, *kuml* could refer to different material expressions. It could be the rune stone itself, other stones arranged in specific manners without inscriptions erected in close proximity to the rune stone, or indeed a burial mound (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942, Johansen 1997).

Interestingly, the word *kuml* is not frequently used in medieval writings, commonly held to reflect at least some instances of Late Iron Age societies. Nils Henric Sjöborg (1815: 5) remarks that the older Edda usually uses the word *haug* (mound) for burials, instead of *kuml*. However, one exception is found in the Saga of Kristni, where *kuml* is used synonymously with *haug* (mound). *Kuml* is unknown in the younger Edda. Snorri Sturlason’s Edda consistently refers to *haugar* (mounds) (Sjöborg 1815: 4). This could indicate that the word *kuml*, and its conceptualizations, were not in use in medieval (or Icelandic) societies to the same extent as previously.

In Old Icelandic the word *kuml* (with different spellings) was used in general for a hillock and/or mound, whether or not made from stones or soil (*e.g.* Sjöborg 1815: 4). Its alleged general meaning is sign or mark (Johansen 1997: 186 from Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 677), but also memorial or monument (Johansen 1997: 186). When using nautical charts of Swedish waters, the word KL stands for kummel, a pile of stones working as a navigation mark (SAOL 2000, *cf.* Sjöborg 1815: 6 from the lexicon of Ihre). However, *kuml*<sup>20</sup> is also synonymous with a facial mask, and even a hood,

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that in the lexicon of Björn Halldórsen (1814) the entry *kuml* has two entries meaning both mound and secondly the same meaning as the word *kufl*. The entry *kufl* refers either to a mask, or a hood attached to a coat.



that is attached to a coat (Sjöborg 1815: 6 from the lexicon of Björn Halldórsen 1814, Heggstad, Hødnebo and Simensen 1975).

From a linguistic point of view it is not unproblematic to claim that *kuml* means or alludes to mask. Rune Palm, Department of Scandinavian Languages, Stockholm University, maintains that the word *kuml* alludes to helmet only once in a passage in the Poetic Edda, namely in verse seven of the Incentive of Gudrun (2005-04-07, pers. comm.). In this passage, *kuml* comes together in the phrase “kumbl konunga”, meaning the *kuml* of the king, commonly translated as “the helmet of the king”. Rune Palm maintains that the expression “kumbl konunga” rather refers to the “sign of kings” than helmet of kings (*ibid*). He is further of the opinion that the meaning helmet/mask does not exist in the word<sup>21</sup> (*ibid*). The following analyses show that there is a conceptual link between mask, mound and rune stone. This conceptuality is expressed by one word *kuml*, and the connection between the categories may also be supported etymologically and visually.

I have maintained previously that masks are associated with transformations and transitions. Let us investigate in which context the notion “kumbl konunga” occurs. I have consulted two different Swedish translations of the poem “The Incentive of Gudrun”<sup>22</sup>. The differences found in translations/interpretations were however minor, and did not affect the result of the analysis. In the poem, Gudrun incites her sons to revenge a sister’s death. After they agree to do so, they demand that Gudrun collects the royal equipments. Gudrun fetches the “kumbl konunga” and another piece of suitable paraphernalia to be worn in the imminent battle. Through the act of Gudrun, the sons are no longer just her sons, but are equally great and worthy as kings, revealed by their addition attires. The signs (helmets or masks) assist in this change from ordinary sons to be kings admired, mounted on horses ready for close encounters. The context in which the word *kuml* is used thus alludes to transformation. Further the sign of kings seems to be something that is worn on the body, and a part of your costume. The sign is materialised and has physical entity. I argue further that there is a link between rune stone, mound and mask/helmet which apart from having a transitional character can be found in the appearance of the respective material. They all commonly have rounded tops, illustrated in fig. 47. This specificity can likewise be detected etymologically. According to Elof Hellquist (1980) the derivation of the word *kuml* is debated and essentially unknown. One suggestion is that it is related to the Greek word *gamphós* meaning bent, and the Lithuanian word *Gumbas* meaning elevated (*ibid*). Another proposal maintains that it is related to the Greek word *gómphos* meaning plug or nail

<sup>21</sup> However, masks work as signs of signs, or as signs of objects in semiotic terms (see earlier arguments in section *The purposes of masking*). Even if we cannot be sure of the materiality of the *kuml*, it is enough to know that it worked as a sign – as an abbreviated form of power assisting in defining new roles.

<sup>22</sup> The two consulted works were Collinder (1972) and Brate (2004).

(*ibid*). It is, however, clear that the word is not from the Latin word *cumulus* meaning heap or pile (*ibid*). My arguments here would support the suggestion made by Prellwitz (in Hellquist 1980) that the word signifies something rounded or bent that stands out or is elevated. In my view it is probable that it is this intrinsic quality of the word that is the reason for *kuml* meaning haystack<sup>23</sup> today in Icelandic (e.g. Jansson 1994).

In summary, the meaning of the word *kuml* can be grouped into three main possibilities: mound, rune stone/memorial/sign and mask. In this section it is maintained and demonstrated that what connects all these meanings are bodily passages, transformations and transitional events.

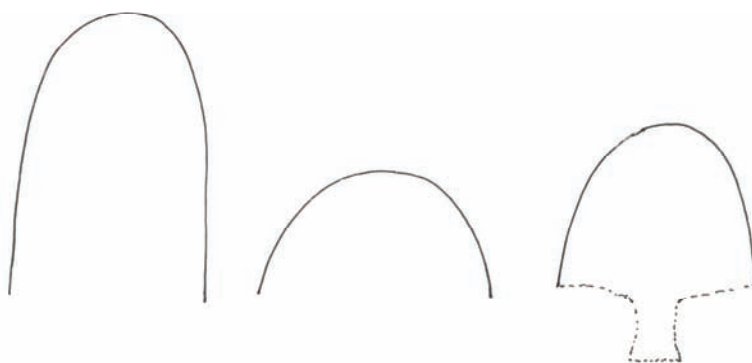


Fig. 47. I claim that one of the conceptual links between a rune stone, a mound and a helmet/mask consists of a visual similarity (cf. Johansen 1997 on the visual similarity between hinged mountains and the enclosing inscription “filled snake” on rune stones). The three categories were all labelled *kuml* during the Late Iron Age, and they were also linked to transitional events and objects. Drawing: author.

Apart from the theoretical and more comprehensive connection between the categories presented below, the building of a mound may further be structurally comparable to masking practices. When mounds were built during the period in question, different layers were created, for instance by covering the burnt pieces with stones of varying sizes and on top of that perhaps a specific kind of soil was chosen, followed by something else. Thus a new man-

<sup>23</sup> Today, in Icelandic, *kuml* also means scratch or small wound made on the body (Jansson 1994) – perhaps a bit forced, but scratches or wounds are also expressions of bodily transitions.

tle of earth was made. This mantling may certainly be referred to as a masking practice.

In the following I will analyse rune stones by using the concepts transitional event and transitional object. I would like to emphasise that the interpretations suggested here in no way exclude interpretations presented by other researchers of rune stones as, for instance, documents regulating inheritance of property (Sawyer 1988), or that rune stones are primarily erected by people that are conceived to be part of an upper social and economical class (Randsborg 1980, Sawyer 1991). In an elegant paper, Anders Andrén has recently (2000) re-read the texts of rune stones, where he interprets the complex interplay between the texts and the images and stresses a more visual understanding of the monuments. His work is excellent in showing new exciting ways to interpret or rather re-read rune stones. However revolutionary and much wanted (and needed) the re-reading of the rune stones is, a discussion on the possible comprehensive meanings or functions of rune stones is lacking. Of course, that was not the aim of Andrén's article. Then again a singular focus on a re-reading, where for instance the placing of the monuments is not considered and interpretations of the colours of the stones are missing due to the fact that these elements are judged to be lacking today and thus not interpretable (Andrén 2000: 11), partly render the rune stones static, instead of dynamic and possessing social agency (*cf.* Gell 1998). A similar understanding of rune stones can be found with Stefan Brink (2002: 108), when in a recent paper he compares rune stones to notice boards. In the thesis focus is instead on what rune stones did, how they acted and what their possible meanings were when they, together with masks and mounds, are analysed as transitional events and objects.

My point here is to try to make a contribution, however small, to the presumably manifold and shifting meanings of rune stones, and in particular to analytically connect rune stones, masks and mounds to each other. When described as transitional events and objects they reveal new ways of understanding and interpreting not only the different archaeological materials but also how they reflect one another and are structurally related. I maintain that they were all connected to certain bodily journeys that were undertaken by both living and dead beings. These journeys or passages were accentuated and only enabled and facilitated by the guiding rune stone, the built mound or the used mask. What is more, it is suggested that the colours presumably most frequently used on rune stones – red and black – may be connected to burial mound procedures at a structural level.

## Rune stones – directing dwellers on thresholds

Rune stones or *kuml* were most commonly erected during the Viking Age and in memory of someone who died, and are for the most part considered to be Christian monuments (Johansen 1997: 159). After *ca.* 1120 AD they were no longer erected (*ibid*, Zachrisson 1998: 161).

*Kuml* is one word that we know was used in Late Iron Age Scandinavia. The word is found on several rune stones of different ages in both Denmark and Sweden (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942, Peterson 1994). In Denmark almost thirty rune stones with *kuml* inscriptions were known until the 1940s (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 676–7). In Sweden, there are more than twenty rune stones with *kuml* inscriptions in each of the counties of Östergötland and Småland, followed by approximately fourteen in Västergötland and Södermanland respectively, and eight in each of the counties of Uppland and Öland and lastly, one in the county of Närke (statistics gathered from Peterson 1994). It has been argued that *kuml* inscriptions are common in almost all counties except in the county of Uppland (*e.g.* Jansson 1950: 339, Palm 1992: 183, Johansen 1997: 185, 188–9, Zachrisson 1998: 166). A quick consultation with the statistics on word index for rune stones by Lena Peterson (1994) contradicts this. The eight stones in Uppland are not a negligible number, even if one of the neighbouring counties, Södermanland, has some 14 *kuml* inscriptions. I suspect that the reason for the misapprehension of the alleged absence of *kuml* inscriptions in Uppland mainly derives from the fact that the number of *kuml* inscriptions in relation to the total number of rune stones in Uppland is fairly small. Exceptionally, there are more than 1,000 rune stones in Uppland, and almost 400 rune stones in Södermanland (Johansen 1997: 163). Put together, the number of rune stones in Denmark and the counties Västergötland, Östergötland, Södermanland and Småland amounts to the same as Uppland's, some 1,000 stones (*ibid*). A large number of rune stones in Uppland were, for the most part, raised during the late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Zachrisson 1998: 130). These stones belong to the second wave of raising rune stones, when professional rock carvers entered the scene (*ibid*). Recently, a new project on rune stones from Uppland has been launched, where researchers Anne-Sofie Gräslund, Linn Lager and Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt suggest the possible existence of veritable workshops for rune stone carving, involving masters and apprentices (Ekdahl 2004). Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt has suggested that a carving team consisted of two to four people, and that collaboration between individual carvers was common (2002: 193, 195).

It has been assumed that the second wave of raising rune stones is more closely connected to the Christianization processes, perhaps most strongly under the influence of Christian missionaries from the British Isles (Lager

2002: 180–2). The Christian town Sigtuna in Uppland has also been suggested as contributing to the second wave of rune stone raising (Zachrisson 1998: 158). The second wave excluded, Uppland would probably not stand out. Since it is probable that *kuml* inscriptions mainly belong to the older or first wave of raising rune stones (Johansen 1997: 189), the percentage of *kuml* inscriptions for first wave rune stones for Uppland's part would certainly not be small or negligible.

As presented earlier, the oldest known inscribed stone to carry the word *kuml* is probably Da 17 Starup, which is dateable to *ca.* 750–900 AD (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 42–3, 676–7). One of the youngest stones is the rune stone Da 383 Vester Marie 1, which can be dated to the later part of the period *ca.* AD 1050–1150 (*ibid*). The word *kuml* is surely older than the oldest rune stone on which the word has been found.

When studying the runic inscriptions, it is clear that *kuml* can refer to the rune stone itself, and indeed to other stones that were erected at the same time as the rune stone, since *kuml* often stands in the plural. It seems to have been the case that a rune stone was not erected alone, but as Jacobsen and Moltke (1942: 998–9) have argued, was commonly only one part of a monument comprising several stones arranged in specific ways. This could be in the shape of stones standing in one or two rows (*e.g.* Da 30 Bække 2), in circles (*e.g.* Da 282–6 Hunnestad, Da 334–5 Västra Strö, Da 357 Stentofte) or in the shape of a stone ship (*e.g.* Da 209 Glavendrup, Da 230 Tryggevælde) (*ibid*). Other examples from Sweden from the county of Södermanland are the rune stones Sö 34 and 35, which frame a road in immediate connection to a river and a “court place” (see below) (Brate and Wessén 1936). One of the stones in addition declares that it stands at a court place (*ibid*, Brink 2004: 309). Another example is the well-known Jarlabanke monument from the county of Uppland where several stones, both inscribed and uninscribed, are aligned on both sides of a path or a road (Snædal Brink 1981b: 129). Another illuminating example is the rune stone at Ängby in Lunda, Uppland, carved by Asmund Karesson (Ekholm 1950: 138–9). Ängby had one of the biggest grave-fields of the county and close by the rune stone and grave-field were land and water roads (*ibid*). During excavation, it was discovered that this stone constituted the centre of 14 flanking bautas, which at one end touched an ancient ford (*ibid*). At Anundshög in the county of Västmanland, a line of raised stones follows a prehistoric road and ends at an ancient ford. In front of the big mound called Anundshög, which served as a court place well into the middle ages, the line of raised uncarved stones are interrupted by a carved rune stone (ATA).

Although *kuml* means mound and rune stone, it seems to have been the case that very few rune stones were erected by or on mounds. The stone of Järs-

berg near Kristinehamn in the county of Värmland, Sweden, however, is erected on a burial mound (see Johansen 1997: 161, fig. 60). Jacobsen and Moltke (1942: 910–1) argues that the most common or proper place for the Viking Age rune stones are in connection to roads or routes, fairways or along places where people travelled (*ibid*). Birgitta Johansen (1997: 223), however, maintains that during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century, rune stones were commonly erected next to burial places, and later also next to communications and then at the same time, or more probably later, on churchyards (during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries). During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries rune stones were moved from burial grounds to churches (*ibid*).

The original placing of rune stones has been a subject of debate for at least a century. For a summary of the different opinions in research see Birgitta Johansen 1997, and also Torun Zachrisson 1998. Complicating the matter further is the fact that the different places attributed as the original locations for rune stones often lie next to one another (Johansen 1997: 162). A road or a path would time and again pass a burial ground, for instance (*ibid*). On the other hand one might equally say that it is the archaeologist who poses the wrong question, or insists on finding one answer to the question, when persistently focusing on one single original placing of a rune stone – for instance in a grave-field or by a road. Perhaps it was equally important for the rune stone erectors to have the stone both in/by the grave-field and by the road. Part of the reason why Birgitta Johansen claims that rune stones were mostly erected by burial places during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries is the fact that she, in making statistics of the placing of rune stones, refers rune stones erected by roads and grave-fields solely to the category of grave-fields (Johansen 1997: 162). The geographical area of her research includes Denmark, and the counties of Västergötland, Östergötland, Småland, Södermanland and Uppland in Sweden (*ibid*: 163). She justifies her statistical divisions by stating that “the roads have often passed the grave-fields and the grave-field group would otherwise be deceptively small” (Johansen 1997: 161–2, my translation and italics). This means that her conclusion in the thesis (1997: 176) that it was primarily rune stones originally erected in connection to pre-Christian burials (grave-fields) that later were transported to and inserted into medieval churches would have to be changed. Rune stones inserted into church walls and church buildings according to specific patterns<sup>24</sup> were thus most probably taken from settings where grave-fields and roads met. Jacobsen’s and Moltke’s (1942: 910–1) claim would therefore

<sup>24</sup> During the heathen period, the landscape was apprehended and experienced quite differently from the later Christian time. Holiness and sacredness was not restricted to singular buildings (*cf.* Andrén 2002), whereas the same concepts were restricted to the church in Christianity. The reasons for transporting rune stones to churches may have been ways to ensure a continued safe after-life for “heathen” ancestor, where their placing again had to be on thresholds.

still seem to be valid: the most common or proper place for the Viking Age rune stones is in connection with roads or routes, fairways or along places where people travelled. This coincides with the thoughts of Gunnar Ekholm (1950: 140) who likewise claimed that rune stones are connected to communication networks on land and in water. Gunnar Ekholm further notes that rune stones may be raised by grave-fields, but stresses that the carved surface is turned towards the routes of travel by the burial grounds (138–9). It is also noteworthy the fact that these places were not haphazardly placed along the routes, but instead are located in places where different sets of landscapes or routes met, or simply put: at cross-roads. A few rune stones had also been placed in farm courts (Zachrisson 1998). Occasionally, the inscriptions on the rune stones themselves declare that the stones are raised at cross-roads, such as two rune stones in the county of Småland (Sm 45 and Sm 60). In her study of Late Viking Age rune stones in the Mälars Valley and the county of Uppland in particular, Torun Zachrisson (1998: 194) has concluded that these rune stones were mostly placed where different boundaries met, most specifically at property boundaries as well as at bridge crossings.

There are also examples of earlier rune stones found in other parts of today's Sweden that clearly marked and still mark different boundaries. One example is the rune stone Da 360 Björketorp, which mentions *argr* in its inscription. *Argr* is known to be connected to certain transgressing bodily passages perceived of as shameful, which I touched upon in Part One. This rune stone or group of stones is found in Listerby parish in the district of Medelstad in Sweden. It can be dated to *ca.* 650–750 AD (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 410–4). The rune stone is one of very few early rune stones still standing in its original place (*ibid.*: 910). The stone with runic inscription stands together with two almost identically high stones that have no inscriptions. The three stones stand in a triangular position and on the exact location of the border between the three villages of Björketorp, Leråkra and Listerby (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942: 412). It is not possible, however, to claim with certainty that at the time of their raising they did indeed correspond to village or farm borders – they might equally have been used later for that purpose.

Another example of a rune stone standing at its original place – again marking boundaries – is the rune stone (Sm 96) from Brobyholm in Småland. This stone stands by an ancient road, at the intersection of three parishes (Lannaskede, Fröderyd and Skepperstad), on the border between the Eastern and Western part of the county of Njudung, by a ford (Brink 2002: 111). Stefan Brink has debated whether the rune stone at the time of its raising really marked borders or boundaries (*ibid.*: 110–1). He argues that it could have been the other way around, and that the placing of the rune stone in fact determined where the borders would be (*ibid.*). I assume that he then must

mean the cases where the rune stone acts as a possible border between villages or counties – that is, mental boundaries that found their material expressions through the rune stone. But such a discussion focuses on the age of, for example, counties and hundreds, since it is undisputable, at least in my view, that rune stones indeed were raised in connection to the crossing of boundaries, physical as well as mental. Stefan Brink himself at least recognises that the Brobyholm stone undoubtedly stands (and stood) at a “physical” border – by a ford signalling leaving firm land and entering water, where indeed the inscription of the rune stone itself declares that a bridge has been built in memory of a deceased brother (*ibid*). The mentioned deceased brother may be perceived of as having crossed another border, that between the living and the dead.

Although the meanings of rune stones have surely shifted during the course of time, as well as being dependent on geographical context (*cf.* Zachrisson 1998: 123), it is perhaps possible to speak of the long *durée*, borrowing from Professor Fernand Braudel, in the sense of rune stones generally marking different boundaries. At least for some 500 years during the Iron Age in Scandinavia, the rune stones can be recognized as boundary markings. Further, during the Middle Ages rune stones and indeed other stones referred to as rune stones, among other things, continued to serve as boundary markings in a judicial sense (Johansen 1997: 160).

In more than one way rune stones may be said to have enabled, accentuated and facilitated bodily passages and boundary crossings for the living as well as the dead. The living moved along roads and paths, and when the landscape shifted the rune stones standing by a bridge, a grave-field, a port, a court place (*Sw.* *tingsplats*), *etc.*, might have been perceived of as thresholds announcing and directing the passing of boundaries (*cf.* Andrén 1993: 292–4 on Gotlandic picture stones as symbolic doors between inner and outer land; Zachrisson 1998: 197 on rune stones as guarded entrances to the farm yard; and Arrhenius 1970 on rune stones as the doors of the dead). The deceased would also be guided in their travels, though at a spiritual level due to the blessing of the soul as inscribed in the stone. The inscription would also help the soul reach light and paradise (Zachrisson 1998: 147–8).

The places where rune stones were erected were probably also spaces and thresholds for dwelling. On the rune stone Sö 174 from Selebo in the county of Södermanland, the inscription declares that a father made the *kumbl* (the rune stone), the *likhus* (the corpse house) and the bridge after a son who died on the island of Gotland (Brate and Wessén 1936: 135–6). Another rune stone, U838, in the Kulla parish likewise mentions a *likhus*, which was built together with a bridge (Andersson 2005: 139). Different interpretations of the word *likhus* have been presented (Brate and Wessén 1936: 135–6); the



issue revolves around the question of whether the house was intended as a resting place for dead or living bodies. The building of a *likhus* nonetheless underlined the place where the road met a bridge (a stream), a rune stone and of course the body house, as spaces one dwelled in, whether dead or alive. Another example of a dwelling place connected to rune stones is the court place, where cultic and judicial activities were exercised (see below). The last part of the inscription of Sö 174 has the usual blessing of the soul of the deceased (*ibid*). The rune stone had later been taken from its original location and placed at another threshold scene, as a building stone in the doorway of the medieval church of Aspö (*ibid*, cf. Johansen 1997 on the transportation of rune stones to churches and insertion of the stones into the buildings according to specific patterns).

I would like to discuss another group of rune stones that likewise act as thresholds or gates. Skilfully avoiding any deeper discussion on heathen versus Christian practices, in a recent paper Stefan Brink (2004: 308) discusses court places (*Sw. tingsplatser*) where the execution of cult and justice took place. The court place would usually be on a(n ancient) mound of considerable dimensions (*ibid*: 309). Commonly the spaces were marked by rune stones and other stones, which lined the path to the court place (*ibid*: 309–12). The inscriptions on these stones may differ from the earlier described stones, although carrying the usual formula for a blessing. For instance, the inscriptions can declare that a court place has been built (e.g. Up 225/6, Sö 34, 35). Here the rune stone announces the entrance to a space with certain metaphysical connections. Stefan Brink suggests that the mound where the court (*Sw. ting*) took place was a scene enabling divine communication in multiple directions: downwards to chthonic and ancestral realms and upwards towards heavenly dominions and gods (*ibid*). Hereby the execution of laws was given authority by the power of traditions as well as divine powers (*ibid*). Brink chooses to call the court place an interface (*ibid*).

Torun Zachrisson has suggested (1998: 148–9) that the rune stones were erected by Christians (cf. Herschend 1994). Adhering to their faith the deceased was buried without burial goods, contrary to the earlier heathen custom where the dead was accompanied by a number of grave goods – food, drinks and possibly personal belongings (*ibid*). In the absence of such procedures, the provisioning by the surviving relatives had to focus on something else, namely the construction and erection of a rune stone (*ibid*). Returning to the more comprehensive ontological perspective above, the actions of the relatives may be referred to as a transitional event and the rune stone as a transitional object. In my opinion the terms are of analytic value for most rune stones. The specific category of rune stones I am referring to are the stones erected in the absence of a dead body, or at least a dead body within reasonable reach. It is usually stated on these stones where the person

passed on, for instance during the trip eastwards with Ingvar, the so called Ingvar stones found in particular in the Mälars Valley (Snædal Brink 1981a), in Öresund (Da 117), in London (Da 337), on Gotland (Da 259, see example Sö 174 above), in Sweden (Sw. Svitjod) (Da 217), and so on. In these specific cases it must surely have been of the greatest importance to see to it that the transformations of the departed (of the person's soul or the transformation into a possible ancestor) was taken care of in the best and safest way possible – be it in a Christian or non-Christian manner. On the rune stone Sö 213 from Nybble in Södermanland it is stated that the message is “bound in runes”. I would like to suggest that the soul of the dead might also be conceived of as securely fastened to stone through the procedure, and that this could have been one of the ways rune inscriptions worked – the message (and soul of the passed away) was bound in runes. Thereby the soul would not be dangerously on the loose in far away, or not so far away, places. The inscriptions also occasionally relate that the stone is alive through the memory writings of runes (Jansson 1984: 169), and perhaps also through the red colouring of the stone (see below).

Birgitta Johansen (1997: 132–8) has in her thesis persuasively argued and shown how during the period of interest and later a common belief was acknowledging the fact that dead kinfolks dwelled and lived in stone/mountains. She further states that the visual similarity between the mound and the mountain corresponds to a similarity in concept – the mound and the mountain are the tenements of the dead (*ibid*: 133). In light of this way of thinking, it is perhaps possible to see the rune stones and their inscriptions as guiding the departed to their dwelling place. There is one example where the rune inscription explicitly states that the stone was raised for the soul of a departed, namely the stone from Gudum, Da 147 (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942). The same is also true for a few of Jarlabanke's stones, who made the bridge for the sake of his soul (Snædal 1995: 130). In many societies there are special procedures for taking care of deceased members of society. In the case of a person passing away far from home, this could perhaps mean an unrestrained attendance of the spiritual constituents of the departed among the living, which of course could be potentially dangerous (Pernet 1992: 99). In order for the spiritual elements to arrive at the correct place a performance could be organised which would help and allow the attainment of the dead to the new state of being. As pointed out by John Layard, “it is not death, but ritual which opens up the way to future life” (Layard (1934) cited by Pernet 1992: 99, *cf.* above on transitional events).

Whether or not the rune stone was used for guiding the soul of the departed to a stone/mountain/mound, or to the Christian light and paradise, a parallel can be drawn between rune stones and funerary masks. Using the research of others, earlier in this chapter and elsewhere (1999: 9) I have maintained that

masking at a general level was associated with rites of passage or performances and acting that marked changes, for instance funerals, weddings, healing practices or initiation rites. David Napier (1986: 1–3) has reached the conclusion that transformations can be dealt with through masks, since they are ambiguous and paradoxical. Accredited and performed with such properties they may further constitute an ancestry or a pantheon (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 259). In my discussion above on liminality as presented by Victor Turner, it was clear that masks frequently assisted during liminal periods. The main purpose of funerary masks would specifically be to show the dead with his/her model or destination (Pernet 1992: 100). In the explicit case of rune stones they would guide the dead to the stone/mountain/mound or the light/paradise. It is thus not the living family that need to meet and be enlightened in these alternative dwelling places, but the dead (*ibid*). Significantly, the transformative and guiding power of rune stones has in a few cases been further enhanced by the carvings of facial masks on them (figs 44–46). Jacobsen and Moltke (1942: 850) interpret these masks as protective forces. However, they might also have been carved upon the stone to emphasize the transitional quality of the occasion – the death of a relative and the erection of a rune stone.

### Bridging gaps between different worlds

Large numbers of rune stones state that they were erected at the same time as a bridge was built (Zachrisson 1998: 197). There are also instances where rune stones stand next to bridges without having an explicit bridge inscription (*ibid*: 167). Just as a guardian tree of a farm can be perceived as the microcosmic *axis mundi*, a cosmic pivotal tree, Torun Zachrisson suggests that the bridge over which one entered the farm yard can be associated with Bifrost, the guarded bridge (*ibid*: 197; the ideas of *axis mundi* from Hastrup 1992: 30). I would like to explore another theme of bridge building, which again emphasises the rune stones as guiding and directing deceased beings to heavenly realms. In fact, Bifrost was not only a bridge that was guarded (by Heimdall) but, in addition, it was the very bridge that connected earth and heaven, and likewise enabled communication between the two (NE, Bæksted 1988: 74). In many cultures the bridge is perceived as the way the soul of the deceased must pass in order to reach heavenly realms. This is not only true for heathen religions. Within Christian thought, exemplified in Matthew 7: 14, the selective bridge of heaven is mentioned (Walker 1983: 840). Using this line of reasoning, it would not be of the greatest importance to discuss whether the deceased or rune stone erectors adhered to the heathen or Christian way of living; instead, we could conclude that the bridge did not solely correspond to an actual physical bridge. Symbolically, the bridge also helped and allowed the soul of the deceased to reach its designated place. Thus it is not surprising that many rune stones have inscriptions that openly announce

that the bridge was built for the soul (*e.g.* Da 147, U 225/6, U 345 Z181, U 327).

According to the ancient Nordic belief, Bifrost was the name for the rainbow (Heggstad, Hødnebø and Simensen 1975, Bæksted 1988: 74) that, following Snorri's Edda, consisted of three colours (Pipping 1926: 115). The rainbow was said to consist of radiant colours, where the colour red was also symbolically perceived as a flaming fire (Bæksted 1988: 74). Perceptions of a rainbow as a bridge with which to reach heaven are known from burial practices among the Mari, formerly the Cheremis, who were heathen well into recent times. This people lives near the bend of the Northern Volga and the Vjatka river (Holmberg 1914: 9 and their religion is entirely based on oral tradition (Sebeok and Ingemann 1956: 313). In order to treat the dead in a correct manner, three strands of different colours are taken and placed on the shroud of the corpse – from its head to toes (Holmberg 1926: 18). The deceased was perceived to climb up this rainbow to heaven (*ibid*).

Before concluding and summing up my thoughts and interpretations of the transitional events and objects treated here, I would like to point to yet another aspect of the rune stone material that structurally may bind it to burial procedures and mounds: colour.

### Mounds and colourful rune stones

At least during the Viking Age, there was a predilection for colours (Tronner, Nord and Gustavson 2002: 197). It is generally assumed that rune stones were painted in different colours (Jansson 1984: 167). As will be seen below, the possible meaning of the colours as well as their production may connect them to burial practices.

The most common shades that were used on the stones were black and red, but the colours brown and white are known to have been employed also (Jansson 1984: 167, Tronner, Nord and Gustavson 2002). It must be remembered however, that these colours, due to their chemical composition may have been the ones best preserved (Tronner, Nord and Gustavson 2002), that is, other colours may have been common, but have left no traces. Even so, it would not be surprising if red and black indeed were most commonly used since they together with white have been found present as primary colours in many cultures (*e.g.* Douglas 1966, 1970). The rune stones themselves also occasionally declare that they have been painted. This is true for the following rune stones, all in Sweden: Sö 205, Sö 347, Sö 213 and Ö1 175 (43) (Peterson 1994). The rune stone at the Hogrän church, Gotland, likewise declares that it has been painted (Johansen 1997: 6, Lindqvist 1941, 1942). More specifically the rune signs are at times declared to be painted red, as is stated on the inscription Sö 206 (Jansson 1984: 161–2).

According to Sven B. F. Jansson (1984: 167) the colours were used in such a way that readings of the stones were facilitated. For instance, every second word was black or red or the shade changed with a new clause element (*ibid*). I would like to suggest that it is possible that the colours were also used to create a chanting, poetic and/or singing rhythm to the rune stone telling. In the chapter “Oral communities” I emphasized how stories in oral communities were embodied performances where rhythms of words and sounds and the moving body gave structure to the delivered narrative.

The shades of colour have been preserved due to the fact that some rune stones were reused and placed inside medieval church buildings, where they were saved from wind and weather, sometimes hidden and later recovered in connection with restorations of the same churches (Jansson 1984: 166–7). Fascinatingly, Birgitta Johansen (1997: 176) writes in her thesis that it was primarily those rune stones that were originally erected in connection to pre-Christian burials, and of course roads as remarked above, that were transported to the medieval churches. So it is possible to argue, that at least the rune stones erected in connection to pre-Christian burials where cremation took place or cremated bones were deposited were painted in the most common shades of red and black. The pre-Christian grave-fields may also occasionally have harboured a few skeleton burials with little if any grave goods, which implies that Christian burial procedures might have been performed there too.

The most frequent burial practice during the Viking Age in the area of research was otherwise cremation. Obviously, many researchers have commented on and interpreted the procedures or performances associated with cremations and funeral pyres and the accompanying transformations (e.g. Bennett 1987, Biuw 1992, Kaliff 1992, 1997, Hjørungdal 1999, Artelius 2000, Back Danielsson 2003, Williams 2004, see also Part Three in the thesis). I have previously (2003) emphasised the great expertise, presumably of specialists, involved in regard to the fire and pyre techniques used in cremation burials. Here it is sufficient to point out that soot was one of the many products that commonly were the outcome of the pyre. Even if not from cremation burials, soot was nonetheless used to colour chosen sections of rune stones black according to Sven B. F. Jansson (1984: 167; see also Tronner, Nord and Gustavson 2002). The colour red was usually obtained by using red lead or red iron oxide (Jansson 1984: 167, Tronner, Nord and Gustavson 2002: 208). In order to obtain red lead litharge must be heating up with hot oxygen (NE). Litharge would have to be taken from certain mountains. Red iron oxide on the other hand, would have been produced through the heating up of material that contained iron (Hansen and Jensen 1991: 69). The spiritual constituents of a human being, according to Nordic beliefs, were breath and blood (Steinsland 1990a: 60–2). This appears in Swedish

even today, since the Swedish word *andedräkt* (English: breath) literary means the attire (*dräkt*) of the spirit (*ande*). The heated oxygen required for the transformation of litharge or iron material may be conceived of as the necessary life-giving breath in order for the red substance (perhaps symbolically interpreted as blood) to appear (*cf.* Gansum and Hansen 2002, Budd and Taylor 1995 on connections between rituals and technology). As stated above, it was also through the red runes that the stone was considered to come alive. Consequently, as with soot, a process of controlling fire and heat for transformational purposes must take place in order for the desired outcome (the colour red) to be realised. It is very difficult to state whether red lead was produced during the Iron Age in Scandinavia – although we at least know that it was produced in ancient Greece and Rome (Hansen and Jensen 1991: 146). Perhaps it is more plausible that red iron oxide was produced in Scandinavia, since we know that iron objects and iron things were produced and were available during the time in question. The preferred colours of red and black can in themselves be connected to the burial mound events, at a structural but perhaps also at a physically evident level – soot is taken from a pyre and the colour red was obtained from the same or another heating procedure. And even if these colours did not actually have their origin in the funeral pyre, they might have been perceived and interpreted as such. As stated above, the colour red was seen as being part of the rainbow or bridge which guided deceased beings to heaven. Red also symbolised flaming fire. It could also be the case that a smaller pyre of some sort was lit in close relation to the rune stone; such procedures have been established when it comes to the earlier Gotlandic picture stones (Nordberg 2003: 44), perhaps to create different colours to be used on the rune stones. In the case of Gotlandic picture stones, burnt and unburnt bones from animals and coal were recovered in connection with the stone monuments (*ibid* from Buisson 1976: 24–9).

Yet another way of trying to discern how the colours might have been apprehended lies in analysing the possible meanings of various colours in the earlier written medieval sources, specifically the Older Edda poems or songs. Terje Gansum (1999b) has analysed the symbolism of colour in these poems. He has found that the colour red can be associated with blood, struggle and sacrifice (1999b: 456). It may also be related to family (*ibid*: 456, appendix II: 496); and blood was also one of the constituents of a human being's soul, as is clear from the above. The colour black, in contrast, is associated with Ragnarok, utgard, night, travel, knowledge and *sejd* (prophecy making) (Gansum 1999b: 457). The red colour on the rune stones may have been used to emphasize the family ties and blood relations between the dead and the living mentioned in the inscriptions. It could also be perceived of as one of the colours of the rainbow/bridge, with which the deceased could reach heaven. Black could represent the transformational processes the deceased would go through: from a dead body to a pile of burnt (or unburnt)

bones, during which metamorphosis perhaps the soul was liberated, or the travelling of the soul towards light and paradise was accomplished. Through the metamorphosis the once living relative was transformed into an ancestor who would be contacted by the living because of its ability for spiritual travels and possible knowledge of the future to come (Back Danielsson 2003, see also Part Three). The colour black could symbolise these procedures – where death/black/soot is associated with the travelling of the soul of the dead as well as unknown, fearful or out-of-control things for some of the living, such as *utgard*, night and *sejd* (prophecy making).

## Conclusions: *kuml*

The point of departure for the interpretation of rune stones is a focus on bodies and how the passages during different sets of journeys were structured and realised. The journeys were undertaken by both living and deceased beings. The living moved in a shifting landscape, where the rune stones signalled the entrances and exits to new worlds – ports, courts, farm yards, grave-fields, *etc.* I have further emphasized the many transformations that might be connected to rune stones. They were not only thresholds or gates, but veritable transformers, which highlighted the following processes: the change from heathen to Christian practices, from alive to dead to ancestor, the passing of arable land from one generation to the next, the movement from earthly realms to celestial realms, from passing a certain part of the landscape to the next, *etc.* Through the usual inscriptions blessing the soul, the deceased was guided to its dwelling place, be it the Christian light and paradise or the stone/mountain where ancestors were believed to dwell. It seems the rune signs themselves were believed to have the power to fasten the soul of the deceased to stone/mountain. I have also tried to give the interpretations an ontological flavour, in order to present ideas that go beyond the rune stones themselves. Rune stones, as well as masks and mounds, have been interpreted as transitional events and objects. Through the interruption of continuity, for instance the death of a relative, a change in the landscape such as reaching a port, river, bridge or court, or a change in beliefs from heathen to Christian, a potential space is created that needs to be filled. Most concretely rune stones were erected to fill this potential space, and thus acted as a transitional object, an object effecting transitions between the world as it was known to be and the world as it presently was perceived to be. Similarly, a burial of a relative may have been considered a transitional event and the mound a transitional object.

As far as I know, no effort has been made previously to interpret the colours of rune stones. I am convinced that great importance was attached to the colouring of rune stones, both as regards the symbolism of the colours and

their production. The colours that were used most frequently were red and black. I have argued here that the use of red emphasised family ties and blood relations between the dead and the living. I also believe that using red was seen as a way to bring life to the stone, since the soul of a human being consisted of blood and breath. The production of red colourant included moments of inducing life-giving breaths in the form of heated oxygen to the raw materials. Perhaps red also symbolised the flaming red of the rainbow that would guide the dead to celestial realms. Black, in the form of soot, in contrast, was connected to the transformational processes the deceased would go through: from a dead body to a pile of burnt (or unburnt) bones, during which metamorphosis perhaps the soul was liberated, or the travelling of the soul towards light and paradise was accomplished. I have suggested that soot might have been taken from funeral or other pyres, perhaps lit in close relation to the rune stones. Structurally, the production of colours may be said to concur with that of funeral pyres, since it includes a process of controlling fire and heat for transformational purposes.

When researchers discuss what kind of material *kuml* bore upon (e.g. Sjöborg 1815, Jacobsen and Moltke 1942, Jansson 1950, Johansen 1997), new insights may be gained if the centre of attention is less on the actual materials and instead on the possible significance of the same materials. Here it is maintained that the different material shapes the Late Iron Age word *kuml* came in – rune stone, mound and mask – ultimately expressed the idea of transitions. What is more, the transitions focused on bodily journeys and passages at spiritual and spatial levels where the transitional objects acted as helpers, enunciators and navigators for both living and dead human beings.

## Concluding remarks: Masking and Performance

This chapter has discussed masking practices in depth and at length. The concept of masking includes not only facial masks, but also any paraphernalia that is commonly used for transformational purposes. I refer to several anthropological studies where masks have almost exclusively been found in connection with transitional situations. Masks may at the same time also express aspects of power relations. Examples of transitional situations are births and deaths, initiation into adulthood, marriage, healing sessions, *etc.* In other words, situations that play on the symbolism of birth and death. I have also pointed to the fact that the many (archaeological) works referring to Victor Turner's publications on the liminal period as being pivotal in rites of passage rarely acknowledge and discuss the importance of the usage of masks in the Ndembu initiation rituals he examined. Another important point is the recognition that masked characters did not primarily represent certain



divinities, deities, mythic ancestors, gods or occasionally dead humans, but rather expressed ways of recasting certain events. Such events may have been the founding actions of the world or the clan, or a way to express the community's mythic diversity.

I have likewise stressed the expertise with which the mask wearer must perform. When a successful amalgam is created, that is when the mask and wearer act as one, the mask functions as a revelatory device. I have also put an emphasis on audiences as co-performers rather than passive recipients of something delivered/performed.

After the general discussion on what masking may be about, I argued that the feature of masking was a prominent trait of (Late) Iron Age Scandinavia. Traces of masking are found in the material culture in a multitude of ways. I account for the recovering of actual facial masks and facial masks fastened to, or as being represented on, a variety of objects. However, since masking is certainly not limited to facial masks, I also discuss other expressions of masking from the period under investigation. I show that humanoid figures were manipulated in different manners. Sometimes they were dressed up with necklaces or had other props taken on or off, and at other times they showed evidence of having been stabbed in supposed vital organs. Importantly, this means that masking practices are not restricted to human beings but likewise include bodily representations and humanoid figures.

The existence of masking practices during the period researched is supported linguistically as well, as was seen through a discussion of the ancient words *grím* and *kuml*. A large part of the chapter was devoted to examining and discussing the meanings of the word *kuml*. Apart from meaning rune stone, stone standing in proximity to a rune stone and/or mound, I maintained through detailed analyses that in semiotic terms it also alludes to mask. I found that the seemingly disparate materials in fact share conceptual similarities. They are all connected to transitional events and acted as transitional objects, as understood by the British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott (1971). A transitional object effects transits between the world as it was known to be and the world as it presently would be perceived to be. The transitional object, whether a mound or a rune stone, helped bridge the gap in continuity created by, for example, the death of someone. They manifestly enable dealings with change. Masks, mounds and rune stones assist in these metamorphoses. I also touched upon the question of the possible symbolism of the colours of rune stones. It is suggested that the most frequently used colours (that is the colours that we today are able to detect) – red and black – were related to the spheres of the living and the dead, respectively. Throughout the chapter I emphasized how the material was linked to the human body. The following parts of the thesis will investigate further how the body was pivotal for explaining, experiencing and creating cosmic worlds.

## PART TWO – DIRECTING MICROCOSMIC BODIES

The current part deals with bodily representations other than those connected with the remains of physical bodies. This material includes gold foil figures, figural pendants and other figures; that is, bodies in miniature. These bodies are referred to as humanoid figures and often come in miniscule sizes. I start by focusing on the workings of miniaturization. I consider what miniaturization is about, how the representations may have been used and had the agency to create and make cosmos. I argue that a discussion on metaphors is inseparable from miniaturization, and in particular representations of bodies are analysed as vehicles for metaphorical thinking. Further, gold foil figures are scrutinized, and I discuss what the metal gold implied and what bodily senses are emphasized through the foils. I also re-connect to the topic of masking, discussed in detail in Part One.

I conclude that it is imperative that gold foil figures be regarded as an heterogeneous body of material, where an assortment of purposes and agencies were in operation in varying contexts during the period. However, despite the heterogeneity I claim that what holds the variety of expressions together is the theme of transformations and transitions. These transitions are achieved through bodily engagements, such as dancing, and the passing of bodily boundaries through orifices, for example through drinking, singing, eating, speaking/shouting, listening to sounds/music, and through bodily manipulations such as masking practices. The bodily performances and arrangements may have included shape-changing, healing, initiations, divine consummation and divine and/or dynastic weddings. Equally, the transitions also included the transformations of other than human beings, such as the ability to turn raw materials into objects.

# The Workings of Miniaturization

## Introduction

The humanoid figures dealt with in the current part of the thesis are bodily representations in miniature. I have argued, and will argue below, that such representations acted in stories of a transitional character, where they sometimes had props added to them, were portrayed as wearing masks, or were inflicted bodily wounds and/or experienced other treatments. My point of departure is that these were in effect performing objects, a concept that has been defined by Frank Proschan as “material images of humans, animals, or spirits that are created, displayed or manipulated in narrative or dramatic performance” (Proschan 1983: 4 in Bell 2000: 5). I will use the concept performing objects, but not in the exact understanding of Proschan. By all means, the figures treated here were created, displayed and manipulated. However, the rituals in which they participated cannot be reduced to simple dramatic presentations. What needs to be considered is the agency of the objects, and how they as bodies were part of making the world and other worlds intelligible, negotiable and communicative. The title of this part of the thesis *Directing Microcosmic Bodies* tries to capture this complexity.

## Miniaturization – to make the world and other worlds intelligible, negotiable and communicative

A miniature is something copied or represented in a smaller size from something larger (Johansen 1997: 58). We may recognize a model of a railway as being a miniature of a real railway. The purpose of these models is to be accurate in measurement, simply to re-present material culture in a smaller size. Bailey argues that miniatures are different from models, since they “do not seek accuracy in representation” (Bailey 2005: 29), that is, the miniature is not represented in terms of scale. I maintain that in comparison to miniatures, models are not polysemous, and they do not invite disparate significata. They may nonetheless, in the same way as miniatures, evoke emotions

within the handler or viewer, such as wonder, awe and/or empowerment (Bailey 2005: 29, 33). The effects may even be described as making it possible to enter other worlds. The Disneylands that are found in, for instance, the US and France commonly employ the effects of miniaturization (and “maximization”) to create other worlds, affecting you physically, emotionally and mentally (Bailey 2005: 35).

Models as well as miniatures contribute to the intelligibility of the world (I have not discussed the negotiable and communicative aspects of miniaturization, but I connect to these topics in the following sections). A modern example may be presented: when you are in an aeroplane that has just taken off, the landscape below you is in miniature and in the blink of an eye, you grasp, for example, the spatial connections between farms, fields, avenues, trees and mountains, although not all details of the landscape are visible. In the specific prehistoric context, however, we are discussing created miniaturizations, where manipulations are possible and necessary. Knowing the whole before the parts of the whole is gratifying for the intelligence (Rosenblum 2001: 21 in Bailey 2005: 33).

## Miniaturization, manipulation and metaphorical thinking

It has already been established that there is a difference between models and miniatures, where the latter is not restricted to a size reduction, but equally contains elements of manipulation. Birgitta Johansen (1997: 58) prefers to discuss these manipulations in terms of simplification and/or exaggeration, while Douglass Bailey (2005: 32) speaks of abstraction and compression. Miniaturization enables people to think and create meaning, which in Birgitta Johansen’s (1997) term may be referred to as metaphorical thinking. Christopher Tilley (1999: 261) has suggested that one of the few universals is that of metaphorical thinking. The kinds of metaphors employed and the metaphorical connections that people draw with their embodied minds depend, however, on the cultural traditions and the environments people live in (*ibid*). The main techniques for metaphorical thinking are, according to Birgitta Johansen, stylization and miniaturization (1997, chapter 2). Let me present a few examples of metaphorical thinking where the themes of miniaturization and stylization are interlinked. Birgitta Johansen (1997) discusses aspects of existence and landscape during the Iron Age and Middle Ages in Scandinavia in her thesis. She suggests that as diverse phenomena as the dragons on rune stones, the stone walls separating outer field from inner

field and the ramparts of hinged mountains<sup>25</sup> all had visual similarities that corresponded to conceptual similarities. The dragon/snake on the rune stone is thus viewed as a miniature of the meandering stone walls and ramparts, all having as their purpose to be guardians and acting as boundaries. Similarly, she presents a resemblance in shape between the mountain and the grave-mound, and shows both to be places for ancestral dwelling. Christopher Tilley (1991) has argued in a work on megalithic tombs in Västergötland, central southern Sweden, that the tombs in effect are representations of the landscape in miniature, connected to issues of authority and social control within society.

Stefan Brink (2001: 93) has argued that islands such as Selaön in Södermanland, Sweden, can be interpreted as representations of a mythological micro-cosmos. He maintains that some islands probably were given an elevated and sacred position in the landscape (*ibid*). Lotte Hedeager (2001) has in a similar manner discussed so-called 'central places' from the Iron Age in Scandinavia. She argues that places like Gudme/Lundeborg and Ribe in Denmark, Borre and Kaupang in Norway, and Slöinge and Helgö in Sweden presented models of the cosmic world (*ibid*: 506). Gudme on Funen, Denmark, is suggested to have been "a reconstruction of Asgard; the enormous amount of gold found in Gudme's centre as well as in its surroundings suggests that those who built this complex central place perceived it as a sacred place, and possibly as a replication of Asgard, its divine counterpart" (Hedeager 2001: 505, *cf.* Sundqvist 2004). A similar line of thought may apply to those, frequently large buildings where gold foil figures have been recovered (see more below).

An equally important ingredient in terms of metaphorical thinking is, as hinted at above, the conceptual link that binds different, but from some points of view, similar materials together. I have already mentioned the elaborate features of the language of the time, in which metaphors and kennings flourished, a trait typical of oral societies. For instance, travelling at sea or riding waves at sea could be referred to as riding horses, and the horse of the sea was the ship (Bæksted 1988, Thunmark-Nylén 1995d). Kristin Oma (2000: 107) has suggested that travelling by horse and by sea (in a ship) were complementary ways of travelling, which was why they were often used as kennings for one another. The horse could be used as a means for transportation where the ship could not, and vice versa. Another polysemous ancient word, *gandr*, meant (magic) stick or staff (Heggstad, Hødnebo and Simensen 1975, *cf.* Raudvere 2003, Heide 2006 on *gandr* and *seiðr*). It could also mean snake or serpent, as in the word Jormungandr, the giant

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<sup>25</sup> The concept hinged mountain was introduced by Åsa Wall (2003), replacing the old misleading term "hill forts".

snake or the Midgård serpent (Heggstad, Hødnebo and Simensen 1975). Further, it was in some contexts used to denote a wolf (*Sw. ulv*) (Heggstad, Hødnebo and Simensen 1975). Below I interpret a *gandr*, an Iron Age yew-tree staff retrieved from a bog in Denmark. I maintain that the staff is meant to allude to a snake, due to its rhombic or snake like incision, its appropriate length and its glittering and polished surface. I suggest that it functioned as a powerful, transforming and multi-associative tool in healing practices. I will reiterate my argument in Part One that there is a conceptual link and (visual) similarities between masks, mounds and rune stones, expressed through the Late Iron Age word *kuml*. Further, in Part Three, I maintain that different activities such as carbonizing iron, ceramic production and cremating dead in certain contexts were metaphorically connected (see also Back Danielsson forthcoming). These activities all played on the symbolism of births and deaths, the procreations of persons, human and non-human, whether in the shape of an ancestor, a sword or a ceramic vessel. I would like to paraphrase René Devisch, to explain how such seemingly different activities as smithing, ceramic production and cremation of dead beings are connected. He maintains that metaphor “transforms various domains by transferring, for example, spatio-temporal principles or potent images on to previously unrelated domains” (Devisch 1993: 37). Thereby practices may be loaded with new or different energies and new rules for behaviours and power regulations may be called for. In this case it is the potent image of giving birth to persons by heated intercourse and the adding of symbolic semen (crushed animal/human bones) that is transferred to other acts (ceramic production, turning iron to steel, transforming the dead to an ancestor – see discussions in detail in Part Three). In all these transformational instances, the adding of air, or breath is a prerequisite. As presented in Part One, air or breath is one of the components necessary to create life, according to the anthropogenic myth as it is presented in the Edda poem *Voluspá* (Steinsland 1990a). This anthropogenic myth might be interpreted as an indigenous metaphor to explain the world or people. As such, it could be claimed to be more effective than other metaphors (Strathern 1988, 1992 in Fowler 2004: 108) when interpreting Late Iron Age peoples and worlds.

What must not be forgotten when discussing metaphorical thinking, or miniaturization for that matter, are the power relations that are also embedded in such societal expressions and relationships. I have mentioned already the work of Christopher Tilley (1991), where he suggests that issues of authority and social control within society were connected to the representation of the landscape in miniature through megalithic tombs.

To my knowledge, the theme of miniaturization has not been explored at much length in research on the (Late) Iron Age in Scandinavia. As regards bodies in miniature a book called “Att föra gudarnas talan” (“To speak for the gods”) was published recently by RAÄ, in which several miniature fig-

ures from the Iron Age are mentioned (2004). This book does not, however, discuss miniaturization as a topic of importance in order to interpret the figures, nor contextual readings of the recovered bodies, nor the body as a topic *per se*, nor the importance of the material from which the figures were made. In this context I also want to bring up an article from 1961 by Birgit Arrhenius on Viking Age miniatures, despite the fact that it does not consider miniature bodies. The miniatures discussed by Arrhenius come in the shapes of steel shaped pendants, block chairs, horses, lances, swords, spears, scythes, *etc.* The items are made of bronze, silver, or iron. Arrhenius interprets them as having deeper symbolic meanings than mere functioning as charms (1961: 150). She maintains that the miniature lance was a sign of dignity worthy a king, and likewise that the sword, the horse and the block chair can be interpreted as similar signs (*ibid.*). The objects are tentatively suggested to have been signs worn or carried in worship of the highest of all chiefs, the god Odin (*ibid.*: 157). It is outside the scope of the current work, which focuses on bodies, to discuss these specific miniatures in detail (though see fig. 32 in Part One where I discuss the evolvement of the usage of miniatures during the Late Iron Age).

The human body is used as a key metaphor around the world in endless varieties and examples. In fact, the belief that bodies are pivotal to a variety of societal practices is present in societies almost everywhere (*e.g.* Douglas 1966, 1982, Aijmer and Boholm 1994: 3). The body is a central device for creating and experiencing the world and cosmos. Here I will concentrate on a few archaeological and anthropological examples of how the body, its performances and relationships with other people and materials have been used metaphorically. The examples range from simple statements to complex relationships between humans and their surroundings.

## The human body as a vehicle for metaphorical thinking

The human body is exemplary for metaphorical thinking, and body parts are frequently used to describe the details of a variety of materials (*e.g.* Hamilakis, Pluciennik and Tarlow 2002: 11 and there cited references). Cups have ears, ceramic pots have necks and bellies, and length can be described in terms of feet, just to mention a few examples. The human body and body parts have been suggested to be metaphorically present in many materials in several prehistoric contexts (*e.g.* Welbourne 1984, Barley 1994, Thomas 1999, Gansum 2003, 2004a, b on human bodies or body parts represented through objects and Källén 2004 on bodies and/or body parts in/as ceramics).

The human body and its destinies after death have been interpreted by Christopher Tilley and Julian Thomas (1993) as the active metaphor in Neolithic Bretagne. Here the body as metaphor ties a variety of Neolithic materials together through their similarity in shape, for example, axes, menhirs, internal and external structures of burials, carvings, *etc.* However, I argue that not only the human body *per se*, or body parts *per se*, were used to create, define and structure sequences of the world. The socio-cultural webs in which bodies, persons, things, and surroundings were interrelated were likewise used in the literal creations of worlds. In regard to prehistoric contexts, the challenge thus lies in "...defamiliarizing and even exoticizing one of our most naturalized metaphors, the human body, which is all the more powerful because it is *our* way of encountering the world" (Hamilakis, Pluciennik and Tarlow 2002: 13, original emphasis).

## The recognition of the contextual and socio-cultural body for creating and making worlds

Let us start with the creating of the very word *world*, as it was perceived in Late Iron Age and medieval times. World comes from the Old English *woruld*, etymologically meaning human existence, or this world and age, akin to Old English *wer*, (hu)man, and *eald*, old (Johansen 1997: 23, MW 2001, *cf.* Gurevich 1985). The word *world* conveyed the time or age of humans. This demonstrates how intricately human body/human life and time are interdependent, creating a specific world. Other existences or times are also known, since from the Poetic Edda we know of the ages of the axes, the knives and the wolves (Johansen 1997: 23). Seemingly, there is an elasticity in connection to time – time is not just time (in contrast to today when time is noted in non-elastic equal minutes and hours, though our experiences of the time may vary), but it is a contextual time, time depending on and being inseparable from the context. Birgitta Johansen (1997: 23) has suggested that time in the period under investigation, as well as space, were coloured by emotions and could be conceived of in terms of, for instance good, bad, evil or sacred. The word *wer-* was also used to form other compounds, for example werewolf. Werewolf is another evocative early word that conveys another type of being and embodiment; that of a human wolf.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) has maintained that kinship is one of the governing principles for social relations in most non-western large-scale societies. During the Viking Age in particular, but most probably also earlier, it is clear that kinship or the family had just such a prominent position in Scandinavia – it saturated relations as well as landscapes. The concept of the family was used to connote and structure large parts of Late Iron Age worlds. The ancient Swedish word *ätt* stands for family/kinship (Hellquist 1980). The *ätt*



functioned as the social foundation of society through systems of loyalty and cult practice (Lamm 1995b, *cf.* Hafström 1982, Fenger 1982, Hamre 1982, Lindal 1982). Membership in an *ätt* was not restricted to blood relatives. Through weddings or adoptions of thralls, children born outside marriage and non-relatives, the *ätt* was expanded to include new members (*ibid.*). The same word was also used for the three groups of letters that made up the *futhark*, the runic alphabet, where each *ätt* consisted of eight (*ätt*) letters (Gustavson 1995). The word *ätt* also stood for the cardinal points of the compass (Hellquist 1980). Consequently, through the word a linkage between bodies, their orientation in the landscape and, as a result, an ancestral geography (*cf.* Edmonds 1999) was conveyed. *Ätt* can be traced at least to the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and is also linked to the German *aihti* and the Gothic word *aihts*, meaning property (Hellquist 1980). Even though it can be argued that the *ätt* word to some extent could have been used as a memory device in the oral culture, the word undeniably also signals the vast importance the family had and how it worked as a structuring principle in society. In this context, it is also worth pointing out how dead bodies were transformed into ancestors in burial grounds that frequently were tangential to (cross)roads in the landscape (see above and Part Three, *cf.* Back Danielsson 2003, Engesveen 2005). This could have been a way of further metaphysically charging the landscape. The burials, together with remarkable natural objects and place names, could have worked as mnemotechnic “bolts” for assisting memory when experiencing and/or delivering myths (Brink 2001: 80). Several researchers have emphasized the vital role ancestors played among the living and that burial grounds were treated as cult sites (Birkeli 1938, 1943, Baudou 1989, Kaliff 1997, 2001, Artelius 2000, Sognnes 2000, and Gräslund 2001 in Brink 2001: 86).

It should be remarked that the view of regarding Late Iron Age societies as based on kinship is not unchallenged. For instance Michael Gelting (2003: 429–30) in a recent paper on Canon law maintains that it is not possible to use Scandinavian law books to claim that Late Iron Age societies were kinship oriented. He suggests instead that this is “the product of an ideological, ecclesiastical project to use pre-existing ideals of kinship solidarity everywhere in Europe in the interest of internal peace within Christian society” (Gelting 2003: 430). His reasoning must be explained further. He argues that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the church with the Pope Alexander III as the central person, had huge problems with Christians who upon their deaths let the church inherit their properties, contrary to the wishes of relatives (Gelting 2003: 422). The disputes over properties could be costly on all sorts of levels, and indeed were contrary to the ideas of the church/Christianity as a religion of peace (*ibid.*: 424). It was suggested instead that the church/Christ would count as a relative, and only receive a share of the inheritance (*ibid.*: 422). Gelting argues that the church saw a way out of these disputes by strengthen-

ing the right of inheritance amongst relatives or kin folks, which at the same time eliminated doubts on successions (*ibid*: 424). Conclusively, Gelting (2003: 429) maintains that kinship was of importance for the power relations the Late Iron Age societies, but that it came to be emphasized in certain ways through Canon law. Above all, kinship relations were only one of many different socially important relations (*ibid*).

René Devisch (1994) has carried out research on the non-literate culture of the Yaka of Zaïre, in which he showed that the physical body and its bodily functions act as key symbolic material in healing and divination practices. However, his observations on how the body is pivotal in these and other circumstances are argued to be present in societies almost everywhere (Aijmer and Boholm 1994: 3). Of further significance in René Devisch's argument is that rituals are not enactments of given meanings, which are granted by cosmos and society, "but are rather to be seen as devices which generate culture meaning and force" (Devisch 1994: 9). This contrasts with the views presented by Victor Turner in his heavily cited work(s) on Ndembu revelatory and divinatory practices (1975). Devisch instead puts emphasis on how healing rituals *make* the world "...in that they generate relations within and between the provinces of knowledge that are the human body – senses, emotions – and the social body of relationships, and cosmos" (Devisch 1994: 9 original emphasis). This statement is also related to the fact that the Yaka people are non-literate. He declares:

"In this oral, non-literate culture, there is no disembodied scientific discourse on reality, no assumption concerning a reality seen as an orderly whole, that can be fully described, a book that is already written, a theatre-like story with a beginning, a sequential development and an end. Initiatory cults aim at mastering the world neither technically, nor by the clarity of statements of truth. Reality is seen not so much as a temporal, lineal, teleological redemptive or emancipatory development of self, truth or cosmos, but rather as the developing, fading away and re-emerging of forces and meaning through rhythm, boundary marking and crossing, decay and flowering, and similar processes. The human body, its boundaries and orifices, the senses, its oral, digestive and genital functions, offer not so much a meta-narrative as the central device or principal key that opens up and stimulates the whole system of initiatory transformation... it is not profitable to try to understand initiation in terms of learning, or of gaining insight into reality or truth". (Devisch 1994: 23).

"The initiatory art is a very practical method of intertwining the body with the group and the lived-in world. It does not so much draw on the spoken word but rather it brings into play the devices of seclusion, incantation, rhythm, dance, mime, body decoration, colours, massage, concealment and trance. These are the devices mentioned earlier, that the art of initiation supplies, whereby the novice makes use of his body as metaphor in 'fleshing out' ('giving body to') and re-incorporating the social and cosmological bodies.

Corporeal boundaries and openings act as the very loci and generative means for the remaking or renewing the units of exchange deployed in the social and cosmological fields: the conjugal and domestic unit, wife-givers and wife-takers, house, village, and the environment in which the Yaka live. Skin and orifices act as juncture between various orders. Orificial transitions, manipulations of the skin, and bodily postures may become means for initiatory transformation, since they are processes that bring together, to form a whole, such constituents as the intensely dramatized resonance between pregnant body and foetus, cult house and microcosmic womb in gestation, or the hen that lays an egg and incubation.” (Devisch 1994: 24).

Although I have not interpreted the figures in the current work to the fullest yet, or hitherto have suggested that they have taken part in divination or healing practices, the work by René Devisch is important for this thesis on several levels. Firstly, he is dealing with a non-literate culture or society. Of course, this does not mean that what is defined as Yaka cultural meanings are equivalent to cultural meanings in Iron Age Scandinavia. They are probably not; but what René Devisch equally describes is the difference between a mainstream cultural tradition’s view of reality and truth, and an oral tradition’s view of the same. I have already discussed this matter in Part One in the chapter *Oral communities, medieval texts and interpretations of Iron Age bodies*. It deserves to be repeated: when we are interpreting the world(s) of Iron Age people, we must be aware of the fact that they most likely did not conceive of their world or cosmos as coherently and logically as we as modern Westerners would like (cf. Brink 2004). (Though of course the cosmos and world were coherent and logical to Iron Age people). The point I would like to extract from René Devisch’s research to the Iron Age context is the idea that the figures discussed in the thesis are believed to have participated in performances that made the world, not performances that were enactments of the world(s). The difference between “making” and “en-acting” is huge – for one thing the former is placing an emphasis on the creational process through the body for experiencing the world and the latter is a passive reflection, implying that a real world is present as a fixed key in the background.

# Contacting Divine Forces Through Shiny Metal

## The origins of gold

Many of the figures analysed in this part are of metal, foremost of gold. In this section I will explore the possible meanings ascribed to the material used to make these figures.

It has been assumed that most, if not all, gold retrieved from the Iron Age had its origin outside of Scandinavia (Thunmark-Nylén 1995c). Not until the Middle Ages were the metals gold and silver extracted domestically within the Nordic countries, and the main part of the gold from prehistoric times must have been imported (K. Andersson 1995: 9–11). This gold originated from the Romans, mining gold in provinces such as Arabia, Dacia, Hispania, Illyricum, Lydia and Noricum (*ibid*). However, there is a possibility that small amounts of gold could have been taken from domestic river sediments as early as in the Bronze Age, since gold is retrievable in some rivers of Småland and Norrland, Sweden, and the northern part of Finland (*ibid*). The first Roman golden coins to reach Scandinavia were the aurei, a coin that was minted between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 140). After the aurei a new gold coin, solidus, was introduced in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by Constantine the Great (307–37) (*ibid*). The aurei coins were worn largely on the body, hanging as pendants, since they have holes or loops attached to them. This reveals that the “coins” had travelled far from their original Roman setting, context and meaning(s). John Chapman has elegantly suggested that: “An insightful way of treating artefacts is to consider their cultural biographies, in which their life-histories are part of their cultural impact. This implies that each person who makes, owns or uses an object makes some contribution to the item’s biographical story. The value of an artefact is interdependent upon the value of the person connected to that object” (Chapman 2002: 53, see also Kopytoff 1986 and Strassburg 1998).

Rather misleadingly it has been suggested that golden coins at times were imitations made by barbarians. Lars Jørgensen and Peter Vang Petersen claim that a few coins from the Late Germanic Iron Age in Scandinavia were in fact “barbaric imitations” of Roman coins, and as such “false” (1998: 144). For instance, a barbaric gold coin (their choice of word) has been recovered in Gudme, where a lion is visible on one side of the coin, and an alleged emperor on the other (*ibid*: 144–5). It also has Latin and Greek inscriptions and is dated to c. 300 AD (*ibid*). If anything should have the label “false” in the Scandinavian context, it is the word coin. The golden lion and the human/divinity on either side of the golden plate, together with the golden loop and the inscriptions simply do not add up to the category “coin”. To my mind there is no reason why gold items of perfect quality but with images other than those of the aurei, should be deemed false. Although I agree with John Chapman that the cultural biographies of things are of the greatest importance, perhaps it is wise in respect to the Scandinavian circumstances to not always use the “civilized” Roman world as a model or an interpretative key. Even if Roman coins were models, we still need to interpret the findings in the Scandinavian context: what were the meanings of the item of gold here? However basic a statement it may seem, it needs to be said: when we find the Roman aurei in, for instance, burials with an attached loop, it is no longer a Roman coin, or aurei. In its “early years” it probably was a coin, but through journeys, different people owning it, holding it, attaching a loop to it, *etc.*, the coin was transformed into another thing. In my view, one also needs to consider whether it was foremost the metal itself of the coinage and its inherent properties that were desirable rather than the motif (or perhaps both). This could be the case since it has been claimed that the Scandinavians rarely valued Roman jewellery, but instead preferred products that were made by local goldsmiths (K. Andersson 1995: 11, Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 149). The thing or the item of gold produced, whether an ex-coin or a new product, was probably used to enhance, dazzle or repel the specific powers of something or someone, at times a deceased (see below). The specific forces deemed inherent in the metal gold – luminosity as well as numinosity – could also have been acquired or augmented through the various journeys, stories, ownerships, and additions/refabrications the metal had gone through prior to its presumed pre-historic end-journey, perhaps a burial or deposit.

## The importance of colour symbolism within metals

The ancient Swedish/Scandinavian word for gold was *gul*, *gull* (Hellquist 1980). Gold consequently translates to “the yellow metal” (*ibid*). The word gold (Sw. guld) is thus etymologically related the colour adjective yellow (Sw. gul). This means that the most salient feature of gold during the later

part of the Iron Age in Scandinavia, and presumably earlier, was considered the colour of the metal. This gives us something to work with since the way the colours of materials are perceived and sorted within a given society have been found to have great importance for understanding how the same society and its cosmos are structured and organized (e.g. Herbert 1984, Drewal and Mason 1998, Jones and MacGregor 2002). This may be even more pertinent when it comes to the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia, since it is claimed that people in general at this period of time had a predilection for colours (e.g. Tronner, Nord and Gustavson 2002). We have already discussed the possible meanings of the colours of rune stones in Part One, in the chapter *Masking and Performance: Bodily Metamorphoses*. I would like to suggest that metals, or rather the luminosity of metals, were also greatly favoured during the period in question. The prized luminosity need not have been restricted to metals but may also be evinced by, for example, silk, Merovingian garnet jewellery, pearls, glass beads, or even the iridescent feathers of birds such as the peacock, as retrieved from the Gokstad ship, discussed below. By polishing wood, as was the case with the Hemdrup staff, discussed below, luminosity may also have been maintained, demonstrating that luminous qualities were not only restricted to high status objects.

What connotations did the colour yellow bear, perceived as the most prominent aspect of gold during the (Late) Iron Age in Scandinavia? Today in the Western world, colours are frequently characterized according to the Berlin and Kay Colour Paradigm, where a universal story of the evolution of colour perception is built mainly on linguistic data (Chapman 2002: 47). This Western perspective needs to be challenged should alternative ways of assessing colours be gained. John Chapman (2002: 49) has stressed the necessity of integrating cultural meanings into colour studies. Eugenia Herbert has rightly claimed that “Investigations into color systems...may provide the most useful methodology for the study of the language of materials, because it has taught us to be more comfortable with ambiguity and to look at context rather than isolated phenomena” (1984: 295). The study of colours within cultures is a complex area. It is not as simple as concentrating on the colour, as if this fact was separate from the material. On the contrary, it is probable that there is a co-emergence of colour-and-things (Casson 1997 in Chapman 2002: 51). In the word lemon, Casson (1997) maintains that the entity sense has priority over the colour sense, that is the presence of a lemon has precedence over the naming of the colour lemon (*ibid*). Another example is the colour/fruit orange. As with any material, colour or metal, it is not possible to interpret them in isolation, but they need to be interpreted within a given context. Consequently, a colour may have a specific meaning in a certain context, but in combination with other colours yet another (Herbert 1984: 279). Let me present an example. I claim that yellow during the Iron Age on a general level is connected to and alludes to gold, the sun, gods, fire and

water (see below and also Gansum 1999b: 456). When yellow is combined in a pattern with black, however, other readings are possible.

One of the famous Viking ships from Norway is that from Gokstad, dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD (Thunmark-Nylén and Haasum 1995). It had been used for navigation prior to its serving as a burial dwelling (Montelius 1886: 179). The boat burial contained an alleged man<sup>26</sup> suffering from rheumatism deposited with a great variety of grave goods (Nicolaysen 1882, Thunmark-Nylén and Haasum 1995). Returning to the topic of masking, many of the deposited objects had been manipulated, creating ambiguity, paradox and illusion. For instance, the ship's mast had been cut away (Montelius 1886: 179), and its 32 shields were very thin (Nicolaysen 1882: 63). If the shields' identities could be connected with defensive purposes, then that identity had been seriously flawed in their preparation, since their thinness made reasonable protection impossible. Within the boat burial, the colour combination of black and yellow was used on certain objects in certain locations. Every second shield of the Gokstad ship was painted yellow and the other black (Nicolaysen 1882: 62–3, Gansum 1999b: 456). The shields made of white pine were hung on the ship as shown in fig. 48. The pattern or combination of yellow and black also occurred in other places. Most significantly, what had been interpreted as the tiller of the ship, was also alternately decorated yellow and black (Nicolaysen 1882: 44, Plate XI: 1). The yellow and black spots along the lengthways and on the end knot of the tiller (made of ash according to Nicolaysen, but the rudder of oak according to Sjøvold 1954: 19) were arranged in a similar way as the shields (fig. 48). The devouring head of a beast on the tiller also possibly had apotropeic purposes had, and revealed yellow and red paint (Nicolaysen 1882: 44, Plate XI: 1). The wind sheets or verge boards of a tent were likewise painted yellow and black, although not in a shield like or spot like manner (Nicolaysen 1882: 41). The wind sheets were in the shape of discouraging heads of dragons/horses. Arne Emil Christensen (1979: 145) has speculated that the top planking of the ship was also painted black and yellow, due to the fact that it showed light patterned carvings. However, ocular inspections have not revealed any traces of colour (*ibid*).

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<sup>26</sup> The bone estimation was made by Jacob Heiberg, Professor in Anatomy, in 1881. He had only nine pieces of bones at his disposal, belonging to seven different bones. There were pieces from the arms and legs (the left thighbone, the left tibia, the humerus, the left knee-joint) and from the left shoulder blade and the skull. The reason why Heiberg decides the pieces had belonged to a man is the fact that the bones were thick and had strong muscle lines (Heiberg in Appendix IV in Nicolaysen 1882: 75). However, thick and strong bones with big muscle lines may not wholly be the result of a person's sex, but equally important is what the body did during its life time. Hard manual labour and moving the body result in thicker bones and extensive muscle lines. That is why elderly people inclined to osteoporoses are encouraged to take walks *etc.*, and indeed why younger people need to exercise to avoid the sickness at older ages.

Of course, it is not my intention to interpret the Gokstad ship burial. However, as regards the colours yellow and black I cannot refrain from pointing out that it seems that they may have served protective purposes (which of course the shields themselves signal). The placing of the colours, at in-between places, separating the outside of the ship (or the tent) from the inside, indicate the necessity of creating protective limits and boundaries for desired activities. It is also possible that the colours were meant to augment or attract certain worldly or divine powers and repel others. Further, the black and yellow spots on the tiller might be read as miniature shields. The tiller also has an obvious in-between position, acting as a mediating director between the steering party of the ship and the unleashed and hazardous powers outside the ship. Navigating could well be considered a task needing protective forces. The verge borders of a tent also serve as protecting borders against malefic winds. The placing of the colour combinations yellow and black on borders is not coincidental, nor is the choice of attributing shields, however thin or tiny, with the colour combination.

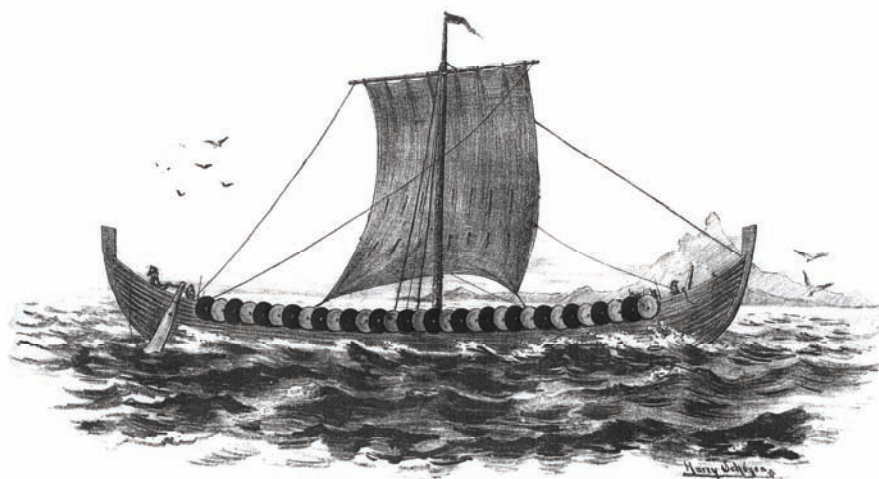


Fig. 48. The Gokstad ship with its shields. Drawing by Harry Schøyen. Source: Nicolaysen 1882, unnumbered.

Anna Wierzbicka has argued that it is common that locally salient references such as plants, animals and minerals are used for colour perceptions (Wierzbicka 1990 in Chapman 2002: 50). If this line of reasoning is used, one of the most obvious animals for the combination black and yellow is the bee or the wasp. If this allusion were correct we still would not know what cultural meanings bees or wasps had during the Late Iron Age. If there is any similarity with our allusions of today however it would concur with the proposed



workings of yellow and black as a protective force. The colours arranged in a bee like manner – yellow and black alternately – could have meant as a “warding-off” signal, or else you could be stung and end up in trouble. Although we cannot be certain that my proposed interpretation here of the colour pattern with black and yellow on borders is correct, it nonetheless serves to demonstrate several basic points on colour symbolism. A colour cannot be analysed in isolation. The item(s) that wear the colour(s) also tell something about the significance of the colour(s). The placing of the coloured item(s) also adds to our understanding of the complex interplay between colour and thing.

Before concentrating further on the possible connotations of gold and yellow in a Scandinavian Iron Age setting, we need to consider further examples of how colours may work. These examples are presented in order to widen the horizons of interpretation (*cf.* Ucko 1969).

Among the Yorùbá of West Africa, colour works as a mnemonic device (Keates 2002: 116), reminding people of, making and reinforcing the cosmological ideas and worlds of the society. Colour perception is here clearly separated from the ways colours are apprehended by us Westerners. Three chromatic groups are distinguished: *funfun*, *pupa* and *dúdú* (Drewal and Mason 1998: 20). What separates the chromatic groups is primarily their temperatures and by extension their temperaments (*ibid.*: 21). *Funfun* evokes cold or coldness and is connected with wisdom and age and what we would label as “white”. *Pupa* on the other hand connects to heat and warmth. The god of war and iron has the temperament of *pupa*, and wears colours Westerners label orange, deep yellow, red, and pink (*ibid.*). In between the hot and the cold is *dúdú* including the colours indigo, purple, green, black, and blue (*ibid.*). Through the three chromatic groups otherworldly presences are made tangible and manifest, such as spirits, deities and ancestors (Keates 2002: 116). Thus the colour system expresses Yorùbá’s cosmological ideas, and they also function as visual warnings of “forces and actions in the world for which one must be prepared” (Drewal and Mason 1998: 21–2). What is more, the colour system is not solely a matter of sight, but a multisensory experience involving touch and other somatic materialisations (Drewal and Mason 1998: 21). For instance red/heat/god of iron and war might evoke feelings of fear or anger. In conclusion, “colors define and reveal the nature, character or personality of things, persons, and divinities” (Drewal and Mason 1998: 21).

Above I discussed Wierzbicka’s opinion that it is most common that locally salient references are used for colour perceptions, such as through the colour of plants, animals and minerals. Although Anna Wierzbicka (1990), like Eugenia Herbert (1984), stresses the differences in terms of colour systems

within cultures, the most obvious candidates for the colour yellow are warmth and the sun (Wierzbicka 1990: 115–25 in Chapman 2002: 50). This idea seems to have been prevalent at least during the Bronze Age in Scandinavia (but also during the Italian Copper Age – see Keates 2002), but appears also to occur during the Iron Age. Many peoples in the past have revered gold, including ancient Sumerian, Egyptian and Andean peoples (Rivers 1999: 50). It was held to be the most flawless substance, and therefore was permeated with healing properties (*ibid*). During the Bronze Age we find manifestations of the sun in yellow and shiny metal. For instance the well-known Danish Trundholm wagon pulled by a horse carries a standing disc, layered with thin radiant gold (e.g. Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 84–86). The golden disc carried by the wagon has been interpreted as the sun, being pulled by a horse (*ibid*). In antiquity the sun was worshipped, and was synonymous with fire, light and fertility (Rivers 1999: 6). It is likewise possible that during the Bronze Age the metal bronze (like gold) was valued for its luminous (and probably numinous) qualities (*ibid*). The connection between the sun and the brilliant qualities of gold can also be found among the ancient Egyptians’ sun worshipping. Gold was apprehended as the materialized sun (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 82, Rivers 1999: 6). Since the Pharaoh was an incarnation of the Sun God, the ruler could rightfully claim all gold (*ibid*). Here we discern how power, wealth, ruling, and religion/myth are cleverly and intricately interlaced. During the period under investigation in the current work, it has been suggested that similar connections were at play. Within classical and Nordic mythology it is claimed that gold was the metal of gods; in fact the words golden and godly/divine are used interchangeably (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 82). According to Anne Holtsmark (1960), gold was considered to have a mythological origin during the Iron Age and thereby also magical powers.

Terje Gansum (1999b) has analysed the meanings attributed to colours in medieval writings such as the poems or songs in the older Edda. He concludes that yellow can be connected to gold (Gansum 1999b: 456). More importantly, gold is also linked to burning sun light and fire (*ibid*). Fire has transformational powers that are quintessential (see Part Three on burnt human/animal bones as media of rebirth). However contradictory it may seem, the shimmering effect of gold also alludes to water. Of course these allusions are not restricted to gold, but to any shiny metal. Like luminous metals, water too may reflect and dazzle: these natural elements have a conceptual link (Keates 2002: 117). This ambiguity – the allusion to both fire and water – is typical for the most powerful symbols (Herbert 1984: 278). I argue that gold is such a powerful symbol. It may well be that symbols that are the least important in effect are the most obvious (*ibid*). Eugenia Herbert has maintained that the shining qualities of copper – the red gold of Africa – in pre-colonial times suggested the “watery divide between the worlds of the living

and dead but also the power to deflect witchcraft and other malefic forces and to see into the beyond” (1984: 280–1). Although we cannot be sure that this was exactly the case in Late Iron Age Scandinavia, there is a multitude of evidence from a variety of sources, such as archaeological investigations, later written sources, *etc.*, that the metal gold (here most specifically interpreted through gold foil figures) was believed to have specific powers. These powers were restricted to certain people and contexts. Further, shining metal has been found during long periods of time in watery connections. It has been deposited in bogs but seemingly also watery shallows may have sufficed for the purpose (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 19). It should be added that not only metal was deposited into bogs or other watery locations, but also ceramics, pearls, animals, humans or parts of the same. The bogs function as a membrane between this world and other, di-vine or godly worlds, is significant in explaining these depositions (*cf.* Bradley 1990). Stefan Brink has further emphasised water as being sacred in Snorri’s Edda (2001: 87). Brink (*ibid*) ascertains that the word *heilagr* (holy) had a semantic content meaning “energy, supernatural power”, an energy that comes from the close connection with, representation of, or association with the divinity, something that might appropriately be called an epiphany.

## The ontophany of gold

Let us consider some properties of the metal gold, even if described in a Western manner. In comparison to other metals such as copper and iron, gold is a soft metal, with a hardness of *ca.* 18 HB. Regardless of what temperature is used – low or high – gold is extremely ductile. As one of the most stretchable metals in the world, one gram of gold, if drawn out to its maximum, can be turned into a 2,000 metre long thread. Although it is ductile, casting in gold requires the use of bellows or another source to supply additional air to the furnace; pure gold melts at 1064 degrees Celsius (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 29).

Gold occurs naturally throughout Europe, apart from lowland areas such as Denmark, although in comparison to other parts of the world, only small quantities of are found. The most common source for naturally occurring gold is river sediments. Solid gold can also be found in rocks, where there are thousands of past mines that testify to the efforts that were made to retrieve the precious metal (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 29–30).

What makes gold spectacular is also the fact that gold preserves its surface intact through centuries, providing normal atmospheric conditions prevail. Perhaps that is why retrieving gold during archaeological excavations even today arouses excitement – it is as glittering and shimmering as when it was last experienced by someone. Although the above description of gold natu-

rally is a present-day Western one, I believe it is possible to claim that the characteristics presented here were decisive for why gold was used, valued and treated in particular ways during the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia. Mircea Eliade has described stones as expressing “absolute existence, exceeding time and being” and that “the hierophany of the stone is an ontophany par excellence” (Eliade 1968: 106–7 in Brink 2001: 90). The word hierophany comes from Greek, where *hieros* means sacred, and *-phany* comes from *phai'no* which means “to show” or “to reveal” (NE). *Onto* in ontophany comes from the Greek work *o'ntos* which means being (NE). Returning to gold, although it is a soft material, I believe it can be described as having similar characteristics. Gold may thus be described as an eternal, sparkling flame, and as I have and will argue below, during the Scandinavian Iron Age considered to be endowed with divine powers. Within the right contexts, in the correct form and by authorized/special humans, gold could act as a conduit through which contacts could be made between humans, everyday life and Otherworldly presences. Further, I would like to suggest that apart from the inherent qualities of the metal, the history of gold, as it was recounted during the Iron Age, mattered for how the metal was apprehended and used in specific contexts. Whether this recounting consisted of details on the birth of gold (in rivers/waters or in rocks/caves) and/or histories on how the gold was acquired and by whom and further what was felt and could be viewed on the coin, is perhaps hard to tell.

Another point of importance in this context is also the fact that gold usually or always is assumed to reflect political and/or economical status and power. For instance, gold items that originally had been aurei have been retrieved in richly furnished graves in Denmark (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 140). An emphasis on gold as a sign of political and/or economical status needs to be complemented however with other characteristics of the metal (*cf.* Hedeager 2001). Of importance might be the gold's history, that it could be transformed through smiths (whom you had to engage with in order to produce metamorphoses). Signs of wealth, of luminosity and numinosity, were perhaps factors that were judged as inherent in the metal, and pivotal for how golden objects were made and used.

To sum up, gold bore connotations of gods, the colour yellow, sun, fire, water and by extension fertility, growth and regeneration (life). It is also claimed that its luminous qualities were of outmost importance, and that the lumen also implied and attracted a numinous presence. Perhaps gold likewise suggested time standing still and time-travelling, since gold never changes within normal atmospheric conditions and is not dis-solved by many other metals, fluids, *etc.*; it is seemingly indestructible, hence interweaving the past, future and present.

# Brilliant Bodies – Histories and Interpretations

## Introduction

As with any prehistoric material, there are discrepancies between how the material is viewed, understood and interpreted by different archaeologists. Perhaps this is most obvious when it comes to (prehistoric) images or as in this case representations of prehistoric bodies. The interpreter invests something of herself/himself in the interpretational process, and previous experiences – personal as well as professional – contribute in the process. Necessarily the lenses that the interpreter uses in this same process are from our modern, Western society. Of course, the conditions under which the representations of bodies are experienced also influence the interpretations; for instance light and whether the body is there in real life or represented through a photograph, in black-and-white or in colour, or indeed as a copy or an imprint of a photograph, which is commonly the case. The emotions of the viewer may also contribute to the interpretational process.

How the views of figures differ from one person to another became evidently clear when I hired a skilled drawer, Stefan Kayat, to redraw a pendant from a burial in Norsborg, Botkyrka parish, Södermanland, Sweden. The pendant is discussed further below. The pendant and other burial items were retrieved from a 9<sup>th</sup> century burial just before the Second World War, and the excavations were stopped at its outbreak. The first drawing was made by Faith-Ell, a renowned drawer in archaeological circles. Black-and-white photographs were also taken of the pendant at the time of excavations. Due to the fact that I thought the drawing of the pendant in several ways differed from the copies of the photographs, I decided to take a closer look at the pendant in real life, and further that it could benefit from being redrawn. Irene Sigurdsson kindly searched for, and was able to find, the pendant in a safe box at the Stockholm City Museum. The drawer, Stefan Kayat, and I were in agreement of the fact that the previous drawing did not “accurately” enough capture or interpret the figures and their attributes represented on the pendant. However, we were in slight disagreement on what was represented

on the pendant. The final drawing of the pendant is the result of our discussion on what is/was represented. Fig. 49 shows Faith-Ells interpretation of it and figure 50 shows Stefan Kayat's (or our) interpretation. (This interpretation is scanned from the original drawing). I would like to stress that I do not think that it is a problem that the views of what is represented on a pendant or a gold foil are different. Rather this is to be expected and to be embraced. However, what is of importance is that as archaeologists we have an obligation to recognise that our interpretations are neither neutral nor objective and as such may have political implications (*cf.* S. Jones 1997:11 in Thomas 2004:110–1). I have already mentioned in Part One how heterocentrism and androcentrism have shaped interpretations of figural representations from the Late Iron Age, thereby not only being expressions of modern Western society, but likewise expressing how our lives and existences will be structured (*e.g.* Back Danielsson and Strassburg 1998a, b).



Fig. 49. The Norsborg pendant according to Faith-Ell. Enlarged. Source: ATA.



Fig. 50. The Norsborg pendant according to Stefan Kayat. Enlarged.

### Anyone can have a go – the positive predicament

Humanoid figures attract the modern eye, and the excavation and retrieval of prehistoric figures constantly arouses interest and excitement among archaeologists and non-archaeologists (*e.g.* Bailey 2005: 2–3). We all walk around with bodies which probably is one of the reasons why it is so easy to relate to material culture that comes in this, or similar forms (*cf.* Douglas 1966, 1970, 1975). It may be more difficult to relate to and interpret other material objects, such as a jar of clay, a metal clasp or a flint axe other than in functional terms. This easiness with which figures lure the spectator or interpreter into “knowing” (or equally dazzling, not knowing) what they represent is probably one of the reasons why I myself chose to work with them. Seemingly, anyone can have a go, and archaeologists without any previous professional experience of figures, theoretical understandings of images/representations, or bodies for that matter, do not hesitate to throw in images of bodily representations from Gotlandic picture stones, rune stones, gold foils, *etc.* in whatever context, to whatever purpose, to support their arguments. Douglass Bailey has rightly claimed that “[i]t is as if figurines...function with an intangible, inherent and perhaps unquantifiable rhetoric...It is a rhetoric of essentialism...which is damaging and has restricted the intellectual breadth of research and conditioned many scholars to accept figurines as an easy and simple category of material culture” (Bailey 2005: 12–3). They are not. Bailey (2005: 12–3) complains that either the interpretations of the figures are anecdotal where they are explained as dolls,

talismans, effigies, *etc.* (Meskell 1998 in Bailey 2005: 12), or they excel in scientific measurements and descriptions such as weight, height, compounds, colour, *etc.*, but this information is not used for interpreting the material itself. Regarding Swedish gold foil figures, these have been quantified in various ways, taking into consideration, for example, their weight, gold content and size. I am in slight disagreement with Bailey on the use of these statistics. Even if these measurements are not employed by the investigator, they can be of use to other researchers, although perhaps in unintentional ways. For example, the gold content of gold foil figures has been scientifically measured, and conclusively showed that the people who manufactured and used the foils showed very little, if any, concern with the gold content (Gullman 2004). Gold foils within one and the same context could show a great variety as regards the purity of the gold (*ibid*). From this it can be concluded that other features of the foils were deemed significant and important. I would argue that what was sought after and considered life-bringing was the luminosity – not the gold content – of these objects, based on my discussion above on the characteristics of gold (and metal). This argument is further supported by the fact that figures were also occasionally made of other shining metals, such as silver and bronze (*e.g.* from Västmanland, Sweden (Stjernquist 1951) and from Norsborg, Södermanland, Sweden (Einerstam 1940)).

The figures treated here have been studied through prints in publications and through visual inspections at museums, though I have not touched them for closer inspection, the Norsborg pendant being the only exception. I have not felt their weight, coldness or warmth. Although gold foil figures have been scientifically weighed and measured and otherwise investigated (*e.g.* Lamm 2004), I lack the bodily experiences of these precise details. Their tiny size, thinness, feather light weight, warmth or coldness when held, worn and sometimes torn, sound or silence when in movement, their brilliance, their manufacturing history and the history of the metal, their bodily manifestations and expressions were probably all matters of the greatest importance that were decisive for why they were used in varying circumstances. Seemingly, almost every archaeological publication presenting and discussing gold foil figures, or any figure for that matter, concentrates on the figures *per se* and their possible identities, almost as if they were photographs of today (which they in a sense are, but they were not in the Iron Age) (*e.g.* Hauck 1992, 1993a, Watt 2001). Such identification processes may involve a substantial amount of work and time. I do not wish to discredit such advanced endeavours in any way. However it is my belief that studies of figural representations may benefit from other research angles too. I have already opened up other interpretative avenues by discussing the possible meanings attributed to shiny metals, the meanings of miniaturization, performing objects



and continue below by exploring the creation of somatic experiences as a pivotal trait of the figure.

This thesis does not include a catalogue or present interpretations of all known gold foil finds from Scandinavia. Jan Peder Lamm (2004) has comprehensively explored the gold foil figures found in Sweden in the volume *Excavations at Helgö XVI*. He discusses their distribution and context, manufacturing technique, chronology, measurements, iconography and goes through the interpretations made of the material. Each gold foil is elegantly represented through (a copy print of) a drawing, and a photograph of the obverse and the reverse, all in black-and-white. He also discusses figures other than gold foil figures and mentions similar foil figures from Denmark and Norway. The book has an extensive list of reference of works that have discussed gold foil figures. Anna Andréasson (1995) has thoroughly accounted for all known gold foil figures recovered from 1754 to 1994 in Scandinavia, and also presents interpretations made of the figures. Only a few of the gold foil figures recovered from Uppåkra, Sweden, are discussed in the Helgö book, since these were published later in the Uppåkra series (2004) by Margrethe Watt. Watt is further about to publish an extensive volume on the gold foil finds from Bornholm, specifically from Sorte Muld entitled “Sorte Muld, guldgubberne og Ibskerbygden”.

Although gold foil figures are discussed in general in this part, I focus primarily on a few retrieved examples. As I stated earlier, my investigations and analyses revolve around questions such as how and why these figures worked. The examples are taken from various locations in Scandinavia. The selection has been made in recognition of the fact that they may represent different activities, agencies and alliances.

## Gold foil figures – an heterogeneous delivery

Gold foil figures are only known from Scandinavia, although gold foil crosses with humanoid figures have been unearthed in the Langobardic-Allamantic area from the 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century, and are known also from the Near East, where their use presumably go back to Hellenistic times (Lamm 2004: 127). The Scandinavian gold foil figures are made out of thin hammered gold, sometimes made with the help of patrices, and at other times cut out from the hammered foil (Lamm 2004: 41). They come in three types, displaying only one humanoid figure, two humanoids or an animal like being (*ibid*). The island of Bornholm has by far produced the largest number of gold foil figures – more than 2,300 were excavated in Sorte Muld in the 1980s, and animal foils have only been retrieved on Bornholm. Other places have fewer examples, for instance Lundeborg, Denmark, with *ca.* one hun-

dred foil figures, Helgö in Sweden produced 26 figures, Uppåkra with just over 100 examples and Hauge, Norway with 16 foil figures.

Let me start by claiming that gold foils are an heterogeneous body of material (*cf.* Söderberg 2005: 181). Their various features, in the case of Sweden's, are thoroughly accounted for, as previously mentioned, in the catalogue in Lamm (2004), and information on specifics for foils recovered in Scandinavia may be found in Andréasson (1995). Gold foils retrieved from the same context commonly show differences as regards execution, weight, shape, size and gold content. For instance, the 26 gold foils from Helgö, Sweden, varied in thickness between 0.024 mm and 0.047 mm, and in size from 7 x 7 mm to 11 x 11 mm, and they are all different apart from one instance where the same die for making the foils can be assumed (Lamm 2004: 46). They may also be rectangular, square or figure cut. In terms of their form/shape, I have previously maintained that they are distinct from earlier golden figural executions, the golden bracteates, which were always executed in a circular fashion.

If my argument is correct that the bracteates are indeed connected to stories (from Hauck, *e.g.* 1985a, b, 1986a, b) and that the figural foils also worked as agents in performances/stories, then the conclusion must be reached that, importantly, the bracteate figures and the foil figures acted in different stories. Equally significantly, the stories could have been performed at dissimilar locations. Bracteates were used in certain contexts, and gold foil figures in others, where gold foil couples mostly participated in stories/performances that were recounted in halls. As Ehrenberg (2003) has concluded, each era has its own audiences and new media for story-telling. This line of reasoning could likewise explain the absence of gold foil figures from Gotland. Here stories are aligned instead to the tradition of the golden bracteates, since these do not disappear from the island after the Migration Period. Likewise, a rich tradition of story-telling and performances was materialized through the erection of picture stones.

Although the general characteristic of gold foil figures is that of being tiny figural representations, they also show differences as regards motifs and find circumstances. It is almost as if as soon as you have categorised them, there immediately become examples that do not fit into the categories. I believe this variability to be significant – the figures and the metal gold are polysemous.

Margrethe Watt (1991a: 98–9, 2004: 168, fig. 1) claims that gold foil figures with few exceptions are recovered from settlement sites, implying homogeneity as regards find location. I would like to suggest, instead, that it can be fruitful to acknowledge the different places and contexts where the figures

have been recovered. I will refrain from using the word settlement site, since it suggests that the places were used for settlements, for living ordinary, everyday life, when on the contrary the buildings where figure foils have been retrieved were anything but ordinary, something Watt (1991a: 96) herself has noted. So let me start by claiming that gold foil figures have been recovered in a variety of circumstances. They have been salvaged in connection with burials (Bolmsö, Visingsö, Ulltuna), in connection to special buildings (*e.g.* Helgö, Slöinge, Borg, Uppåkra, Svintuna), in watery threshold zones (Tørring, Lundeborg, Ravlunda), in/as hoards (Hög Edsten, Nørre Hvam), and in connection to possible workshops (Vä, Husby) and uncertain locations (Gullmarsberg). At times, the categorisation of the find sites is inadequate, since large buildings have delivered “debris” from handicraft activity and burials may have been excavated in a church (this is the case for the gold foil couple from Visingsö). However the point here is not to deliver an exact categorisation of the find site, but rather to demonstrate that the find contexts are varied. The places where they have been retrieved are known to have been in operation for long periods of times: the structures covered earlier buildings, and it is not uncommon for later constructions to be built on these locations (*cf.* Andréasson 2002 on cult place continuity). The variation nonetheless speaks of non-every day settlement locations. (Please see Andréasson (1995) and Lamm (2004) for specific details for all find locations in Scandinavia).

A 7<sup>th</sup> century patrix for making gold foil couples was recovered close to a special building, a “hall”, in Järrestad, Uppåkra, Sweden (Söderberg 2005: 181). Uppåkra has further yielded two patrices as loose finds (Watt 2004). Patrices have likewise on a few occasions, been recovered in Denmark (Andréasson 1995).

As heterogeneous that I claim foil figures are regarding contexts and executions, almost as heterogeneous are their dating, ranging from *ca.* the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, largely corresponding to the Vendel Period (550–800 AD) (*e.g.* Andréasson 1995, Lamm 2004). There are a few places that have contributed to their exact dating. For the gold foil figures recovered in one of the buildings at Slöinge, Sweden, a possible appreciation of their date has been achieved through dendrochronology. Thirty-eight gold foil couples together with a few pieces of raw garnet and smaller gold fragments were excavated from a post-hole in Building 2 (Lundqvist 1995: 2 in Andréasson 1995: 34–5). Next to this post, pieces of a roof bearing post of oak were found to be so well preserved to enable dendrochronological analysis, which revealed that the building had been erected somewhere around 710–720 AD (*ibid*). Of course, it is only the post that has this date; the gold foil figures could be older. The five gold foil figures excavated in Borg, Norway, were likewise retrieved from a post-hole of a very large building (Munch 1988: 47

in Andréasson 1995: 16). This roof bearing post had belonged to the last building phase of Borg, whose days of glory were without a doubt during the Vendel period, the 600s and 700s (Andréasson 1995: 17). The gold foil figures – pairs – from Helgö are assumed to belong to the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Holmqvist 1957: 211). At Toftegård, Zealand, Denmark, the post-hole of a large building contained a gold foil figure, and the topsoil an additional six gold foil figures (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 35). The gold foil figures retrieved in Lundeborg, Denmark, on a watery threshold zone, in this case next to a stream out-flowing into the sea, have been dated from the late 6<sup>th</sup> century to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, in all probability belonging to *ca.* 600 AD (Thomsen *et al.* 1993: 89).

This date was obtained from other objects found within the same layer consisting of fibulas and pot shards (*ibid*). Watt (1991a: 96) has argued that the numerous gold foil figures from Sorte Muld, Bornholm, belonged to the transition between the early and late Germanic period (*ca.* 550 AD). An even earlier date is suggested for the three figure cut single gold figures, figure cut, recovered together with a sword pommel with garnet inlays, golden amulets, and golden rods from Hög Edsten, Sweden (Fabech 1992: 56 in Andréasson 1995: 31). Charlotte Fabech (*ibid*) dates these objects to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Suggestively, the figure cut foil of gold from Nørre Hvam, Denmark also belongs to this period of time. I base this assumption on the fact that the hoard to which it belonged also contained D bracteates (Andréasson 1995: 40–1), which are the youngest of bracteates, executed in what has been coined as Style I. Within the hoard were also eleven pieces of golden spirals, three pieces of gold as well as a half golden figure which now is missing (Mackeprang 1952: 132 in Andréasson 1995: 40–1). Despite my claim that the material is heterogeneous, I would like to suggest that it is probable that single foil figures occur earlier than, and later simultaneously as, gold foil couples. In fact this thought was suggested as early as in 1952 (p. 105) by Mogens Mackeprang (*cf.* Lamm 2004: 128–9). This is also supported by the existence of figures reminiscent of single gold foils on objects that are earlier than the Vendel period, such as the characters from the Möne golden collar (fig. 51).



Fig. 51. Characters from the Möne collar, similar in style to a few single gold foil figures. Note in particular the “facial mask” (nose and eye) of the middle figure, a trait that is visible also on many other later miniature figures. These figures however, are free standing objects, and not part of for instance a necklace, as these figures are part of the Möne gold collar. Enlarged. Drawing by Händel. Source: Lamm 2004: 129.

Lamm (2004: 128) has also pointed out the detail that attributes of figures on bracteates are similar to elements discernable on gold foil figures, and that the tenth bracteate from Söderby, Sweden, represented two single gold foil figure-like beings. In the chapter on masking, I argued that these figures apparently had become free from their earlier context, and more importantly free from the stories/rituals which belonged to the Möne necklace, or the Söderby bracteate. Free standing and apparently cut loose from their earlier contexts, they were allowed to participate in other performances. To my knowledge, no couples or pairs of human figures occur as part of another object during the Early Iron Age and Migration Period in Scandinavia. This may suggest that gold foil couples are connected to new or transformed stories and performances.

### Excavating foils

It should be noted, that the excavating of gold foil figures is a difficult project. Fragile and tiny as they are they may easily go unrecognized during excavations, at least if water sieving is not used. For instance, Margrethe Watt (1991a: 90–2) recounts that when Sorte Muld was excavated horizontally and in a layered fashion, as was common for most Iron Age excavations, less than 10 per cent of the gold foil figures were retrieved. Most of the gold foil figures were instead recovered when water sieving with 3 mm meshes was employed (*ibid*). This leads to questions whether there could have been more gold foil figures at places that were excavated without water sieving. Whether Sorte Muld on Bornholm is exceptional, with its more than

2,300 gold foil figures from a limited area, or whether the excavation techniques employed were especially efficient for discovering gold foils is perhaps difficult to answer with absolute certainty. Their abundance nonetheless required that visitors to the excavations in the 1980s had to show their shoe soles for inspection before leaving the site (Carlsson 2006, oral comm.).

## Earlier interpretations

I have already examined, to some extent, earlier interpretations of gold foil figures in Part One, where I in particular analysed the common procedure of sexing the figures. The 18<sup>th</sup> century scientist Otto Sperling identified a gold foil couple as a representation of gothic figures. Gabriel Gustafson (1900: 87) was probably the first archaeologist to sex the figures, and I suggested that he might have been influenced in his way of thinking through his everyday world in which heterosexuality and the productive qualities of male and female bonding became prominent. He stated that the 16 figures from Hauge, Norway, each represented a man and a woman. He did not stop there, however, stating: “The scene is obviously meant to portray a love scene” (Gustafson 1900: 88, my translation). He reached this conclusion based on his interpretation of the man figure touching the breast or cheek of the woman, and the woman occasionally putting her hand on the shoulder of the man (*ibid*). From Gustafson’s time the thought of the pair as a heterosexual loving couple has persisted. Arthur Nordén postulated that the gold foil couples were “des talismans erotique” that were “fabriquées et vendues dans un but rituel ayant exigé leur enfouissement en terre, sous le sol pavé des habitations” (Nordén 1938: 161).

In a very traditional way, efforts have been made to identify the two characters (and the single figures as well). Of course, this has meant a search in the Norse literature to see which candidates are the most appropriate, and differences in opinions on who the characters represent have evolved. Magnus Olsen (1909) was of the opinion that they were representations of a loving couple, with a prominent association to a fertility cult, since a “woman” sometimes is represented as holding what has been interpreted as a vegetative symbol in her hands. They were in effect representations of Frö and Gerd, argued Olsen (*ibid*). His interpretation was strongly criticized by Jöran Sahlgren (1928), who showed that Skírnismál, which Olsen had referred to in his interpretation, certainly was not connected to a fertility cult, but rather was a folk tale, which had sprung from known saga motifs. Later, Daniel Sävborg (2006: 339) has underscored that Skírnismál cannot be used as a source for pre-Christian religion. Rather, it is a high medieval poem all together (*ibid*). Despite the criticism delivered by Sahlgren, a number of scholars have interpreted Skírnismál as being connected to a fertility cult. Gro Steinsland (1990b, 1991) re-considered the possibility that the figures repre-

sented a diving wedding, probably between the god Frö and the giantess Gerd. This divine wedding, also connected to the myth of *hieros gamos*, was according to Steinsland, described in the *Skírnismál* mentioned above (*ibid*). *Hieros gamos* stands for a sacred wedding, commonly between a god and a royal personage, whose offspring becomes the ruler (Bolle 1987). For discussions on the possibility of the theme of *hieros gamos* as part of Norse mythology, see Sundqvist (2000, 2002).

Jan Peder Lamm offers the same interpretation of the characters as Steinsland when declaring that “[t]he single figures can represent nothing other than deities, and the pairs of figures most probably allude to *Skírnismál*’s description of Frey’s offer of marriage to Gerd, daughter of the giant Gymir” (Lamm 2004: 130). These interpretations have been criticized by other researchers, such as Clunies Ross (1994) and Rudolf Simek (2002). Simek (*ibid*: 475) argues that instead of mythic weddings, the gold foil couples are representations of dynastic weddings: his analyses of the figures’ hands and clothes reveal performances that had legal implications. By embracing one another in certain ways, the transition of a woman to a man’s household was accomplished, according to Simek (*ibid*: 474). It seems his main evidence for this interpretation is found in a much later (600 years, to be precise) manuscript (the German *Sachsenspiegel*) which was “a legal codification of Germanic Laws, albeit with its Christian continuation” (Simek 2002: 474). According to Simek’s (2002: 474) interpretation of this source, the central part of a marriage consisted of taking someone (read: the woman) into care and possession. Since the hands and arms are occasionally exaggerated (see more below), I agree with Simek that the postures of the figures’ limbs are important. There are, however, so many different positions of arms and hands that it is impossible to claim that they signal that “a man” takes “a woman” into his custody. The arms may be wide open on one figure, where it touches, grabs or caresses the other figure or the figure’s clothes. However, this statement is valid for both opposing figures, not at all restricted to the alleged “male” figure. Further, gold foil couples may represent two figures equally engaged. Gold foil couples in their totality thus show no signs of one figure as dominant or taking care of the other. It should also be pointed out that the figures appear always to be represented as the same height. I have earlier stressed the heterogeneity as regards gold foil figures, and this statement is equally valid for gold foil couples. Some do not even have arms or hands to allow for an embrace or touching posture, and other examples are so “dissolved” in their traits that they are hard to interpret.

More recently, Simek together with Ratke (2006) one more time refers to the *Sachsenspiegel* as providing answers on how to interpret gold foil figures. In this particular case, they focus on a type of figure they designate as wraiths (*ibid*: 262–3). They contend that these figures have their correspon-

dences in the *Sachsenspiegel* illustrations of dead beings, since their respective ways of holding the arms and hands are similar (*ibid*). However, when I look at the figures (figs 1–5) which the authors use to validate their claim, the similarities between the “wraiths” (certain gold foil figures) and the medieval dead beings are hard to find. This does not mean that gold foil figures might not represent transitional stories involving death, but rather that these specific arguments for the classifications are weak. Hauck’s interpretation of the figures representing gods is dismissed by Simek and Ratke on several grounds, where one is the large time-gap between the medieval literary sources he uses and the dating of the gold foil figures (*ibid*: 260). However, the very same time-gap exists between the Heidelberg manuscript of the *Sachsenspiegel* to which Ratke and Simek refers, and the gold foil figures.

Margrethe Watt (1992, 2004) has also paid attention to the gestures and postures of the gold foil figures like Simek, and accentuates the importance of gestures in illiterate societies (2004: 204). She has analysed the gold foil figures from Uppåkra, and concludes that a few gestures with arms and hands of the figures are similar to gestures of figures on a variety of Christian objects in continental Europe (Watt 2004: 204–9). Some gestures are interpreted as being connected to adoration or divine epiphany (*ibid*: 204–5, fig. 33), others to have been inspired by the saluting sign of for instance Late Roman coin portraits (*ibid*: 206–7, fig. 34) and a few as gestating the “seer’s thumb”, a sign important within many mythologies, for example Celtic, Norse as well as Christian religions (*ibid*: 207–8, fig. 34). The seer’s thumb is in all cases or religions/mythologies connected to prophecies, and to foresee future events and thus has shamanic connotations (*ibid*). Watt (2004: 204–9) also points to the fact that some gestures (and absence of gestures I would like to add) do not have any counterparts outside Scandinavia. Although some ways of placing arms and hands of the gold foil figures at times remind of contemporaneous figures’ gestures from Europe, I believe it is necessary still to ponder on how the gold foil figures might be interpreted in their Scandinavian contexts. Further, the European figures are not free standing items of gold, but work as integral parts of objects, for instance as on buckles, fibulas, bracteates or as in one case on a stone cross (see figs 33–4 in Watt 2004).

Karl Hauck (1993a) has carried out an extensive iconographic analysis of the gold foil figures and has argued that “the figural gold foils represent figures of polytheist gods who, like the gold bracteates, were manufactured under the influence of sacrificial priests, who as experts in ritual and tradition were the true upholders of the polytheist cultural tradition, and must have been in constant attendance at Sorte Muld, Gamla Uppsala and elsewhere” (Lamm 2004: 121–2). He has interpreted some gold foil figures as representing the god Odin, and others as the god Thor (Watt 2004: 208, 217).



I have myself in two prior publications (1999, 2002) interpreted the gold foil figures. I argued that the single gold foil figures were connected to transitional events, such as performing *sejd*, or shamanistic engagements, based on a number of observations. The grand variety of characters were considered as different personas during acts of transformations, and the animal shaped gold foils from Bornholm were interpreted as successful transformations of persons performing *sejd*/shamanism, or perhaps as spirit helpers (1999: 13–4). I argued that the blurred characteristics of some figures could imply an altered state of consciousness (*ibid*). I further forwarded the idea that the theme of transformation – by which control was held over various domains – was an essential “tool” to possess (1999: 15–8). To be able to shape-change through queer behaviour and cross-dressing was an ability restricted to certain people who were thus able to undergo cosmic journeys without moving physically. Through such journeys contacts could be made with ancestors, other worlds, supernatural beings, and it also became possible to deal with transformation and change and by extension formal change. The fact that the gold foil couples generally may be of a later date and to a large extent were unearthed within special buildings was taken into consideration. I suggested that at the time of the later, possibly ruling couples, the abilities to transform or shape-change were restricted to even fewer people and circumstances to a greater extent than previously (perhaps to aristocratic couples and their “halls”).

Anna Hed Jakobsson (2003) has recently discussed the gold foil couples in fruitful terms. She has focused on the material categories that are recovered with the gold foil figures, such as raw garnets, gold strips, *etc.*, and the fact that gold foil couples are unearthed within post-holes, often next to the location of for the high seat of the ruling couple (Hed Jakobsson 2003: 169). These structures were encountered in specific buildings, termed “halls”, that were established during the Migration Period (*ca.* 400–550 AD), and were manifestations of the cultural and political dominance of aristocratic networks (*ibid*: 116). Hed Jakobsson has suggested that by producing godly images smiths gave life to the very same gods that created human beings (*ibid*). Leading families and rulers were connected to such ritual transformations and were considered to be producers of wealth (*ibid*). Hed Jakobsson emphasizes the metaphorical connection between crops and other valuable stuff, which was to be put into circulation in the relationships among human beings (*ibid*). Consequently, this omnipotent fertility was extended to encompass all kinds of production (*ibid*). Handicrafts were thus perceived of as being part of a sociological and cosmological discourse (*ibid*: 114), and to be in possession of such knowledge seems to have been a recurrent theme in Norse literature (*ibid*: 121). She further points to the fact that gold foil figures appear in the material culture at the same time as large workshops are emerging and in use when the animal ornamentation is reproduced (*ibid*:

167). The gold foil couples are interpreted as a union between the god Frö and the giantess Gerd, although re-interpreted as an expression of cosmic balance, which always results in fertility and richness (*ibid*: 167).

In Bengt Söderberg's thesis on halls (2005), gold foil figures are also discussed. He uses much of Anna Hed Jakobsson's interpretations on gold foil figures in his analyses of halls, and likewise draws on Simek's (2002) reading, presented above. He also proposes, importantly, that the different interpretations of gold foil figures are not mutually exclusive, but that nonetheless the figures were linked to "aristocratic identities and self-understandings" within specific networks (2005: 181, my translation from Swedish). He suggests that the varying find sites for the figures give an impressionistic picture of the geographic extension of aristocratic networks (*ibid*: 183). We are not able to understand the figures fully, according to Söderberg, since we have very limited possibilities of understanding the world of ideas behind the figures (*ibid*: 181). As I stated earlier, it is not my intention to interpret all the specific gold foil figures, but rather to draw attention to the question of why the figures invite to so many different interpretations – in the present as well as in the past (which is suggested by their multiple find contexts). Further, it is my firm belief that there is no world of ideas behind the figures – they are (in) and make the world(s).

### How they were used

Gabriel Gustafson (1900: 92–3) suggested that the gold foil figures were fastened by an adhesive on some sort of foundation, perhaps wood, metal or cloth. C. J. Thomsen (1855: 299) also speculated that the figures were fastened on leather or clothes. Gad Rausing (2000) has likewise suggested that the gold foil figures could have been used as attachments on a headband or a crown, worn by kings. Since a few gold foil figures have loops, and at times pieces of metal on their reverse sides, it is indeed possible that the figures could have been worn. Larsson and Lenntorp (2004: 23, 42), in a volume on Uppåkra put forward the idea that (some) gold foil figures had been attached to the posts of large buildings or halls by means of honey or fat. Erik Rosengren (2000: 12) has made the same suggestion for the posts of Slöinge. The curling of a gold foil figure into a cylinder, which was then threaded on a cord together with beads, and in its last life stage deposited in a bog in Tørring (Fischer 1974), is indicative of the other areas in which the figures were brought into play. As previously remarked, they may likewise have been crumpled up or even torn apart, as many of the examples unearthed on Sorte Muld, Bornholm demonstrate (Watt 1992: 205–10). Gold foil figures have also been used as wrappings for small pieces of gold (Lamm 2004: 130). Gold foil with a waffle pattern was exploited when exquisite jewellery was made – when put under the garnets in, for instance, button-on-bow brooches,

the colour red of the garnets appears to have produced the stunning effect of flaming fire (Arrhenius 1962, 1997, *cf.* Arrhenius 1985: 23–6). Such waffled foil was occasionally utilized for manufacturing gold foil figures (Watt 1991b).

Margrethe Watt has maintained that the gold foil figures were utilized as a sort of temple-coin, “a disposable oblation, given in connection to cultic activities” (1991a: 99, my translation from Danish). Karl Hauck is in agreement with Watt that the gold foil figures could have been used as payment for services of a ritual character (Hauck 1994: 302 in Lamm 2004: 122).

Gold foil figures might well have worked as payment for ritual services in some contexts as suggested by Hauck and Watt, but I would like to propose that the gold foil figures most probably were employed in a variety of contexts (please see note 26, on how temple coins must have been considered as to have had agency and assisted in transformations). They may have been attached to clothes being worn, easily glued with an adhesive of some sort since they are very light. Their luminous qualities could have repelled or attracted divine or otherworldly energies/powers. It has been reported that the costume and paraphernalia of shamans may include glittering and dazzling objects with such purposes (*e.g.* Holmberg 1923, Rivers 1999, Price 2002: 171, chapter 5 and there cited references). Further, Victoria Rivers (1999: 7) maintains that attire with shimmering surfaces may express continuity, fertility and abundance through rites of passages.

It is not likely that we as archaeologists have been able to find the gold foil figures in all the contexts in which they were utilized. The fact that they, in their last (or only) life-cycle, that is at the time of their physical abandonment, have appeared in an assortment of circumstances clearly speaks to this probability. They could have been worn as godly adornments in transitional performances such as initiations, the births and deaths of persons (humans and objects), the confirmation of alliances or weddings, in commemorative practices or during the celebrations for seasonal changes; or they may have worked as guardians, have been used for the purpose of conferring blessings, or perhaps they bestowed divine *numen*, *etc.*, upon other materials or productive activities in metaphysically charged (and thereby metaphysically charging) areas such as bogs; or they may have been worn on clothes for protective or healing purposes, thread on necklaces and taken part in narratives, *etc.* (Back Danielsson 1999 and below). In all of these situations, the changes are realized through the body, as suggested by the gold foil figures themselves. Bodies were engaged in the ceremonies by, for instance, moving arms, legs and feet, listening to stories and music, taking part in verbal combat, singing, talking, drinking, eating, embracing, kissing, and so on. Despite the fact that Söderberg (2005) rightly puts an emphasis on the halls (or buildings) as paramount for transgressing activities, it is my belief that these

transformations (also) need to be seen in regard to the body – how the body was engaged, performed, and used to make the world.

### Making sense of senses – creating somatic experiences

I would now like to re-connect to thoughts and ideas presented earlier on masks, miniatures and metaphors. I maintained that masks are manipulations of the conventional ways of expressing identities. Further, the gestation of miniature bodies requires manipulations, perhaps exaggerating some body parts or aspects of being and excluding others. The result is the creation of a materialized paradox, only tangential to the present world in its representation. The invention of the surreal and/or alternative world is underlined through the metaphorically rich metal gold, alluding to gods, the sun, water, and fertility. Let me also repeat the fact that the features elaborated or manipulated, whether this was accomplished through an exaggeration or perhaps an understatement or absence, are commonly those that attract attention and are open for polysemous interpretations. To be able to relate to such paradoxical signs is to be powerful, as previously noted.

Using this line of argument, the “realistic” – that is highly detailed presentation – of the clothes of some figures, for example fig. 5, where there is neither exaggeration nor abbreviation, may mean that the clothes are not open to a variety of interpretations, they are not polysemous and as such may not have been the most important aspects of the bodily representation. Instead, the arms (*e.g.* figs 7, 52), the hands (figs 5–7, 52), and jewellery (fig. 52) are manipulated. It is likewise noteworthy that the head, or rather the face, is apparently always represented in a manipulated fashion. I have interpreted this as a kind of mask-wearing, signalling the time for transitions and transformations (see earlier chapter *Masking and Performance* in Part One (figs 33–35) and below). The face/head is the ultimate “sensing” box, enabling the ingestion of material, vocal production, tasting, kissing, fellatio, smelling, seeing, hearing, *etc.*

I here refrain from using the body of literature that is available on gestures on contemporary European or medieval materials (see for instance Gombrich 1971, Garnier 1982, 1989, Kennerstedt 1987, 1991, Liepe 2003). This does not mean that I am unaware of the fact that gestures and postures are of significance, but my point is that these still need to be interpreted within their Scandinavian contexts. Further, as earlier mentioned, the gestures of the gold foil figures at times do not have any contemporary counterparts. Likewise I wish to put weight on the bodily sensations that are the results of different bodily engagements. These bodily facets are easily forgotten if a focus is kept on what the body gesticulated, instead of what it might have felt, where

the sensations assisted in commemorative practices (Connerton 1989, *cf.* Hamilakis 2002: 124).

Through ocular inspection of the finds presented in Lamm (2004), Watt (2004) and Andréasson (1995), I have found the following bodily sensations to be implied through the gold foil figures.

- Seeing through protuberant eyes – suggesting far sightedness. Some cultures of native North America claim that bulging eyes, in the form of protruding cylinders as eyes on masks, or even cylinders on their own, in myths and rites are linked to clairvoyance and to ‘capturing, fixing, and putting into direct communication terms that are very far apart’ (Lévi-Strauss 1988: 131, 134). Further, Inuits of Alaska associate bulbous eyes with a piercing vision (*ibid.*: 131–3), as in a dream or trance. Large eyes may equally have been ways of representing the taking of drugs (*cf.* Morris and Peatfield 2002: 114). We know that henbane was used during the Viking Age (Rudgely 2000, *cf.* Price 2002). One effect of the drug that might be experienced is the sensation of flying (Rudgely 2000: 127–32). Belladonna, or Walkerbeere as the Germanic tribes called it, could also have been in use to achieve trance (*ibid.*). It gives the taker large eyes, or rather large pupils (*ibid.*). Walkerbeere means the berry of the Valkyries (*ibid.*), perhaps indicative of how different levels of consciousness were achieved at special occasions, relating to war. Henbane has been recovered in, for instance, Archsum and Tofting in Denmark. Large quantities of the drug were likewise unearthed in a Viking Age burial in Jutland (Price 2002: 149–157). The findings of Archsum and Tofting, however, date to the pre-Roman and Roman Iron Ages. The seeds from Archsum were recovered in storage pits (Kroll 1975, 1980), and at Tofting they were retrieved in the remnants of a burnt house (Behre 1976). Henbane has likewise been unearthed at Tvegade, Ribe, Denmark, in layers associated with manure (Jensen 1985). (fig. 11)
- Pointed chin – implying a leaning back position as in trance, where the chin is lifted up. Watt (2004: 201) declares that a beard is not indicated (I agree). (fig. 53)
- Smelling/breathing, suggested by the exaggerated nose. (*Cf.* the ancient Swedish word for breath: *andedräkt*, which literally means “the attire of the spirit”). In this context I again bring attention to the similarity between the accentuation of the nose on other material categories such as helmets (figs 22–4, see also note 17, the Hagebyhöga figure *etc.*), and the accentuation of the nose of the gold foil figures. The helmets are connected to bodily exercises that involve heavy breathing. The Hagebyhöga figure has been interpreted as a pregnant woman (Arrhenius 2001: 306, Andersson 2005: 76), where the forthcoming labours surely would require a great deal of effort breathing. The figure has likewise been interpreted

as being involved in divinatory activities (*e.g.* Price 2002: 157–8), probably also requiring a changed breathing rhythm. The point I would like to make here is that the inhalation and exhalation of air are (of course) closely interrelated to bodily activities. The prominence of the nose might have been a means of communicating that specific bodily (transformative) activities were at hand, requiring that the spirit (breath) must be properly attired, that is, a mask must be worn.

- Drinking from horns – suggestive of transcending experiences, the passing of fluids through the mouth enabled the merging of humans and animals as implied by the strips on the Söderby Karl beakers (fig. 54). (*Cf.* the strips of Taplow and Uppåkra).
- Lips – visible when couple is eating. (fig. 10 – Helgö)
- Vocal production (fig. 55)
- Kissing (fig. 56)



Fig. 52. Examples of gold foil figures (top: Slöinge 3007, bottom: Helgö 4009, inventory number SHM 29925: 4009) with enlarged arms, hands and jewellery. Also observe the large eyes and the rolling pin like noses of the top figures. See also figs 5–7. Enlarged. Source: top figures Lamm 2004: 92, bottom figure Lamm 2004: 84.



Fig. 53. Enlarged eyes and pointed chin of a gold foil figure. The nose is likewise exaggerated. Eketorp A1, inventory number SHM 31597. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 98.



Fig. 54. Patrices for making gold foil figures from Uppåkra. When these were used, they delivered, or gave birth to, miniature beings seemingly drinking from horns. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 106.



Fig. 55. A gold foil figure that seems to be producing sounds. Eketorp C2, inventory number SHM 31597. Drawing to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 102.



Fig. 56. Gold foil couple engaged in a kiss? Helgö 961, inventory number SHM 25075: 961. Drawing to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 81.

Please note that all these activities involve the face, which I have termed “the ultimate sensing box”, which is represented in a manipulated or masked fashion. As previously argued from Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 171) – it is the face (not the head) that refers to the inhuman features of the human, and that belongs “to conditions of apartness” (Shanks 2001: 76).



Further bodily activities and sensations suggested by the gold foil figures are:

- Moving legs and feet, possibly dancing (fig. 57). In this context I would like to bring to attention the research done by Morris and Peatfield (2002) on gestures of clay figurines from the Cretan Bronze Age. Importantly, they show that gestures may not (only) be of ritual importance, but are rather about the physicality of gestures and postures – how these act as conduits for religious experiences. Consequently, the body does not always have to engage with external stimuli (for instance drugs or drums) to achieve trance like states, but this may equally be evoked through placing the body with its limbs in certain sometimes repetitive positions. This may likewise include sitting and standing postures. (Cf. for instance Camille (1998) on how knowledge within Christian settings during the 15<sup>th</sup> century was gained through the senses, rather than by communicating verbally/textually theological ideas).
- Standing still – within oral communities standing still is a most powerful gesture (see more in section *Oral literacy and bodies*, Part One). (fig. 58). The same argument can be made for sitting postures.
- Seated postures – may additionally be linked to sitting in the high seat, having political, religious and legal significance (fig. 59).
- Inducing pain – the possible piercing of organs (fig. 29, 60).
- Touching by arms and hands (figs 6, 7, 52).
- Wearing an assortment of garments – some may represent birds/wings of birds, or animals furs (figs 13, 61) (cf. above on the drug henbane, which may arouse sensations of flying). A sense of flight is also recorded when Wolf's bane or aconite is used. Aconite was included in ointments that were used in ancient times (Rudgely 2000: 263–4). It has been suggested that the transformations into werewolves could have been achieved by using ointments with aconite, since the users felt as if they had fur or feathers (*ibid*). Ancient Germanic peoples revered aconite, and called it Thor's hat (*ibid*: 1).



Fig. 57. A gold foil figure representing moving legs and feet. Possibly from Ravlunda, Sweden. Drawing by Händel to the left, and photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 95.



Fig. 58. A gold foil figure in a still position from Uppåkra. Source: Watt 2004: 189.



Fig. 59. A gold foil figure in a seated posture. From Bolmsö, a drawing by Händel to the left, and a photo to the right. Bolmsö 1, SHM 14535: D11. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 96.



Fig. 60. A pierced gold foil figure from Slöinge, 887. Drawing to the left, photo to the right. The figure to the left has been stabbed in the face four times possibly with the point of a knife (Lamm 2004: 72). Drawing to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 88.



Fig. 61. A gold foil figure in a possible feather like garment. Tørring, Denmark. Enlarged. Source: Fischer 1974: 29. See also figure 13.

One bodily sense is not emphasized in the foils, and that is hearing. Only a few have ears represented, for example fig. 62 from Helgö. An absence does not have to mean, however, that that specific bodily sense is not important, it could actually be the other way around.



Fig. 62. One of the few gold foil figures that have ears represented. Helgö 476, inventory number SHM 25075: 476. Drawing by Händel to the left, photo to the right. Enlarged. Source: Lamm 2004: 78.

I argue that the bodily sensations presented on the foils could either be part of commemorative practices (as in buildings with oral performances requiring audiences/co-performers) or more secluded events (as within possible healing and initiation rituals). They are about engaging with the world and other worlds through bodily sensing and sensations. Importantly, as previously emphasized, this means that there is no world, myth, cosmos or reality behind the use of the figures, but rather that their use, and the human bodies'

engagement with the figures and the body's participation in other activities are those that make the world, myth, cosmos and reality.

I have stressed the gold foils' heterogeneity, and in my view there are not really any "typical" gold foil figures, even among the gold foil couples. Usually the figures represented in prints and books are the clear, "easily" interpreted ones (*e.g.* fig. 5 from Helgö). Therefore gold foil figures are regarded as belonging to a spectrum, ranging from clear, visible traits of the bodily representation to less-clear or stylized ones. Please observe that this "blurring" is not due to any specific usage or handling of the gold foil, such as a crumpling up and a modern straightening out, but rather is a most deliberate way of re-presenting the world.

# Playbills Directing Performances of Union and Consummation – Gold Foil Couples

## Introduction

Although the gold foil figures may be interpreted in many ways, in this section I will briefly present a few examples of interpretational possibilities. I include both foils with one figure and foils with two figures. The later chapter, *To figure out figures*, explores for how and why they were used.

## (Em)barking up the right tree – gold foil figures assisting in the births of houses

Gold foil figures, couples in particular, have been retrieved under or in close proximity to roof bearing posts of special buildings (for “hall” criteria see Herschend 1993: 182). This is the case with gold foil figures retrieved from Helgö, Slöinge and Uppåkra, Sweden, Borg/Lofoten and Maere, Norway (Andréasson 1995: 42, table 4, Larsson and Lenntorp 2004) and finally Toftegård, Zealand, Denmark (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 35). At Svintuna the single gold foil couple was recovered between two hearths in a building foundation (Andréasson 1995: 86). At Vä, Sweden, a typical foil figure, though made in bronze, was retrieved from the bottom layers of a building, below which there was untouched sand (*ibid*: 78–9). Further, at Hov, Lillehammer, Norway, due to necessary construction relating to the Olympic Games in 1994, one and a half gold foil figures were found in the southern end of a building, deep in a pit-like structure with large stones that were covered by a thick layer of charcoal (*ibid*: 27). Subsequent excavations have revealed further gold foil figures at the same location; the total now amounting to *ca.* 19 (Guhnfeldt 2005).

The following building structures where figural foils have been recovered, had been re-built on the same location a number of times, and were consequently in use for a long period of time: Uppåkra (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004), Borg/Lofoten (Munch 1991 in Andréasson 1995: 14), Slöinge

(Andréasson 1995), Helgö (Holmqvist 1961: 72 in Andréasson 1995: 90), Maere (Lidén 1969, Andréasson 1995: 18–9) and Eskilstuna (Andréasson 1995: 104).

I will discuss the significance of depositing gold foil figures in post-holes and in other constructional elements using the example of Uppåkra. At Uppåkra, two gold foil sheets, one with a single figure and the other representing a couple, were recovered outside the building (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004, Watt 2004). The bulk of the gold foil figures (*ca.* 120) were, however, retrieved within a building – in its post-holes, post-hole fill and wall trenches (*ibid*). Of all the examples unearthed, six were couples and the remainder were single figures, and almost all of them are well preserved, not at all crumpled like most of the foil figures from Bornholm (Watt 2004: 170).

The specific building place at Uppåkra was in use for a long period of time (fig. 63). Lars Larsson and Karl-Magnus Lenntorp (2004: 7, 18) remark that the surface structure of the house was the same from House 19 until House 2; that is for hundreds of years from the Early Roman period to the Early Viking Age. The two gables were straight and *ca.* 6 metres wide, whereas the walls were slightly bowed, 13.5 metres long, and the house(s) had 4 pairs of roof-bearing posts (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 6). It/they had 3 entrances/exits, one to the north and two facing south, where the southwest entrance was opposite the entrance/exit to the north (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 6).

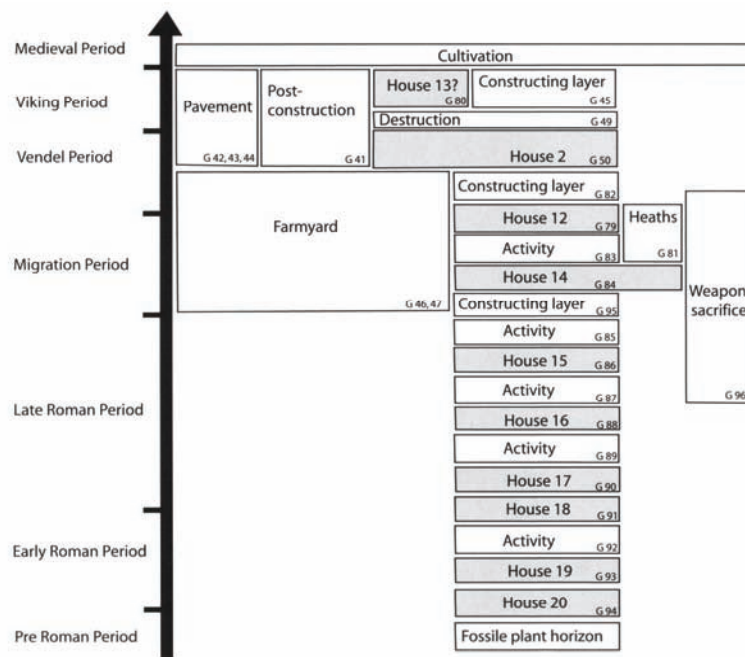


Fig. 63. The different building phases at Uppåkra. Source: Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 7.

In all of these successive buildings a fireplace was placed in the centre of the house, and they all had clay floors (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 18). Larsson and Lenntorp (*ibid*) remark that the fireplace was open and appears not have been made with great care, since it was not elevated above the floor surface, and lacked a stone packing. Up until House 12, the fire place was flanked by several hearth pits, which were not filled with the customary fire cracked stones, but rather with a layer of sooty humus (*ibid*). A change is notable in custom when House 12 is in operation. It is likewise in this house that a magnificent glass bowl had been deposited together with a beaker decorated with gold foil strips (fig. 2) (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 23–4, Stjernquist 2004, Hårdh 2004). The objects were intentionally put under the floor of this house, just south of the fire place, and the excavators suggest that they were deposited when House 12 was abandoned and a new house, House 2, was constructed (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 24). The gold foil figures can be connected to the construction and deconstruction of buildings 12 and 20 (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004, Watt 2004). At this time, in House 12, the central fire place is flanked by two hearths, both along the centre line of the building (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 19). These two pits were filled with charcoal, soot and fire-cracked stones (*ibid*). Importantly, fragments of these stones showed that they were once mill stones. Stones connected to grinding



and crops were likewise unearthed outside the building. In 1934, another building was excavated approximately 40 metres west of the house, and outside it a stone pavement was found to contain a remarkable number of quern stones (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 40). The house itself dated to *ca.* 400 AD, and within it large amounts of burnt grains were recovered (*ibid*). Additional millstone fragments were retrieved in a stoned pavement lying in between this house and Uppåkra's special building. They were likewise encountered in an area east of the special building, where several long-houses had been in use (*ibid*). This suggests that Uppåkra was not only associated with the processes of turning raw materials into objects, refining objects or giving them other treatments (Larsson and Hårdh 1998, Hårdh 2001, 2003, Larsson 2001, 2004), but also assisted in other transformational changes – those connected to crops, harvesting and grinding. Recently, Titti Fendin (2006, see also 2000) has elucidated how technological and agricultural processes are connected to grinding practices and thoughts on reproduction. This concords well with the ideas presented by Anna Hed Jakobsson (2003), rehearsed above, that there is a metaphorical connection between the creation of crops and the manufacture of valuable things. To be able to assist in such metamorphoses and transformations was to be powerful, and it also meant that you possessed certain abilities, and consequently was able to produce wealth (*ibid*). As regards the quern stones of Uppåkra, it is suggested that they had a symbolic meaning, connected to the Grotti mill, which according to Norse literature ground gold, war, good fortune and disaster (Hultkrantz 1991: 41, Zachrisson 2004: 361–6 in Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 41, *cf.* Fendin 2006).

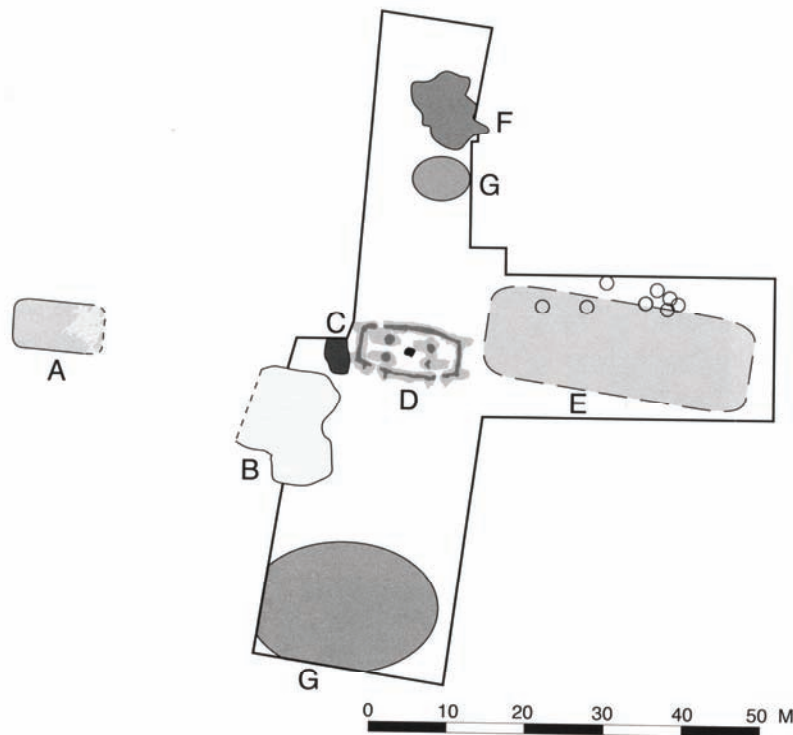


Fig. 64. The area outside the Uppåkra building. A: a partly excavated house, B: stone paving, D: concentration of fire-cracked stones and bones, D: the house sequence, E: area with several long-houses, F: concentrations of weapons and G: sparse distribution of weapons. The circles in/close to area E mark pits with fragmentary and intact quern stones. Source: Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 40, fig. 25.

The gold foil figures of the Uppåkra building were unearthed “in all parts of the house” (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 22). They were, however, only recovered in fill (fig. 65); in the fill of post-holes or in the fill of wall trenches, with the exception of two figure foils (*ibid*). These two figures were securely established to belong to a construction layer (*ibid*). This implies that the figures are associated with 1) the construction of buildings, 2) the deconstruction of buildings, and 3) were positioned only on “borders” within the buildings, that is, in or on posts or on walls, whereby they ended up in the post-hole fill and/or wall trenches during later reconstructions. Importantly, no gold foil figures were deposited on any floor level (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 22). The gold foil figures are thus connected to events or structures that manifest borders. Walls are physical borders, in-between the outside and the inside of the house and posts are also physical (and probably were meta-physical) borders, in-between the earth and the roof (heaven). The

(re)construction of a building can be described as an in-between phase between an old and new building. The gold foil figures, I argue, are thus connected to transitional qualities, and accentuated boundaries. Their transitional qualities are further enhanced by other characteristics, presented above and below. One of their many purposes may have been to assist in the birth of houses (*cf.* Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 22).

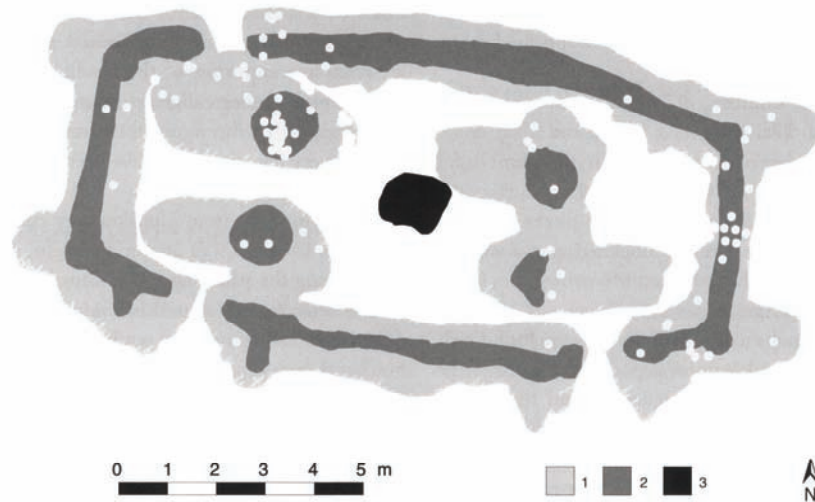


Fig. 65. The distribution of the gold-foil figures in the Uppåkra house sequence.  
Source: Watt 2004: 169.

Although Uppåkra's gold foil figures were recovered (on borders) in almost every part of the house, the north-western part of the building received the highest number of gold foil figures (fig. 65). The high seat, which during the Late Iron Age is postulated to have been placed in this part of the building, had a significant role to play in religious and legal instances (Sundqvist 2002: 266–71). From a legal point of view the high seat was inherited together with all other property, and to be able to sit in a high seat was the equivalence of being in control of your land (*ibid*). Frands Herschend (1999, see also 1997, 1998, 2001) has maintained that the placing of the high seat within buildings shifted during the Iron Age. Early on the high seat seems to have been placed along the northern wall, and later (the Late Iron Age) moved from the central part of this wall to the middle of the gable wall (*ibid*: 1999). Of course, finding such items in the north-western part of special buildings has contributed to interpreting this area of halls as the location of the high seat, probably designated for the sitting, ruling couple. If so, the

spatial connection between the high seat and the gold foil couples “supporting” large posts hints at the existence of a symbol of the cosmic centre, an axis mundi (see more below) (*cf.* Holmberg 1923). A prominent feature in the cosmological landscape of Norse mythology is the myth of an axis mundi, the world tree (an ash tree) (Baeksted 1988: 52–4, Andrén 2004).

In connection to the north-western post-hole at Uppåkra items other than gold foil figures and gold foil strips were also unearthed. Specifically, the post-hole also contained a ring of iron and a cow skull (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 8, 14). Larsson and Lenntorp (2004: 14) consider that these items were deposited in the post-hole when a house was demolished and a new one was constructed. A similar ring of iron was recovered in the vicinity of the Uppåkra building, and they both were ring handles with knobs for doors (*ibid*). In the first chapter of the following part of the thesis, I argue that human and animal body parts (bones) had transitional qualities, and that they are found at border points and accentuate boundaries during this period. One particular place of interest with reference to Uppåkra is Birka, where animal and human body parts (parts of a cow skull, bones from the wing of a bird and a human shoulder blade) were unearthed together with miniature rings of iron (amulet rings) in a furrow between two buildings (Ambrosiani and Erikson 1993: 15–7). In one of the buildings smithing activities had probably taken place (*ibid*). It could equally be the case that the roof-bearing post in the northwest corner of the Uppåkra building was considered a boundary in a cosmological landscape. The post – or even “pillar” – could be perceived of as an axis mundi, connecting different cosmic tiers. Access to these tiers and metaphysical travel could have been granted to those in proximity to the post. Commonly, the northwest post, as stated earlier, is assumed to have been the place where the ruling couple occupied the high seat of the “hall”. Both the bones (the cow skull) and the iron ring handle I maintain had transitional qualities, and lying beneath the post enabled entries and exits to interconnected worlds. Ring handles are attached to doors. The excavators of Uppåkra mainly interpreted the iron ring handle in terms of its symbolic associations with rings (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 27–9). These aspects (political, religious and legal) may have been equally significant, though I believe it is worthwhile to consider also the immediate contextual significance of depositing a ring handle for a door in/on a probable symbolic door (a large post). Perhaps it is also possible to re-interpret the amulet rings, encountered in the furrow at Birka, as miniature ring handles for doors? Such an interpretation does not, of course, exclude the many other meanings the rings could and have been given (see, for instance, suggestions in Vierck 1981 and Näsström 2002).

The roof bearing posts of Building 2 in Slöinge, Sweden, where a large number of gold foils were found, were made of oak, one of the holy trees of

the period (Baeksted 1988: 52). The posts of the Uppåkra building could equally have been made of oak, though the excavators make no mention of what kind of wood could have been employed. The post holes of House 2 were very deep, at least 1.7 metres (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 9). Further, they were approximately 4 x 2 m in area (*ibid*). It is estimated that the posts had a diameter of 0.7 m (*ibid*: 29). The total length of the posts is estimated to have been a maximum of 8 m, or 5–6 m above the floor level (*ibid*). If made of oak, the tree trunks must have been taken from woods with oaks, not from isolated oak trees (Hagstedt 2006, pers. comm.). Free standing oaks – those that stand in open landscapes – are always shorter than oaks that grow in woods, and they are likewise knottier, making it difficult to get straight poles (*ibid*). Trees standing in woods or in areas where there is shelter from winds become straighter. When choosing tree trunks for houses, the place from where they were taken could have mattered (*ibid*). The quality of trees depends also on climatic factors and the composition of the soils in which they grow (*ibid*). To sum up, the posts themselves, whether plain or sculpted, decorated with gold foil figures or not, may have been considered special or endowed with specific characteristics and powers resulting from their place of origin.

Just as entire sites (*e.g.* Slöinge, Gudme, Helgö) have been maintained to display models of the cosmic world (Hedeager 2001: 506, *cf.* Sundqvist 2004), a special building or hall might have worked as a microcosm, representing a cosmological geography, something I have previously argued (Back Danielsson 1999: 17, 2002: 193). These ideas have recently been explored also by Terry Gunnell (2004, 2006). Larsson and Lenntorp go further though and argue that “[t]he high timbered house and its finds might in its total constitute a kenning for the hall of Odin at Valhalla and the concentration of the cosmology of Norse mythology” (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 42). Further, they maintain that the posts at Uppåkra, perhaps decorated with gold foil figures, could have been mental equivalents of Glasir at Valhalla (*ibid*). According to Snorri’s Edda Glasir is located close to Valhalla (*ibid*). However, I would not go as far as attributing either the Uppåkra building(s) to Odin’s hall or the posts as representing Glasir. The buildings could have had shifting meanings and purposes, despite their enduring structures.

## A framing device – making two into one

I argued above that despite the heterogeneity of the gold foil figures they may all have been connected to transformations and transitions. One feature of the figural foils that speaks to this declaration is the fact that a large number of gold foil figures are framed, sometimes with a beaded border. In his search of the origins of figural gold foils, Karl Hauck (1993a) has suggested

that the Roman votive plaques of silver and gold were influential (Lamm 2004: 126). The figural representations on these plaques are standing in a portal of a temple: they worked as a means to compensate for service of a ritual character<sup>27</sup> (*ibid.*: 122, 126.). In an earlier piece I interpreted the framing and the beaded borders of the figural foils of gold as portals (Back Danielsson 1999: 13), although arguing that they are not (only) suggestive of real gateways, but importantly allude to metaphysical thresholds, signalling entrances and exits to other worlds. One example of a threshold moment is the joining of two people in a union, be it a dynastic or divine wedding. In such instances, the gold foil figures could have acted as playbills or scripts directing performances of union and consummation. To assist in such metamorphoses, bodily engagements and encounters have to take place, such as masking, eating, drinking, kissing, embracing, bill and cooing, touching, and dancing, all activities that are possibly reflected in the gold foil couple representations. It is the body and its performances that make this transformation tangible and brings it about. A few gold foil couples may represent a complete union – the faces in profile are so close and positioned in such a way that their two separate faces simultaneously look like one face from the front (fig. 42). It is likewise possible that this union could have other materialized expressions, such as the couple riding together in connection with the confirmation of an alliance. Evidence includes the representation of a gold foil couple on the crest of a saddle-bow, recovered within a burial context in Søllested on Fyn, Denmark (fig. 66) (Steinsland 1990b: 76). This burial is however dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid.*). With inspiration from the Old Norse mythology the bow from Søllested has been interpreted as representing *Hliðskjálf*, a special place or some sort of seat (Dobat 2006: 185). Karl Hauck (1982: 289) forwards the opinion that the two characters represent Odin and Frigg, as they engage with the *Hliðskjálf* in the eddic poem *Grímnismál* (Dobat 2006: 186).

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<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the payment for ritual services must have been in effect when a person needed guidance or help from divinities or gods, that is when changes were about to be implemented in someone's life. However, referring to votive plaques of the Late Roman Empire as mere "payments" in my view misses out on the agency of these objects, and how they helped in probable transitional situations. Even in the Roman cases, the portal could have symbolized more than the portal of a temple.



Figure 66. A gold foil couple in a somewhat different context – the crest of an elaborate saddle bow, retrieved from a burial in Søllested on Fyn, Denmark. Source: Steinsland 1990b: 91.

I would refrain from using the notion “loving couples” for the mentioned categories. The term is unfortunate for several reasons. One is, of course, the constant reference to heterocentrism and the hierarchies of power that are connected to men and women. Having a heterosexual couple as the centre of attention misses out on consideration of other meanings of gold foil figures. I have already argued that gold foil figures were probably connected to divine beings, otherworldly presences, where their spatial connection to roof-bearing posts and, beside them, the seats for a ruling couple, implies the creation of a cosmic geography, divine communication, and cosmological movement and seasonality (*cf.* Back Danielsson 1999: 17). Support for my thought of embracing couples signalling other events or emotions than love can also be gained from European religious embroidery and paintings, though at times of somewhat later date. For instance, the tapestry of Quedlinburg shows two beings in a seemingly intimate embrace (Dodwell 1993: 23, fig. 19). The Quedlinburg sequence is meant to show the concord of Church and State (*ibid.*). Next to each embracing being a word is embroidered, which describes the qualities the relationship between Church and State should have. For instance, one character is accompanied by the word *pietas*, which is Latin for fidelity.

If we return to the idea of gold foil figures as assisting in transformations, further connections to transitions is suggested by my proposal above, that the post-hole in which gold foil figures are retrieved itself was a border, where the post was a representation of an *axis mundi*, a cosmic pivotal tree. The deposition of objects in post-holes is not hap-hazard, but may provide infor-

mation on what kind of activities were executed in the building and what kind of structures were created through the building. Consequently, the deposited objects relate to the activities (and thereby stories) that are performed within or in the vicinity of the building. Lennart Carlie (1999: 66) demonstrates how the deposition of grinding stones in post-holes of buildings from the Iron Age was more than simple fill. For instance, in one roof-supporting post-hole in a building from Trönninge, Halland, Sweden, a well-used grinding stone was unearthed. Significantly, the post-hole in which the stone had been deposited also acted as a boundary for the room in which seeds were roasted (*ibid*). A pavement just outside House A at Uppåkra (see fig. 64) similarly consisted of a large amount of quern stones (fragmented and complete) where the house itself showed a large accumulation of burnt grain (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 40).

Lennart Carlie (1999: 66) is of the opinion that the depositing of objects in post-holes during the Iron Age is more complex than earlier, and that such practices are found to a greater extent than previously in settlement areas (Carlie 1999, see also Paulsson 1993 for discussions on the general purposes of deposits in buildings and A. Carlie 2004, 2006 on ancient building cults and Falk 2006 on building offerings in the Middle Ages). What I am ultimately arguing here is that there are connections and an apparent logic to be understood between (deposited) objects and the places/processes that are associated to the deposited items. The events that are represented through gold foil figures could subsequently be interpreted as gestating real performances during which stimulating of the senses was prominent (see above on *Making sense of senses*). At several locations where gold foil figures have been unearthed, for instance in connection to buildings, there is extensive evidence of feasting (eating and drinking), listening to music, the use of serving utensils of fine quality, *etc.* (e.g. Söderberg 2005 and there cited references). Thus, these places not only refined, manufactured or circulated substances related to crafts but also “stuff” that was circulating within and between human bodies. Anna Hed Jakobsson (2003: 173) has rightly emphasized that during the period activities such as smithing and the preparation of food appear to have been analogues. The same was true for finished products and food: they were kennings for one another. Ultimately, I would argue that what brings all of these materials together is the act of transformation, something I would name the main theme of the whole Late Iron Age (*cf.* Oma 2000, Hed Jakobsson 2003, Gansum 2004b: 133). It was not only the preparation of food and smithing activities that were included within the transitional sphere but also the production of other objects (for instance ceramic vessels) and ancestors (through the act of cremation). Thus it is not surprising that burial grounds occasionally show traces of food preparation (e.g. cooking pits) along with the burials (Hufthammer 1994, Johnson 1995 in Gansum 2004b: 140). The occurrence of hearths for making iron together



with burials has likewise been observed on a few occasions (e.g. Appelgren and Broberg 1996, cf. Burström 1993). I comment further on these interrelated practices in the first chapter of Part Three.

## Fire down the hall

It has been argued that gold foil figures could have been attached and displayed on roof-bearing posts. Such a suggestion has been forwarded by Rosengren (2000: 12) for a few foils recovered in Slöinge, as well as for figure foils recovered at Uppåkra (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004: 23, 42), as recounted earlier. The adhesive with which they were attached may have been honey or fat (*ibid*: 42). Imagine the context: a rather dark building (“hall”) lit only by fire, where the foils, no matter how tiny, would have had a sparkling, glittering and attracting effect from their positions on the posts, no matter what the distance to the objects. The fire would reflect “bring out” the luminous, numinous and perhaps vivid qualities of the figures. Of course, the details of the foils would only be discernable for those closest to them, perhaps ritual performers, aristocrats, ruling couples or other persons sitting on the high seat, or eminent guests, sitting next to the high seat dwellers. If attached to another material, and perhaps worn by performers and/or co-performers, the effect would be even more stunning. Movement by a person would likewise result in a movement of the representation, which would thus come alive. Furthermore, oral performances must have taken place in these buildings. In such performances the foils could equally have been of secondary value, acting as props, where the oral delivery was the main attraction (cf. Proschan 1983: 9). The occurrence of music in buildings with gold foil figures is likewise probable, since a piece for a lyre was retrieved within the hall complex of Tissø (Söderberg 2005: 146). This piece of equipment is noteworthy: a peg for the lyre was decorated with facial masks (*ibid*), similar to those represented on rune stones, discussed earlier in this work. Perhaps this is indicative of the contexts in which the lyre was used – producing sounds/music that assisted in a variety of bodily transitions.

I claimed above that one of the allusions of gold was to fire. Interestingly, the accentuation of the use of fire can be claimed for some buildings from which gold foil figures have been retrieved. The gold foil figures on Bornholm, extreme in their large numbers, had all been deposited on an unexcavated, burnt area (Watt 1991b: 93). Additionally, at Hov, Lillehammer, Norway, an unusually high number of strike-a-lights were recovered (Guhnfeldt 2005, Andréasson 1995: 27). One section of the building at Borg/Lofoten had, what the excavators labelled, a very special fire place construction (Andréasson 1995: 16). At Uppåkra, as mentioned earlier, the excavators stated that with the construction of House 12 a change was noti-

cable as regards fire place construction. Further, some of the figures from Maere in Norway appear to have been singed by fire (Andréasson 1995: 22).

## The absence of aristocratic individuality in “transit halls”

Several archaeologists have maintained that many of the places where gold foil figures have been recovered can be connected to different levels of aristocracy and aristocratic networks manifested in special buildings, commonly termed “halls” (e.g. Jørgensen 2001, 2002, Söderberg 2005). For instance, Söderberg (2005: 218) argues that it is possible to identify individuals and groups of individuals as hall owners through analysing the ruling ideology’s architecture and space. However, from my point of view, there is a tension between the constant weight on individuality, on aristocratic individuals as emerging in the archaeological material culture, and at the same time these same individuals’ prominent ability to cross borders, control specialized crafts, and be a part of networks (e.g. Söderberg 2005). In fact, I question the usefulness of the word individual, and the misleading consequences its application may generate. The concept of the individual is historical, and is, above all, a modern, Western notion (Chapman 2002, Fowler 2004). Frands Herschend (1997: 50) has rightly underscored that the individuality of the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia probably was far different from our modern sense. A coherent, constant and fixed self (that is, an individual) was probably the opposite of what a person was considered to be during the (Late) Iron Age, and especially at places where transformations took place (such as “transit halls”), cloaked as handicraft activities, commemorative practices, feasting, weddings, *etc.* Rather, the dividuality of persons and things was a prerequisite for acquiring desired outcomes: new or modified relationships, objects (persons), exquisite jewellery, *etc.* Is it possible that the modern quest for searching for early Scandinavian kings and kingdoms hinder archaeologists in thinking differently about prehistoric societies and peoples, especially in terms of the obvious categories of important places such as halls? In the first chapter of Part Three I discuss identity and individuality further, and I have already explored notions like individuality and dividuality in chapter *Essential Engagements* in Part One.

In this context, I would also like to bring attention back to the rune inscription of the stone 192 from Södermanland. Here the inscription “the *grimr* of the people” (*Sw. fulks krimr*) has been translated as “the chief of the people”, though the literal meaning is “the mask of the people”. I contented that the inscription did not necessarily allude to an omnipotent chief, but rather that the choice of words might have reflected a perspective where all

people were included, “their individual differences left aside, or rather incorporated within one collective person”. I also made reference to Chris Fowler’s (2004: 48–9) point that a single person may embody a whole clan. In this context I also remind of the rune inscription of the stone 192 from Södermanland. Here the inscription “the *grimr* of the people” (Sw. fulks krimr) has been translated as “the chief of the people” though the literal meaning is “the mask of the people”. I forwarded the possibility that the inscription not necessarily alluded to an omnipotent chief, but that the choice of words might have reflected a view where all people were included, “their individual differences left aside, or rather incorporated within one collective person”. I also made reference to Chris Fowler (2004: 48–9) where he exemplified how a single person may embody a whole clan.

## Embracing stories – the pendants from Norsborg and Roskilde

In Part One, I mentioned two pendants that in style resemble the gold foil couples (fig. 6 and fig. 7). The gold pendant from Roskilde, Denmark, is a casual find, and thus not datable. The pendant in bronze – as luminous as gold – was recovered when an 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> century burial with no apparent superstructure was excavated in Norsborg, Botkyrka parish, Sweden. The figures represented seem to be embracing one another or grabbing each other by the arms, just as the gold foil couples do. The heterocentrism that has permeated earlier interpretations of these figures has been accounted for previously. If the loving couple definition should be used at all, which I seriously doubt (see above), then these pendants should equally qualify as “loving couples”. Although not retrieved within the (cosmic) worlds of halls, where certain cosmic enactments took place, they were nonetheless designed as if they had access and relevance to the cosmos. This might suggest the circulation of other stories, and the existence of other places for enacting performances/stories that were equally important for making the world.

# To Tell One's Beads

## Introduction

Although the general purpose of discussing figures, and in this particular case gold foil figures, is to understand how and why the miniature bodies worked, I will in this chapter tentatively make a few remarks on single gold foil figures, and their possible meanings. In Part One I maintained that the single gold foil figures showed similarities with earlier figures. They included, for instance, facial characteristics as with facial masks, bodily postures, and similarity in garments. I pointed to the fact that the wooden figure from Rude Eskildstrup, with something in its lap, resembled with later gold foil figures, though these in some instances were highly stylized (see figs. 26, 27 and 29).

## Portability

In general, figures from the Early Iron Age were not free-standing objects, but rather integral parts of other items (see also note 16). I suggested in Part One that these items dictated the scenarios or narratives in which they were allowed to perform, and pointed to the possibility that the free-standing figures, as with the gold foil figures, were associated with new or modified performances and narratives compared to the stories in which the earlier figures-in-objects participated. As detached, “free” and extremely light and portable objects/items, they could have participated or worked as actors in a variety of performances and stories. Their respective places of abandonment were likewise different, possibly indicating that they were used in new and different arenas for story-telling, transitions and/or performances.

## The seated travellers

In a forthcoming paper, Torun Zachrisson (in print) suggests that the Rude Eskildstrup sculpture, as well as a few single gold foil figures, and other figural expressions that have in common a seated posture and the presence of

something in their laps were part of Iron Age rituals in which land was transferred and legal agreements regarding property were made. Regardless of the meanings of the seated figures, standing still or non-movement within oral cultures is a powerful attitude. I would like to suggest that the seated posture of, for instance, the Rude Eskildstrup sculpture together with the figure's other characteristics – bulbous eyes, pointed chin, leaning back position, golden necklace – imply a trance like position, enabling travel without moving physically. Wilhelm Holmqvist (1980) has interpreted the collar of the Rude Eskildstrup figure as a magical instrument for shamans and shamanic acts. Counterparts to the collars have been unearthed in Sweden (see fig. 67).

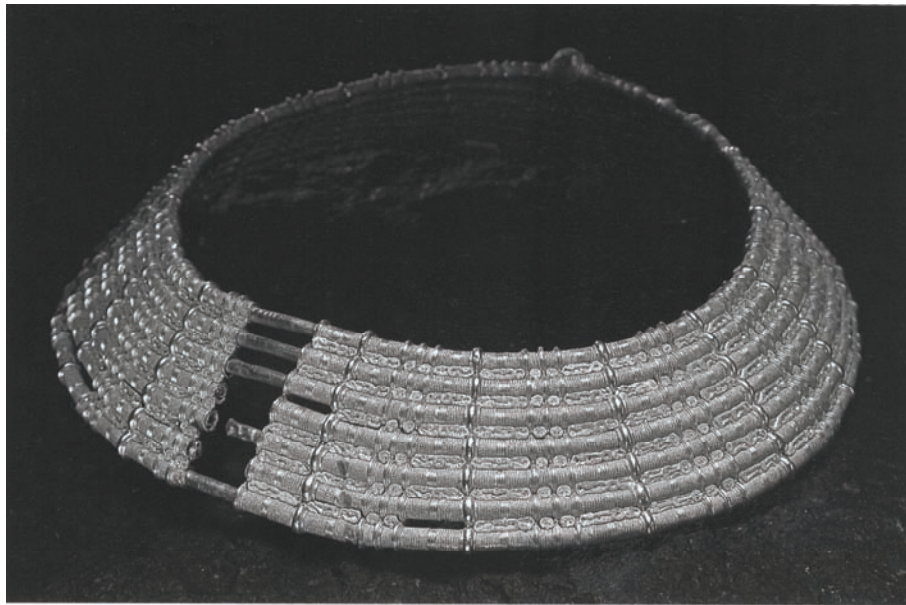


Fig. 67. The Möne collar from Sweden. Source: Arrhenius 1994: 185.

## Props that guide and direct – supporting transformations

I have argued that, ultimately, gold foil figures are connected to transitions and transformations, and may be described as performing objects. The way gold foil figures were sometimes executed, apparently standing in portals, underlines this interpretation (see above *A framing device*). Significantly, several figures appear to hold drinking horns/beakers in their hands, where the passing of liquid through the mouth could enable a journey if the beverage, for instance, contained alcoholic substances. Their eyes – enlarged and

protruding – could likewise, as suggested above, indicate the partaking of drugs (*e.g.* henbane), through which far-sightedness and trance were enabled. I have already mentioned places where seeds of henbane and *Belladonna* have been unearthed. In Järrestad, where a patrix in bronze for making gold foil figures was recovered, there was in close proximity to a special building evidence of hops cultivation, a necessary ingredient in the production of mead or beer (Söderberg 2005: 270). The probable preparation of yeasted beverages is also supported by finds of honey bees (*ibid*). The retrieval of drinking vessels within the buildings (Uppåkra, Borg, Helgö, *etc.*) in which gold foil figures have been recovered likewise indicate drinking ceremonies. As I mentioned earlier, human spit can work as a powerful ingredient when producing alcoholic beverages. Of course, it is not possible to substantiate such a proposal archaeologically. I would like to bring up again the possibility that story-telling, that is, delivering performances, during the period was probably linked to the drinking of mead (Näsström 2001 in Fernstål 2004: 179). Equally, other somatic sensations could assist in the story-telling, both in the performer and the co-performers (*e.g.* Scheub 1977, see also section *Oral literacy and bodies in Part One*).

I have already mentioned that one gold foil figure on one occasion had been re-shaped to a cylinder and threaded with other “ordinary” beads on a necklace. This necklace was recovered together with a small spiral in bronze in a bog during peat removal (Andréasson 1995: 41). The bog is located close to Tørring, approximately 15 km southeast of Silkeborg, Denmark (*ibid*). Moreover, I stressed that the gold foil figures are ultimately connected to stories and performances – not as representations of certain figures but rather of events. I also argued on the basis of a variety of evidence that these narratives worked by assisting in a variety of rites of passage and, thereby, in-between-stages. The gold foil figure from Tørring is shown unfolded in fig. 61. It is roughly 2.5 cm high and represents an apparently cloaked figure in a feather-like garment possibly equipped with a beaker and a button-on-bow brooch (Fischer 1974: 28). It has not been possible to date the beads and the gold foil figure exactly; they are estimated to belong to the Migration (*ca.* 400–50 AD) and Vendel Period (*ca.* 550–800 AD) (Andréasson 1995: 42).

By analysing the costumes of deceased beings in Iron Age burials, Lotta Fernstål (2004) emphasised necklaces with beads as physical manifestations and aids for delivering narratives and stories of importance. She argues that beings who received necklaces with beads could have been the ones responsible for certain stories and knowledge about people, places, events and memories (2004: 170). Equally important in structuring the stories were the beads different colours, shape, materials and patterns, indicating what kind of rhythm the stories would have had (*ibid*: 176–8). I would like to add to this a few reflections on pearls and beads as cultural objects. Beads, as well

as the curled gold foil figure, are enigmatic in the sense that they reflect, transform and if of glass, transmit light. I have already commented on the fact that luminosity was one characteristic that was greatly appreciated and valued during the period, and I argued that luminous objects might also have signalled numinosity, thus having transcending qualities. The colours (of the beads) were also significant; I recounted how single colours and combination of colours may be interpreted. In their study of beads among the Yorùbá, Drewal and Mason argue that “[c]olors move those who experience them, for they connote specific attributes and modes of action” (1988: 18). An assortment of sensations is connected to Yorùbá beads, such as healing, empowerment, authority, power, divinity, well-being, and wealth (Drewal and Mason 1988). Further, to string beads on a lace is a serial process that also relates to structuring a story (*cf. ibid*: 18). When threaded together the beads (representing events or families, for example) are united into coherency, and may symbolize generation and regeneration (*ibid*). Among the Yorùbá, those who manipulate and mediate cosmic forces – priests, diviners, rulers, and maskers – wear beads (*ibid*: 24). The transformation of light (re- and deflection) through beads makes them especially useful as transformative tools in rites of passage (*ibid*).

Of course, the segments of the human body that are encircled by the threaded beads or pearls must also be of significance. By encircling vital parts of the body, or parts that mark borders (such as the head, the neck, the wrists), the lace with beads may be envisioned as sealing in, tying up and enclosing the essential forces of things and persons (*ibid*). In this context it is also worth mentioning the work of Uno Holmberg (Harva) – *The shaman costume and its significance* (1922) – in which he maintains that by taking off their belts, the shaman performer and the assistant were able to free their souls.

Recently, Lise-Marie Bye Johansen (2004) has discussed the occurrence of beads in burials. She rightly highlights and questions the reasons for the different interpretations of beads recovered in male and female burials (*cf. Ahlberg-Thieffry and Nordenstam 1973*). When in large numbers (read: found in a woman’s grave), the beads are seen as an expression of jewellery fashion, whereas small number of beads (unearthed in men’s graves) are seen as magical (Bye Johansen 2004: 469). She forwards the opinion that beads can be interpreted as magico-religious items, regardless the sex or gender in the burials, but that this thought does not exclude the beads working on other levels as well, such as economic, ethnic and/or social.

## Birds of a feather – feathers of birds

Although there are many ways of interpreting gold foil figures, I would like to suggest that it is possible that the garments of a few figures were meant to represent furry or feather-like garments. The retrieval of furry head masks has already been discussed. These animal masks were unearthed in Haithabu, preserved only due to the fact that they had been drowned in tar and had ended their days between two planks of a ship (later ship-wrecked in Haithabu's harbour). This could be exemplified by fig. 13 from Eketorp, Sweden, where the figure stands in a tip-toe and alert position, eyes enlarged. Other figures also appear to have feather-like garments (see earlier in the chapter *Masking and Performance*). Furthermore, the gold foil figure mentioned above, curled to a cylinder and threaded together with 71 glass beads represented a figure with furry or feather-like piece of clothing (Fischer 1974) (fig. 61). A cup may be being represented in her hand (*ibid*).

I argue that these outfits represented a shape-changing by being executed in the divine metal gold reflected on back to humans, who likewise under certain conditions could perform as shape-changed. The gold foil figure rendered the performance not only a divine *numen*, but could equally have worked as a precaution, to guide and bless the way the specialist was going on their cosmic voyaging. In such instances the gold foil figures could have been worn. In several cases, as previously recounted, it has been re-reported that ritual specialists and shamans wore glittering and luminous objects in their pursuit of reaching trance and ancestral realms (*e.g.* Holmberg 1922, Rivers 1999, Price 2002).

The transformative powers of gold were also, as elaborated above, associated with the inherent properties of the metal itself. I have already maintained that the metal represented numinous presence, and that pieces of gold could be manipulated ("masked") in elaborate ways to represent a variety of humanoid figures; likewise, that humanoids could be, in our view, crudely executed and with difficulty referred to as "gold foil figures". Some are so stylized that archaeologists may describe them as mere strips (see especially fig. 29). These particularities of gold foil (figures) resonate ambiguity and paradox, speaking to the power residing in masking practices (see more below). Although the figures were masked in a variety of ways, they were indeed birds of a feather.



# The Hemdrup staff – a Sealing Orchestration

## Introduction

So far I have discussed miniature bodies in the shape of gold foil figures. In this chapter I will interpret another representation of a humanoid figure from the Viking Age<sup>28</sup>. In the earlier chapter on masking I demonstrated that figures are connected to events and stories, rather than particular gods, persons or other characters. Here I make an effort to present such a story or event.

## Curing a body – the Hemdrup staff

In 1945 in a bog in Hemdrup, Denmark, a staff, standing perpendicularly to the ground, was recovered (fig. 68). It was made of yew, was 0.5 m long, nicely polished and had figures and runes inscribed. Its top, 2.1 cm thick, had been slightly burned, whereas its bottom, about 3.4 cm thick, had a flute-like cut-out. Within a rhombic carved pattern, a humanoid figure, several dog-like animals, two runic inscriptions and a triquetra knot are observable (fig. 69). (Skautrup 1951: 154–5, Andersen 1971: 13–23).

Peter Skautrup (1951) was the first to present an interpretation of the Hemdrup staff. He interpreted it as a shepherd's staff that had accidentally been burnt on one end when the shepherd or hind poked around in the fire he had built as a pastime (Skautrup 1951: 155, 161). The carvings are said to have been made for the same reason (*ibid*). The humanoid figure is interpreted as a woman with her hair down, arms wide open and garments reaching to her feet (*ibid*) The inscribed letters forming the female name “Åse” could possibly be the shepherd's, or the man's, girl friend. Certainly, argues Skautrup, the staff cannot be interpreted as magical or secretive.

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<sup>28</sup> This chapter has appeared in an earlier version in *Fornvännen* in the year 2001.



Fig. 68. The Hemdrup staff, as it was found in the bog, standing perpendicularly to the ground. Source: Andersen 1971: 18.

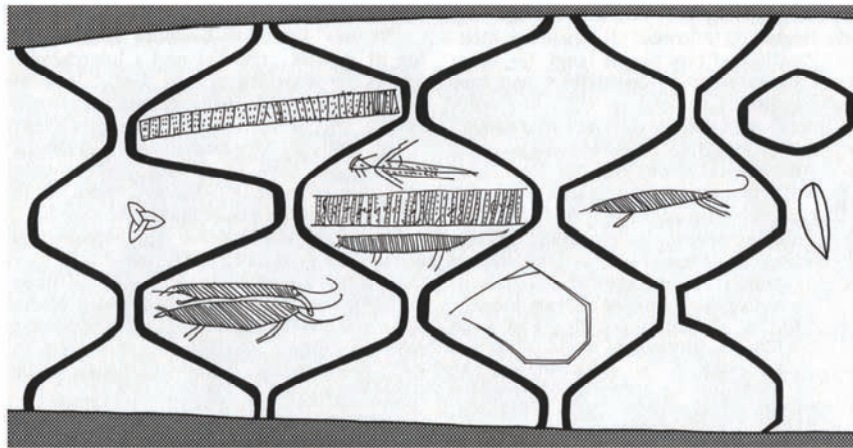


Fig. 69. The rhomb-like incised pattern I interpret as alluding to the scales of a snake. At the bottom of the staff, a flute-like incision is seen. Inside the scales, dog-like animals and a humanoid figure, perhaps in a feathered garment, seem to run and/or fly towards the top of the staff, or towards heavenly realms. Although difficult to interpret, the runic inscription next to the humanoid speak of “the flying”. Source: Andersen 1971: 19.

In 1971, the Hemdrup staff was discussed again. Harald Andersen interpreted the staff as a fiery cross, more precisely a fiery cross relating to war (Andersen 1971: 22–27.). Of the two runic inscriptions, one of them has received several different interpretations, the one found in field 2b following Skautrup 1951. Erik Moltke (1976: 290) interprets them as secret runes, and considers them extremely difficult to decipher. The other runic inscription in the middle of the stick has a dog like being on one of its sides, and a humanoid figure on the other (fig. 69). This inscription is read by Moltke (1976: 289) as: u a n þ i k i b a \* f i u k a t i \* a s a a u a a u b i. To interpret this text, he draws on another inscription found on a bronze tinplate from Högstena, Västergötland, Sweden. This item contains a term, *galdr*, meaning against “the flying”. Consequently, the inscription is interpreted by Moltke as “The flying (fever devil?) never killed you, Åse” (Moltke 1976: 289). He refrains from deciphering the last letters a u a u b i, and dates the staff to the 9<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid*: 290). Skautrup on the other hand, thinks it belongs to the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century (Skautrup 1951: 161–2).

In 1984, Niels Åge Nielsen produced a somewhat revised interpretation of Moltke’s suggestion, and additionally presented an interpretation of the last letters of the middle inscription. According to Nielsen, it could be read as: “The flying never won over you. Åse is lucky in battle” (Nielsen 1984: 219–30). He further maintained that a man inscribed the letters on the stick as a tribute to the young woman who recently recovered from an ailment. The stick is supposed to have been a gift from the man, in which case the runic inscription would be the oldest known Danish love poem.

### Paying attention to details

To a large extent, these earlier interpretations may be characterized as being androcentric. The man is described as being active, he is the one that makes the staff, shapes it, inscribes it with runic letters, and portrays his woman on the staff. The woman only has a passive role – just being there, an object for the feelings of the man. At most, she is allowed participation as someone who has to be cured of an illness. Further, there are also streaks of heterocentrism and essentialism evident. Heterocentrism occurs since the staff is interpreted within a frame where the emotions of a man and a woman are possible or inevitable. The essentialism is created through placing the staff in contexts where love, sex and war are interpreted as being the same throughout prehistory. I would like to suggest another interpretation, which takes as its starting point an analysis of the rhombic pattern of the staff, as well as why it is burnt on one end, what the carvings might mean, why the staff has a flute like incision, and why it is well polished.

Let us begin with the humanoid figure. Its outfit or costume has several lines, which of course may be interpreted in several ways. One possibility is that the clothes worn may represent an animal-like garment, perhaps alluding to a bird or a furry animal (figs. 69–70). I have already made several observations for (Late) Iron Age figures and materials, that indicate that dressing up with animal-like clothes could have been present in certain contexts. For instance, this could be the case with the foil figure (fig. 13) from Eketorp and the earlier recounted gold foil figure (fig. 61) from a bog in Tørring, Denmark, that had been curled into a cylinder and then threaded onto a cord with beads (Fischer 1974: 29–30). Equally, the lines could have been intended to represent the infliction bodily wounds or repeated stabbings, as has been established on a few occasions for gold foil figures and figures on golden bracteates. That the lines are there nonetheless emphasizes that the manipulation or paraphernalia of the body needed to be expressed in the execution. It is worth pointing out that both Moltke (1976) and Nielsen (1984) interpreted the runic inscription next to the humanoid figure in terms of “the flying”, thus indicating the possibility of a furry or feather-like garment. Importantly, they likewise connect the inscription to *galdr*. *Galdr* can be compared to magic songs, or poems with magic effect (Lindquist 1923, cf. Lindquist 1936). Dag Strömbäck (1935: 119) has associated these poems with *sejd*, that is a kind of sorcery or witchcraft.



Fig. 70. The humanoid figure of the Hemdrup staff. Source: Andersen 1971: 20.

*Sejd* is something I would term a disembodied practice (see earlier chapter on *Essential Engagements* in Part One). It was practiced for a number of

reasons. For instance, it was used for medical causes, to make prophesies, to gain knowledge on reasons for mishaps or accidents, or to affect a far away person in a desired fashion (Strömbäck 1935: 124, 142–7, 153). The person performing *sejd* could shape change into an animal, a human like being or even a fiendish being (*ibid*: 163). This was accomplished through different aids, which were used to enable a trance like state (*ibid*). One of these aids consisted of sounds, created by singing (*ibid*: 119). Other sounds, that seemed to have been considered similar to songs, were appreciated as well. For instance the “songs” created by swords (*suerðs songr*) or the “poems” delivered by weapons (*vápna galdr*) (*ibid*: 119). When the soul of the shape-changed being was to return from its journey, a special song could have been sung, namely *varðlok(k)ur*. This Norse word literally means to entice the soul back into the body (Strömbäck 1935: 125, 139). Perhaps because the (Late) Iron Age communities were largely orally based, trance like conditions were reached through special songs, that is certain sounds.

Other sounds may have been used, such as those produced by a flute (*cf.* Eliade 1964). The flute-like incision at the bottom, or thicker, end of the staff corresponds to incisions known from several flutes dating to the Iron Age. One such flute was retrieved in a marsh at Vesterbølle, Jutland, Denmark (Vestergaard Nielsen 1951: 145–6), and another example was unearthed at Birka, Sweden (Oldeberg 1950: 51–6). I would like to emphasize that the stick or staff was not intended as a flute and could not have been used as such an instrument. I am here interpreting the stick in terms of metaphorical thinking. To suggest that the incision had nothing at all to do with a flute, since it *in practice* could not operate as such a piece of equipment, is a preposterous claim. Neil Price (2002: 202) rejects the possible metaphorical connections between the Hemdrup staff and flutes. To ignore metaphorical associations in prehistories is a very reductionistic way of interpreting people in the past and their engagement with the world, that is avoided in the current work (I have commented in greater detail the work by Neil Price in Part One).

Returning to the Hemdrup staff, in this context it is also worth to reiterate the meanings attributed to the Norse word *varðlok(k)ur*. Not only was it an expression for the song with which to lure back the soul of the spirit traveller, or *sejd* performer, but it also pertained to the stick or staff (–*lokur/loka*) with which the soul or spirit (*varð*) was physically captured (Strömbäck 1935: 125, 139). Apart from aiding and transformative songs, other transitional paraphernalia could be used when performing *sejd*. One such example is the *sejd* staff (Strömbäck 1935: 140, *cf.* Price 2002).

The Hemdrup staff is made of a yew tree. Perhaps yew trees were considered endowed with specific qualities that were considered necessary for the occasion. Yew trees are evergreens, and in later literary compositions within Norse literature, holy trees are mentioned. The holy trees included eternally green coniferous trees (Bæksted 1988: 52). The wood from a yew tree is also both poisonous and hard. Apparently chosen with care, it was polished to a shine.

The pattern of the staff may allude to the scales of a snake (fig. 69). Its length, thickness and lustre likewise connects it to a snake. The staff of a *sejd* performer, the *volvic* staff, is also associated with serpents (Johansen 1997: 79). The Hemdrup staff might well be a *gandr*, described in the later Norse sources as a magic stick or staff (Heggstad, Hødnebo and Simensen 1975, cf. Raudvere 2003, Heide 2006 on *gandr* and *sejðr*). It could also mean snake or serpent, as in the word *Jormungandr*, the giant snake or the Midgård serpent (Heggstad, Hødnebo and Simensen 1975).

Considering all the interpretational possibilities above, I would like to suggest that the Hemdrup staff was part of the equipment used when performing *sejd*. The humanoid figure incised on the staff could represent the performer, perhaps with wounds, or perhaps dressed in a feather-like or animal-like garment. The animals that surround the performer might be interpreted as helping spirits in animal gestalts. Possibly the performer is referred to as “the flying” in the inscription, who flies away to avoid or render harmless another haunting soul or illness. Through its association with flutes, air and the necessary guiding, ecstasy inducing sounds may be perceived as emanating from the stick. The sounds/air facilitated the performers’ ability to fly. The animal helpers, as well as the humanoid figure, appear to move upwards. They move from the thick end (where air enters the “flute”) of the stick, that is, from the bottom of the bog, or the chthonic forces, towards heavenly realms. The stick/staff/snake/flute thereby connects different cosmic tiers: the netherworld, the earthly or middle world and the heavenly or celestial one. The triquetra knot found towards the top of the staff has been linked to movements, or twisting and turning (Biedermann 1991: 428–9, Skautrup 1984: 219), and could thus have acted as a propelling force. This sign has likewise been interpreted as a magical and protective symbol (*ibid*). The incisions may be gestating a scene or an event, where a spirit animal runs behind the humanoid figure that is flanked and protected by an additional animal and the magic spells of the runic inscription. Two animal gestalts run further ahead and are covered by additional secretive runes, and before reaching the burnt top of the staff, a shielding or power enhancing triquetra knot is placed. The burning of the top could have had a cleansing function. Through fire the soul, spirit or illness was transformed, or rather purified and made harmless.

In conclusion, the staff from Hemdrup may be interpreted as a powerful, transforming and multi-associative tool, that could only have been used within and by a bog, a place just as transitional and filled with spectacular powers as a shape-changed being<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Price (2002: 201–3) discusses the Hemdrup staff in his thesis, but more or less presents the same history of research of the Hemdrup staff as I published in *Fornvännen* in 2001. He refers to my interpretations of the Hemdrup staff as plausible, but, as he would probably put it, not scientifically proven. He claims incorrectly that the analogies I cite are from Eliade, although almost all references in regard to *sejd* are made to Dag Strömbäck's major work on the topic from 1935, a book he himself refers to on plenty of occasions in his thesis. His own interpretation of the Hemdrup staff reads: "The Hemdrup staff is clearly a very special object, both in its form, decoration and the context of its deposition" (Price 2002: 202). The reader is not in any way enlightened as to why the staff is a "very special object". The words "form", "decoration" and "context" are all together unsatisfactory.

## To Figure Out Figures – How and Why They Worked

I have referred to the miniature bodies being studied as humanoid figures. As previously explained, the notion of “humanoid” attempts to catch the human like but what we as Westerners ethnocentrically refer to as the supernatural characteristics that I claim are evident in the figures. The word figure tries to capture other and similar complexities. A figure can be a drawing, it may be geometrical or rhetorical. Further, a figure pertains to visual forms and graphic representations. Figures necessarily also have tropic qualities, but need not always be mimetic and representational. This means that figures usually contain elements of displacement contributing to troubling beliefs and recognitions. What is more, figurations may also be summarized maps of contestable worlds. (Haraway 1997: 11).

By using figures – instead of performing, living human beings – characters are presented through a different site of signification (Tillis 2000: 175). Theodora Skipitäre (2000: 125) has illustrated that by using figures, such as in puppetry, it is possible to more effectively illuminate social, political and cultural issues and transmit deeply felt emotions. The same argument may also be used for masks, which I have already discussed in detail in Part One. Figures, puppets, and masks are all objects that can be described as performing objects. Their forms may be abbreviated, and/or exaggerated. With such techniques paradox and power is manifested and exerted, inviting and generating a possible array of mixed and enhanced feelings. Performing objects worked within specific contexts where they could be handled in certain ways; they could be worn, shown, and/or manipulated in performances that made the world. The manipulations included, for instance, piercing, dressing up, and/or crumpling up. They were likewise portable, disposable, paradoxical, and were not objects but signs of signs, and abbreviated in their miniature sizes. Their disparate significata invited varying and polysemous interpretations and feelings.

Importantly, even though humanoid figures are not the equivalent of human bodies, their treatments or attitudes to them might not have differed. Lynn Meskell has written that in “pharaonic, Graeco-Roman and Late Antique times there was little distinction between the statue of a deity and the deity



itself” (Meskell 2003: 42). There was no difference whether a deity was present in the flesh or through a statue, since both contained the presence of a divine numen (*ibid*). Further, a sculptor in Egyptian terms meant “he who keeps alive”, underscoring statues and other representations as living materialities (*ibid*: 41–2). Consequently, as representations of deities, the statue or divine body could be given clothes, food and drink on a daily basis (*ibid*: 42). Eugenia Herbert (1984: 218–20), writing on copper in pre-colonial history and culture in Africa, has emphasized that the way a human body is ornamented rarely differs from the way sculptures are embellished. Several humanoid figures from the (Late) Iron Age have been dressed up in various ways (wrists links, necklaces, *etc.*) as presumably human beings were. One example is suggested by the wooden figure from Rude Eskildstrup, whose sculpted necklace seems to have its counterpart in gold necklaces of the same time (Rude Eskildstrup and necklace – see figs 26, 27 and 67).

Further, borrowing from performance studies and semiotics, we should recognize that an object can become an actor during performances; and that an actor, a person, can even be transformed into an object (Veltruský 1964 [1940] in Proschan 1983: 16). There are other illustrative examples where bodies or body parts cease to be person(al) and become “object oriented” – bog bodies may be displayed in museums, body parts may be worshipped as relics or are conserved, and at times consumed, exchanged or used as beauty enhancers (Hamilakis, Pluciennik and Tarlow 2002: 11 and references therein). With the gold foil figures, the situation is reversed – through their engagement they are transformed into performing elements. I have chosen to describe them as performing objects, though the notion “object” is misleading, since “[p]erforming objects...are the supreme examples of objects that become actors in performance” (Proschan 1983: 16). Through their engagement the boundary “between life and immobile dead matter” was obliterated (Jakobson 1975: 8 in Proschan 1983: 16). Gold foil figures could have pendulated between being, for instance, objects, actors, persons and tools for divine communication. They were used in acts and processes that involved several socio-cultural contexts at one and the same time.

When the gold foil figures are seen in the light of these arguments and the previous arguments concerning miniaturization, gold’s metaphorical connections, and gold’s ontophany it becomes clear that gold foil figures must be understood as extremely forceful agents.

## PART THREE – DE-PARTING BODIES

The final part of the thesis focuses on bodies, body parts and metaphorical thinking. It also reconnects to the topic of masking. In the first chapter, *Re-circulating Bones*, I argue that the theme of transformation was pivotal for the creation of persons during the Late Iron Age. However, these persons need not have been of flesh and blood, but may have included any thing that was handled and conceptualized as a person (Fowler 2004: 7). I contend that objects such as swords, ancestors, and certain ceramic vessels in specific contexts were perceived of and treated as persons. They were all created in transformational processes requiring heat, breath and dismembered body parts. I suggest that pieces of animal and/or human bones were regarded as a sort of universal life-giving substance, perhaps conceived of as a necessary ingredient in the making of persons and cosmos. Crushed white bones may have alluded to flour or semen. The transitional qualities of bones are likewise underlined by their occurring at border points in the landscape, suggesting that they might have worked as transitional objects. Conclusively, bones could work as transitional objects and as a regenerative substance.

The second chapter of the current part, *Reciprocal Engagements*, discusses burials in a new way. From an example of a Late Iron Age grave-field in the county of Södermanland in Sweden, I argue that the burials are connected to travels in a variety of ways. Instead of naming the category a burial, I introduce the concept of a vehicle for cosmic transportation. The burial practices may thus be described as a de-assemble and re-assemble of components, in order to get a functioning vehicle. By adopting the concept of the vehicle, I further place weight on the fact that the remains of bodies, animals, and things were put together into new constellations, that not necessarily can be equated to represent a singular, coherent, and sexable individual. The created vehicle is suggested to have been engaged by relatives on certain occasions, such as when guidance was needed in hardships or in order to gain knowledge of the future.

In the final chapter, *The connections between the preparation of foods and burials*, I tentatively examine the connections between food preparation, with an emphasis on bread, and burials. I also return to the topic of masking from a semiotic perspective, and discuss the manipulations food stuffs and food utensils often underwent in connection to burials.

# Re-circulating Bones

## Introduction

I have already demonstrated in Part One, when discussing issues of sex and gender, that whole cremated bodies were not deposited in Late Iron Age burials. Rather, only a portion of the cremated was put in, for instance, a ceramic urn or spread within layers of a burial mound. The quantities of human and animal bones recovered were also commonly fragmented prior to the burial. These circumstances have made it difficult for archaeologists who want to assign graves to individuals, and to identify buried persons and attribute them to either sex. In pursuit of the quest to find buried individuals, it has been argued that the small quantities of bones in fact represent a totality, that is, a complete person (Andersson 2005: 61). By contrast, in this chapter another way in to interpreting cremated and fragmented bones is used. Such an approach involves a scrutiny of the other places where bones have emerged, complemented with a much needed theorizing of the (Late) Iron Age person and (in)dividual, as they may be encountered or represented in the archaeological materials. Similarly, I utilize the theme of metaphorical thinking to explore how the different places (and processes) where bones have been unearthed are interrelated. The area focused on is the large Mälardalen region in Sweden, although other areas in Scandinavia are mentioned. I have already explored the ideas presented here to some extent (Back Danielsson in print), and I hope to publish them more extensively in a forthcoming work (Back Danielsson forthcoming).

## The Great Divide – re-distributing and sharing body parts at moments of interment

My point of departure is that the treatment of dead bodies may be used to interpret and explore principles and beliefs of the communities involved that go beyond the burials themselves (*e.g.* Svanberg 2003a, b, Fowler 2004: 100, 160).

The amount of cremated bone in burial contexts differs between the Early Iron Age and the Late Iron Age in the area under investigation. During the Early Iron Age only small quantities of burnt human bones are generally deposited in graves (Bennett 1987: 20–1), which may also contain a few burnt animal bones from sheep/goats, dogs and birds (*ibid*). The Late Iron Age sees larger quantities of burnt bones within burial contexts (*e.g.* Bennett 1987, Sigvallius 1994, Andersson 2005). Importantly, however, Berit Sigvallius (1994) and Gunnar Andersson (2005: 61) have proposed that the average amount of crushed human bone did not change significantly between the Early and the Late Iron Age. The small quantity of burnt bones that has been unearthed within Early Iron Age mounds or small cairns had usually been cleansed and crushed to an amorphous mass prior to deposition (Ericsson and Runcis 1995). It has been suggested that these ways of dealing with death and transformation were a means of letting the deceased become part of a collective group of undefined ancestors (*ibid*).

The novelty of the Late Iron Age is the presence of more animal species. Specifically, horses and cats start to accompany deceased beings in funeral pyres (Bennett 1987: 21). Initially, horses are primarily connected to high status graves (for example, at Högom and Vallstenarum, Sweden), but become more common generally in burials during the Vendel Period (550–800 AD) and Viking Age Period (800–1050 AD) (Oma 2000). The horse is also one of the animals that is represented in the animal ornamentation (*e.g.* Heidegger 1997, Oma 2000) that emerges in the Migration Period (400–550 AD).

Cattle and swine are also increasingly common in Late Iron Age burials (Bennett 1987, Andersson 2005). Even so, burnt bones continue to be crushed after the act of cremation, and, as previously mentioned, not all bones were deposited in graves. Where did they go and how were they used? Why were bones re-circulated in other communal spheres? In this chapter I argue that their appearance in other contexts contributes to our understandings not only of how Late Iron Age people constructed persons but also of how the world/cosmos worked and was reliant on the exchange and circulation of certain transformative substances, foremost among which were bones. This discussion will begin with a discussion of the other burial places where human and animal body parts have been unearthed during the period.

## Bones as objects and as substance

### Bones as transitional objects that work like masks

When investigating the other sites where human and animal body parts have emerged during the period and place under investigation, it is noteworthy that these are places on literal or symbolic borders or are those used in transformational processes. For example, fragmentized burnt bones was used as temper in ceramic vessels (Stilborg 2001), in iron working/forges (Gansum 2004a, b) and in the post holes of roof-bearing posts in buildings (Artelius 1999, 2001). After excavating buildings from the Late Iron Age in an area in the county of Halland, Sweden, Tore Artelius suggested the possible existence of a complete structure for taking care of and grinding cremated bones (2001: 176–7). Other places where burnt fragmented bones have been unearthed include cooking pits, hearths, and on property borders (Gansum 2004a:43–4, Gansum 2004b: 139, *cf.* Kaliff 1997: 93–4).

Bones of humans and animals have also been encountered in a furrow between two buildings in the Viking Age town of Birka, Sweden. Deposited together were parts of a cow skull with both horns intact, bones from the wings of an eider duck and a large human shoulder blade, allegedly from the body of a sturdy man (Ambrosiani and Erikson 1993: 15–17). Together with the bones were several iron amulet rings (*ibid*). The furrow acted as a boundary between the two buildings, and in one of them smithing activities had probably taken place (*ibid*). In Part Two, I demonstrated that a similar structure was present at Uppåkra. Within the north-western post hole of a building at Uppåkra a ring of iron and a cow skull were recovered (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004, see also above). I suggested that this roof bearing post was considered a boundary in a cosmological landscape, and in fact acted as an axis mundi, connecting different cosmic tiers. It was not only the cow skull – argued to have transitional qualities – that underscored the post's role as enabling entrances and exits to interconnected worlds, but likewise the iron ring handle, since ring handles were commonly attached to doors.

Further, burnt human bones have been recovered on thresholds/entrances to long houses; for example, at Orred, Fjärås parish, Halland, Sweden (Artelius 1999: 76, see also Ångeby 1996, Artelius and Arcini 1996). Tore Artelius (1999: 77) thinks that it is probable that burnt bones will be recovered in connection with other buildings in Halland as well.

Bones, then, seem to have been retrieved from borders, from in-between places, or were used in transformational processes. Considering these different, but in some aspects similar places and processes, it is possible to suggest that bones were treasured and considered to be endowed with transitional qualities. In these contexts, bones worked like masks – they were transitional

objects in transitional events (see previous chapter *Masking and Performance – Bodily Metamorphoses* on the concepts transitional event and transitional object). They mediated between structures, accentuated borders, and simultaneously bridged gaps between different worlds. However, as will become clear below, their importance reaches beyond these statements. I argue that they possessed regenerative powers that were instrumental in the creation of persons and worlds and how these interrelated.

## **Bone as a generative substance**

It is important to recognize that body parts from humans and animals could have worked as transitional objects or generative substances. It is the context in which the bones are unearthed that decides whether they worked as objects or substance (Fowler 2004: 114). When found on borders they could have worked as transitional objects, whereas their involvement in other contexts points to bones working as substance, such as in the transformation of iron to steel. I will now discuss a few examples where burnt and fragmented bones may have worked as a generative substance.

### **Bone as a medium of rebirth: creating ceramic bodies**

Fragmented bones have been found in ceramic vessels (Stilborg 2001), though so finely crushed that it has not been possible to ascertain whether the bones emanate from animals or humans. As with regenerating or processing once-living (human) beings into possible ancestors, the transformation of formable, wet or moist clay tempered with fragmented animal and/or human burnt bones to give the composite a solidity or backbone, also required a firing arrangement and sufficient air supply. In the ancient Nordic cultures in particular, the adding of air/breath in pro-generative actions was considered necessary to create life (Steinsland 1990a). Breath, thought, blood and godly looks were all powers of the soul essential for the creation of human beings, and according to the medieval text *Voluspá*, these powers were given to humans by the gods (*ibid*).

To temper ceramic vessels with bones is a phenomenon that is known from north European pottery as early as the Neolithic and onwards (Stilborg 2001: 400). The meanings ascribed to the use of bone temper must have varied over the course of time. From a modern functionalistic view, though, bone temper seems to have been a good choice in order to attain an adjust-able plasticity in the clay and to facilitate a more even drying (Stilborg 2001). However, the employment of bone temper had almost disappeared prior to the Early Iron Age (*ibid*). This suggests that the Iron Age people made an active choice when they brought bone temper back to the process. To my knowledge analyses of temper in pottery have been made primarily on mate-

rials from southern Scandinavia. In the Gudme-Lundeborg area on the Danish island of Funen, bone temper was found only in fine-ware vessels that had been produced locally (Stilborg 2001: 401). The majority of the pottery was recovered from cremation burials, where they acted as funerary urns (Stilborg 2001). Fragments of such pottery were also recovered in what the archaeological excavators labelled as rubbish pits at the settlement of Gudme (*ibid*). One shard was additionally found in another context at the trading site of Lundeborg, where it had been reshaped as a pendant (*ibid*). In order to produce ceramic vessels, soft and moist clay was mixed with finely crushed bones, and then modelled to the desired shape. When dried, the transformative power of fire, and with the right amount of air, would turn the composite into a ceramic pot – or (why not) would give birth to a new member of the household. It is difficult to say whether the fine-ware vessels were produced primarily to be funerary urns. I propose, however, that the choice of vessels with bone as temper in burial contexts was probably intentional. Such a proposal is also supported by the argument presented by Robert Hertz (1960: 60) that there is a close connection between the soul and the urn with the bones as the spiritual stuff of the charnel house (Hertz 1960 in Oestigaard 2000: 50).

### **Bone as a medium of rebirth: enabling a shape-changing of iron to steel**

Terje Gansum has elegantly examined the roles of the bones in connection with the transformation of iron to steel in iron forges (2004a, b). The way in which iron was produced in Scandinavia during the Iron Age involved the extraction of bloomery iron from bog ore (*ibid*). This iron is comparatively soft in its raw state (like wet clay and human flesh). In order to make the iron hard – that is, to turn it into steel – it needs to be carbonized (Gansum 2004a: 42). A clay oven was probably constructed where the necessary ingredients were brought together (Gansum 2004a, b). Of importance was a sufficient air supply during the metamorphosis, accomplished through the use of bellows (*ibid*). Through extensive use of literature on smithing, evaluating archaeological materials and doing experiments with an experienced smith Terje Gansum (2004a, b) has suggested the probable use of bone coal to carbonize bloomery iron. The use of bone coal in carbonizing processes is known in the area from at least the Early Iron Age (*ca.* 400 BC–400 AD) (*ibid*). Bone coal consists of poorly burnt bones, which are bluish in tone. Such bones are easily recognizable in funeral pyres, hearths and so on. Our modern (Western) way of describing the phenomenon of turning iron into steel would be something like: when the temperature inside a presumed clay cage/oven reaches 720°C the carbon within the bone coal starts to move from the bones to the iron (*ibid*). The carbon may penetrate the surface of the iron to a depth of as much as 3 millimetres, hardening it and enabling a sharp edge to be achieved, such as that on a sword (*ibid*). An Iron Age way of describing the

same procedure may have concentrated on what we would describe as the deep symbolic meanings. By mingling soft iron with ancestral and/or animal bones (where the animal bones might have indicated ancestry as well), the heated intercourse ultimately resulted in a birth of, for instance, a sword, which carried the strength and characteristics of the chosen parents (*ibid*). Several anthropological and ethnographical studies have emphasized that thoughts on sexual intercourse and birth are commonly interlinked with the production of iron (*e.g.* Haaland 2004). Terje Gansum (2004a: 49) considers it most likely that iron production at this time and place was associated with sexuality. For instance, the forge could be envisioned as a womb giving birth, and indeed what was delivered might have been perceived as kin person with social qualities (*ibid*). We know from The Poetic Edda and the medieval sagas that swords actually had names. Some could even speak, sing and guide the hand and shanks of their awestruck wielders. Siv Kristoffersen (1995) has suggested that items composed of intermingled human and animal parts were ontologically indivisible from the person who wore them.

Through extensive studies of East African iron workings Randi Barndon (2004) has concluded that ideas about bodies and furnaces for iron workings among the Tanzanian Pangwa and Fipa were based on the same notions of thermodynamics, well-being and morality. For instance, both bodies and furnaces “were treated with the same set of homeopathic medicines and magic” (Barndon 2004: 35). Furnaces were considered no different from human beings, and they were cared for like humans and likewise were bound by the same rules of conducts regarding, for example, taboos against sexual intercourse (Barndon 2004). Both furnace and human bodies were perceived as containers for vital forces, consisting of body fluids and of course cold and hot substances that would have to be balanced correctly to achieve a healthy desirable outcome (*ibid*). As a result, one might say that there would be no ontological difference between a human (body) and a non-human (furnace) (*ibid*, *cf.* Burström 1993, Englund 2002).

### **Accessing transitional materials after interment**

In Scandinavian Late Iron Age cremations the bones and artefacts from burial mounds were occasionally sought after. Through archaeological excavations the conclusion has been reached on a number of occasions that the burial mounds were opened shortly after their construction (*e.g.* Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992), anything from a few years to decades. Apparently, it was not enough to remove body parts in connection with interments, but also to later seek out specific items in burials. Terje Gansum (2004a, b) has suggested that these re-openings of mounds were aimed at the retrieval of bones. In this way, ancestral power was literally taken hold of for occasions such as carbonizing iron, where bone coal was a necessary ingredient. I previously mentioned the work of Brendalsmo and Røthe (1992), where they interpret



these retrievals as a sign of the possible recovery of items with magical power and those associated with necromancy.

### **Communicable ancestors or elders**

Within Late Iron Age Scandinavian contexts, there are several indicators that the deceased or created being/ancestor that dwelled in the burial mound had agency and was considered capable of communication. This is not only supported by the opening of burial mounds, but also by medieval sagas, Edda poems and laws, since they frequently refer to communication between living and dead beings (Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992: 102). In particular, I think it is worth noting that the new Christian Gulathing Law from the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century AD strictly forbade (heathen) activities such as grave digging, sitting on mounds and asking questions about the future or reasons for mishaps (*e.g.* Breisch 1994). This suggests that during the Late Iron Age relatives or kin of the deceased on certain occasions visited the mound to have a talk with what then was viewed as an ancestor. We may thus assume that what was represented or created through the burial procedures was treated and regarded as a living entity. In this context it is worth pointing out that African anthropological studies (*e.g.* Driberg 1936, Kenyatta 1938, Mbiti 1969, Kopytoff 1971, Brain 1973) have shown that deceased persons in some societies need not have been perceived of as ancestors, but instead were referred to as variants of elders. In his studies of the Suku, Igor Kopytoff (1971: 130–1) has shown that the dead are spoken to in the same way as one speaks to the living, and that they do not even have a notion for “ancestor”, instead a term is used that is somewhat similar to “bigger” or “older”.

Returning to the Late Iron Age Scandinavian cases, communication with deceased relatives is also suggested by the way some burial mounds have been structured. They appear to have entrances connected to them, commonly called “gates” that often are oriented to the southwest, inviting reciprocal engagements (*e.g.* Gräslund 1965, 1969, Back Danielsson 2003 and below). In his extensive work on Late Iron Age societies in Scandinavia the Russian historian Aron Gurevich (*e.g.* 1985) has emphasized that the living and the dead of the time did not live in two separate worlds, but in fact coexisted in one world, where the past, the present and the future were all interwoven into one fabric. Birkeli (1943) has likewise argued that the deceased did not disappear, but lived on among the living in a different state. I would like to suggest that the places where interactions between living and dead beings could have effect were burial mounds and perhaps where rune stones were erected, which acted in the landscape as nodes and conduits for communication (*cf.* earlier chapter on rune stones, mounds and masks). This is supported by Stefan Brink’s (2004) previously referenced work on court places (*Sw. tingsplatser*), where he ascertains that commonly cult and justice were executed on large burial mounds. A rune stone usually accompanied

the court place, declaring the inauguration of the space. Brink (2004: 309–12) argues that the court place enabled divine communication in several directions – towards ancestral and chthonic realms and also towards gods and heavenly dominions. This created space with metaphysical connections is called an interface by Brink (*ibid*). My point is that even smaller mounds and burials could have invited reciprocal engagements, where kinfolks interacted with the deceased through the bringing and sharing of foods and drinks, as suggested in several works by Anne-Sofie Gräslund (*e.g.* 1965, 1969), and in return were treated benevolently, or were able to see into the future. In the next chapter, Reciprocal Engagements, I interpret burials as vehicles for cosmic transportation that could be activated by visiting relatives.

### **Places for the exchange and circulation of substances**

I have maintained that the mixing of animal and human bones with(in) other substances could be realized primarily at transformational stages and places, such as at burials and the manufacturing of ceramics and steel. This idea is also supported by other facts.

Sven Isaksson (2000, see also Isaksson, Hjulström and Wojnar Johansson 2004) has analysed food residues from pottery recovered from late Iron Age cemeteries and settlements in the Mälardalen region. In both places, the pottery had been used for cooking vegetables only, or animals only, or a combination of the two (*ibid*). However, whereas the ceramic urns placed in burials largely only showed lipid traces of animals (more than 50 percent), the ceramic vessels at settlements had very few pots with lipid traces of only animals (less than ten percent) (*ibid*). These vessels had instead been used for cooking vegetables only or a mixture of vegetables and animals (*ibid*).

Traces of iron production, furnaces, cooking pits and apparent ceramic ovens are all features that have been encountered on or in close proximity to burial grounds (Gansum 2004a: 45). It is also in connection with these processes that bones have been unearthed and used, as earlier described. The result of the research done by Isaksson (2000) strengthens the suggestion that the places for intermingling, establishing and entertaining different sorts of relationships and the taking of substances, as well as the places for transformations, varied depending on the context. At settlements, the circulation of substances other than from animals/bodies or vegetable foodstuffs through bodies (human and non-human) was of importance. Body parts/bones were circulated at burial grounds, in proximity to them where other transformational processes took place, and in connection with burials. The regeneration or processing of the dead in order to give birth to ancestors or elders obviously required the participation of animal/human body parts (and things) to a large extent. The birth of other persons, for instance steel and ceramic vessels, may also have required body parts.

## Bones, semen, flour: regeneration and eternity

Not all the body parts from humans and animals that were cremated ended up in the same place. Some parts of bones were left in the cremation layers or deposited in ceramic urns, whereas other pieces were taken elsewhere. Commonly, the bones were handled in specific ways after the cremation, such as being crushed into fragments. I have already discussed a few of the different places where the pieces of bones re-emerged. Thus, cremated bones were of great importance (Kaliff 1997: 93).

There are indications that bones at times were pounded by using the same equipment that was used for grinding crops. Grinding stones have emerged, as remarked earlier, in burial contexts and other find sites such as in post-holes within buildings or in hearths (see also examples in Fendin 2006). A reasonable question is to ask how the practices of grinding crops and grinding bones were interlinked during this period. From a metaphorical point of view, they are connected to thoughts on regeneration and fertility. It is common for ideas of transformation and reproduction to be associated to grinding (Fendin 2006: 159–61 and references therein). Grinding metaphors are also prominent within Norse literature. Lars Larsson and Karl-Magnus Lenntorp (2004: 41) have maintained that the large quantity of quern stones at Uppåkra had a symbolic meaning that was associated with the mill Grotti, which, according to Norse literature, ground gold, war, good fortune and disaster (see also Hultkrantz 1991, Zachrisson 2004).

Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (1987) have stressed that the body in many burial rituals stands out as the dominating symbol for fertility and regeneration and, what is more, that bones are considered endowed with highly revitalizing powers. Anja Mansrud (2004: 104) argues in the case of Scandinavia that fragmented burnt bones during the (Late) Iron Age could have been spread across fields, so that the power and vitality of the deceased were transferred to the earth/soil. Further, ground bones and ground crops (flour) share the same whitish colour. These substances could equally have been associated with semen, thus underlining the links to regeneration and fertility. Ideas about semen and other ingredients, such as milk, being the source of bone are not uncommon (Fowler 2004: 114).

Obtaining regenerative qualities or substances requires hard manual labour. Titti Fendin (2006: 161) emphasizes the essential role of the body in the grinding process. Using a saddle quern, for instance, requires intense physical action, and the rhythmical moving backwards and forwards could have been facilitated through singing (*ibid*). In some sense then, the deceased beings were delivered by the living people through grinding. Their hard labour enabled this re-birth, and, once processed, the ancestral bones may have

worked as a regenerative substances in other societal spheres. When participating in other transformational acts they could have ensured an ever present ancestry in a variety of spheres/objects.

When human and animal bones are burnt they become harder and “indestructible”, or at least they do not change within normal atmospheric conditions (cf. Mansrud 2006: 104). Burnt bones can hence be described as eternal and, in fact, share this same quality with gold.

The most effective way to reach an understanding of how metaphorical thinking works is by drawing on indigenous metaphors (Strathern 1988, 1992 in Fowler 2004: 108). By strenuous breath-taking work (grinding), the fragments/flour/semen are produced, and this symbolic semen (crushed animal/human bones) is used in other transformative acts such as in ceramic production, turning iron to steel, or fertilizing the ground. In all of these transformational instances, the adding of air or increased breath is a prerequisite. As presented in Part One, air or breath is one of the components necessary to create life according to the anthropogenic myth in the Edda poem Voluspá (Steinsland 1990a). Further, I have already mentioned how grinding within Norse literature is used as a metaphor for explaining how regeneration (and degeneration) is achieved through the mill Grotti. Another indigenous story reiterates how the different parts of the world were created by using bodily limbs. The giant Ymer, a progenitor of a race of giants, had his bodily limbs spread out to the effect that his blood became seas, his bones became mountains, his skull became the vaulted sky, *etc.* (Mansrud 2006: 103). These stories or metaphors suggest that the world(s) could not be taken for granted, but that beings had to engage and relate to things, other beings and their surroundings in order for the world(s) to be brought into being.

## Other arenas for mixing animals, humans, and things

I will now briefly examine the other areas in which the intermingling of animals, humans and things was made manifest during the period investigated.

### Animality within humanity

Looking to the history of religion, we gain support for the fact that human beings and animals were interlinked during the Late Iron Age. For instance, all human beings had a *hugr*, a dimension of their soul, which under certain conditions could act on its own (Steinsland 1990a: 62). Frequently, it would materialize itself in the form of an animal. Gifted humans could practice this form of shape shifting, and Neil Price (2002) has recently explored the ways in which shape shifting, *sejd* or shamanism were expressed during the Vi-

king Age in Scandinavia. Another dimension of the soul was represented by the *fylgja*, which could be observed either in a female or in an animal shape (Price 2002: 59). The *fylgja* as an animal gestalt has been interpreted as reflecting a genuinely Nordic perception of the soul, and it was born with the human and functioned like his/her alter ego (Steinsland 1990a: 62–3). The *fylgja* could never be killed or hurt, and only revealed itself in dreams or to clairvoyant people (*ibid*). It died when the human passed on (*ibid*).

The names of Late Iron Age persons similarly reflect how animals and humans were fixed together. Human persons could be given the same names as animals such as Björn (bear) and Ulf (wolf) (Hedeager 2004: 232–3). Lotte Hedeager (1999) has demonstrated further how the relations between animals and humans during heathen times differ substantially from how the relations between the two groups were/are perceived within Christianity. In Christianity, humans consider themselves superior to animals, whereas this was not the case during for instance the Iron Age (*ibid*, cf. Jennbert 2002, 2004).

### Animal ornamentation

During the Migration Period (AD 400–550) what has been termed animal ornamentation emerges. Scandinavian animal ornamentation develops during the 5<sup>th</sup> century and lasts until the beginning of Christianity, that is, for almost 800 years (Hedeager 1997a: 81, 2004: 220). Style I of the animal ornamentation may be described as gestating animal and human body parts that are jointed and adjoined, such as figures 2–4 in the current work (e.g. Salin 1904, Vierck 1967: 137–39, Arrhenius 1994, Kristoffersen 1995). Lindstrøm and Kristoffersen (2001: 80–81) have recently described the art and art objects of the Migration Period as expressions of diverse varieties of transformations. Importantly, in the chapter of masking I demonstrated that facial masks are common in, and a prominent part of, early animal ornamentation (Style I). The style also includes split representation, a characteristic of certain cultures that use masks. Arguably, it is because masks themselves are expressions of transformations that they in turn become used in contexts that resonate ambiguity, paradox and “transitionality”.

The animals that are represented in Style I may be interpreted as horses, wolves or birds of prey (Hedeager 1997a: 81–2). Such animals, or perhaps fantasy animals (figs 2–4), were represented in metals with luminous qualities, where their body parts seemingly intermingle with those of humans. The animals are most clearly discernable in the early animal ornamentation and later become more dissolved or stylized, and harder to see/interpret (Hedeager 2004). It has been suggested that the animal ornamentation illustrated mythical layers that were connected to animals within the Nordic world of ideas (Kristoffersen 1995).

The emergence of the animal Style I is concurrent with the changes in burial customs between the Early and the Late Iron Ages, detectable in the Mälardalen region and in large parts of the rest of Scandinavia, described above. It appears that animals and humans are involved in processes where they intermingle. Their relationships and engagements are made manifest through bodily representations in numinous and luminous metals as well as in acts of cremation. The body parts are amalgamated through metal processing and cremation respectively, that is, through transformative or technological acts (*cf.* Gansum 2004b: 144).

### **A bigger picture**

Lotte Hedeager has stated that in the turbulent times of the Migration Period (400–550 AD), wars and fighting were to a greater extent than before one way for a social elite to sustain or gain influence or control in society (1997a: 26). Germanic peoples came to form kingdoms with fixed territories within the boundaries of the old western Roman realm (Hedeager 1997a: 83). The changes occurred not only in Scandinavia but also large parts of what we today call Europe (2004: 219). The new rulers and a warrior elite developed holy stories and myths of origin as part of their cosmological dominance (*ibid*). The power of this social elite was manifested through control over land, but was ideologically connected to a warrior religion/belief. Political power resided in authority that was gained through a cosmology that was well-known, and a crucial element here would have been access to the world of ancestors and gods, gained through the powerful Sir god Odin (Hedeager 1997a: 118–119). Odin was the master of transformations; he could easily use a grand variety of cloaking devices, for instance dress in women's clothing in order to be able to perform *sejd*, *etc.* (*e.g.* Solli 1999a, b, 2002). Odin could present himself in an animal gestalt to gain knowledge and contact ancestors. Odin (or rather the events in which the god partook) is represented on many of the Migration Period golden bracteates, at times in an animal form (*e.g.* Hedeager 1997a). Through the symbolism of Style I, the status of the warrior elites and their connection to divinity was made visible, tangible and mediated (Hedeager 1997a: 83).

I have already recounted in Part Two the metaphorical connections that gold might have motivated during the (Late) Iron Age, including associations with regeneration and divinity. I maintained above that bones likewise contained generative qualities.

Since the combining of animals and humans was initially primarily represented on items of gold (Gansum 2004a: 51), it might be suggested that the people who could express such metamorphoses through relationships with skilled and revered smiths (and who had access to gold) also had some sort of control over the mythical traditions or stories that were expressed, recounted and associated with the intermingled humans and animals on the

artefacts. It is also worth noting that the (re-)appearance during the Iron Age of bone-tempered ceramic vessels was manifested in fine-ware pottery, perhaps also implying that not everybody had equal access to cosmic exchanges and relationships.

As earlier remarked, one possible animal that intermingles with humans in gold artefacts is the horse (see figs 2–4). The horse takes on a new role during the Migration Period; prior to this period horses were sacrificed in bogs, or specific parts were deposited in post holes or hearths (Oma 2000: 99). Kristin Oma tentatively suggests that the horse's character as a collective offering during the Migration Period changes, and that it becomes more connected to singular burials (2000: 99–101). These burials are initially so-called high status graves, but become more common as time progresses (Oma 2000). Andreas Nordberg (2003: 250) suggests that the increased appearance of horses in burial contexts is an example of a so called “gesunkenes Kulturgut”, that is, a cultural behaviour from a higher social stratum that later spread to other, lower social groups. In the succeeding chapter, *Reciprocal Engagements*, I tentatively account for the different roles the horse may have been connected to in burial contexts.

Throughout the previous chapters, I have more or less avoided speaking in terms of social classes. As hinted above, it is within contexts of an elite that parts of animals and humans are found intermingled for the first time in the Iron Age (Hedeager 2004: 220). The emergence of a “new” style (animal ornamentation) and the recovery of large amounts of deposited gold during the Migration Period have been used to identify upper classes and kingdoms, which we may find easy to relate to today. This social elite, or upper class groups, is later believed to manifest itself at specific places such as Uppåkra, Järrestad, Helgö, Lundeberg, and Borg in Lofoten, *etc.* I have already discussed these places to some extent in regard to the gold foil figures that have been unearthed there. Although it would be unwise to exclude discussions on power relations that automatically come with finding/inventing upper classes, it would be equally unwise to not discuss concepts of individuality and personhood. It is easy to fall foul of the pitfalls of searching for early kings and other powerful individuals in the past, since we thereby more clearly link our present to the past. However, the places where the alleged aristocratic individuals are made visible in the archaeological materials may themselves be contradictory to indivisibility, as argued in Part Two. These aristocratic places were referred to as “transit halls” in order to emphasize their role as places for transformations of relations and of materials into objects, to mention a couple of examples. In such instances, the partible or divisible aspects of a person are pivotal in maintaining relationships of different sorts.

## Concluding remarks: dividends for dividuals

The mixing of animals, humans, appears to be a structure that combines strata within Iron Age communities. For instance, it is expressed in precious metals, in language, in ordinary burial contexts, and in perceptions of the soul. One way of approaching these phenomena is to look at them from the viewpoint of personhood and (in)dividuality, which I have done in this chapter. As a result, other facets of Iron Age societies and persons emerge.

If we leave behind notions of the Late Iron Age individual, and instead focus on a dividable and partible person, as well as metaphorical thinking, it is possible to see how the same modes of personhood contribute to creating persons and regenerating the world. For example, when crushed ancestral bones (whether from a human being or a non-human) were used as ingredients in other transformative processes, the ancestors or elders continued to live on in the world/cosmos as part of, or constituting new, persons. The deceased beings were thus being re-born, and by being re-born the world/cosmos was also regenerated and kept alive (*cf.* Kaliff 1997: 76–7). The death and burial of a person, and the further circulation of that person's dividable and partible aspects, was thus a communal and a cosmological affair of great significance.

In conclusion, during the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia the existence of an animal element within a person was probably not perceived as odd. Moreover, a person need not have been a solid human being, but could also have been non-human, such as a sword, or perhaps a fine-ware ceramic vessel. The different elements that constituted a person could be processed during certain transformational stages, which were carried out in specific places. In all three transformational processes discussed where bones were recycle – from clay to ceramics, from corpse to ancestor, from soft iron to steel – it is likely that the procedures necessarily involved substantial knowledge and that the (re)productions of the various bodies were ritualized and regulated spheres. I have maintained that bones worked as transitional objects and substances. Further, the thought of (ancestral) human and animal bones circulating within varying communal contexts emphasizes not only the role of the bones as mediums of (re)birth, but also how the world/cosmos was created by, built around and relied on exchange and relationships between human beings, animals, and things, or, put differently, between persons and potential persons.



# Reciprocal Engagements

## Introduction

This chapter<sup>30</sup> tentatively explores new perspectives of, and approaches to, Late Iron Age bodies and burials. It moves away from treating burials as bar codes to be read off, and remains of burnt bodies as representing solid, singular and sexable humans, as well as coherent and self-identical beings. Instead other productions of corporeality are explored. From an example of a Late Iron Age grave-field in the county of Södermanland in Sweden, it is suggested that constructions of pyres and the use of particular combustion techniques may be regarded as parts of an artificial knowledge; in fact, as a spiritual high technology where controlling different sorts of metamorphoses required expertise. The complex procedures involved transformed and intertwined human and non-human bodies, such as animals and objects, eventually resulting in a vehicle for cosmic transportation (traditionally termed “a grave”), that, without necessarily moving physically, was sent on its various and multidimensional ways.

## Starter

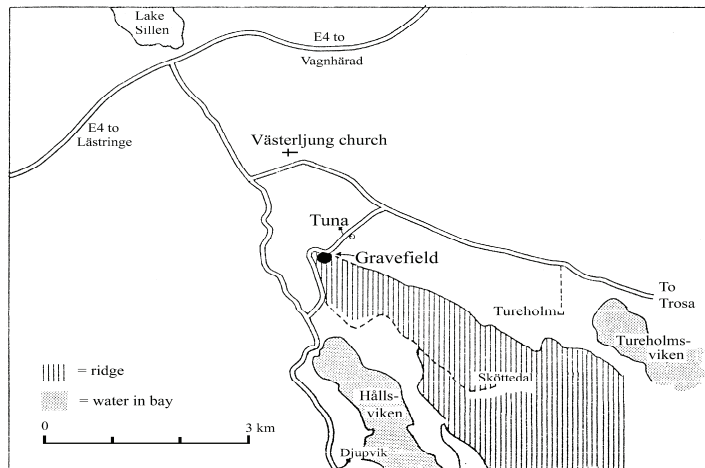
In the preceding chapter, I recounted how Early Iron Age burials in Södermanland contained only small amounts of burnt bones crushed to an amorphous mass. In addition, burials principally void of any bones from pre-Roman Iron Age Gotland have been interpreted by Jimmy Strassburg (2001) as expressions of the finalisation of contractual obligations within prevailing kinship relations. In contrast to these examples from the Early Iron Age, Late Iron Age burials in the Mälaren region, Sweden, consistently contain larger quantities of burnt bones, as previously mentioned. Burnt bones from humans are frequently intermingled with burnt bones from animals and at times objects, which were also mostly burnt and melted, occasionally beyond recognition. Very often it is stated that the deceased was accompanied

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<sup>30</sup> An earlier version of this paper appeared in 2003 in “Scandinavian archaeological practice – in theory. Proceedings from the 6<sup>th</sup> Nordic TAG, Oslo 2001” (editor Jostein Bergstøl).

onto the pyre by this or that animal and this or that object – I have myself written along those lines in an excavation report (see Back Danielsson 2000). To make the description more colourful, endless authors refer to Ibn Fadlan's account of a Viking Age burial, starting as early as Oscar Montelius (*e.g.* 1886) and continuing through the years (*e.g.* Gräslund 1964, Carlsson 1994, Parker Pearson 1999, Price 2002). In combination with an uncritical use of seemingly self-explanatory facts on the sex and age of the buried, however, we end up with stereotyped stories that leave little room for thinking differently about Late Iron Age people and contexts.

The archaeological material to be analysed and interpreted is an excavated grave-field from Västerlång parish, a few miles south of Stockholm (fig. 71). It was excavated in 1963 by, amongst others, Bo and Anne-Sofie Gräslund. The grave-field 21b of Tuna 5 dates to the Late Iron Age; probably to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century (Gräslund 1964: 92, 1969: 133). A thorough report of the excavation is available at the Antiquarian Topographical Archive (ATA) in Stockholm, and Anne-Sofie Gräslund wrote two articles and one BA-thesis on the subject in the 1960s.



Source: A-S Gräslund 1964: 99.

Fig. 71. The grave-field of 21b of Tuna 5, Västerlång parish, Södermanland, Sweden. Partly after Gräslund 1964: 99.

Four out of six mounds in the Tuna grave-field contained cremation burials, and the remaining two contained inhumations (Gräslund 1964). The four mounds all had rectangular constructions, which off-shoot the mounds in a south-western direction (fig. 72). Mounds with such constructions from this period in Sweden are mostly known from the county of Uppland; fewer have been recovered in Södermanland, but they are also known from other places in contemporary Sweden (Gräslund 1969: 140–143, see also Bratt (2004) for a compilation of such off-shoot construction).

I argue that in this particular case and context we are dealing with extensive and intensive bodily and technological transformations and intermingling, as well as bodies in flux, both metaphorically and literally. This includes the whole process, from a possible dismembering of human as well as animal bodies (*cf.* Holck 1987), through the construction of a pyre, the cremation and the use of particular combustion techniques, the possible consumption of foods and liquids, to the precarious and complex construction of a vehicle for cosmic transportation, or more traditionally put, to the construction of a grave, and its subsequent care or use. To assist in this matter I force upon the material the modern concept of a vehicle with an engine. It is obvious that such engines or vehicles were not at hand during the period under investigation. However, neither were other modern concepts such as activity unit, occupational area, disposal pit and south-west gates. The notion of vehicle has nonetheless been used before when analysing Late Iron Age burials, in fact, as early as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Oscar Montelius (1886) chose to describe certain Viking Age burials as containing vehicles within them. These included burials that held ships, and Montelius also remarks on the fact that the burial itself might have been constructed so as to allude to a ship (1886: 149). Åke Ohlmarks (1946) expanded on the notion of the grave as symbolizing a journey to the other world. Further, Andreas Nordberg (2003: 82, 238) in his recent thesis emphasized that the burial rites of the time, where horses and dogs participated, were dramatized as cosmic journeys. Within Norse literature it is likewise common to perceive of the person being buried as a traveller where horses acted as carriers through cosmic barriers (Nordberg 2003: 242, *cf.* Victor Turner (1967: 94) on naming the being who experiences the passage from one state to another as a passenger and, of course, van Gennep (1960 [1909]) on death as a symbolic journey).

Another recurrent trait of Late Iron Age burials has also led me to use the notion “vehicle for cosmic transportation” instead of grave: the fact that they frequently display (remnants) of vehicles, often in the shape of wrecked pieces of boats, the Tuna grave-field being no exception. The general occurrence of iron rivets in differing amounts in Late Iron Age burials might be interpreted in this context. When large numbers of rivets are recovered, it is often stated that the deceased was burnt on the pyre in a boat (*e.g.* Lindqvist

1958). Few suggestions of why a boat was put on the pyre have been put forward though. The communicative aspects of boats in burials has, nevertheless, been discussed by Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh (1998), in light of the example of the Oseberg ship burial. When iron rivets are encountered in small amounts, however, it is commonly suggested that old parts, from worn or ship-wrecked boats, that were essentially just debris, were used for the pyre (e.g. Lindqvist 1958, who also terms these events as “false boat graves”, cf. Müller-Ville 1970). But, with a perspective that links burials with vehicles, journeys and metamorphoses, such claims seem less appropriate. Rather, it is probably with the greatest intention that such pieces of wood, former parts of sea-borne vehicles and experienced in travelling, were put on the pyre as enhancing, transforming and constructional elements. As will become clear below, there are other features of the discussed burials that equally allude to vehicles and travelling, for example the placing of the burials (on negotiable ridges and close to water), the occurrence of rideable animals, the deposition of possible Charon coins and fuel for the ride indicated by the deposition of ceramic vessels.

## Ingenious ignition

The constructions of pyres and the cremation techniques of the Late Iron Age have been noted as highly organized and advanced by numerous researchers (e.g. Holck 1987, Sigvallius 1994, Artelius 2001). The same remark has also been made in regard to the building of ships (Varenius 1992). Although bordering on the banal, the transformative power of fire deserves further attention. In my view it is not enough to think of fire, nor pyres, in organic terms – that is, to think in terms of “everything is just burnt up”. Rather, one must think of fire as transcendent for different sorts of metamorphoses requiring expertise within a variety of fields. In plenty of Eurasian cultures, for instance, certain shamans are primarily hailed and held in awe as masters of fire spirits (Strassburg 2000: 81). I have already placed an emphasis on the role of oxygen/breath as a regenerating power, but of course it is also crucial in transformative practices involving fire. Within such contexts, cremations and burials must be regarded as part of an artificial knowledge; in fact, as a spiritual high technology involving human and non-human agents. Here I refer to Bruno Latour and his view that technology is society made durable, and to his emphasis on how stability and domination in society may be further specified and explored once non-human actors, or technology, are woven into the social fabric (1991: 103). Technology concerns a science of techniques, in the same sense as epistemology thus not reducing technology to the mere artefacts themselves (Latour 1988: 22, 39n). Also, instead of speaking in terms of social ties and technical bonds, Callon and Latour prefer to talk of association (Latour 1988: 27 from Callon and Latour

1981, Latour 1986, 1987), and whether an association is stronger or weaker than another rather than if the ties or bonds are either social or technical. Association can, in this context, express or be interpreted as the act of joining or the state of being joined with somebody or something (LDCE), and the process of forming mental connections or bonds between sensations, ideas or memories (MW).

Thoughts along similar lines, where there seems to be no sharp divide between humans, objects and even animals, have been presented within anthropology, and I have recounted ideas connected to these thoughts in an earlier chapter, *Essential Disembodiment*, in Part One.

## Keeping engines running

Returning to Tuna in Västerlång, the four mounds with cremation burials all had rectangular off-shoots, whereas the two burials without such constructional elements must have harboured inhumations; only traces of a knife and a whetstone were recovered in each (Gräslund 1964). Within the off-shoots a few burnt bones and a few pieces of ceramic were retrieved. Anne-Sofie Gräslund thinks these items might have ended up there incidentally, from the grave fill (1969: 139). She suggests that the outer coffin (which is what she chooses to call the construction) served as a connection to the inner grave, that is, to the deceased, and that food sacrifices were conducted there on special occasions (1969: 140, 1965: 24). Further, Ann-Marie Hansson has maintained in her studies of Birka that “foodstuffs and drinks of various kinds were common as grave-gifts during the Viking Age” (Hansson 1996: 62).

There are records of traditions among oral cultures, that well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century conducted rituals involving meals at cemeteries. One example is found among the earlier mentioned Mari, formerly the Cheremis (Sebeok and Ingemann 1956). Geographically closer to Sweden, among the Seti, living in the south-easternmost corner of Estonia, ritual meals were/are often consumed in connection to burials and on other special occasions (Valk 2006: 144–5).

The Tuna mounds contained between one and three cremation burials within them, where stones and/or charred wood limited or framed the extension of the cremation layer (fig. 72).

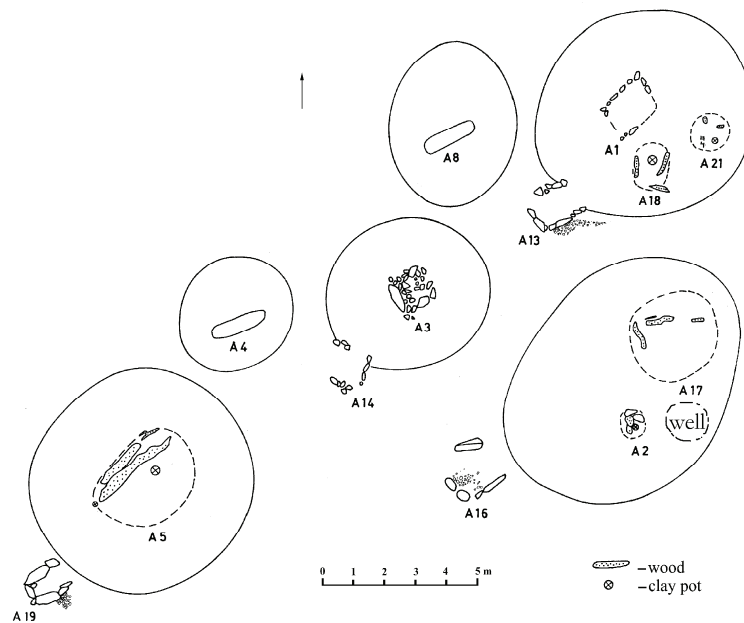


Fig. 72. Grave-field 21b of Tuna, Västerlång parish in the county of Södermanland, Sweden. Partly after Anne-Sofie Gräslund 1969: 134.

Now it is time to take a closer look at the bodies in flux from Late Iron Age Tuna. I begin with the burials that revealed charred pieces of wood, namely A18 and A21 from the northernmost mound, A2 and A17 in the easternmost mound, and A5 in the southernmost mound (fig. 72). I will start by discussing A5 and A18.

A18 and A5 contained two ceramic pots each – one larger and one smaller (Gräslund 1965: 13, 23). In the case of A18, the larger one revealed two fragments of iron, burnt bones from a horse and coal (Gräslund 1965: 7). The following items were retrieved from the large vessel from A5: burnt bones from a horse, a dog and a bird (Gräslund 1965: 13, 29). Unfortunately, nothing could be obtained from the two smaller pots.

The burnt bones of a human, a horse, a dog and a cock in burial A5, and a human, a horse, a sheep and a bird in burial A18, were spread out in the cremation layers (Gräslund 1965: 29). Gunnar Andersson (2005: 86) has emphasised the fact that horse, dog and cat are categories that are over represented in Viking Age burial contexts in comparison to the animal bones recovered from settlement sites. At the latter sites bones, or rather the extremities of the animals, have been uncovered. This observation has led Elisabeth

Iregren (1972) to the suggestion that certain animals could have been perceived in terms of sacredness (dog, horse and cat) and others in terms of fat stock (cattle, pig and sheep). However, according to Norse mythology, fat stock was also sacred (Andersson 2005: 87). As previously remarked, it has been suggested that the horse and the dog may have been perceived of as necessary participants for successful journeying through cosmic tiers (Nordberg 2003: 238), where the dog could have acted as a psychopomp, that is as a guide for the soul's departing, or as an embodiment of a mythical guard of the realm of the dead (*ibid*: 244–5). Birds that occur in burials, such as cocks, chickens and hens, are argued to have been symbols of reincarnation (*ibid*: 242–7.).

Returning to the Tuna grave-field, delimiting the cremation layers or acting as the bodywork were, in the case of A18 (fig. 73), three deals of oak that had been placed on end, supported and insulated by stones on the outside and clay on the inside (Gräslund 1964: 98). The bodywork of A5 consisted of two parallel deals; the longest made of spruce, and the somewhat shorter of pine (Gräslund 1965: 13). (Fig. 74). Beyond the pine board in a southeast-northwest direction was a staff in the shape of an “h” (*ibid*). Due to the recovering of some iron rivets in the cremation layer, Anne-Sofie Gräslund has suggested that a boat was included on the pyre (1964: 96).

Furthermore, the half-Arabic silver coin encountered within the compartment of the A18 vehicle, interpreted by Anne-Sofie Gräslund (1964, 1965) as a Charon coin, the coin with which to pay the undead ferry man for riverine transport into the dimension of departed souls, also underscores the burials' connection to vehicles, subterranean travelling and shifting planes of existence.



Fig. 73. The bodywork of vehicle A18 – three charred deals of oak placed on end. The vertical deal to the left seems to have moved downwards from its original position (the vehicle was placed on sloping ground). The horizontal deals were slightly bent inwards, visible in the photograph, and one deal had to be supported by stones on the outside to keep it in place. The boards had clay as interior fittings. The top of the largest clay pot is visible in the compartment. Right next to it lies a thick rectangular stone, and opposite it another stone, likewise rectangular, or rhombic, in its execution, perhaps reminiscent of the flat rectangular grinding stones that have been retrieved lying close to ceramic urns in Iron Age burials at other locations, for instance Sannagård, Halland, Sweden (Artelius 1999: 80), though note that there is no indication from the excavators that the stone(s) could have been used for this purpose. The cremation layer extends beyond the length of the deals, and stretches towards vehicles (burials) A1 and A21 respectively (Gräslund 1964: 22). Within the compartment of the A18 vehicle a coin, possibly a Charon coin, was encountered, which also strengthens the connection of the burial to underground travelling. Source: ATA.



Fig. 74. The A5 vehicle. Iron rivets in the cremation layer indicate that the constructional elements of a boat were added for shifting purposes on the pyre already. Source: ATA.



In the case of burial A21, the ceramic pot containing burnt human bones was turned upside down (Gräslund 1965: 8). Perhaps this indicates that the main cosmic direction for this vehicle was downwards, towards chthonic realms. The charred pieces of juniper lying right next to the pot (Gräslund 1965: 7), but also forming part of the bodywork, might also indicate this, since juniper and juniper twigs were traditionally (according to folk tales) put on graves in order to prevent the buried from rising (Hagberg 1937). Juniper twigs also generate a thick white smoke (Svensson 2006 in Bengtsson 2006: 14), enabling a possibly spectacular burial event. Further, several Nordic medieval sagas and poetry include references of travelling to underworlds, for instance of journeys to Hel, the realm of the dead, which according to Gylfaginning 48 went “downwards and to the north” (Bæksted 1988: 162, Nordberg 1997: 7–9, 2003: 70–1). The cremation layer, or the vehicle’s compartment, revealed burnt human bones and a possible bone fragment from a horse (Gräslund 1965: 8).

The large number of iron rivets recovered from the cremation layer of A17 (Gräslund 1964: 96) suggests that a vehicle familiar to us, that is, a boat, was added for transformational purposes already at the time of the cremation. The bodywork consisted, as in A18, of oak deals but also of a few stones (Gräslund 1965: 9). No ceramic pots were recovered from this construction, but instead a large quantity of potsherds (*ibid*); an engine malfunction seems to have occurred here. The vehicle was, nonetheless, equipped with horsepower, and the presence of burnt cat bones may suggest the possibility of a supple and smooth ride for a human, whose burnt bones were also spread out in the cremation layer (*ibid*).

In contrast to all other constructions, the A2 burial contained no cremation layer (Gräslund 1964: 96, 1965: 9). Within a clay pot standing close to a charred piece of oak wood and a few stones were burnt bones of an adult and a possible fragment of a burnt bone from a horse (Gräslund 1965: 9). Perhaps this vehicle, as well as that of A17, was inclined to embark on voyages downwards, since an orifice or entrance towards the netherworld in the shape of a 1-meter-deep well was discovered in between them (fig. 72). Even when excavated, the well continued to hold a constant level of fresh water from the ridge when debris was cleared away from it (Gräslund 1964: 100). It has not been possible to ascertain the age of the well (Gräslund 1965: 5), or how long the even flow of water might have facilitated passages to the underworlds.

Somewhat different sets of vehicles are present in A1 and A3. Here stone constructions are prevalent (Gräslund 1965: 5–6, 9–10). In the case of A1, the bodywork, or the stones framing the cremation layer, were arranged in such a way that every second stone was lying down, and the other standing

up (apart from a looted area in the north-east, where stones were missing). This clearly non-haphazard but rather neat arrangement of stones and other similar patterns in the stones of the off-shoot constructions have neither been noted nor commented on by the excavators, but are visible when looking at photographs of the constructions, kept at the ATA. I would like to suggest that these arrangements might be seen as significant architectural features in the vehicles' design. At the north-west wall of A1 charred pieces of wood, probably oak, seem to have supported the bodywork (Gräslund 1965: 6). Travelling in this compartment – that included horsepower – were an osteologically estimated adult and a new-born infant, whose possible remains (very few burnt bones) were also recovered in a fragmented clay vessel (*ibid*). The mound with construction A3 had matching passenger components to A1, namely that of an adult and a new-born infant, though in this case these were not in the vehicle A3 itself, but between it and the south-west gate (*ibid*: 11). Perhaps these might be regarded as pedestrians? The A3 vehicle was, nonetheless, supplied with power from a large animal and a bird, facilitating travel for the adult, whose burnt bones were recovered within the cremation layer (*ibid*:10).

All the burials but one (A3) that I have discussed so far have had charred pieces of wood as constructional elements, which I have suggested were the vehicles' bodyworks. In a sense, the vehicles might symbolically be described as chariots of fire, drawn by horses and occasionally dogs, as they were in the Roman Empire (BE). Other draught animals can surely be postulated. For instance, according to Norse mythology the chariot of Thor was drawn by two goats when he was making thunder (Bæksted 1988). The same sources also connect horses and sea, since riding waves at sea was called riding horses (*ibid*).

The animals that were assembled in the burials, and part of the vehicles, may have had several other meanings apart from the ones suggested above. I have already referred to the research of Reichborn-Kjennerud (1927) who has studied ancient Nordic notions on the physiology of humans. He (1927: 31) claims that the characteristics of animals, whether eaten or perhaps worn, were transferred to the consumer or wearer. We do not know which qualities were considered prominent in which animals. When the theme is travelling, I would like to suggest that the assortment of different animals within the burials might be connected to their varying abilities to move in various elements, for example, in the air or on the ground, speedily or smoothly, and so on. The horse, however, stands out among the animals, apart from the evident fact that it could be used for transportation. Kristin Oma (2000: 108) argues convincingly that the horse is a bonding agent between humans and gods during the Iron Age, that it is a messenger from gods and that it has the power to shatter a variety of borders. She suggests further that the horse

maintains and stabilizes contacts with chaotic powers (*ibid*). The fact that the horse is the only animal with non-cloven hooves, has hair that can be pleated in the same way as the hair of humans, and lacks the fur of other animals, could have been characteristics that meant an augmentation of its potential liminality (*ibid*).

For the Late Iron Age Tuna grave-field, I would like to suggest that through artificiality or spiritual high technology the divide between human, animal and things was dissolved or matters were re-arranged. Through a burial, a complex socio-technical mixture came into being, de-signed to hold together new links and bonds on all sorts of levels (*cf.* Latour 1988: 27) involving, for example, ancestors, family ties and kinship obligations. Howard Williams has recently stressed that the agency of the dead needs to be considered in greater depth by archaeologists, and that "...the dead body can be conceptualized as a node in a nexus of social relationships, objects and exchanges through which personhood and remembrance are distributed and constituted" (Williams 2004: 267). Through studying early Anglo-Saxon cremation rites he also suggests that by collecting certain human and/or animal bones and/or artefacts from a pyre and depositing them in a burial urn a new body – and a new personality dependant on what was put in the urn – was created. The container might even be perceived as a metaphorical skin for the ancestral state or body. Further, in the vehicle, the created being could have been perceived to have been alive, but at the same time was present in otherworldly realms (*cf.* Nordberg 2003: 79–80). In those instances, the vehicle acted as an axis mundi, to which ancestors came (Nordberg 2003: 79–80). The vehicles enabled passages and openings to other worlds (*ibid*).

## Communications: rivers and roads in the shade

Finally, the importance of the south-west gates: I argue that the gates might have worked as orifices, entrances, exits, links and interfaces between living and dead, or indeed for fuelling up the vehicles (*cf.* Gräslund 1965: 24, 1969: 140). Interestingly, adjoining the gates in two cases, and inside the gate in one case, were small rounded stones (fig. 75). These had not been drawn on the sketches documenting the excavation, and were revealed only when looking at photographs of it. In my view, the smaller stones of the off-shoot constructions are paraphrasing the natural dry stone dyke, also made up of small rounded stones, that runs in a south-western direction under the northernmost mound and touches the A1 vehicle's bodywork (figs 75 and 76). Just as the ridge at the end of which the grave-field was situated can be connected to travelling, moving and walking, so too can the dry stone dyke be regarded as a sort of road on which to travel. What is more, a clear connection to water, travelling and journeying is suggested by the dry stone dyke,

the sand on which the mounds were erected and the fact that passing close by the grave-field in earlier times was a water-road connecting the Baltic Sea and Lake Mälaren (Lindqvist 1918: 16–17 in Gräslund 1965: 2). Anne-Sofie Gräslund has also remarked that graves with south-west gates in Södermanland and Uppland show a connection to the coast and water (1969: 144). However, the claim that burials are closely associated to travelling, whether by road or water, is valid for most burials of the (Late) Iron Age. I have already commented on the frequent association between burials and roads when discussing rune stones, and Anne Terese Engesveen (2005) has recently investigated the close relationship between burials and roads for Viking Age burials in Vestfold, Norway. In fact, the connection between burials, roads and cross-roads is prominent throughout prehistory, starting as early as in the early Neolithic (Rudebeck 2002: 170–2).



Fig. 75. The natural stone dyke touching the bodywork of vehicle A1. From this photograph the neat pattern of the arranged stones of the vehicle is also evident. Source: ATA.

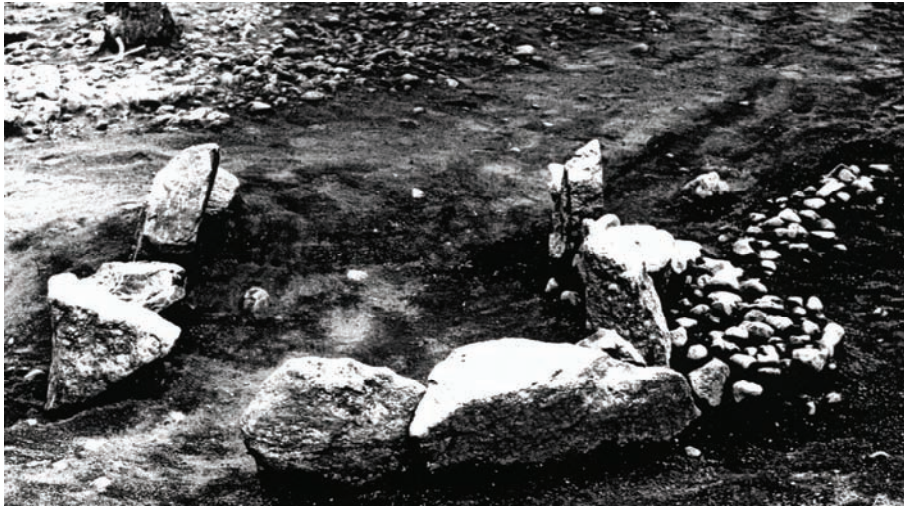


Fig. 76. The south-west gate (A13) of the northernmost mound with adjoining small rounded stones, possibly paraphrasing the natural stone dyke from the previous figure. Source: ATA.

## Conclusions: picturing paramount motions

My brief discussion in this chapter may suggest that we are dealing we are dealing with transforming and intermingling human and non-human bodies, in short, bodies in flux. These were forged together into new constellations with multi-faceted features and states of being. Emphasis has also been placed on the travelling aspects of the burials; although here I am referring to travelling without necessarily moving physically. Implied through the burials is also the importance of cosmic directions, indicating different cosmic tiers, perhaps connected though an axis mundi. Finally, through means of bodily metamorphoses and cosmic transportation, where a variety of vehicles and engines were used, human as well as non-human dis-membered bodies were re-membered into new beings (*cf.* Strassburg 2000, Fowler 2001, Howard 2004). To create such beings probably required an unusual level of expertise. Perhaps the partibility and dividuality of humans, animals, and objects were seen as a prerequisite for varied and repeated cosmic journeying. Here, each grave with its different components, combustion engine, pace, and timing might be described as a “movie”, something moving along different cosmic alleys, directions and roads, featuring various objects and spirits as protagonists and antagonists – a sort of road-movie. In such contexts, it does not seem appropriate to regard a grave as something static, an EAN-code, or a bar code, to be read off, nor to speak in terms of a buried person or a solid human body. Instead, here we have a new, created, and

cosmically active being who due to the correct burial procedures was able to move in a number of directions and dimensions. The places or parking lots where the vehicles were assembled might equally be perceived of as multi-dimensional hot spots. And even as a burial was over, and a mound was erected, the cosmic voyaging probably continued, especially by demand of the living, who might have wanted help with hardship, sickness, or seeing into the future.

# The Connections Between the Preparation of Foods and Burials

## Introduction

In the first chapter of the current part, I investigated how burnt human and animal bones were handled and used, and argued that they took part in pro-creational acts, for instance, when certain ceramic vessels were made or when iron was hardened into steel. The burning of bones (and things) in burial contexts was equally aimed at creating ancestral beings, cosmically active and ready to make celestial journeys in special vehicles on the demand of the living. In this final chapter, I will tentatively examine the connections between food preparation – with an emphasis on bread – and burials. I also reconnect to the topic of masking from a semiotic point of view, and discuss the manipulations often undergone by food and food utensils in connection with burials.

## Bread for the dead

Associations with baking and bread have been established on several occasions for Iron Age burials. A burial cairn at the Sannagård cemetery in Halland, Sweden, not only revealed a ceramic urn with cremated bones, but next to it also sat a rectangular shaped grinding stone (Artelius 1999: 80). Grinding stones are used to grind crops to flour, but perhaps this particular grinding stone could equally have been used for grinding cremated bones (*cf.* Nordberg 2003: 253). The cairn belongs to a vast burial ground with monuments from both the Bronze Age and the Iron Age (Artelius 1999: 80). Of particular interest is an Iron Age house with special features, located on the southwest border of the burial ground (*ibid.*: 81). All the inner roof-bearing posts of this building revealed burnt and fragmented human bones (*ibid.*: 81). It was obvious that these bones were not only fragmented during the cremation but that they had also been finely crushed (Artelius and Arcini 1996: 38 in Artelius 1999: 80).

Bread, the result of mixing and kneading dough, has been retrieved from different places, in different shapes, with different contents, at different times and from different Iron Age contexts, and ranges from hardly edible to edible, or rather from very compact bread to more spongy in character. Ann-Marie Hansson (2006) has recently published a comparative study of bread buns with inorganic materials. Loaves of bread show great variety as regards size and cereal content. Anne-Sofie Gräslund (1967: 259) maintains that it is most probable that bread in connection to burials was more common than we think, a proposal made by Bengt Schönback as well. As early as 1912, Bror Schnittger remarked that bread retrieved within a hinged mountain, dating to *ca.* 400 AD from Boberget, Konungssund parish, Östergötland, was probably meant for cult practices in connection to burials, since one loaf of bread contained gravel, and was hardly edible. He made the same observation on the piece of bread recovered from a Viking Age grave in Ljunga, Skönberga parish, Östergötland, with the following ingredients: field-peas and pine bark (*ibid*). Ann-Marie Hansson (1995) has re-dated the Ljunga burial to the Vendel period, and suggests further that the recovery of pine bark was coincidental.

Burnt loaves of bread have also been unearthed within another hinged mountain – Runsa, in Uppland, Sweden. The burnt loaves of bread buns were recovered in a hearth next to the rampart, which had also been burnt (Strassburg 2007). Not far from the loaves of bread, in the same level, were a bronze pin from the Migration Period and less than a metre away a neat row of loom weights and a large whetstone (*ibid*). In the place judged to have been used for sitting and weaving, a deep trench-like pit revealed huge quantities of animal skeletal components (*ibid*). Complete skulls had been deposited, along with other body parts, and according to osteology Professor Ebba Düring, who visited the excavation of the hinged mountain, there were many bovine skeletal fragments (*ibid*).

Close to Orlanda school, Skeda parish, Östergötland, another loaf of bread was unearthed within a burial context. Within one of two deposited ceramic vessels, a charred piece of bread was recovered (Gräslund 1967: 257). The pot also served as a container for 0.8 litres of burnt bones from a human, cattle and a dog, large pieces of coal, small fragments of iron and a rounded, white smooth stone (*ibid*). On top of the loaf finger prints were clearly visible, and it was approximately 11.5 cm in diameter and 3.1 cm thick (*ibid*). The loaf of bread was made of hulled barley (*ibid*). The burial is dated to *ca.* 550–600 AD, that is, the Early Vendel Period. Other places where loaves of bread have been unearthed include Helgö, Birka and Västerby, Uppland, Sweden. At Helgö baking ovens as well as some 20 loaves of bread have been unearthed (Gräslund 1967: 257–8). They have been C14-dated to *ca.* 200 AD. Fifteen were made of barley and oats, one of just barley and four of only oats (*ibid*). Bread has also been found in graves at Helgö (Waller and Hallinder 1970: 194, Sander 1997: 77–8, Melin 2001:



76 in Zachrisson 2004: 153) and in Building Group 2, Foundation VI (Lundström 1970: 81 in Zachrisson 2004: 153). A number of grinding stones and saddle querns have been unearthed on the Helgö island in connection with buildings, where they had been used as stone foundations, to wedge posts, or deposited in post-holes (Zachrisson 2004: 153). Torun Zachrisson (2004: 154) in a recent work points to the fact that saddle querns and rotary querns, both found on Helgö, were treated differently, and argues that the rotary quern not only ground crops, but also was perceived as having a cosmic dimension. The rotating characteristic of this quern was connected to the passing of time and the seasons (*ibid*). It was likewise connected to fertility (*ibid*).

At Birka, loaves of bread were encountered in 37 graves, all cremation burials (Gräslund 1967: 258). Hakon Hjelmqvist (1984, *cf.* 1990) has made cell structure analysis on the Birka bread. As regards the bread recovered from cremation burials on Birka, Uppland, Sweden, these were largely made of hulled barley (Latin: *Hordeum*), at times combined with other ingredients such as oats (Latin: *Avena*) or peas (Hansson 1996: 64, table 1). Bread could equally have been deposited in inhumation burials, but will have since disintegrated (Gräslund 1967: 258). The charred bread within the cremation burials was retrieved in the cremation layers, or placed either in ceramic vessels or in close proximity to them (*ibid*). A Viking Age grave from Västerby, Läby parish, Uppland, Sweden similarly contained a charred loaf of bread, deposited with burnt bones of a human and a dog in a ceramic urn (*ibid*, Hagberg 1959). A loaf of bread was also unearthed at Lovö, Uppland, Sweden, where a sharp-pointed stone in its middle made it inedible (Hansson 2006) (fig. 77). Loaves of bread, as well as the equipment for making bread, have been unearthed from at least the Roman Iron Age and onwards.



Fig. 77. The loaf of bread from Lovö, in which a sharp-edged stone had been put.  
Photo: Bo Petré.

Hans Christiansson (1948) has maintained that the decorated grave-balls on top of Iron Age mounds were meant to allude to bread, or perhaps baskets of bread, that loaves occasionally would be carried in or would be left to rise in, giving them the same pattern as the baskets. Such stones have, however, been interpreted in a number of other ways (*e.g.* Petré 1984, Göransson 1999 and references therein).

### A (t)rough start

A vessel in the shape of a trough made of oak was recovered from a Viking Age burial mound in Glömsta, Huddinge parish, Södermanland, Sweden (Frykberg and Lindholm 1996: 12–4). The wooden trough was deposited after the pyre event, and was partly charred (fig. 78). It was put there before the pyre had cooled down, since it was shown that it had been exposed to hot, but comparatively low temperatures for a long period of time (*ibid*). Such wooden troughs have a long history, and have been used well into – not only the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the excavators (*ibid*: 14) suggest – but to the present day, based on my own experiences. Similar wooden troughs have been recovered elsewhere too, most specifically in boat graves (Nylén and Schönback 1994). One possibility is that the trough was used to prepare dough for baking bread, as has been common for the last few centuries. However, to create dough that would rise would require rye or wheat to some extent,

since they in combination with water can produce sour dough (Gräslund 1967: 259). The rising process could easily be facilitated and accelerated if the trough was not cleaned after producing dough (*ibid*), since old dough lived on between the wooden fibres of the trough.

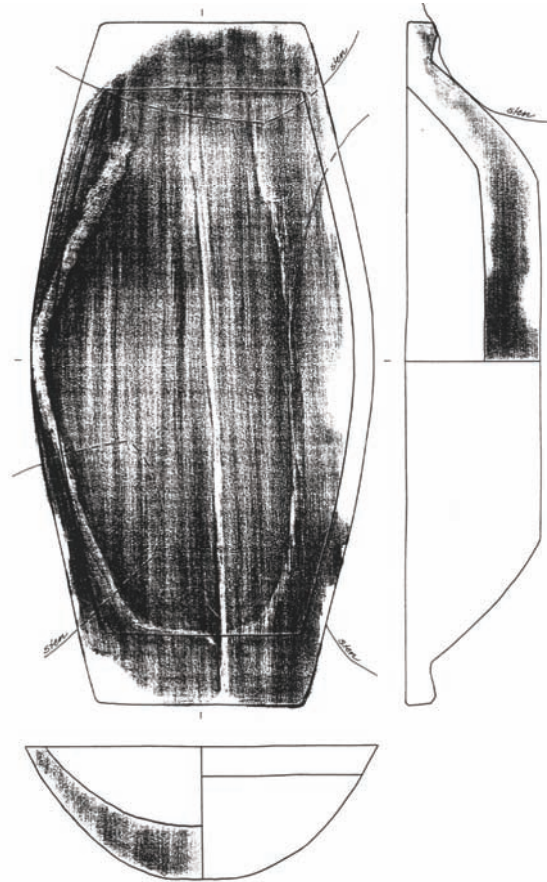


Fig. 78. The trough unearthed in a Viking Age burial mound in Glömsta, Huddinge parish, Södermanland, Sweden. The author proposes that it could have been used to prepare dough. Not to scale. Source: Frykholm and Lindholm 1996: 13.

In the Viking Age burial of Glömsta the following items are similarly significant. Nails and rivets were spread in the cremation layer, and the excavators consider it possible that these had belonged to a sledge, a smaller boat or a rowing boat. However, they argue that it is most probable that they came from wood from old, wrecked boats that was used for the pyre. In the preceding chapter I maintained that adding remnants or debris of boats or vehicles in pro-creational acts, that is, using fire and breath to create ancestors or cosmically active beings (that is in acts of cremation), underlined the travelling element of burials. The cosmic journeying could have been facili-

tated by adding experienced travellers in the form of parts of past seaborne vehicles.

Returning to the Glömsta burial, three ceramic vessels are estimated to have been put in the grave, though all were recovered as pot shards. A heavily fragmented urn with coarse temper was recovered from the centre of the grave in the cremation layer. It contained both animal and human bones. Importantly, no pieces of the rim were found. Two pot shards were retrieved from the earth mantle, though differing in character from the burial urn. (Frykberg and Lindholm 1996: 12).

The Glömsta burial is typical of Late Iron Age graves in the sense that not all the burnt bones had been deposited in the grave. The total amount of collected bone was approximately 2 kg, stemming from a human being, two dogs, a horse and a bird (Frykberg and Lindholm 1996: 16, 22–5). If all these beings had been put in the mound, the amount of burnt bone would have been substantially higher. After the cremation act, burnt bones were thus removed and were used/put/circulated in other spheres, as well as being placed in the burial. In the first chapter of the current part, I discussed these other places and processes.

Besides the wooden trough, five pieces of charred oak wood, cut lengthwise, were recovered in and close to the cremation layer. They were rounded and had a diameter of roughly 16–23 cm, and were about 4–6 cm thick. Their function is unknown, but the excavators suggest two possible explanations. They could have been part of the pyre construction, since they were equal distances from each other and of roughly the same size. Interestingly, the excavators also suggest that the pieces of wood might have worked as serving plates, judging from the lengthwise cuts. Although perhaps more symbolic than functional plates, since they were rather thick (Frykberg and Lindholm 1996: 14–5). The excavators also suggest that a meal consisting of a bird might have been consumed in connection with the burial. Considering the fact that bread put in burials at times was not edible, it is not unlikely that the round wooden objects indeed could represent plates. Actually it could have been important and probably paramount in some ways to distinguish between plates for the dead, and plates for the living, inviting paradox and ambiguity. The same argument may be made of other material categories deposited in burial contexts, such as bread and ceramic vessels. In the Glömsta case, the central ceramic urn lacked its rim. I will return to the topic of manipulation of ceramic vessels in burial contexts below.

Ann-Marie Hansson (1996: 76) who has analysed Viking Age bread in Birka and on Björkö, Sweden, argues that a distinction was made between bread for the living and bread for the dead in terms of morphology and the choice of cereals. I would like to describe this as a way of manipulating or masking the bread in order for it to fit the burial context. By making bread for burials more or less inedible or different, the burial context was separated from the

other contexts in which loaves of bread were eaten or handled. A transformed or paradoxical loaf of bread that, for instance, contains gravel may be described as a transitional object that assisted in transforming the relations between the deceased and the living. Hence a loaf of bread in the burial context is not a simple piece of bread but rather works as a sign, underlining the special features of burial circumstances.

The finding of bread in cremation burials cannot be determined “by sex or age”, but perhaps by wealth (Hansson 1996: 76). Commonly, in many traditions around the world, the symbolic value of bread is connected to fertility and regeneration, and it is probable that such associations were current during the Iron Age in Scandinavia as well (Hansson 1996: 76). There is also the possibility of metaphorical thinking connecting the whole process of baking (involving crops, harvesting, grinding, baking in hot ovens) to that of cremating. The burnt bones of humans and animals were fragmented and crushed, at times probably with querns that could have been used previously for grinding seed to flour. The substances are alike – they are white and powdery. The human and animal “powders” were used as rising agents (both symbolically and literally) in other transformational processes (see the chapter *Re-circulating Bones*). The white substance might equally have been associated with semen, itself associated with fertility and regeneration. Burning bones makes them harder, “indestructible”. Thus, they may have been considered eternal and static and by being added to other transformational acts they ensured an ever present ancestry in a variety of spheres/objects. Although it is impossible to substantiate, small portions of crushed bone might have been consumed in holy meals (*cf.* Dole 1962, Young 1989, Chagnon 1992, Hamilakis 2002). In some senses burnt bone has the same qualities as gold – it is eternal and does not change under normal atmospheric conditions.

Bread is a so-called simple category of object. However, it is often the most simple objects or symbols that are the most significant (Herbert 1984). They are the ones that invite polysemous interpretations, and it is possible that there were different levels of knowledge of bread symbolism with different Iron Age people. Let me present an example on how elaborate the baking of bread, and its consumption may be. It is but one example of many practices among the Mari involving bread offerings (others take place during weddings, at house dedications, divinations, omens, and cures (Seboek and Ingemann 1956: 238).

Among the Mari, formerly the Cheremis, who well into modern times were an oral culture, it was/is common to have bread as an offering. The sacrifice of an animal – where a horse stands out as the finest gift to sacrifice to a god – is always accompanied by bread. This bread is made by a religious specialist, such as a priest. Bread to be used as an offering is thus

made especially for the occasion. Although the number of loaves offered varies from one region to another, nine loaves are often made, one large and eight small. The bread is often unleavened, and receives designs fashioned by the baker (fig. 79) which correspond to body parts of a bird, thus presenting body, beak, tail and wings. The “animal parts” of the bread, that is the designs, are torn out and offered to a god, and a part of the bread is consumed by the participants. The left half of the large loaf of bread together with five smaller loaves is used on the day of the sacrifice. The remaining three small loaves and the right half of the large loaf are eaten when the sacrificed animal meat is consumed (Seboek and Ingemann 1956: 166, 169).

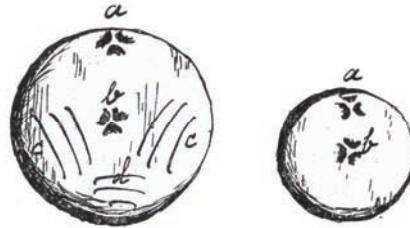


Fig. 79. A large bread bun and a small bread bun offering of the Mari, alluding to a bird. a= beak, c= wings, d= tail and b= body. Drawing: Uno Holmberg 1914: 79.

## Transforming food utensils

In the Glömsta burial, as well as in most of the Late Iron Age cremation burials in the large Mälaren region, a cremation layer with burnt and unburnt objects and one or more ceramic vessels are commonly unearthed (e.g. Bennett 1987: 21). Terje Oestigaard (2000) has recently interpreted bodies in burial contexts from Late Iron Age Norway as gifts served in different ways, including raw, cooked and burnt. The gifts were then subsequently put in appropriate wrappings, for instance in cauldrons or in urns. He considers these “composites” to have been edible meals and gifts to gods, who, by accepting the holy meals, legitimized the social order, thus giving the preparation and giving of divine food great cosmological significance. From the point of view of the deceased, a safe journey to the land of the dead is promised by this holy consumption, and the spirit thus becomes benevolent. Åsa Wall (in print) has interpreted these common pots in burial contexts as metaphors for the household – they were locally made vessels in which food was prepared and consumed prior to the burial. The pot likewise alluded to a new body when used for burials (*ibid*, Williams 2004). This body container might well have been used for brewing beer before the burial – the ceramic con-

tainers are often porous on the inside thus facilitating the yeasting process (Lindahl *et al.* 2002: 39 in Wall in print). There is thus a tendency to deposit in burials objects or utensils that have been used for the preparation of food, or rather in the transformation of ingredients to something new, such as the trough for mixing and kneading dough and the ceramic pots for producing certain beverages or mixtures. It is worth underlining that the cremation act itself may be likened to the preparation of a meal, requiring fire and different ingredients, the possible butchering (dismembering) of bodies, *etc.* On occasion food stuff (for example loaves of bread) was put in the burial, but certain animal or animal parts may have also been consumed in connection with the burial. In the Glömsta case, the shattered urn placed centrally lacked its rim – no parts of it were recovered within the burial. The fact that the rim is lacking is, however, not uncommon for (Late) Iron Age burial vessels (Carlson 1998 in Wall in print). Wall (in print) suggests that by breaking the rim, the ties between the deceased and the household are broken. I would like to compare this assertion to my discussion above on bread being a so-called simple category of object. The coarse, undecorated ceramic pots containing burnt bones are also alleged to be uncomplicated items. They are, however, as previously emphasized, those objects that are especially polysemous and thus make possible many interpretations and elaborations. By removing the border of the ceramic urn, it becomes masked, that is, its conventional way of expressing identity – working as a complete vessel – is manipulated. Thereby it worked as a transitional object, and intentionally assisted in changing the relations between the living and the deceased.

## Summary with Conclusions

This thesis has explored the theme of bodily representations in Late Iron Age (400–1050 AD) Scandinavia. By representation I mean to cause something to be present again or to make something reappear that had disappeared. The material included human bodies and non-human bodies such as gold foil figures. The general purpose of the thesis was to expand and explore the potential of an archaeology of bodies. This was accomplished by discussing how people in different contexts constructed, sorted and produced manifestations of human bodies in relation to prevailing cultural settings, and why. Three analytical concepts – masks, miniature, and metaphor – were deployed in order to interpret how and why the chosen bodies worked within their prehistoric contexts.

The work consists of three parts, Part One *Foundation*, Part Two *Directing Microcosmic Bodies* and Part Three *De-Parting Bodies*. Part One laid the foundation for the interpretive parts of the work, by examining the relationships of human bodies to the following topics: oral literacy and medieval texts, sex and gender, embodiment and disembodiment, person and personhood, and masking practices. Part Two discussed bodily representations other than through (remains of) human bodies, for example gold foil figures, with the assistance of the theme of miniaturization. Part Three was devoted to analyses of human bodies, or rather body parts, where their occurrence in contexts other than that burial are interpreted with the help of metaphorical thinking. Throughout the chapters in all three parts, I put an emphasis on how the material expressions benefited from being related to masking practices from an analytical point of view.

### Part One – Foundation

I started by arguing that the basic ways in which people and communities communicated and expressed identities were decisive for how bodies were constructed and constructive in Iron Age Scandinavian societies. Put differently, since oral literacy was one dominant structure during the period under investigation, I discussed how the engagements of bodies within such contexts differ from literate ones. In this context I also discussed the common usage of medieval texts when interpreting Late Iron Age materials and bod-



ies, and presented arguments as to why they cannot be used for direct analogy or equation of meaning. The standpoint advocated was that they may be of service in the same way as anthropological and other sources, that is, larger contexts of connections and network of connections are preferred instead.

I further presented the ways in which researchers on oral literacy have shown how the body is pivotal for the memory of spoken language. In comparison with textual memory, oral literacy requires the use of the body to a far greater extent. The somatic element when telling stories for, instance, is thus considerable. Words alone do not convey the unfolding of a story; it is also told and structured by bodily movements and sounds.

Emphasis was also put on the contexts in which oral performances are mainly delivered. It has been concluded that such occasions frequently occur at transitional periods, when persons or even whole societies are adopting new roles, that is, during rites of passage. At such instances, the oral performances are ways of creating new roles, dealing with change, weaving old and new together into coherency, or in other words, ways of producing and directing a new story. These changes are realized through the body, where not only the story-teller's body is set in motion, but likewise the listeners', or rather, the co-participants'.

In Part One I also reviewed images of bodies, and perhaps more importantly considered what an image is, and if the non-human bodies (such as gold foil figures) examined in the thesis may be referred to as images of bodies. One of the pitfalls of treating these bodies as images is that they are analyzed as if they are bar codes or texts to be read. Hence, weight is placed on the image as a visual expression, when on the contrary an image is not exclusively visual. Matters get further complicated when "images" of bodies are present. The medieval sources are too easily leaned on in order to identify these Late Iron Age beings, thus adding further to the "images" as mere photos of ancient deities, for instance. One point lost in such processes is the recognition of the agency of the "images" or objects. What is more, I presented research conducted on bodily "images" from non-modern times, which clearly showed that the ways bodies are (re)presented are contextual. Bodies may not be presented anatomically correct, for instance (from a modern point of view), sex, if represented at all, may not be expressed by genitals but instead by clothes, gender attributes may be conveyed by the exaggeration of a certain body part such as the calves, *etc.* Throughout the thesis I refrained from regarding the non-human bodies such as gold foil figures as images, but referred to them instead as representations of bodies. I further contended that these are impossible to sex, due to the arguments presented above, and also due to the fact that there are really no bodies to sex but instead just pieces of metal.

The standard way of approaching representations of bodies in archaeology, human as well as non-human, is by attributing them to a sex and gender. A substantial piece of Part One, *Foundation*, was dedicated to analysing this common procedure and its consequences as regards the interpretations that thus are presented. The histories of the invention of the sexes were discussed, and it was maintained that two sexes were not invented until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that is, far later than the time of research. I examined the sexing methods within physical anthropology, the archaeological sexing, and briefly the sexing through DNA. The analyses were made with the help of queer theories and feminisms. I argued that the categorisation of the chosen prehistoric materials into two sexes (and consequently two genders) is substantially flawed, and makes little contribution to the efforts of understanding different realities. An emphasis was equally put on the fact that commonly only a few pieces of burnt bones are unearthed within Late Iron Age burials in, for instance, the Mälaren region of Sweden. This naturally means that only few (relics of) bodies may be estimated as regards sex. I also pointed to the circumstance that a large number of burials, usually the majority of a burial ground, are left uninterpreted since the fragmented bodies/bones are unsexable, or do not contain objects that we in our modern world have determined to belong to either of the sexes. I showed that a critical examination of concepts that commonly are taken for granted (such as sex) in the long run contribute to well-needed problemizations of our ideas on burials and sex, including our methods of approaching them. Thereby alternative interpretations may be proposed and expanded upon. The sexing procedure was ultimately claimed to be more of a reflection of present-day demands and sometimes unconscious and hidden agendas. It has been shown that archaeological interpretations of the past may be used consciously or subconsciously – for example, to further justify present power relations, or indeed to work as active and dynamic instruments for creating and shaping the characteristics of a sex in our contemporary society. Archaeological discourses act as both creators and applicators of sex ideologies.

To sum up, there are virtually no bodies to sex during the Late Iron Age in the areas with cremated materials. Complete human bodies are rarely unearthed within burials, but the burials contain small portions of fragmented and burnt bones and consequently cannot be sexed. “Sexy” objects are further not always recovered among the fragmented and burnt objects in burials. What is more, when it is possible to make sex estimations, the methods employed for sexing are revealed as having androcentric twists, and are not at all neutral and scientifically safe. Bodily representations through gold foil figures, *etc.*, are further impossible to sex, as earlier stated, since they are not bodies, but mere pieces of, for instance, metal. They may of course be interpreted in terms of a performing embodiment of gender, though this must not be all limited to only two genders. In Part One, I also presented examples of

how earlier interpretations of bodily representations are flavoured by the currents of modern times, that is, they are often andro- and heterocentric. To avoid this Western binary squalor and corruption, sex was bid good rid-dance.

I discussed masking practices in depth and at great length, both theoretically and through examples in the material culture from distant cultures, contemporaneous and prehistoric. I referred to several anthropological studies where masks are found almost exclusively in connection with transitional situations. Masks may however at the same time also express aspects of power relations. Examples of transitional situations are, for example, birth and death, initiation into adulthood, marriage, and healing sessions. I also pointed to the fact that the many (archaeological) works referring to Victor Turner's publications on the liminal period as being pivotal in rites of passage rarely acknowledge and discuss the importance of the usage of masks in the examined Ndembu initiation rituals. Another important point of departure was the recognition that masked characters do not primarily represent certain divinities, deities, mythic ancestors, gods, or occasionally dead humans but rather express ways of recasting certain events. Such events may be the founding actions of the world or the clan or a way to express the community's mythic diversity.

Mask wearing often resonates ambiguity, paradox, and representation. A mask such as a helmet defines not only the helmet wearer, but also those who do not wear facial gear. Likewise, a facial mask/helmet also classifies what is perceived to be a normal or ordinary face, and the abbreviation, exaggeration or intensification of facial characteristics in the mask makes it something completely different and opposed to the ordinary and human face. These contrasting effects are crucial, as they invite and demonstrate paradox. Masks, if successfully integrated by the performer, engender and reveal a new persona. Consequently, what is created through the mask is a new being, which creates emotional responses within the co-performers, as I chose to designate the audience. The mask thus neither hides nor obscures, it is in fact a revelatory device. Masks and paradox making are ways of signalling power, since they are "the focus of concentrated symbolism, whose associated meanings and emotions reverberate off one another" (Tonkin 1979: 246).

The form a mask may take varies from one culture and context to another. In order to ascertain whether masks are used within a certain framework, the conventional means of expressing identities and personhoods must be known. This is the case because a mask, from a semiotic point of view, is a manipulation of the standard ways of communicating identity. Consequently, knowledge must be gained of the criteria along which the world or worlds are categorised and sorted. I emphasized that orality must have been a

prominent trait of societies in Iron Age Scandinavia, as compared with today, when the literate conventions in which we live leave us to structure the world on a seeing basis. For us eyes and sight are conventional and focal vehicles of identity – our semiotics of identity. How were the bodily senses and organs used to structure the world during the Late Iron Age Scandinavia? Was there primarily a reliance on the visual as in our Western culture, the oral and aural, or on colours and/or on luminosity? Importantly, what must be recognized are also the power relations that are in operation within each discourse of sorting. We know that orality (and subsequently aurality) was no doubt one directing principle, or one of the major semiotics of identity, during the (Late) Iron Age in Scandinavia. However, other bodily senses were likewise engaged in order to create and structure the world(s), which engendered identities and personhood. In Part Two and Part Three I maintained that, apart from a focus on the oral (and aural), identities and personhoods could likewise be articulated at certain periods in certain contexts through luminosity, colours, and paradoxically, through a mastering of transformations or masking techniques, whether through verbal performances, other bodily modifications, or even by processing metal or producing ceramics. Equally, an emphasis was put on the audiences as co-performers in performances involving transformations, instead of being passive recipients of something delivered.

To sum up, I concluded that the purposes of masks are to assist in, and act as guides, in transformational processes of whatever kind. As such, masks are necessarily paradoxical. They work by playing and experimenting with the conventional ways of expressing identities, by means of which they capture and focus attention on certain aspects of being and the world/cosmos. A variety of channels, codes, and systems may be used to contradict or complement one another in vigorous performances. Masked performances offer glimpses and explanations of not only other worlds, but of the very world(s) we ourselves live in, by exploiting the unrealized potential that resides in systems of the familiar, every day life.

After the general but thorough discussion of masking practices, I demonstrated that masking was a prominent trait of (Late) Iron Age Scandinavia in at least four ways. I discussed the fact that mask wearing can be traced through the (Late) Iron Age words *grimr* and *kuml*. I further accounted for actual facial masks that have been recovered from the period under investigation. It was also shown that facial masks are represented on, or fastened to, a variety of objects. However, since masking is certainly not limited to facial masks, I also discussed other expressions of masking. I showed that humanoid figures exhibiting “supernatural traits”, such as gold foil figures, are manipulated in different ways. Sometimes they are dressed up with necklaces or have other props taken on or off, and at other times they show stab-

blings wounds in presumed vital organs. Importantly, this means that masking practices are not restricted to human beings but likewise include non-human bodily representations. By interpreting the added paraphernalia and markings of humanoid figures as significant manipulations, it was also possible to re-interpret for, instance, so-called waste products in the shape of small golden strips or bars in other ways. They might be considered as staging props for divine, miniature beings. This thought was likewise underlined by the fact that such “waste” is encountered in the same circumstances as the more recognizable gold foil figures, I later showed in Part Two. In that instance I likewise questioned the modern categorising of certain items as representing figures, whereas others are mere “strips”, and argued that in prehistoric times objects unrecognizable for us as figures might have been considered as indicating divine presence, though in a crude execution.

Linguistically, the existence of masking practices during the period of research was also supported through an examination of the old Norse words *grimr* and *kuml*, mentioned earlier. A large part of the chapter on masking was devoted to examining and discussing the meanings of the word *kuml*. Apart from meaning rune stone, stone standing in proximity of a rune stone and/or mound, I claimed through detailed analyses that in semiotic terms it also alludes to a mask. I found that the seemingly disparate materials in fact share conceptual similarities. The materials were all connected to transitional events and act as transitional objects, where the concepts used were borrowed from the British psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott. A transitional object effects transits between the world as it was known to be and the world as it presently was perceived to be. The transitional object, whether a mound or a rune stone, helps to bridge the gap in continuity that is created by, for example, somebody’s death. Masks, mounds and rune stones assisted in these metamorphoses, and they ultimately expressed the idea of transitions. The transitions focused on bodily journeys and passages at spiritual and spatial levels where the transitional objects acted as helpers, enunciators and navigators for both living and dead human beings.

Part One also took issue with the concept of the individual, and argued with support from other researchers that this modern quality of a person needs to be problemized in prehistory. Further, in accordance with the criticism of the fixed and naturalized concepts of sex/gender, which were bid good riddance earlier, bodies, as well as identities, were considered far from being fixed and stable entities; rather, they should be seen as ongoing processes, things constructed, constructing and always contextual. What is more, bodies are also considered to be constantly intertwined and interacting with things, beings and relationships, creating a multitude of bodies, identities and personhoods. This means that a person is not entirely indivisible, which indicates that a person is not (only) an autonomous and closed body – an indi-

vidual. Dividuality refers to the partible and divisible sides of agency, where, for example, aspects of one's identity may be strategically or haphazardly attached, detached or permeated by someone or something else. Whether an archaeologist chooses to apply the concept of the individual or to accept other analytical constructs, such as the dividual, has great consequences for the interpretations that may be made of prehistoric persons and their social interactions with things, substances, other persons, and the world/cosmos at large. Consequently, the analytical construct of, for instance, the dividual as a mode of personhood bring with it alternative ways of interpreting excavated prehistoric materials and bodies. Particularly in the first chapter of Part Three, different notions of personhood were explored when interpreting fragmented burnt bones, retrieved from places other than burials. Further, the concept of the person was argued to embrace not only human beings, but equally anything that is handled and conceptualized as a person.

Last but not least the I considered the concepts of embodiment and disembodiment. In the thesis disembodied practices and experiences, such as witch-craft and sorcery, were held to be as significant as embodied practices, commonly perceived of as the normal state of affairs, in interpretations of bodies.

## Part Two – Directing Microcosmic Bodies

Part Two, *Directing Microcosmic Bodies*, discussed bodily representations that come in miniature form. They were referred to as humanoid figures. The notion of humanoid tried to catch the human-like, but what we as Westerners ethnocentrically refer to as, supernatural characteristics that were claimed to be evident in the figures. The word figure tried to capture other and similar complexities. A figure can be a drawing, it may be geometrical and rhetorical, it pertains to visual forms and graphic representations and it necessarily also has tropic qualities, but need not always be mimetic and representational. What is more, figurations may also be summarized maps of contestable worlds. Instead of interpreting all the contexts where miniature bodies have been unearthed, I considered what miniaturization is about, and how and why the humanoid figures in their miniscule sizes were used and had agency to create and make cosmos.

Borrowing from performance studies, the concept performing object was suggested to be useful when miniature bodies are discussed. The notion performing object was somewhat modified and was elaborated to comprise material images of beings that made the world and other worlds intelligible, negotiable and communicative through their use in a variety of perform-

ances. When brought into play in performances, the represented bodies were not objects but signs of signs, abbreviated in their miniature executions. As such they were not models from/of the real world and as a result they invited varying interpretations, paradoxes and disparate significata. To be able to relate to paradox and to have multiple understandings of dissimilar signs is to be powerful, I demonstrated. Performing objects, as well as masks, transformed events and/or mediated between structures. The paradoxical features of the miniatures further generated emotions, within performer and co-performers, enlarging the power of the performing objects. They were vehicles for explicit sorts of communications. By using figures – instead of living, performing human beings – characters were presented through a different site of signification. Importantly, both miniature figures discussed in Part Two and masks in Part One were categories that were ascribed similar characteristics and powers as performing objects. Such objects worked within specific contexts where they could be handled in certain ways; they could be worn, shown, and/or manipulated in performances that made the world. Crucially, such characteristics likewise included the ability to obliterate the boundary between life and still, inert matter.

It was further argued that a discussion on metaphors is inseparable from miniaturization, and in relation to this, miniature representations of bodies in particular are analysed as vehicles for metaphorical thinking. The material out of which miniature figures are made was likewise suggested to have been of importance. Accordingly, when gold foil figures were scrutinized, I discussed what the metal gold implied. I concluded that gold bore connotations of gods, the colour yellow, sun, fire, water and by extension fertility, growth and regeneration (life). The reflecting and luminous properties of gold was probably considered as conveying numinosity, not least expressed by the fact that the words god and gold could be used interchangeably for one another. The luminous qualities were thus of outmost importance to attract numinous presence. Gold was likewise suggested to have worked as a time-stand-still and time-travelling, due to the fact gold never changes within normal atmospheric conditions and is not dissolved by many other metals, fluids, *etc.*; hence, an interweaving of the past, the future and the present was accomplished. I deduced that it is imperative that gold foil figures be regarded as an heterogeneous material, where an assortment of purposes and agencies were in operation in varying contexts during the period.

However, despite the heterogeneity I claimed that what held the variety of expressions together was the theme of transformations. By analyzing the gold foil figures I expressed the view that these transitions were achieved through bodily engagements such as dancing, embracing, touching, and the passing of bodily boundaries through orifices, for example, drinking, singing, eating, speaking/shouting, listening to sounds/music, and through bodily

manipulations such as masking practices. The analysis took as its point of departure the recognition of the bodily features of the gold foil figures that were seemingly exaggerated, abbreviated or manipulated; that is, showed signs of masking practices. The bodily performances and arrangements expressed through the gold foil figures may have included shape-changing, assisting in (symbolic) births and deaths, healings, initiations, divine consummations and divine and/or dynastic weddings. Equally, the transitions also included the transformations of other matter, such as the ability to turn raw materials into objects. Given all these particularities, gold foil figures – regardless the context – must be understood as extremely forceful agents. Furthermore, their extraordinary and polysemous characteristics are underlined by their versatility as regards bodily expressions and find circumstances. These objects or actors obliterated boundaries, or bridged gaps, between (symbolic) life and death, the mundane and the divine, and the ephemeral and the eternal.

Gold foil figures were not the only miniature material that was discussed. Although I maintained that the figural gold foils were connected to events and stories (rather than representing certain gods, deities, or other persons), I did not present such a story in any greater detail. Instead, I delivered a possible narrative in a separate chapter of one specific item, the Hemdrup staff. My interpretation focused on the rhombic pattern of the staff, why it was burnt on one end, what the carvings of letters and humanoid beings might have meant, why it was equipped with a flute-like incision, why it was well-polished, as well as presenting the possible allusions of the yew tree out of which it was made. I concluded that the staff had many allusions, that it might have worked as a *gandr*, that is, as a magic stick or staff, and could have been used for healing purposes. The material expression of the disembodied practice, perhaps as in the performance of *sejdr*, that is the Hemdrup staff, was deposited in its last life stage in a bog, a place perhaps as transitional and filled with spectacular powers as a shape-changed being.

## Part Three – De-Parting Bodies

The final part of the thesis, Part Three, *De-parting Bodies*, focused on bodies, or rather body parts and metaphorical thinking. Although all three chapters in this, the last part interpreted bodily practices and remains, discussed notions of personhood, re-interpreted burials as vehicles for cosmic transportation and tentatively explored the metaphorical connections between food preparations and burials, I emphasized that these discussions do not take (or could not have taken) their point of departure as a sexing of prehistoric bodies. I maintained that the contexts in which the body parts appear instead



were good starting points in order to gain some understanding of how body parts, things and substances were interrelated and brought into play. The thought of burials as representing whole, sexable and identifiable beings was thus rejected. Instead burials were considered to be transformational instances; hardly a new or innovative thought at all, but one which is frequently forgotten in the modern eagerness to excavate prehistoric lives and individuals.

In the first chapter of Part Three, *Re-circulating Bones*, my point of departure was that the treatment of dead bodies consistently leaves clues about how a community in a specific context regarded, (de)constructed and (re)processed body, identity and person. The discussion served to demonstrate how a body or a person as constructed or perceived in certain contexts and how delicately the concepts of body, identity and community are interwoven. I commence by discussing other places where fragmented burnt bones from humans and animals have been retrieved. This was considered a necessary task in order to widen interpretations of (Late) Iron Age lives, deaths, and persons, since only a small amount of burnt bones usually surfaces in burials – far less than what would be expected. Where the bones went, and whether their appearance in other contexts contribute to understandings of (Late) Iron Age societies were the questions asked and answered. Fragments of bone surface in contexts that relate to transformational processes such as the production of ceramic vessels and possibly in processes for hardening iron to steel. They have likewise been detected on border points and on symbolic or literal thresholds. I maintained that bones in certain contexts worked as transitional objects (when found on borders), whereby an analytic connection was established for bones and masks. In other contexts crushed bones worked as a regenerative substance (in the creation of persons, human as well as non-human).

The theme of transformation was pivotal for the creation of persons during the Late Iron Age. However, these persons need not have been of flesh and blood, but likewise included anything that was handled and conceptualized as a person (Fowler 2004: 7). I maintained that objects such as swords, ancestors, and certain ceramic vessels, in specific contexts, were perceived and treated as persons. They were all created in transformational processes requiring heat, breath and dismembered body parts. I argued that animal and/or human pieces of bone were regarded as a sort of universal life-giving substance, that is, they had regenerative qualities and as such perhaps were conceived of as a necessary ingredient in the making of persons. Further, crushed white bones may have alluded to flour and/or semen. I concluded that during the Late Iron Age in Scandinavia, the existence of an animal element within a person was probably not perceived as odd. The different elements that constituted a person could be processed during certain trans-

formational stages, which were carried out in specific places. Such procedures necessarily involved substantial knowledge and the (re)productions of the various bodies were probably ritualized and regulated spheres. Further, the circulation of (ancestral) human and animal bones within varying communal contexts emphasized not only the role of the bones as mediums of (re)birth, but also how the world/cosmos was created, built around and relied on the exchange and relationships between human beings, animals, and things or, put differently, between persons and/or potential persons.

The second chapter of Part Three, *Reciprocal Engagements*, specifically discussed one particular grave-field from Tuna, Västerlång parish in Södermanland, Sweden. I argued that the burial ground was the place for extensive and intensive bodily and technological transformations and intermingling; that is, for bodies in flux, both metaphorically and literally. I forced upon the material the modern concept of a vehicle with an engine. Such engines or vehicles were of course not at hand during the period under investigation. Neither, however, were other modern concepts that are found in excavation reports. Likewise another recurrent trait of Late Iron Age burials led me to use the notion “vehicle for cosmic transportation” instead of grave/burial, namely the fact that they frequently display (remnants) of vehicles, often in the shape of wrecked pieces of boats, and the investigated grave-field was no exception. Seemingly, these vehicles were usually manipulated, or masked, before being put in burials, as was remarked already in Part Two on, for instance, the equipment of the Gokstad ship. There were also other features of the discussed burials that alluded to vehicles and travelling, such as the placing of the burials (on negotiable ridges and close to water), the occurrence of rideable animals, the deposition of possible Charon coins and fuel for the ride indicated by the deposition of ceramic vessels. I concluded that within such contexts, it is not appropriate to regard a grave as something static, an EAN-code, or a bar code, to be read, nor to speak in terms of a buried person or a solid human body. Instead, a new, created, and cosmically active being was able to move in a number of directions and dimensions if the correct burial procedures were followed. The places for the burial grounds are likened to parking lots for a number of cosmic vehicles. These lots or multi-dimensional hot-spots were visited by living beings, who might have wanted help in different matters.

The last chapter of Part Three, *The connections between the preparation of food and burials*, tentatively explored the connections between the preparation of foods and burials. Specifically, I discussed the occurrence of bread within burial contexts. In this last chapter of the thesis the analytic concept of masking practices was also utilized. When loaves of bread are unearthed within burials, the bread has occasionally been manipulated in different ways. For instance, gravel has been put in it, and in one instance a sharp-

pointed stone had been added, thus rendering the bread inedible. My point was that these procedures used to make the bread inedible are carried out in order to separate the burial context from other contexts in which loaves of bread are eaten. Thereby the bread was not really a simple loaf of bread but a sign, a paradox, that underlined the special features of burial circumstances. Thus the bread may be recognized also as a transitional object, one that assisted in the process of transforming the relations between the deceased and the living. The mask constituted the gravel or stone within the bread. I also briefly discussed how bread on certain occasions was handled among the Mari, formerly the Cheremis, who live near the northern bend of the Volga, in order to broaden our understandings of the polysemous characteristic of bread. Comments were also made in regard to other objects that are known to have been manipulated or masked in burial contexts, ceramic vessels in particular. Such pots usually have a long life-cycle, or participate in other communal arenas involving the production of foods/beverages, before ending their days in a burial mound (or in a vehicle for cosmic transportation). In such contexts they may lack the rim, for instance, or may be turned upside down. Thus the ceramic urn in the burial context is singled out from the ordinary contexts in which it operated. It is concluded that the categories that are the most obvious, or simplest, (such as bread and ceramic vessels), may be the most polysemous ones and thus gain attention and are exposed to manipulation (mutilation, exaggeration, abbreviation, *etc.*) in rites of passage, such as death.

## Concluding Remarks – The Late Iron Age as the Time of Transformations

In the thesis I have analysed representations of bodies, both human and non-human. I have demonstrated that the themes of metaphorical thinking and miniaturization, as well as masking practices, were useful for understanding aspects of Late Iron Age bodies and societies. What binds all the chapters and analyzed bodies together is the idea of transformation. The theme of transformation is argued to be one of the fundamental characteristics throughout the centuries of the (Late) Iron Age. It is most clearly discernable, for instance, in the Migration Period, when evidence of masking practices starts to appear in the archaeological material. I have further maintained that gold foil figures are connected to transitions, since they were used in transitional events. I have likewise underscored the lack of individuals in “transit halls”, where in many instances gold foil figures have been unearthed, as well as in vehicles for cosmic transportation (burials). Instead these circumstances point to dividuality, where these dividuals’ partible and

divisible aspects are necessary ingredients in the continuous creation and regeneration of other beings, persons, things, and/or the world at large. A crucial ingredient in such transitional events is animal and human bones. Crushed bones are argued to have worked as a regenerative substance that alluded to both semen and flour. Through their circulation in a variety of societal spheres, and their taking part in transformative acts, they assisted in keeping and bringing life to this and other worlds. The transformations and the circulation of substances thus had cosmic relevance and significance.

Although I have not discussed the reasons why transformation was a paramount expression of (Late) Iron Age societies, it is possible to suggest that it emanates from the large societal changes that took place in the transition between the Early and the Late Iron Age, which is when (facial) masks start to appear in significant numbers in the archaeological material in a multitude of ways. As previously mentioned, these changes included the abandonment and moving of settlements (Zachrisson 2001), the re-naming of farms and cultivated areas (Karlsson Lönn 1991), a dramatic change in Primitive Norse between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries (Gustavson 1981), and finally, making the treatment and deposition of dead bodies more heterogeneous than earlier in the sense that more animal species and objects were put in burials (Andersson 2005). Equally, employing the analytical constructs of dividual and partible beings as I have done here engenders a (Late) Iron Age societies in which there was a necessity to keep body parts in circulation. Their regenerative qualities were essential for successful transformations to take place, that is, for the continuation of persons and worlds.

In conclusion, the bodily representations discussed in the thesis are connected to transitions. No matter how much archaeologists want to describe ways of living when excavating prehistories, the author argues that the material remains unearthed in many instances reflect ways of dying (and being re-born), whether literally or symbolically. The materials may reflect rites of passages, as maintained in the cases I have investigated. My aim with the thesis *Masking Moments. The Transitions of Bodies and Beings in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* has captured these phenomena.

# Sammanfattning

Den här avhandlingen har diskuterat kroppar från Skandinaviens yngre järnålder, ca. 400–1050 AD. Kropparna har bestått dels av lämningar av kroppar i gravar, dels av kroppsliga representationer i form av miniatyrer, såsom t ex genom guldgubbar. Avhandlingens övergripande syfte har varit att utforska den potential arkeologiska studier av kroppar kan ge, och mer specifikt representationer av skandinaviska järnålderskroppar.

Avhandlingen består av tre delar, Del Ett *Foundation*, Del Två *Directing Microcosmic Bodies* och Del Tre *De-Parting Bodies*. Många av de ord och begrepp som används i avhandlingen är svåra att översätta direkt till svenska, varför jag i denna svenska sammanfattning behåller de engelska uttrycken.

Del Ett utgör grunden för de tolkande avsnitten i arbetet. Där analyseras följande ämnens förhållanden till kroppar, nämligen muntliga och skriftliga samhällen, kön och genus, embodiment och disembodiment, person och personhood samt maskpraktiker.

Del Två undersöker representationer av kroppar, som inte är (rester av) människokroppar, såsom till exempel guldgubbar. De analyseras med hjälp av det begreppet miniatyrisering.

Del Tre diskuterar lämningar av människokroppar med stöd av metaforiskt tänkande, och granskar närmare anledningarna till att dessa inte bara återfinns i gravar, utan även på andra platser.

Jag betonar i alla kapitel att de undersökta materialen med fördel kan kopplas samman med maskpraktiker från analytisk synpunkt.

## Del Ett – Foundation

Avhandlingens första del, *Foundation*, består av fyra kapitel. I dess första kapitel, *Levelling*, redogjorde jag för avhandlingens syften, frågeställningar och vetenskapliga tillvägagångssätt. Arbetets övergripande syfte var, som sagt, att expandera och utforska den potential en arkeologi med fokus på kroppar kan erbjuda. Framför allt har detta skett genom att ifrågasätta det

som uppfattas som naturliga kategoriseringar, såsom kön. Istället för att fråga vilket kön eller genus en uppträdande kroppslighet har, har fokus legat på frågor om hur människor i olika kontexter konstruerade, sorterade och producerade manifestationer av mänskliga kroppar, och varför. Därigenom har arbetet diskuterat även allmänna frågor om kategorisering och variabilitet i kroppar, och för all del även i materiell kultur. Ett queerteoretiskt och ett feministiskt perspektiv anläggs för att analysera det utvalda materialet, och insikter från flera olika akademiska discipliner (förutom arkeologi) används, framför allt från antropologi, teatervetenskap, religionsvetenskap och filosofi. Detta till trots används inte antropologi för att dra direkta paralleller mellan förhistorier och andra samhällen. Istället görs en ansträngning för att jämförande analogier skall innehålla större sammanhang och nätverk av samband med de analyserade materialen.

Ett grundantagande jag gjort är att de sätt som människor och samhällen kommunicerar och uttrycker identitet är förankrat i kroppen. Det blir då av betydelse att försöka begripliggöra de skillnader som föreligger mellan skriftliga samhällen (såsom vårt nuvarande idag) och muntliga samhällen (såsom de huvudsakligen var i Skandinavien under yngre järnåldern) och hur dessa skillnader påverkade de sätt som kroppar användes och engagerades i kommunikativa strategier.

Jag har även demonstrerat hur forskning om muntliga samhällen tydligt visar hur kroppen är av största vikt för det talade språket. Jämfört med ett minne som förlitar sig på texter, dvs. minnet kan vara avskilt ifrån kroppen, måste kroppen användas i långt större utsträckning i muntliga samhällen. De somatiska, alltså kroppsliga, inslagen när en historia berättas t ex, är avsevärd i muntliga kulturer. Det är också viktigt att förstå att de praktiker som vi moderna människor har delat upp i olika kategorier, där teknologi kan utgöra ett exempel, förslagsvis konsten att tillverka ett föremål, under förhistorier var sammanvävda med kroppar och historier. Där är inte bara ord avgörande för hur en historia utvecklar sig, utan också kroppsliga rörelser och ljud.

Jag har också lagt vikt vid de kontexter då muntliga framföranden vanligen ges. Framför allt förekommer de i perioder som karaktäriseras av gränsöverskridande, alltså när en person, eller till och med hela samhällen, får ändrade roller, dvs. under passageriter. Vid sådana tillfällen fungerar det muntliga framförandet som ett sätt att skapa nya roller, att handskas med förändringar, att väva nytt och gammalt till en ny helhet, eller annorlunda uttryckt; ett sätt att producera och regissera en ny berättelse. Det är genom kroppen som detta sker, där inte bara berättarens kropp sätts i rörelse under framförandet, utan även medaktörers.

I Del Ett diskuterade jag även bilder av kroppar. Framför allt så reflekterade jag över vad en bild är, och om de icke-mänskliga kropparna som analyseras

i arbetet kan betraktas som bilder. En uppenbar nackdel finns med att betrakta de som sådana – de synes då vara direkt avläsbara streckkoder, eller texter som väntar på att läsas. Därmed läggs också fokus på en kroppslig representation som ett visuellt medium, medan jag i motsats till detta menar att en bild inte alls enbart är visuell. Dessutom hävdade jag att saken kompliceras ytterligare när ”bilder” av järnålderskroppar är aktuella. Dessa kroppar identifieras gärna med personer, väsen eller gudar från de medeltida källorna, och bidrar än mer till att bilderna blir ett slags foton över järnålders- eller medeltidskändisar. Dessutom presenterade jag forskning som utförts på bilder från andra än moderna tider, som tydligt visar att kroppsliga representationer är kontextuella. Kroppar presenteras t ex inte alltid helt anatomiskt korrekt (alltså korrekt från ett nutida perspektiv). Kön, om det ens är representerat, behöver inte alls uttryckas genom genitalier utan kan istället gestaltas genom klädedräkten. Vidare, genusattribut kan uttryckas genom en förstoring av vissa kroppsdelar såsom t ex vadera. Konsekvent genom avhandlingen valde jag att inte betrakta de icke-mänskliga kroppar som undersökts, alltså miniatyrerna, som bilder utan som *representationer av kroppar*. Dessutom menar jag att det är omöjligt att könsbedöma dessa kroppar, då de ju i egentlig mening inte är kroppar, utan istället till exempel en bit metall.

Med representation avses att göra så att något materialiseras igen, eller få något att återuppstå som varit försvunnet. Det som återuppstod behöver heller inte exakt vara det, som försvunnit. Begreppet representation knyter därmed an till betydelseerna av ordet figur, liksom till begreppet mask. Gemensamt för dessa begrepp är att de till viss del är paradoxala, dvs. bilderna eller figurerna är inte lätta att identifiera omedelbart. De har drag som är något annorlunda, som försvårar en säker identifieringsprocess.

Det andra kapitlet i avhandlingens första del, *Categorisation and Variability – the Control of Gender and Sex and the Resistance of Material Culture*, diskuterade ingående hur kroppar sorterats och sorteras generellt i samhället idag och framfört allt inom den arkeologiska disciplinen, med utgångspunkt från begreppet kön. Jag framförde att en könskategorisering, liksom även andra moderna bipolära kategoriseringar såsom den inom genus, till stor del har sin grund i den ontologiska distinktionen mellan kropp och själ inom den filosofiska traditionen. Denna västerländska tradition stöder och möjliggör politiska och psykologiska relationer av underordning och hierarki. Vidare framförs att tolkningar av kroppar inom arkeologi även påverkas av moderna föreställningar om hur den könsbedömda kroppen kunde och skulle uppträda och vara utrustad. Emellertid bjuder de valda arkeologiska materialen motstånd till sådana kategoriseringar. En stor del av kroppsmaterialen går inte att könsbedöma utifrån en tvåkönsmodell, och blir därför otolkade, utesluts från vidare forskning, nämns inte eller tvingas till att passa till endera könet.

Jag redovisade konsekvenserna av den förhärskande heterocentrismen inom disciplinen för de arkeologiska tolkningar som därmed är möjliga att presentera. I kapitlet gavs också en första presentation av det utvalda forskningsmaterialet, genom att tidigare, ofta androcentriska och heterocentriska, tolkningar redovisas.

Efter noggranna analyser av konceptet kön, blev slutsatsen att kön inte skall användas i det fortsatta arbetet med det kroppsliga materialet. Två-könsmodellen är historisk, och jag menade att det inte är oproblematiskt att utgå ifrån att förhistoriska människor sorterade sina kroppar enligt de normer vi utgår från idag. Dessa nutida tolkningar av förhistorier har också visats sig vara aktiva och dynamiska instrument för att påverka och skapa mönster för våra kön i dagens samhälle.

Jag granskade metoderna som används för att göra könsbedömningar, företrädesvis utifrån skelettet, arkeosteologi, och den s k arkeologiska könsbedömningen, dvs. vissa föremål anses vara "feminina" och vissa "maskulina" (huvudsakligen smycken respektive svärd förstås). Jag demonstrerade att den arkeologiska könsbedömningen attribuerar föremål till endera könet utifrån våra moderna uppfattningar av vad som tolkas som kvinno- respektive mansföremål. Vad som uppfattas som ett kvinno- eller mansföremål kan vidare skilja sig från en arkeolog till en annan.

Under den yngre järnåldern i Skandinavien var det förhärskande begravningssättet kremering. En vanlig bedömning är att endast ca. 20–30 % av ett gravmaterial kan bedömas utifrån kön. Väldigt sällan ingår ett helt (bränt) skelett i brandgravar från denna tid. Ett genomsnitt från en begravningsplats i Spånga redovisade en genomsnittlig mängd brända ben på mindre än tre hg. En vuxen människa ger annars uppskattningsvis ca. 2–2.5 kg ben vid kremering. Vart de andra kremerade benen tog vägen, och om och vad de ingick i för andra processer, diskuterades i avhandlingens tredje del, *De-Parting Bodies*. Jag hävdade att det är svårt att könsbedöma kroppar i järnåldersgravar osteologiskt, då dessa som nyss framfördes 1) inte är kompletta, 2) de kremerade delar som nedlagts i gravsammanhang är fragmentariska, ofta krossade till centimeterstora bitar 3) den kroppsdel som bedöms som säkrast för könsbedömning, nämligen bäckenet, blir söndersprängt vid kremering och saknas därmed generellt i gravarna. Där återfinns istället oftast enbart bitar av skallen och tandrötter. Problemet med könsbedömning av järnåldersgravar stannar emellertid inte där. Metoderna för att bedöma lämningar av skelett, i detta fall kremerade ben, är inte säkra eller neutrala, utan har en tendens till att få androcentrisk slagsida. Detta betyder att skelettbitar anses vara från män i större utsträckning än från kvinnor. En annan betydelsefull poäng är att man med ett konstant fokus på att skapa skillnader mellan det som benämns mans- och kvinnokroppar, missar den intervariabilitet som finns inom en könskategori. För att undvika dessa problem, och för att upp-



fylla avhandlingens övergripande syfte, användes inte begreppet kön i avhandlingen.

Sammanfattningsvis så finns det inte så många gram ben från människa att könsbedöma i järnålderns brandgravar, och benen är dessutom vanligen avsiktligt fragmenterade. De ben som återfinns är inte heller de som lättast kan könsbedömas och metoder som används för bedömning har en tendens att ha androcentrisk slagsida. Slutligen, om nu en könsbedömning är gjord med utfallet "man" eller "kvinna" vad betydde detta kulturellt – hur uppfattades kroppen och hur uppträdde den? Dessa frågor kan inte besvaras utifrån svaret "man" eller "kvinna". Däremot finns våra förutfattade och moderna meningar om vad det innebär att vara kvinna och man. Fyndet av ett "kvinnligt" bäcken, vilket i alla händelser är ovanligt i en brandgrav, då ju detta briserar under kremeringsakten, behöver inte betyda att den gravlagde uppträdde i den kategori vi benämner kvinna, om den ens fanns i den lydelse, som vi tillskriver den idag. I avhandlingens senare delar undveks könskategoriseringen man och kvinna. När det gäller lämningar av kroppar, redovisades de skelettkaraktäristika, som bedömts som manligt respektive kvinnligt, t ex TV-formade ögonhålor vilka utgör ett manligt drag (Bäckström 1994), istället för att använda etiketten man. Därigenom blev det tydligt hur litet informationsvärde dessa etiketter har för förståelser av förhistoriska liv, eller annorlunda verkligheter, och hur diffust, imprecist och kulisslikt begreppet kön är. Samtidigt betonade jag att arkeosteologi sannolikt är en underutnyttjad resurs av arkeologer, att min kritik riktat in sig på androcentrismen i könsbedömningsmetoderna, osäkerheter i könsbedömning av järnåldersgravar samt på frånvaron av ett kritiskt förhållningssätt till kön generellt. Jag kritiserade inte det analysarbete som annars utförs på skelettmaterial.

Vidare framförde jag att det är minst lika viktigt att beakta det eller de sammanhang i vilka de gravlagda skelettbitarna ingick i. Om det är svårt att identifiera en individ och dess kön i en yngre järnåldersgrav, där vanligen endast en liten del av skelett från människa ingår, deponerat tillsammans med t ex djurben och föremål vilka också ingått på brandbålet, kan en möjlighet vara att fundera på om begreppen individ och kön ens är intressant eller applicerbart i gravkontexten. Kapitlet, *Essential Engagements*, diskuterade just begrepp som individ och person. Begreppet individ är till stor del förknippat med uppfattningen om den västerländska, självständiga och fria individen. Detta koncept är emellertid historiskt och behöver problematiseras när det skall användas i förhistoriska kontexter. De fria och obundna individer som vi uppfattar oss vara, är vi dock inte alltid – vi är i lika stor utsträckning och i vissa avseenden "divider". Detta betyder att vi inte är autonoma och stabila, snarare ingår vi i nätverk av sociala relationer med såväl människor, ting som substanser (föda, kemikalier, etc.) som påverkar oss. Vi är därmed inte ensamma om att bestämma "vilka vi är". Dividualitet avser de

tillfällen då aspekter av ens identitet av strategiska eller slumpmässiga skäl tas ifrån, läggs till eller genomsyrar någon annan eller någonting annat. Detta betyder att gränserna för en kropp kan utsträckas eller inskränkas och därmed inte alls behöver vara samma sak som, eller sammanfalla med, en individ eller en person. Inom antropologi, och nyligen inom arkeologi (Fowler 2004), har person-konceptet diskuterats. En person kan definieras som en enhet som behandlas som en person, dvs. en person behöver inte vara en människa. "Divid" är ett möjligt sätt att vara som person. Särskilt användbara är begreppen dividualitet och person i järnålderskontexter, visade jag i avhandlingens tredje del, *De-Parting Bodies*. Jag argumenterade för att personer skapades i olika transformationsakter. Dessa akter kunde resultera i såväl mänskliga personer, som icke-mänskliga såsom svärd, keramikkräsl och förmödrar/förfäder. Huruvida en arkeolog väljer att använda det analytiska individkonceptet eller är öppen även för andra analytiska konstruktioner, som till exempel dividen, får enorma konsekvenser för de tolkningar som kan göras av förhistoriska personer och deras interagerande med föremål, substanser, andra personer och världen eller kosmos i stort. Detta betyder att divid-konceptet, som är ett sätt att vara som person, för med sig alternativa sätt att tolka utgrävda material och kroppar. I Del Ett diskuterade jag även begreppen embodiment och disembodiment. Jag framför att disembodiment, såsom det uttrycks till exempel genom trolldom och häxeri, är lika viktigt som embodied eller förkroppsligade praktiker, som brukar betraktas som det normala sättet att vara.

Det mest omfattande kapitlet i Del Ett är kapitlet *Masking and Performance: Bodily Metamorphoses*. Detta var nödvändigt eftersom teorier om maskpraktiker har löpt som en röd tråd genom alla avsnitt av avhandlingen. Dessutom visade jag att teorier om maskpraktiker är speciellt värdefulla för just yngre skandinavisk järnålder, som uppvisar flera olika varianter och nivåer av maskanvändning.

Jag började med att analysera maskpraktiker på en generell nivå, både teoretiskt och genom exempel från dåtida och nutida samhällen. Därefter diskuterade jag specifikt maskpraktiker under järnåldern i Skandiavien.

Jag visade vad maskbärande och maskpraktiker handlar om, och betonar genom rikliga referenser från framför allt antropologi, men även teatervetenskap, att de främst används i situationer som karaktäriseras av transformationer, eller annorlunda uttryckt i passageriter. Framför allt kopplades den brittiske psykoanalytikern Donald W. Winnicotts begrepp "transitional event" och "transitional object" till maskanvändning, för att förklara hur masker fungerar. Ett exempel på en "transitional event", alltså en händelse eller ett skeende i vilket ett gränsöverskridande föremål behövs, är i Winnicotts tappning det tillfälle då ett litet barn upplever ett brott i kontinuiteten, förslagsvis genom att en förälder är frånvarande. För att klara av förändringen i

tillvaron kan t ex ett gosedjur vara till god hjälp, till dess att föräldern är närvarande igen. Därmed fungerar gosedjuret under frånvaron som ett "transitional object". Sammanfattningsvis kan ett "transitional object" beskrivas som ett gränsöverskridande föremål, som hjälper till att förklara, manifesteras och möjliggöra förändringar av allehanda slag.

Med nödvändighet redogjorde jag också för vad som är en mask, eftersom sådana kan ha många uttrycksformer. En mask kan vara det som vanligen förknippas med masker alltså en ansiktsmask. Det kan emellertid även vara huvudbeklädnader, tatueringar, ärr, speciella kläder och figurer eller ansikten som har skulpterats på föremål.

För att förstå om en företeelse är att betrakta som en mask, måste de vanliga sätten att uttrycka identitet förstås. Det är då avgörande att även begripa hur den studerade kulturen strukturerade sin värld – alltså vilka kroppsliga sinnen som var vägledande för hur världen uppfattades och skapades. Idag i den moderniserade västvärlden förlitar vi oss i stor utsträckning på våra ögon – vårt skriftliga samhälle är en seende kultur. För oss kan en mask bestå i att någon täcker för sina ögon. Därmed blir det svårt för oss att identifiera vem som är bakom masken. Från ett semiotiskt perspektiv består maskeringen av att det gängse sättet att uttrycka identitet manipuleras, alltså används en förklädnad som täcker ögonen. Förhistoriska samhällen är emellertid sällan baserade på seende eller det visuella som det främsta framträdande sinnet. De är istället vanligen muntliga kulturer. Hos Kulina, en grupp av människor som lever i västra Brasiliens Amazonområde, sker det främsta sättet att uttrycka identitet genom att producera ljud. En manipulation av identiteten blir i denna kultur därför ekvivalent med att förändra de ljud som framställs. I den helande ritualen *tokorime* t ex, sjunger en rituell expert en speciell sång som framförs under natten. Sången representerar ett andedjur, vilket närmar sig byn för att hela den som är sjuk. I denna kultur motsvaras maskeringen av den speciella sången, eller lätena från ett andedjur. Även om förhistoriska samhällen i stor utsträckning förlitade sig på tal och hörsel, betyder detta dock inte att de alla strukturerades på samma sätt. T ex har Classen (1993) visat att även andra sinnen kan ha varit grundläggande för hur världen uppfattades och strukturerades. Hos Desana-folket i Colombia förlitar man sig på färger för att uttrycka identitet, hos Ongee på Andaman-öarna på lukter och hos Totzil i Mexiko på temperaturer för att nämna några exempel. När det gäller skandinaviska järnålderskulturer hävdade jag att dessa framför allt uttryckte sina identiteter i en muntlig kultur, dvs. de sinnen som var främst framträdande relaterade till mun och öron, alltså till produktion av ljud och att lyssna på dessa ljud. Dessutom menade jag att det är troligt att identiteter även kunde uttryckas i vissa kontexter och hos vissa människor på andra sätt, såsom genom luminositet, färger och paradoxalt nog genom att bemästra transformationer eller maskeringstekniker, vare sig dessa bestod i verbala

uttryck, andra kroppsliga modifikationer eller till och med metallbearbetning och keramiktillverkning. Sådana exempel redogjorde jag för i Del Två och i Del Tre.

Jag har redan omtalat att masker framför allt förknippas med situationer som har med gränsöverskridande att göra, och framförde att de kan liknas vid "transitional objects". Masken transformerar händelser och blir ett slags medium för olika sorters kommunikation både inom maskbäraren och mellan maskbärare och dess medaktörer (som jag har föredragit att kalla det som vanligen benämns publik). Den inbjuder till paradoxer och det kan vara svårt att tolka vad som gestaltas. Det är paradox-skapandet och tolkandet av denna paradox som ger uttryck för maktrelationer. Det är detta sätt att fungera som gör masken till ett kraftfullt verktyg, och inte ett kostymelement.

Jag har också satt fokus på det faktum, att den studie som Victor Turner utförde på initiationsriter hos Ndembu-folket i Afrika, och som framför allt förknippas med liminalitet, inte särskilt ägnade uppmärksamhet åt maskbärandet under dessa riter. Arbeten inom antropologi och även arkeologi som refererar till Turners arbeten om liminalitet är överväldigande många, men ytterst få ser, utforskar eller erkänner kopplingen mellan gränsöverskridande och maskbärande. Elisabeth Tonkin (1979) menar att det är för att masker i sig är uttryck för en transformation som de också används i transformations-sammanhang, alltså i passageriter.

Av största betydelse är också insikten att masker kan användas för att återberätta händelser av vikt, såsom hur världen bildades, dess människor, en klan eller annan institution. Meningen med den maskbeklädde består då i att visa det evenemang som representationen medverkade i, och inte representationen själv. Denna insikt, liksom liknande som presenterats av Walter J. Ong om muntliga kulturer, innebär att de vanliga identifieringarna av järnåldersfigurer som endast varandes gudar eller jättar såsom Oden, Tor, Gerd, osv. inte är alltigenom lyckade (se också den tidigare kritiken mot att betrakta figurer som direkt avläsbara bilder). Figurerna var således långt mer än passiva illustrationer, såsom ett namngivande indikerar.

En annan poäng av vikt är att masker inte främst döljer något eller någon, utan snarare möjliggör skapandet av någon eller något nytt, vilket genererar känslor hos övriga medverkande. Ett exempel kan vara rånarluvor, där det inte är vad luvorna döljer som är det väsentliga, utan vad de skapar – en rånare.

Efter den mer generella beskrivningen av masker och hur masker fungerar, diskuterade jag i större detalj exempel på maskanvändning under skandinavisk järnålder. Jag demonstrerade att maskpraktiker var aktuella under (yngre) järnålder på åtminstone fyra olika sätt. För det första har ett (fåtal) an-

siktsmasker återfunnits från den undersökta tiden. För det andra är det mer vanligt från folkvandringstid (400–550 e Kr) och framåt med representationer av ansiktsmasker eller ansikten på olika föremål. Emellertid, då maskbärande inte alls är begränsat till användandet av ansiktsmasker, påträffas flera maskuttryck från järnåldern. Jag framförde för det tredje att kroppsliga representationer, såsom guldgubbar som på vissa sätt synes ha övernaturliga drag, på många olika sätt manipulerats, alltså maskerats, under den undersökta perioden. För det fjärde finns språkligt stöd för maskpraktiker under järnåldern. Jag tog upp två ord till diskussion, vilka båda användes under åtminstone yngre järnålder i betydelsen mask eller tecken, nämligen *grim* och *kuml*. *Grim* kunde användas som suffix eller prefix till personnamn, för att beskriva att en person var förklädd, och kunde ägna sig åt gränsöverskridande verksamheter såsom att utföra sejd. Vidare, såväl gravar som runstenar kunde under den undersökta perioden benämnas *kuml*, vilket signifikativt också betydde mask eller tecken. Dessa tre företeelser visade jag har konceptuella likheter och att de kan betraktas som gränsöverskridande, och att deras materiella uttryck var ”transitional objects”. Jag framförde att runstenar inte bör beskrivas som passiva objekt eller som ett slags anslagstavlor. Snarare är de föremål med kraft, vilka hjälpte till, och var nödvändiga för, att överbrygga gränser på flera olika plan, såväl praktiskt som symboliskt och för såväl avlidna som levande människor. Exempel på transformationer där runstenar kan ha varit behjälpliga är: från levande till död, till förmoder/förfader, från hedniskt till kristet, överföring av egendom från en generation till en annan, från den vanliga världen till den himmelska och från ett landskapsparti till ett annat.

Avslutningsvis kan nämnas att jag gjorde ett försök till att tolka de färger som vanligen användes på runstenar (eller snarare de färger som bevarats till idag), alltså färgerna rött och svart. Tillsammans med vitt utgör dessa färger det som har benämnts som kulturers urfärger (e.g. Douglas 1966, 1970). Röd menade jag alluderade till att understryka relationer mellan släktingar och att färgen röd användes för att symboliskt ge liv åt stenen. Färgen kan även ha anspelat på den regnbåge på vilken den avlidne skulle guidas till sin himmelska plats. Blod/röd ansågs också under den studerade perioden vara ett av de element som en människa bestod av. Svart kan ha symboliserat de processer den avlidne gick igenom från levande till död till ande, eller förmoder/förfader. Färgen svart kan också kopplas till fördold kunskap, som t ex kan erhållas genom sejd.

## Del Två – Directing Microcosmic Bodies

Del två, *Directing Microcosmic Bodies*, analyserade och diskuterade miniatyr-kroppar. Genom studier från framför allt teatervetenskap framförs att

kroppsliga representationer i miniatyr bör betraktas som ”performing objects”, (ungefär ”uppträdande föremål” på svenska). Sådana kan beskrivas som faktiska bilder eller manifestationer av människor, djur eller andar vilka skapas, visas eller manipuleras i berättelser eller dramatiska uppträdanden. Exempel på sådana uppträdande föremål från yngre skandinavisk järnålder är guldgubbar. De ansågs ha använts i berättelser och uppträdanden av transformerande karaktär, såsom vid förvandlingar (”shape-shiftings”) och allianser eller bröllop, vilka möjliggjordes och förverkligades genom att kroppens sinnen och lemmar engagerades på olika sätt. Titeln på Del Två, som kan översättas med ”Regissera(n)de mikrokosmiska kroppar” försökte fånga denna komplexitet.

Guldgubbar dateras vanligen till vendeltid (550–800 e Kr), och består av tunt guldfoliebleck, vilket stämplats med hjälp av en patris, så att en eller ett par människolika, eller humanoida, figurer framträder. Figurer kan också ha klippts direkt ur guldfolien, och i några enstaka fall har djurlika väsen framställts. De återfinns endast i Danmark, Norge och Sverige. Redan i Del Ett redogjorde jag för de vanligaste sätten att närma sig dessa figurer – nämligen att könsbedöma dem, tolka dem som varandes gudar kända från medeltida källor och att betrakta bleck med två figurer som älskande par. Emellertid, för att förstå hur och varför dessa kroppsliga representationer fungerade i sina olika sammanhang, användes i avhandlingen andra tolkningsingångar. Jag diskuterade således effekter och betydelser av miniatyrisering, och framförde att en diskussion om miniatyrer med nödvändighet även inbegriper ett samtal om metaforiskt tänkande. Det ämne som kroppsrepresentationer är gjorda av, guld i fallet med guldgubbar, kan även det ge inblickar i hur och varför figurerna fungerade. Sist men inte minst framförde jag att det sätt som förhistoriska människor valt att gestalta miniatyrkroppar på, indikerar vilka sinnen och kropps rörelser som ansågs viktiga för att möjliggöra olika transformationer.

I det första kapitlet i avhandlingens andra del, *The Workings of Miniaturization*, argumenterade jag för att miniatyrer bidrar till att göra världen och andra världar begripliga, meddelsamma och kommunikativa. De erbjuder människor en möjlighet att tänka och att skapa mening, vilket kan beskrivas som att tänka metaforiskt. Den som handskas med miniatyrer kan också bibringas en känsla av makt och förundran. Det har också demonstrerats att genom att känna helheten framför delarna, vilket erbjuds i fallet miniatyrer, tillfredsställs intellektet. En miniatyr skiljer sig från en modell, som försöker återskapa något i en mindre storlek, dvs. i en annan skala. Det som görs i miniatyr måste med nödvändighet manipuleras på något sätt; vissa drag eller karaktäristika kan överdrivas medan andra försvinner. När det gäller guldgubbar kan nämnas att de drag i huvudregionen som överdrivits oftast är näspartiet och ögonen, medan öronen mer sällsynt markerats. Jag menade att

den ofta förstörade näsan och ögonen hänsyftar på ett maskbärande. Det är masken, eller attributen ögon och näsa som är de som är polysema, dvs. de som kan tolkas, och inbjuder till att tolkas, på flera sätt än ett. Det omvända gäller de ibland detaljrika återgivningarna av figurernas klädedräkter, där varken överdrift eller underdrift uttrycks. Dessa inbjuder därmed inte till olika tolkningar, och behöver därför inte ha varit de viktigaste aspekterna av de kroppsliga representationerna. De manipulerade dragen däremot, kan sägas utgöra en förverkligad och materialiserad paradox, vilka i sitt utförande endast snuddar vid världen, såsom den vanligen uppfattades. Den skapade paradoxen framhävs ytterligare av den metaforiskt rika metallen guld.

Guldets reflekterande och glittrande egenskaper kan ha ansetts visa på en gudomlig närvaro, åskådliggjorde jag i delens andra kapitel *Contacting Divine Forces Through Shining Metal*. Guldets fysikaliska egenskaper betonades, och guld ansågs ha kunnat anspela på gudar, sol, vatten, färgen gul och rikedom/fertilitet. Då en av guldets mest framträdande egenskaper under yngre järnåldern synes ha varit kopplad till färgen gul, diskuterade jag även färgens symbolik och exemplifierade att en färg aldrig kan tolkas isolerat, att tinget eller föremålet som har färgen också berättar något om färgens signifikans samt att den plats eller den kontext i vilken föremålet förekommer också kan bidra till förståelser av det komplexa samspelet mellan färg och föremål.

Efter att ha belyst såväl betydelser och effekter av miniatyrisering, diskuterat kroppar och metaforiskt tänkande samt förevisat guldets mångbottnade innebörder, analyserade kapitlet *Brilliant Bodies – Histories and Interpretations* guldgubbar i större detalj. Jag framförde att figurer, inte bara guldgubbar, generellt tilldrar sig intresse bland arkeologer och även bland andra människor. De inbjuder till synes med lätthet till allehanda tolkningar och idéer, kanske för att de representerar kroppar, som vi också har. Den lätthet med vilken de låter sig tolkas är emellertid bedräglig i den meningen att figurer framstår som en lätt och enkel kategori av materiell kultur. Så är inte fallet. Guldgubbar är inte alls ett homogent material, snarare ett heterogent. Figurerna uppvisar en stor variation i kroppsliga gester, uttryck, klädedräkter och utförande. Det är också skillnader mellan guldbleckens vikt, form, storlek och guldhalt. Vidare återfinns de i sina ”slutscener” på varierande platser. Som redan antytts, är också deras datering heterogen, omspännande minst 300 år.

I kapitlet redogjorde jag också mer noggrant för tidigare tolkningar av guldgubbar. Margrethe Watt (1991b) och Karl Hauck (1994) anser att de fungerat som ett slags tempelpengar, som gavs som betalning för tjänster av rituell karaktär. Anna Hed Jakobsson (2003) har nyligen föreslagit att guldbleckens med par representerar guden Frö och jättinnan Gerd, dvs. i samklang med

andra forskares tolkningar av paren (t ex Lamm 2004 och där anförda referenser), men med det signifikanta tillägget att föreningen mellan dessa parter måste förstås som ett uttryck för en kosmisk balans, som när den uppnås alltid resulterar i rikedom och fruktbarhet. Hed Jakobsson har därvid förtjänstfullt tagit fasta på de andra material som ofta återfinns i t ex stolphål tillsammans med guldgubbar, exempelvis rågranater, vilka ger uttryck för olika hantverksaktiviteter. Det är utfallet av sådana aktiviteter, dvs. färdigproducerade produkter, som är resultatet av den kosmiska balansen. De tillverkade föremålen kunde sedan omsättas i mellanmänniskliga relationer. Ledande familjer ansågs knutna till denna föremålstillverkning och de rituella transformationer som produktionen innebar och fungerade därmed även som framställare av välstånd. Bengt Söderberg (2005) har tagit fasta på de resonemang och tolkningar som presenterats av Hed Jakobsson. Han fäster dock ytterligare vikt vid de byggnader, ”hallar”, i vilka guldgubbar ibland påträffas, som platser för gränsöverskridande verksamheter. Dessa platser ger ett impressionistiskt intryck av ett aristokratiskt nätverk, anser Söderberg. Guldgubbarna tolkas på flera olika sätt i Söderbergs arbete, liksom i föreliggande avhandling. Det som jag menade är en sammanhållande länk för detta heterogena material är deras koppling till transformationer. De återfinns i sina slutscener på platser som kan kopplas till gränsöverskridande – exempelvis i byggnader där transformationer skedde (t ex omvandling av råmaterial till färdiga produkter och bekräftande av möjliga allianser där muntliga uppträdanden ingick som del), på gränser i byggnader (i stolphål, vid in- och utgångar, vid väggar), i gravar som i sig själva är ett materiellt uttryck för passageriter och på gränser till vatten/i mossar. Metallen guld kan genom sina remarkabla egenskaper också kopplas till gränsöverskridande – den förändras aldrig under normala atmosfäriska förhållanden, dvs. guldet är sig likt århundradena igenom, det har en enorm förmåga att tänjas, etc.

I kapitlet *Making sense of senses – creating somatic experiences* argumenterade jag för att det sätt som guldgubbarnas kroppar representerats på, visar de betydelser de kroppsliga sinnena, positionerna och rörelserna har för att förklara, genomföra och möjliggöra förståelser av världar och även transformationer. Jag har tidigare nämnt att huvudregionen hos guldgubbar ofta framställts som manipulerade, alltså över- eller underdrivna. Här finns flest gränser eller öppningar som kan stimulera sinnena – t ex ögon, näsa, öron och mun. Andra aspekter av guldgubbar som accentuerats är armar och händer. Även smycken kan ibland vara förstorade, i relation till övriga detaljer. Att kunna tolka sådana tecken eller paradoxer måste ha inneburit att vara mäktig, initierad eller erfaren.

Syftet med analyserna av guldgubbar var inte att tolka varje enskild fyndplats eller alla guldgubbar, utan snarare att söka förstå hur och varför de var viktiga och uppträdde i skilda kontexter. Därför gav jag i de två påföljande



kapitlen *Playbills Directing Performances of Union and Consummation* samt *To Tell One's Beads* exempel på de olika tolkningsmöjligheter guldgubbar kan erbjuda, framför allt utifrån exemplet Uppåkra. Sammanfattningsvis föreslogs att guldgubbar kunde spränga eller överbrygga gränser, såsom mellan (symboliskt) liv och död, det världsliga och det gudomliga samt det flyktiga och det eviga.

Guldgubbar är inte det enda miniatyrmaterial som diskuterades. Fastän jag framförde att guldgubbar kan kopplas till händelser och berättelser i större utsträckning än till specifika gudar eller andra väsen, redogjorde jag inte för några sådana skeenden. Ett exempel på en skildring ges istället i kapitlet *The Hemdrup staff – a Sealing Orchestration*. Hemdrup-staven visar en kroppslig representation från yngre järnålder i form av en ristad figur på en slät stav av idegran, vilken deponerats stående i en mosse i Danmark. I kapitlet tog jag fasta på det faktum att staven var bränd i ena änden, diskuterade vad runinskrptionerna och den humanoida varelsen kan ha betytt, varför staven hade en flöjtillskärning, varför den var välpolerad samt presenterade möjliga allusioner som idegran kan haft under den undersökta perioden. Jag drog slutsatsen att staven hade många associationer, och den kan ha fungerat som en gandr, dvs. en magisk stav, som kan ha använts i helande syften. Vidare kan staven betraktas som ett exempel på en "disembodied" praktik, såsom i sejd. I sitt sista livsskede placerades staven i en mosse, som kanske betraktades som lika transformerande i sin karaktär, och lika fylld med spektakulära krafter, som en shaman. För Hemdrup-staven, liksom för de tidigare diskuterade guldgubbarna, konstaterades att temat transformation varit avgörande för föremålets tillblivelse, verkan och slutliga deposition i en mosse.

Del Två avslutades med ett summerande kapitel *To Figure Out Figures – How and Why They Worked*, vilket försöker förklara varför och hur humanoida figurer i miniatyr fungerade under den studerade perioden. Här summerades inte bara det som förts fram i Del Två och som presenterats ovan, utan referenser gjordes också med nödvändighet till de teorier som presenterats i avhandlingens maskkapitel.

## Del Tre – De-Parting Bodies

Del Tre i avhandlingen, *De-Parting Bodies*, diskuterade och analyserade lämningar av kroppar i gravar. Tre olika kapitel visade på flera olika nivåer hur analyser och tolkningar av kroppar kan diversifieras och expanderas, när tvåkönsmodellen inte ges tolkningsföreträde, och begrepp som individ inte används för att identifiera förhistoriska liv. Då den sista delen använde sig av de teorier och metoder som utarbetats i framför allt Del Ett, var denna del mindre omfattande än de övriga. Den var även tänkt att peka mer på framtida

forskningsmöjligheter för begrepp som person och dividualitet, än att i detalj redogöra för möjliga järnåldershistorier.

Det första kapitlet, *Re-circulating Bones*, ventilerade frågan om vad brända människo- och djurben har använts till, då det fastställts att bara en del av benen från människor och djur (och föremål) som fanns med på brandbålet, deponerats i graven. Kapitlet behandlade framför allt generella mönster i brandgravsritualer. Jag föreslog att brända (transformerade) ben ansågs besitta gränsöverskridande kvaliteter, och menade att dessa fungerade på samma sätt som masker, dvs. de var "transitional objects", och ibland en gränsomvandlande substans. Sådana ting/substanser hjälpte som sagt till att foga ihop eller överbrygga det gap som kan uppstå när ett tillstånd eller ett sätt att vara övergår i något annat, såsom vid symboliska eller faktiska födelser och dödsfall. Brända ben fragmenterades ibland ytterligare efter kremering, t ex med malstenar, vilka några tillfällen återfunnits i gravar (se sista kapitlet i denna del). Fragmenterade ben kan då ha alluderat till malen säd (från jordbruk eller människa), vilka behövdes för att skapa personer. Dessa personer behövde dock inte vara mänskliga utan kunde även utgöras av t ex svärd eller kärl, vilka behandlades som om de hade mänskliga kvaliteter. Detta indikerar att begreppet individ, en självständig, solid och fast enhet, inte nödvändigtvis är tillämpligt i gravsammanhang. Snarare är det aktuellt att tala om en divid, vars aspekter – sociala såväl som kroppsliga – ansågs och behandlades som delbara, och som kunde tillsättas och tillfogas andra föremål, personer eller processer. Genom att infoga människo- och djurben i dessa transformationssammanhang, har här de sociala kvaliteter t ex människor eller djur ansågs besitta förts över till det föremål i vars tillverkningsprocess det medverkat (cf. Gansum 2004a, b).

*Reciprocal Engagements*, det andra kapitlet i sista delen, tog avstamp från ett undersökt gravfält i Södermanland i en fortsatt diskussion om individ och grav som solida kategorier. Genom att sätta fokus på den kontext som skapas i samband med gravritualen, kom jag fram till att den framför allt kan kopplas till rörelse och resa, inte till något statiskt och evigt givet. Istället för begreppet grav, en enhet som brukar betraktas som en EAN-kod som kan läsas av, föreslog jag att en sådan lämning kan betraktas som ett fordon för kosmiskt resande. Temat med död som förknippat med resor är inte nytt, det har använts även i andra sammanhang inom arkeologi (Montelius 1886), religionshistoria (Ohlmarks 1946, Nordberg 2003) och även antropologi (van Gennep 1960, Turner 1967). Genom att benämna gravar fordon för kosmiskt resande, förändras synen på denna materiella kategori, och en annan förståelse för företeelsen kan fås. Flera element i det som jag kallade fordon alluderar till resor. Dessa förekommer även på andra gravfält. T ex har delar av båtar lagts på brandbålet i transformerande syfte, fordonen ligger i närheten av färdvägar såsom åsar och vattendrag, ridbara djur som häst har offrats på

bålet, färdkost eller bränsle för färden indikeras t ex av keramikkärl samt förekomsten av möjliga karonsmynt indikerar kopplingar till färder. Det sätt som några av anläggningarna byggts på, med möjliga ”väggar” av trä, ”klädda” med lera, stärker även möjligheten att vad som konstruerats kan betraktas som en slags kupé för färd. Det faktum, känt genom medeltida källor, att fordonen med kosmiska väsen (förmödrar och förfäder), besöktes av levande släktingar för att dessa önskade hjälp med t ex råd i olika ärenden och att se in i framtiden, stärker sambandet mellan gravlagd och färd. Den avlidne besatt kunskaper, genom sina möjligheter att färdas i olika dimensioner tack vare korrekt utförda ritualer, som de levande inte hade tillgång till. Sammanfattningsvis när det gäller kroppar i gravar visade jag att de delar av kremade kroppar från människa och djur som deponerats, inte självklart kan diskuteras i termer av en gravlagd individ, eller att en grav är något statiskt, helt, avgränsbart och direkt avläsbart. Snarare kan gravar under den undersökta tiden kopplas till delbarhet istället för helhet, rörelser och resor istället för stillastående samt skapelseakter av kosmiskt aktiva väsen (förmödrar och förfäder) istället för enbart en avslutande begravningsakt. Ett gravfält kan i någon mening alltså beskrivas som en slags parkeringsplats för kosmiska fordon, vilka genom att engageras på ett korrekt sätt kunde färdas i olika riktningar och dimensioner.

Det sista kapitlet i arbetets avslutande del, *The Connections Between the Preparation of Foods and Burials*, undersökte översiktligt samband mellan transformeringsprocesser av föda, särskilt bröd, och döda. Ett genomgående tema i kapitlet var emellertid likväl hur maskpraktiker ur ett semiotiskt perspektiv kan användas för att analysera föremål i fordon (gravar). Jag framhåller att såväl döda människor som föda tillreddes/transformerades genom olika upphettningstekniker (stekning, grilling, bakning, kremning). Andra kopplingar till födobearbetning finns även på gravfält (eller parkeringsplatser – se ovan), då det på dessa kan påträffas stenar som använts för att mala säd till mjöl. Dessa stenar bedömdes även ha använts till att mala brända ben till benmjöl.

Deponerade föremål eller föda i gravsammanhang kan ibland vara manipulerade, eller med andra ord, maskerade på olika sätt. De gånger då bröd har nedlagts kan det konstateras att det ibland inte är ätbart, och i ett fall har en vass sten påträffats i en brödbulle. Härigenom blir brödet inte längre ett bröd i egentlig mening, utan snarare ett tecken och en paradox, som understryker de speciella omständigheter som råder vid begravningstillfällen. Brödet är således, såsom masker, fragmenterade brända ben mm, ett övergångsföremål (transitional object) som hjälper till att förändra relationerna mellan den avlidna och de levande. Jag påpekade att det ofta är de enkla kategorierna av föremål som kan tolkas på flera sätt, och som därmed får uppmärksamhet

och utsätts för manipulation. Ett annat sådant vanligt föremål i gravkontexter är keramikkarl, vilka i flera fall påträffas skadade eller manipulerade.

## Sammanfattande slutsatser

I avhandlingen analyserade jag representationer av kroppar, både i mänsklig och icke-mänsklig form. Jag visade att metaforiskt tänkande, såväl som begreppet miniatyrisering, liksom maktpraktiker, är användbara begrepp för att förstå aspekter av yngre järnålderskroppar och järnålderssamhällen. Det som binder samman alla kapitel och de analyserade kropparna är idén om transformation. Temat med transformation kan sammanfattas vara ett fundamentalt och utmärkande drag för skandinaviska samhällen genom hela (den yngre) järnåldern. Detta uttrycks t ex under folkvandringstiden då maskpraktiker börjar bli synliga i det arkeologiska källmaterialet på flera sätt och i långt större utsträckning än tidigare. Jag framförde vidare att guldgubbar är förknippade med transitioner, då de ju använts i berättelser av gränsöverskridande karaktär. Likväl underströk jag frånvaron av individer i "transithallar", där i många fall guldgubbar har påträffats. En frånvaro av individer är också påtaglig i gravsammanhang, eller som jag valde att benämna kategorin: ett fordon för kosmiskt resande. Jag menade att dessa omständigheter talar för individualitet, där dessa individers delbara egenskaper var nödvändiga ingredienser för det fortsatta skapandet och återfödelsen av väsen, personer, ting och/eller världen i stort. En avgörande komponent i sådana gränsöverskridande verksamheter är djur- och människoben. Det framfördes i avhandlingen att sådana krossade ben fungerade som en slags återfödelsesubstans, som alluderade till både sädesvätska och mjöl. Genom att substansen cirkulerade i olika samhällssfärer, och genom att den möjliggjorde och deltog i transformationsakter, fungerade och återskapades denna och andra världar. Återvinningen eller cirkulationen av brända ben i olika områden hade alltså kosmisk relevans och betydelse.

Avslutningsvis menar jag att de kroppsliga representationer som tolkas i avhandlingen kan kopplas till transformationer eller övergångar av olika sorter. Därmed påvisar kropparna på olika sätt att dö och återfödelse, symboliskt eller faktiskt, varför den vanliga uppgiften för arkeologer, nämligen att beskriva förhistoriska liv, inte kan genomföras. Snarare undersöks lämningar av olika passageriter, och därav titeln på avhandlingen *Maskerade ögonblick. Förvandlingar av kroppar och väsen under skandinavisk yngre järnålder*.

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## Abbreviations

ATA: Antikvarisk- Topografiska Arkivet, Stockholm.  
BE: Britannica Encyclopaedia.  
COD: The Concise Oxford dictionary of current English.  
CSA: Current Swedish Archaeology.  
Da: Denmark.  
DN: Dagens Nyheter.  
FV: Fornvännen.  
KLMN: Kulturhistorisk Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid.  
KVHAA: Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien.  
LAR: Lund Archaeological Review.  
LDCE: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English.  
MW: Merriam Webster dictionary.  
NAR: Norwegian Archaeological Review.  
NE: Nationalencyklopedien.  
Opia: Occasional Papers in Archaeology.  
RAÄ: Riksantikvarieämbetet.  
SAOL: Svenska Akademiens Ordlista.  
SHM: Statens Historiska Museer.  
Sm: Småland.  
Sö: Södermanland.  
Sw: Swedish.

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