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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**On Discourse and Materiality**  
**Personhood in the Neolithic of the Isle of Man**

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Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Archaeology

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

ARCHAEOLOGY

Doctor of Philosophy

**On Discourse and Materiality: Personhood in the Neolithic of the Isle of Man.**

Christopher John Fowler

This research project takes a fresh look at the Neolithic archaeology of the Isle of Man, using that material to evaluate a number of themes in contemporary archaeology. The theme of personhood in prehistory is most central to the study. This project discusses the prevalent interpretative schemes which archaeologists use to understand prehistoric people, prehistoric bodies, and prehistoric social relationships. As such it joins with a number of current themes in archaeological interpretation, most notably; the role of phenomenology in inferring past experience; the use of ethnographic analogy in understanding past and present ideas and experiences of the person and body; the impact of modernity in forming current ideas of the person (particularly the impact on archaeological thought); and the relationship between the material world, social activity and discourse, both in modernity and in prehistory.

Two main types of theory are employed in this project. Both are geared towards understanding social relationships and the way that personhood is generated through activity. The first theory is a theory of performativity, adapted from the work of Judith Butler. The second is a relational approach to personhood, following the work of Marilyn Strathern and other social and cultural anthropologists. These approaches offer a critical basis for the re-consideration of past and present bodies, and past and present relations of personhood. They also provide the basis for reinterpreting past material culture, architecture and landscapes.

The project situates archaeology as a product of different modern discourses, and argues that these have shaped the interpretation of past discourses. It sets out to deconstruct those present discourses, and re-evaluate the role of conflicting experiences of the self and world in the present. In this approach concepts of archaeological units; the house; the culture; the individual; the family; are all open to question. They are considered as types of metonym which condition archaeological interpretation. By refuting the authority of these metonyms, and by illustrating how they have become sedimented in archaeological discourse (specifically for the Neolithic on the Isle of Man), the project explores the possibilities for more context-specific interpretations. Finally, this thesis offers some new interpretations of Neolithic activity on the Isle of Man, interpretations which focus more on the social production of self and world than on capturing the 'meaning' of the past. These interpretations are not totalising, but partial, and seek to explore the possibility of conflict and subversion in Neolithic activities.



Map 1: Map of the Isle of Man showing main sites discussed in text.

- |                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1: Ballafayle     | 7: Killeaba                    |
| 2: Ballaharra     | 8: King Orry's Grave northeast |
| 3: Ballateare     | 9: King Orry's Grave southwest |
| 4: Ballavarry     | 10: Knocksharry                |
| 5: Billown Quarry | 11: Mull Hill                  |
| 6: Cashtal yn ard | 12: Ronaldsway                 |

# On discourse and materiality: personhood in the Manx Neolithic

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I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandfather, Alfred Edward Fowler.

## Chapter 1: Introduction: Discourse theory and archaeology

*Genealogy investigates the political stakes in designating as an origin and cause those identity categories which are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin. (Butler 1990:viii-ix)*

The past exists within the present. Writing about the past, discussing the past, excavating things or places from the past is part of the process of bringing that past into being. Our activities are what give the past meaning. Alternatively, the past is a territory to where we defer meaning when we do not want to question the present. A critical archaeology questions the pasts which emerge from the present. A critical archaeology looks for the processes whereby meaning is deferred, and demonstrates the specificity of those processes.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s authors like Michael Shanks, Christopher Tilley and John Barrett brought home to archaeologists exactly how important a theory of discourse is (e.g., Barrett 1988, Shanks and Tilley 1987, 1991, Tilley 1989a and b, 1990, 1993, Thomas 1993). But alongside these post-processual archaeologists, feminist and Marxist archaeologists were also engaging with critical theory, and discussing the discursive biases of archaeology (e.g., Wylie 1985, 1991, Spector 1991, 1993, Conkey 1991, Gero 1985, 1991, Tringham 1991, Leone et. al. 1987, Trigger 1989). These critical approaches have triggered a number of responses in archaeology. Some have directly pursued the idea of politically inspired archaeologies (e.g., Bender 1993, 1999, Baker 1997, McGuire 1991, McGuire and Paynter 1991) and archaeologies which accept the impact of authorship and interpretation on the past and present (e.g., Jones 1996, Ronayne 1998, Bender 1999, 1993, Thomas 1993; cf. Bloch 1977, Beckett 1988 among others in the field of anthropology). Some use critical theory to demonstrate how we can deconstruct present discourse to open up possibilities for re-interpreting the past (e.g., Nordbladh and Yates 1990, Yates 1993). Others, however, have sought to deny the specificity of modern discourses, and continue to extrapolate modern ideas into past contexts. The extent of specificity is a crucial factor in contemporary archaeology. ‘What kind of structures or categories are modern, and what may have existed in the past?’ are common queries (e.g., Hodder 1999). Various decisions are made about which of our prejudices (Johnsen and Olsen 1991) or categories we have to accept for the sake of intelligibility, or because they simply must be applicable to other people. Ian Hodder has even commented that

*If it can be accepted that archaeologists do indeed attempt to reconstruct past conceptual meanings which are in some sense in 'their' [past people's] heads, the onus is on us to try and get as close as possible to those past meanings (Hodder 1992:18).*

This thesis takes up the question of universality and specificity with regard to those people of the past. Are the bodies of today a match for the bodies of the Neolithic? Do past and present experiences correlate, let alone thoughts, feelings, ideas? Were there individuals in the Neolithic? Is the individual person really a universal? Is even the body a universal?

If we are all trapped in "the prison-house of language" (Tilley 1989c:122), then we cannot but write the past in terms of the present. So why try and relate to the past in different terms at all? Given the language which we have, why not just describe past lives using the same basic terms? In this thesis I argue that we must develop means of expression which respect the differences we can imagine in past worlds. It is not sufficient to ask what kind of individuals lived in prehistory, but also whether there were individuals. Only by questioning these fundamental tenets of modern discourse can we expect to change archaeology in a way which reflects our own situated, even partisan political desires. For my part, I wish to displace totalising discourses in archaeology with accounts which reflect each author's standpoint. I want to displace category with readings of contingent activity, genealogy and diversity. I believe that these are important because, as the past is a reflection of the present, these approaches can help us to discuss aspects of the present which have not been presented in archaeology. If we are unhappy with the way that contemporary people are categorised then we must not reproduce those categories in studying past lives. We must explore alternative options.

Archaeological language is specific to the discipline, as well as to modernity. The history of archaeology is of crucial importance in understanding archaeological ideas and practices. Archaeologists have been obsessed with category for centuries; categories of artefact (e.g., Thomsen 1836, Piggott 1935, 1954, Montelius 1903), categories of places (e.g., Childe 1950, Piggott 1954, Davies 1945, Kinnes 1992, Hodder 1990, 1992), categories of social and cultural groups (e.g., Tylor 1871, Morgan 1877, Sollas 1911, Kossinna 1911, Childe 1925, 1950, Service 1962, 1975, Renfrew 1973, 1976). While a category of the person exists (the individual), the concept has rarely been consciously discussed, and does not seem to form part of the history of archaeological thought<sup>1</sup>. Nor has the relationship

---

<sup>1</sup> Where the person or the body as categories were discussed by 19th and early 20th Century scholars, biological and racial differences were the main matters of study (e.g., Morton 1839, 1844, Huxley 1896).

between this category and material remains been discussed in any detail. Perhaps the individual has an earlier, more fundamental sedimentation into our system of knowledge, so that it was not a relevant subject for archaeological enquiry. Discussions of Palaeolithic people often include debates over whether a particular group or 'evolutionary stage' were sufficiently 'human' to be like 'us' or not (e.g., arguments involved in Stiles 1998, Ingold 1998:32-3 or Klein 1989), but not whether they were individuals or not. Yet individuality is often portrayed as a basic human right. The implications are that, the closer a species comes to being human, the more its members can be thought of as individuals with rights or personalities (compare Scruton 1996, Rowlands 1998: 38-61, 120-158).

The combined effects of category and the reiterative power of language have fossilised structures of interpretation in archaeology so quickly that by the time they are in public use they are already demonstrated to be redundant. Categories which are apparent enough to be criticised appear for decades in scare quotes, before sinking into the background altogether. Buried, but not forgotten, they resurface at various points in subsequent archaeologies. Bruno Latour once wrote

*The moderns have a peculiar propensity for understanding time that passes as if it were really abolishing the past behind it....They want to keep everything, date everything, because they think they have definitively broken with their past....modern temporality does not have much effect on the passage of time. The past remains, therefore, and even returns. Now this resurgence is incomprehensible to the moderns. They view it as the return of the repressed. They view it as an anarchism. 'If we aren't careful', they think, 'we're going to return to the past; we're going to fall back into the Dark Ages.'* (Latour [1991] 1993:68-69).

There are two important points here which are relevant to this thesis. The first point is that the past will resurface. The past of our discipline will return to haunt us, no matter how much we repress it. The old demons are curled up in the archaeological psyche, the archaeological imagination (Thomas 1996:63-4). However, this also means that the plural, multiple pasts which compose history and prehistory also resurface, also sting us into realising their presence. The second point is that archaeologists will deny that resurgence, deny that archaeology still suffers from the traumatic events of its infancy (cf. Zvelebil 1996). Culture history is not gone, not forgotten, although now it is often assigned to the past. The violences of archaeology, committed in its youth, are not only evident in its current guilt and remorse, but also in the denial of its complicity in the cultural disasters of the present. Many archaeologists seem to fear that unless we refuse to discuss culture

history, oppressive accounts of the past, the presence of universals and dominant discourses in archaeology they will resurface to engulf the discipline. Why can't we just get on with interpretation, and accept that we have learnt those lessons? The answer is that old habits die hard. Many current stances on personhood, on the individual, for example, deny any links to dominant discourses of universality, sameness, or colonisation of the past. In denying those links they think themselves free of the past. This is an illusion. As I shall demonstrate in chapter three, the structures of past archaeological enquiry have informed these interpretations too.

This thesis began as a study of social theory and analogy in prehistoric archaeology. Its remit was to assess current methods of drawing analogies, and to consider whether the use of certain forms of social theory could escape the pitfalls of replacing past specificity with modern analogies. This has still remained a fundamental question, a refrain which haunts the pages of this thesis. However, pursuing this ghost has become a secondary goal, secondary to understanding the material. Rather than write a thesis which was purely an analysis of discourse, I was encouraged to settle down and find a case study. I resisted, but it was sound advice; in the end I came to the conclusion that discourse and material are inseparable. The theories which I had been working on were all to do with the nature of the material world, the nature of discourse, and I could only pursue such theories by relating to the material. The material - the discourse - I chose was that of the Isle of Man during the Neolithic.

The structure of the thesis reflects that process of research development to some extent. In chapters two and three I briefly critique current accounts of the Manx Neolithic. I concentrate on the role particular metonyms have played in constructing the pasts imagined by archaeologists. What arguments support the ideas that there were timeless and unvarying bodies, families, individuals and also households, tombs and cultural groups in the Manx Neolithic? How has material culture come to act as the referent in this metonymic scheme? Why does a bone represent an individual, a fire a hearth, a stone chamber a tomb, a structure a house, a sherd of pot a 'culture'? What specific structures of interpretation have sedimented these ideas into accounts of the Manx Neolithic? In chapter two I identify three main metonymic components of the 'grand narrative' for the Neolithic on the Isle of Man; cultures, families and individuals. The question I ask here, and strive to keep asking throughout the thesis is how is it possible to displace these metonyms?

In chapter three I argue that some of our most basic social categories are inapplicable in the present, let alone the past. I focus in greater depth on the idea of the 'individual'. What evidence do we have for individuals in the Manx Neolithic? Is the individual an appropriate unit of analysis? Should we not, in fact, concentrate on social relationships? If there were no individuals in the prehistoric past, what kind of personal and social relations were there? This chapter combines discourse theory, critical and feminist theories with a broad comparative archaeology of northern Europe in the Neolithic and Bronze Age. What kinds of selves could have existed in the past? At this point I home in to focus on personhood in the Manx Neolithic.

In chapter four I address the question of selfhood from a more specific perspective. I argue that a 'performative' perspective supplies an understanding of how selves are generated through activity. I argue that understandings of relationships which give rise to different types of person are possible. In following this argument I trace the theories of Judith Butler (1993) on 'performativity' and Marilyn Strathern (1988, 1992) on the importance of relationships, and the possibility of non-individual selves.

Performativity is a key element in this thesis. As such it deserves some introduction here. A theory of performativity is one which acknowledges the role of citation, of reiteration in personal activity. This citation is not the identical copying of a structure or model. It is the citation of prior practices. A theory of performativity allows me to reason that no-one can reproduce social norms, but that we are all pressured to try as discursive relations become sedimented in us. It is the attempt to perform these ideals or models which marks us as one thing or another - my attempts to act as an archaeologist make me an archaeologist, regardless of my failure to be like any other archaeologist. Performativity is crucial to this thesis because it is a theory which can be applied to the generation of selves in a way which acknowledges the specifics of a particular discourse, context, type of self. Performativity concentrates on mimesis, on continual reproduction, not on the origins of meaning; it recognises the deferral of meaning to a hidden, buried past. It also accepts that an archaeological signature does not reflect an ideal or model, but the remains of practice. This allows for the interpretation of practices rather than sites, for considering activities rather than typology or morphology. Further, it allows us to relate the self to the world as both are performed in respect to past practices.

In chapter five I begin re-interpreting the Neolithic of the Isle of Man. My re-interpretations are centred around a reading of personhood, the importance of performativity

and the material experience of metaphorical links between particular aspects of the Manx Neolithic world. Here I focus on activities which emerged in the earlier Neolithic.

Chapter six is slightly different to the other chapters, in that it concentrates absolutely on creative writing and the expression of personal relations in archaeological texts. What is the role of imagination in writing prehistory? If personhood during the Manx Neolithic was so radically different to personhood today, what kind of an archaeology can I write? Are there other modes of expression I can use to convey what I think is going on in the material culture? Does this assist in a critique of prehistoric archaeology?

I return to my archaeological interpretations in chapter seven, to discuss the changes and continuities of practice in the later Neolithic of the Isle of Man. Are there changes in the metaphorical links between things? Do different relations of personhood emerge? Do changes in site morphology really indicate changes in practice, and if so, what kind of changes? What citations of emulation, parody, subversion or reiteration of past activities are visible in the material?

Finally, I conclude by discussing whether a performative approach to archaeological material can provide new avenues for interpretation which avoid many of the pitfalls of archaeological knowledge. Can these approaches take account of alternative experiences in the modern world, and demonstrate ways that the diversity of experience in the past may have been far greater than is accepted today?

This thesis presents a detailed study of archaeological discourse, which traces the trajectories of particular categories in accounts about the past. The study focuses on accounts of the Manx Neolithic, and on the discourse of personhood in prehistory. I argue that those categories upon which archaeologists strove so hard to base their discipline in the 19th and early 20th centuries have not been so easily dissolved as might be thought given the proliferation of critical approaches to archaeology in the last thirty years. I argue that deconstruction of specific archaeologies is still a crucial element in reinterpreting the past. I argue that only by such a process of deconstruction, of noting the continuing presence of archaeology's history, can we hope to create interpretations which lead to different futures. While we can never erase the past, a process of *erasure* (Braidotti 1991:99, Derrida 1977, 1978, Norris 1982:69, Bapty 1990:255-8) will allow us to refute the past of archaeological thought as the only possible genealogy of thought. What particular categories have been produced? Which institutions, practices and interpretative schemes have produced them? What are the points of origin of those schemes? What other points of origin for

interpretation exist? How can we bring those “multiple and diffuse points of origin” which exist in our society, but are so often closed off, to bear on contemporary archaeological thought? Feminist philosophers produce new thought by reworking the genealogies of concepts in masculinist philosophers, deconstructing their words, which had become sedimented in the history of philosophy (e.g., Irigaray 1985, 1991, 1993, Braidotti 1991, Grosz 1994, Butler 1993, de Beauvoir 1949, see also Kearney and Derrida 1995). Foucault approached the concepts which structure our lives by showing how they were worn smooth and seamless by their repeated handling in European history (Foucault 1970, 1971, 1972, 1977, 1979, 1980, Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982, Lemert and Gillian 1982). In a parallel way, archaeologists can pull any of the founding concepts of present interpretation into critical light by following the genealogy of those ideas in their study area. This thesis is one attempt to do just that for the Neolithic of the Isle of Man, and for the concept of personhood in the Neolithic period.

## **Chapter 2: Situating the Manx Material: Current interpretations, current problems.**

*The body and its passions, reproduction, the family and the individual are often conceived as timeless and unvarying aspects of nature. (Gatens 1992:122)*

### **Introduction.**

What are the specific discourses which have informed interpretations of the Manx Neolithic? How have these discourses manifested themselves? Concepts which are predominant in prehistoric archaeology are derived from wider cultural preconceptions, preconceptions which pervade the history of Manx archaeology. Here I trace a genealogy of the trends which I believe have been the most insidious in their foundation of a concrete structure of normativity in accounts of prehistory. I argue that these discourses are sedimented in the fossilisation of broader archaeological categories.

A central aspect of this critique is the role of 'difference' as a concept in imagining other people's lives, past and present. Theories of cultural difference are integral to work on prehistory, because prehistoric people are postulated to be different to us, or similar to us to varying degrees. Differences between the past and present are possible on a number of levels; cultural differences, social differences, physical differences. Within the present world the ranges of difference in experience between people vary greatly along these axes. Where are relationships of difference between prehistory and modernity represented in accounts of the Manx Neolithic? Where are differences within prehistory or within modernity represented in those accounts? Where differences of experience are excluded from discourses on the Neolithic, how can they be reintroduced?

Archaeologists have come to locate difference in or between categories which have been devised as a result of a long history of European thought. Two key factors in constructing these categories of thought have been scale and the unit. It is widely noted that European prehistory has been described in a totalising way, in terms of 'grand narratives' (Sherratt 1995, Thomas 1993, 1999, Jones 1996, Olsen 1998). Until relatively recently accounts of prehistory dealt mainly with the past on a largely macroscopic scale (with vignettes of descriptive text expressing assumptions or analogies about individual lives or activities (e.g., Clark 1940:16), or social uses of a particular place (e.g., *ibid.*:39)). The unit of analysis appropriate to this scale was most often that of the 'culture'. Archaeology has

now experienced a series of reactions to working at this scale, from processual and later post-processual camps, and with the question of what 'culture' actually is (e.g., as an adaptive strategy, or "man's extra-somatic means of adaptation", Binford 1972:22). A primary concern among many archaeologists since the 1960s has been that the individual is not represented at this level. This concern reflects a shift in the focus of enquiry from cultural *group* to family group, towards social group, and now to the individual (via the thematisation of aspects like 'culture' as processes rather than entities). However, there are other trends in archaeological enquiry which a focus on the individual ignores. The dangers of focusing on the individual is one of the matters under contention in this thesis. But this is only one problem which can be situated in a wider context. The individual is taken to represent a scale of analysis, but it also represents a unit of analysis. In this chapter I will argue that two units of analysis already (still) dominate interpretations of the Manx Neolithic; 'the culture' and 'the family'. These constructs require critique, deconstruction, before the material can be reinterpreted. In the next chapter I will go on to argue that we must resist the temptation to replace them with 'the individual', because that concept is not as universal - or as useful - as we may think. The scale at which the individual operates is not only the microscopic, it is also the macroscopic. An emphasis on the individual homogenises, it assumes a totality of experience.

I also argue that certain metonyms have come to stand for archaeological sites and remains in the Neolithic; houses, tombs and individuals. Metonymy is a process of substituting a named object or thing for a concept. This process is historically contingent (Tilley 1999:5-6, Hawkes 1972, Ricouer 1975, 1978). Through this process the thing comes to refer to and even *mean* the concept (e.g., 'the Crown' for the monarch or state). In the case of Neolithic archaeology, strong metonymic links exist between the following concepts;

- pottery (and some other material culture; lithics, for example) for 'cultural group'
- building for 'household' or 'family'
- bone for 'individual'.

None of these metonymic links are supported by a rigorous study of the archaeological material; they are products of various modern discourses. In this chapter I examine how the metonyms of culture, house and family have come to pervade literature on the Neolithic, including the Manx Neolithic. In the next chapter I go on to tackle the assumption that human bones automatically indicate individual persons. At a general level, this process of metonymy is one of the ways that modern discourse has strengthened its grip on the past.

Because these links rely on a 'one to one' - or diacritical (Tilley 1989c:185-186) - relationship they deny plurality of meaning, cut down difference and stifle polysemy. How can these diacritical equations be broken down?

### **The cultural unit: 'the Ronaldsway Culture'.**

The Neolithic in the Isle of Man is predominantly described under a culture-historic banner. A collection of later Neolithic artefact styles and site types from the island are collectively referred to as the 'Ronaldsway Culture' (e.g., Piggott 1954: 346-351, Burrow and Darvill 1996). The 'Ronaldsway culture' is a clear manifestation of the archaeological tendency to construct an homogeneous cultural unit in the past. Culture history may have reached its peak as an interpretative tool by the middle of the 20th century, but it cannot be easily dismissed to the past. The metonymic signified, the Culture, still holds sway over material culture as a series of signifiers. A particular type of pot or flint tool has become imbued with the power of metonymy to such an extent that to find a sherd or flake of this kind is to find that 'Culture'. A review of British archaeology from the 1940s and 1950s in particular exemplifies this point. The Ronaldsway culture was first referred to in the reports on two excavations which appeared back to back in the 1947 edition of PPS (Bruce, Megaw and Megaw 1947, Bersu 1947). The excavators, J. R. Bruce and the Megaws, and Gerhard Bersu, a World War II internee, had divided their two Neolithic sites into a domestic site, Ronaldsway, and a cemetery site, Ballateare. This division was to prove crucial to the interpretation of all subsequent later Neolithic Manx sites. At its inception the Ronaldsway culture was a reflection of modern practices; housing the living and burying the dead. In both cases, architectural structures were taken to refer to family units, setting up the criteria for defining late Neolithic practices and sites on Man.

Two syntheses of prehistory produced in the 1940s and 1950s discussed the Manx material. The first, **Prehistoric communities of the British Isles**, published by Gordon Childe in 1940 focused on the earlier Neolithic megaliths of the Isle of Man. As with Stuart Piggott's 1954 synthesis, **The Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles**, this was a wide-ranging prehistory, focusing on the change in form of material objects and structures through time. The nationalised nature of these narratives is clear from the titles; the geographical areas covered were specifically named as the British Isles, though this often included Ireland too. The Isle of Man was treated as a part of the UK, a region which had archaeological similarities to Southern Scotland and northern Ireland. Childe wrote **Prehistoric**

**Communities of the British Isles** before Ronaldsway or Ballateare had been excavated, and therefore discusses only the megalithic sites, which he defines in relation to the “Clyde-Carlingford” group of monuments (Childe 1940:57). Fourteen years later Piggott devoted a small section of his chapter on “secondary Neolithic cultures” to “the Ronaldsway Culture” (Piggott 1954:346-351). By now the Isle of Man had its very own ‘unique’ later Neolithic pottery style; the Ronaldsway jar (the original specimens of which were found in the vicinity of the Ronaldsway ‘house’; Bruce at al. 1947:140, Piggott 1954:348, and cf. Burrow 1997), and locally concentrated style of axeheads (‘RTB’s; Bruce at al. 1947:146-8, Piggott 1954:349-50, and cf. Garrad 1978, Coope and Garrad 1988). Piggott’s interpretation of the Ronaldsway culture was the first overview to appear in international press, and built up a picture of this archaeological context which, I argue, has changed little in the last forty-five years.

*While recognizably a member of the Secondary Neolithic group of cultures in Britain, the Ronaldsway culture has a notable insular individuality.* (Piggott 1954:351)

Piggott’s statement stuck. Although these syntheses had been concerned with the comparison of typologies between cultural groups, governed by models of culture-historic archaeology, statements like these are still used in Manx archaeology today:

*The Ronaldsway Culture of the Isle of Man is a clearly discernible and geographically focused late Neolithic regional grouping ‘well defined in all its major aspects’* (Piggott 1954:346). (Burrow and Darvill 1996)

The culture-historic argument has remained unchallenged by critical scrutiny in Manx Neolithic archaeology. In the paper referenced above, Burrow and Darvill do not seek an alternative means of understanding Manx prehistory, nor even attempt to redefine the later Neolithic - their aim is to provide a more accurate range of dates for the Ronaldsway Culture. Yet the Ronaldsway Culture would be best dated as ‘1947 to the present day’. A lack of critical rigour continues to produce texts which reiterate past mistakes in archaeological thought. The political disasters brought about by racial, cultural and ethnic divisions by nation states are still present today, were present in the 1940s, and are being transferred to the Neolithic past. From a purely theoretical point of view, these distinctions do not reflect the types of relationship which seem to have taken place in the Manx Neolithic. From a political point of view, they risk reflecting the colonialism of modernity, grounding it in an eternally similar past.

The insularity of Man has been another *a priori*, again related to the ease of thinking in units. Perceptions of the Isle of Man as an island community have been central to interpretations of its prehistory since the first antiquarian records in the 18th century. One of the most pervasive traits associated with this factor seems to be the assumption that an island community is an isolated community (e.g. Burrow 1997, Clark 1935, Piggott 1935, Megaw 1939:221). Furthermore, the Isle of Man has been involved in lengthy disputes over its sovereignty since the development of the current nation states which surround it<sup>1</sup>.

Separatism has emerged from these discourses as an underlying influence in the minds of archaeologists studying the Isle of Man. However, the island has also been associated with the Irish Sea region as one of mobility, of 'routeways' and 'landfalls' (e.g., Davies 1945:125, 1946:41-45) for the migrations of different cultural groups. Fleure and Neely (1936:373) illustrate the interconnectedness of these two stances:

*To early maritime intercourse the Isle of Man offered a welcome station and shelter in crossings in all directions, and it is legitimate to suggest that this may contribute to future interpretations of the numerous diverse types of megaliths which are such a feature of the island. We must not exclude the possibility that they are all the work of the same people, or even of one fairly long period or succession.*

Curiously, perhaps, the idea of continuity and cultural homogeneity seems to outweigh the notion of the island as a place of mobility and the importance of routeways along the coast. This interpretative tendency is accentuated for the later Neolithic. Manx heritage is both specific and part of wider European histories; Man has been part of Viking, Scottish, British and Celtic histories, as well as the senior power in the medieval Kingdom of Man and the Isles which stretched from Man to Lewis. The mobility of groups throughout the island's recent history may have had an effect on shaping archaeologists' interpretations of prehistoric cultural relations (particularly as most of the excavators worked with archaeological material from all periods, rather than specialising in any one). The idea that Manx people have endured many 'outside' influences but will still stand as Manx - whichever way they are thrown<sup>2</sup> - is a popular conception, reinforced at Manx heritage museums.

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<sup>1</sup> The Isle of Man is currently a protectorate of the United Kingdom. It has its own Parliament, the House of Keys, but is still officially ruled by the Crown. As such the Crown can enforce laws passed in the British Parliament, though this is seldom done. The Manx Parliament has found that the EU is also liable to interfere in its legislative procedure, as it has done over the Manx laws on homosexuality.

<sup>2</sup> 'Whichever way I am thrown, I will stand' is the motto accompanying the three-legged symbol on the Manx coat of arms.

By the end of the 1950s, then, a 'photofit' had been assembled for the Manx Neolithic. Manx sites could be Clyde-Carlingford chambered cairns (e.g. Childe 1940:57, Piggott 1954:156-164), they could be earthen long-mounds, a variety of other designs of cairn and chambers, jar burial cemeteries, and small houses. They could not be henges, cursus monuments, or any other ditched and banked monument type (yet see Darvill 1996a, 1997, for ditched enclosures at Billown Quarry and Skibrick Hill, for example). These were simply not 'Manx'<sup>3</sup>. Material culture and structures either linked the Manx Neolithic to the British and Irish Isles in general, or illustrated the specificity of an island way of life (Ireland suffered a similar degree of insularity and exclusion from wider trends of European prehistory; cursus monuments, henges and ditched enclosures were also considered alien there). This insularity became greatly accentuated as time passed towards the end of the Neolithic, before being engulfed in the wave of advancing Beakers from Europe (e.g., Childe 1940, Moffatt 1978, Burrow 1997, Burrow and Darvill 1996). Given changes in political climate and in prehistoric archaeology, why have these notions of cultural groups and insularity not been substantially revised?

### **Culture and modernity**

The current legacy of these grand narratives of cultural groups is a Neolithic held within a rigid structure of typology and classification. The conglomerate traits of the Ronaldsway culture have been fossilised by the normative reasoning of an archaeology of 'common sense', in which what is found must be reduced to the familiar. The familiar in this case, the typologies of monument and culture groups have not been sufficiently questioned to allow a re-interpretation of the Manx material. Refusing to use such typologies of sites or material culture to understand the past may seem drastic. But those typologies are derived from the roots of archaeology as a tool of nation states in their colonisation of the world (cf. Olsen 1998, Trigger 1989, and also what Latour (1991) calls the 'purification' of the world into recognised distinct categories which inevitably end up as nothing more than hybrids). Typologies and culture groupings reflect a political matrix of the identification and ordering of the possessions of the state, and those alien to the state (cf.

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<sup>3</sup> While writing this thesis I became aware that 'Manx' is a loaded term, and that strictly speaking I am not writing about a Manx Neolithic so much as the Manx Neolithic which exists in accounts about prehistory on Man, and that my own interpretations are about the Neolithic on the Isle of Man. As such, technically there is nothing 'Manx' about them any more than there would be anything English about an account of Stonehenge in prehistory. In these contexts 'Manx' and 'English' describe the fields of discourse within which the material currently exists, but not the contexts of 5000 years ago.

Bauman 1993:120-123). Here the nation state is the corollary of the individual; a unit which presupposes normativity, which *presupposes itself* (see chapter 3). Where difference is necessary it is located in the modern individual or state as opposed to that past or foreign culture or person. Where normativity is postulated, difference is pushed away. Marilyn Strathern (1987:259-60) describes this process of both alienation and translation as being one where the 'Other' is first made odd and bizarre ('see how different they are') and then reduced to common sense ('but we know why - that is they way they do what we call x'). The Ronaldsway Culture is alien to the nation state in some senses, but it mirrors the notion of the Isle of Man as a bounded separate region with a distinct national identity. It reproduces the familiar. As does the invasion of Beaker people from the mainland; the incorporation of the island into UK and European politics. At what level has this political climate saturated Manx prehistoric archaeology?

Neolithic sites on the Isle of Man are not hotly disputed areas, except, perhaps, among a few academics. They are not highly valued by the tourist industry. In roughly 30 hours (weekday and weekend, day and early evening) at these sites in June 1997 I encountered no tourists, no local visitors, and two council workers with electric trimmers. This is in stark contrast to two days I spent at Neolithic sites in Gloucestershire, in which up to 25 visitors an hour turned up, or in Wiltshire where the Neolithic monuments attracted hundreds or (in the case of Stonehenge) thousands of visitors a day. These Manx sites do not seem to be important locations for locals to *visit*, or to pilgrims of many other Neolithic sites around Britain. Manx Neolithic sites are not involved in overt disputes concerning Manx nationality, unlike education, language, myth, and historic texts or sites<sup>4</sup>. However, the interpretation of Manx Neolithic sites has a history inseparable from questions of relations between the Isle of Man, the UK and Ireland in prehistory. As other authors have shown, these discussions are guided by the modern political division of study areas, schools of thought, fieldwork, and national identity (e.g., Jones 1996 - herself from the Isle of Man, Sparke 1996, Ronayne 1998). Manx nationalists - or their opponents - do not seem particularly concerned with Neolithic archaeology, or Neolithic monuments, and this may be why there has been little reinterpretation of the material. Nationalism on the Isle of Man is a far less hotly contended issue than in Northern Ireland, and less high-profile than in Scotland or Wales. The presence of an insular 'identity' in the 'Ronaldsway culture' has not been

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<sup>4</sup> . The Museum of Manannan in Peel deals with prehistory in terms of the myths of Man, and the interpretative extravaganza which the museum provides begins with the Iron Age



Plate 1: Nympsfield chambered tomb (Gloucestershire); information board.

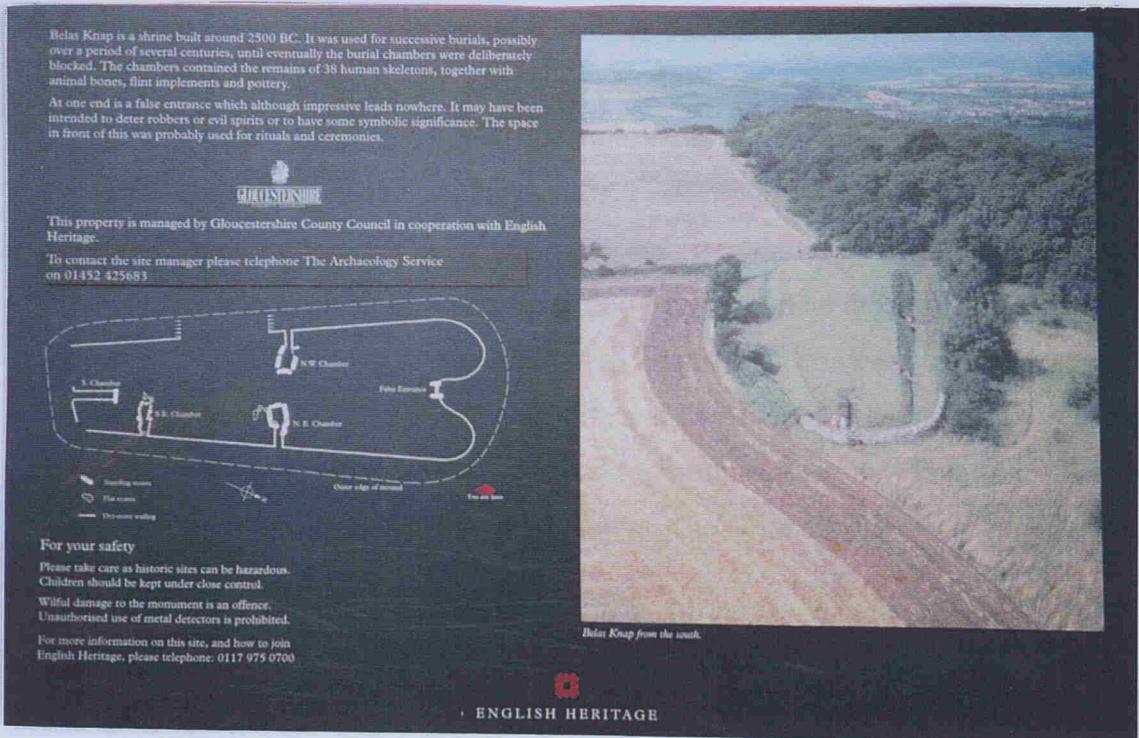


Plate 2: Belas Knapp chambered tomb (Gloucestershire); information board.

used as an argument for separatism explicitly by Manx nationalists, and the regional similarities to British or 'European' 'Cultures' in the earlier Neolithic or in the Bronze Age seems to arouse equally little interest.

But is this really a case of disinterest? Physical access to the sites is often possible although many are off the beaten track, unsignposted or on private property. But while the sites are easily accessible, *knowledge* about the sites is not. None of the sites are accompanied by detailed information boards - sometimes the sites name, 'date' and details of the type of site are available. There are no reconstructions drawings, interpretations, or depictions of the artefacts recovered, no photographs of the site under excavation. Again, this is not the case in Gloucestershire, where site like Nympsfield and Belas Knapp are well signposted, sport useful information boards (plate 1 and 2), and have even been reconstructed for visitors (Belas Knapp (plate 3), Hetty Pegler's Tump (plate 4)). The Manx sites are effectively 'kept quiet' as loci of reinterpretation, because much of what makes them material and interesting is removed. Some of the material and the information is presented in the Manx Museum in Douglas - an award-winning Museum with extremely clear and accessible displays. The museum houses displays on Cashtal-yn-ard, Ballateare and other early and late Neolithic sites. The basis of these interpretations are still heavily conventional, however<sup>5</sup>. The impression gained from the museum is that archaeologists 'know' what happened at these sites. The discourse of the Neolithic on Man - as with many other contexts - is therefore alienated from people in the present, and most fully accessible not through televisual media, public literature, visits to sites or public events at the sites, but through academic texts. Again, this is in stark contrast to the wealth of literature, televisual media and events which the Manx heritage industry produces for historic periods. Interestingly, the later prehistoric periods also fare better than the Neolithic. The reconstructions of peoples' lives on Man from the Iron Age onwards at the Museum of Manannan focuses in detail on everyday life and on religious belief and social, cultural and political interaction. That the Neolithic and Mesolithic are excluded may be, at least in part, due to the failure of academics and archaeologists to write expressively about the people they are studying.

Academic debate about prehistory is of little concern to the party politics between the Isle of Man and the UK. However, the effects of the local and international political

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<sup>5</sup> My point is that no matter how excellent the Museum, the overall trend of interpretation constrains the displays within the structure of a culture-historic and almost 'arcane' form of archaeological knowledge.



Plate 3: Belas Knapp; forecourt reconstruction.



Plate 4: Hetty Pegler's Tump; reconstructed chambered tomb (Gloucestershire).

situation may well inform the interpretations of Manx prehistory on a wider discursive level. Many authors on Manx archaeology are, like myself, outsiders, but all are middle-class, educated or wealthy Europeans, sharing a very similar cultural background. The over-riding discourses I am addressing are far broader - and run far deeper - than party politics, or local politics, recently described thus on an Isle of Man website:

*There are no party politics, as most candidates for the House of Keys stand as independents and invariably, as is the nature of the island's populace, adopt conservative politics* (<http://www.Isle-of-Man.com/information/constit.htm>).

Clearly the website editors do not perceive any dissident voices on Man; presuming a conservative populace presumes the need for conservative, conventional pasts. Accordingly, the majority of archaeologists do not seem to be presenting any alternative understandings of the Manx - or wider UK - social climate, past or present. Although the context of prehistory in Britain seems largely to be a politically 'quiet' one, this is an insidious testimony to the nature of the totalising discourse which shapes people's lives. Liberal politics has a role in keeping difference of opinion or experience quiet, by ingraining normativity so deeply that many cannot see a conflict between norms and experience at all. Simultaneously, processes of identification mould people's lives on a variety of levels from the influence of mass media and role models through peer circles to archaeological models of people and behaviour. While these models, like fashion models, are unreal ideals, they all have an effect on our perceptions of our selves. Though we do not aspire to them, though we realise their defects, they have a hold on us which is very real (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Archaeological models and interpretations presented today really do shape the past.

In the earlier Neolithic, the cultural field within which the Manx material was situated is considered to be loosely defined, and merges well with other local regions. In the later Neolithic a narrower range of material culture 'styles' provides an excuse for tight cultural classification. Yet, despite the narrower range of artefact 'styles', the actual amount of material, and the range of different practices and site forms are far more diverse than in the earlier Neolithic. Strangely, accounts of the later Neolithic focus on local form over international practices, a prolific range of which are represented on Man. Furthermore, wide differences in activity within the island are reduced to a cultural unity. A neat trick has taken place, where the material culture of the Manx Neolithic is viewed through interpretative X-ray specs. These mythical goggles see past the diversity of the material to find the unity of the cultural. But in doing so they have dissolved the material from the

cultural. The flesh is burnt away so that the skeleton can be examined. But the glasses do not work; the skeleton itself is an imposed fiction. Culture is placed *before* the material, though this is a hidden fact. The X-ray specs cannot strip 'culture' from its physical metonym 'material'. The two are too heavily integrated. This is not something simply to regret. Rather, it is something which can be a guide to re-interpretation. The material which we examine as archaeologists exists within the cultural field of modernity. We have different modes of access to that field, and can deconstruct it from our various positions. Furthermore, the material we study is the sedimentation of past cultural activity. We do not have direct access to those fields, but through the material we can speculate on the various processes of sedimentation and citation which produced the material culture. In other words material is often treated as the metonymic signifier for culture by archaeologists (e.g., in Hodder's (1991, 1992) formulation of material culture). But material culture also has other, more polysemic properties. To study those properties, it is necessary to deconstruct the equation that 'culture or Cultures produce material culture'.

A distinction has emerged, then, between the 'Cultures' which have been identified in prehistory through modern understanding, culture, and material culture itself. Cultures have boundaries, they are a quality of scale, a variable unit - but still a unit. Culture is far more difficult to define, and therefore a much more prolific concept; culture can be understood as process, activity or sets of relations. Cultural difference, a term I use repeatedly in my analysis of the Manx Neolithic, does not refer to the difference between bounded groups. Cultural difference is a contextualisation of the relationships between different practices and understandings which are culturally located. John Barrett, in outlining his interpretation of 'fields of discourse' (Barrett 1988) has offered archaeologists a picture of overlapping and plural cultural fields, co-existent in space and time, present as conflicting concerns even in a single piece of material culture. This way of thinking about cultural practice is the context within which I have situated my interpretation of Neolithic cultural practices. The effect that such an approach has on the study of the earlier and later Neolithic on the Isle of Man will be illustrated in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Central to the analysis is the argument that material culture is integral to all activity, that it is the means of citation and generation of social, cultural and personal experience.

Change through time (or the maintenance of continuity through time) is a key element in understanding archaeological reasoning about culture and Cultures. Cultural transmission (e.g., Shennan 1989, van der Leeuw 1989) is too large a subject to discuss in

detail. However, there is a notable link between culture and practice which can be located at the level of smaller groups and even individuals. It is noticeable that for the Manx Neolithic Culture and period are as one. The Ronaldsway Culture does not only define a group of people and set of material culture, but also a period of prehistory. To paraphrase Bruno Latour (1991[1993]), modernity is not an era; it is a tool for the creation of eras.

Archaeological cultures stand as devices for classification, for maintaining the credibility of linear time. This linearity can only be explained through relationships of reproduction. A culture may reproduce itself, but something is missing. How do personal relations reproduce, how do people reproduce? Is it past relations we are really interested in, or the maintenance (or subversion) of present ones?

### **A familiar past: the metonym of the house.**

A particular type of family unit has been assumed as a universal structure by generations of archaeologists, and this assumption has had a clear effect on the Manx Neolithic. No specific kinship structures have been postulated for the Manx Neolithic, but (implicitly normative) families are assumed. The family is a unit which is further expected to combine the micro and the macro scales of interpretation, mediate between the 'individual' and the 'culture' not just in terms of scale but as loci for learning, growth, enculturation and transmission of identities. These families have become part of the key to making the past familiar.

There is little convincing evidence for any particular family structure in prehistory. In later chapters I will argue that there can be no evidence of sexual relations, or of gendering activities in prehistory which match our own in the present. What different sorts of relationships can be read into past material culture? In the accounts of Manx prehistoric everyday life which I critique below these differences are omitted from the past as well as the present. The past is effectively colonised by the present. Differences of experience - whether originating in the past or present - are the victims of this colonial process.

However, as with difference in the present, past differences cannot be entirely submerged beneath the weight of the norms placed upon them.

Consider the following statements about Manx Neolithic 'houses' and 'families' from the literature on the Manx Neolithic.

*...[I]t can be said that both at Ronaldsway and Glencrutchery the houses seem to have been the isolated and permanent homesteads of single families of well to do farmers....The cemeteries are presumably the burial places of individual families (Bruce et al. 1947:159) These two<sup>6</sup> isolated houses suggest that the economy of the culture was based on individual homesteads rather than on hamlets and villages, and the small cemetery...appears to be that of a family community appropriate to such a unit. (Piggott 1954:347).*

The excavation of Ronaldsway in 1943 produced in a site containing a flat trench bottom, post or stake holes, a burnt area and a spread of material culture which included a number of later Neolithic jars, axeheads, and other lithics including inscribed slate plaques (Bruce et al. 1947, also my figures 1 and 12). Archaeological excavators were looking for houses, families, and other aspects of Neolithic life which they expected from their experiences in the present. The find was regarded as the first discovery of a Neolithic dwelling on the island. This reading of the structure lead subsequent archaeologists to conclude that successive finds of small temporary sites were also places for hearths and families, in parallel - but inferior - to this Ronaldsway “family house” (Bruce, Megaw and Megaw 1947:142). Again, the interpretative paradigms of the 1940s and 1950s are crucial to the genealogy of ideas which lead to current Manx archaeology. Mirroring Piggott’s statement about Ronaldsway and Glencrutchery, Burrow and Darvill reflect that “Single houses rather than villages were represented, as were cremation cemeteries” (Burrow and Darvill 1996:412). Note that in all three cases, the house is automatically pluralised; to find the ‘house’ is to find domesticity. Note also that the finding of the house seems to signify the ‘family’<sup>7</sup>.

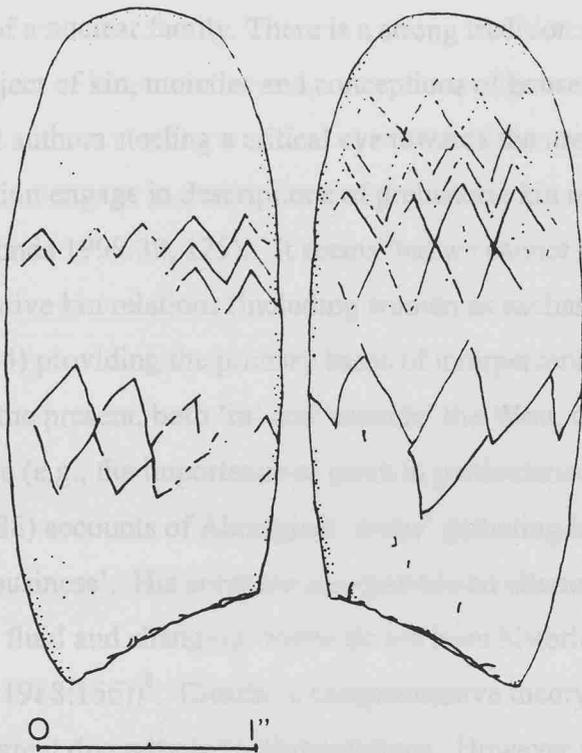
The discourse of ‘domesticity’ as a Neolithic trait has not diminished in the last fifty years; if anything it has seen periods of growing acceptance followed by the rejection of some associated concepts such as ‘sedentism’, without tackling the issue of what kinds of activity these sites do represent. The language of the Neolithic “family house” (Bruce et al.

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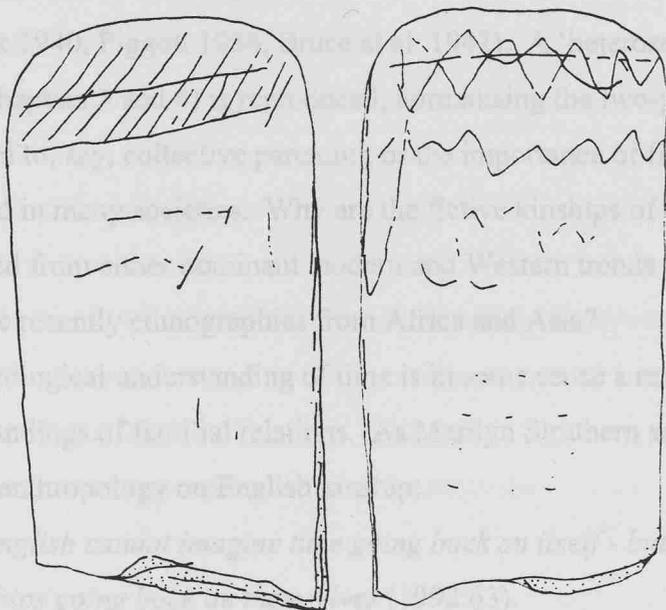
<sup>6</sup> The second Neolithic ‘house’ which the authors mention, Glencrutchery, was not excavated but dug out by construction workers. In fact, Glencrutchery is a collection of Ronaldsway jars and associated material culture for which no contextual evidence exists. Glencrutchery could just have easily been a site like Ballateare which contained both ‘domestic’ and ‘mortuary’ remains according to the original excavator but was classified as a cemetery. Glencrutchery is not dealt with as a site or structure in this thesis because of the lack of archaeological contextual evidence, although I refer to the assemblage found there from time to time.

<sup>7</sup> Here again the relationship between ‘material’ and culture’ in archaeology becomes apparent, and problematic. The cultural aspects of house and family are lain over the material, which seems to signify those cultural aspects (cf. Hodder 1992:16-22). One of the recurrent questions in this thesis is whether we can suggest alternative possibilities for the past use of material culture without either trying to reach ‘their’ meanings or to uncritically use meanings from our own cultural contexts.

1947) with its central “hearth” (ibid.: 145,146 inter alia) and “cooking pots”, “larder” (ibid.:146) and “joints of meat”(ibid.:144) extends from a resolutely gendered and domesticated perception of the use of enclosed space. The use of the word “hearth” is a ubiquitous example. Hearth implies a fire, located within a domestic context, a place synonymous with houses in English; ‘hearth and home’. Yet ‘hearth’ is used in the archaeological texts as a term to indicate any area of burning (see Chapter 5). A heavily preconceived idea has been used as a basic unit of description. But this description is the initial, and often final, *interpretation* of the site. The definition of sites, even in arbitrary terms, into houses or tombs, or the use of terms such as ancestors, individuals, domestic, ritual and even class and gender are problematic because they rely on present categories. We cannot escape the present, or “the prison-house of language” (Tilley 1989c:192). However, throughout this thesis I demonstrate ways of presenting different modern interpretations of the material world. A focus on active practice does allow an escape from definitive category. In chapter 5 I will re-examine the potential for interpreting Ronaldsway among other sites, in light of the variety of uses of similar structures on a regional scale, and in light of a re-interpretation of the earlier Neolithic activities which preceded these sites. The family unit may no longer be explicitly discussed in texts like those of Burrow and Darvill. However, the residue of this concept is still used to glue together the shaky foundations of discourses on Neolithic ‘society’. The house has become a focus of study, yoked to agriculturalism and sedentism. A model of the Neolithic as a period of ‘settling down’ is evident in recent literature (e.g., Hodder 1990, Barrett 1994 - from ‘becoming’ to ‘being’, cf. Whittle 1996, Zvelebil1996). The presence of houses have been crucial to this argument, and volumes have been produced debating the plausibility of Neolithic houses throughout Europe (e.g. Darvill and Thomas 1996). But, what is rarely discussed is the role of personal relationships in the formation and experiencing of such architecture (but cf. Tringham 1991, 1994, Richards 1993, Bender *et al.* 1997). It is almost as if these houses are unpopulated. The silence here, the absence of activity, is convenient. There is no need to state what is already known. If these were houses for living in, then we know what happened there, because we know what family relations are like. However, the kinds of activities which took place at Ronaldsway may be very different from those which take place in a suburban semi at the end of the 20th century. The social groups using Ronaldsway and other Manx camps may in fact have been very heterogeneous, and may represent groups brought together for particular activities, bound by common interests, rather than the



Schist plaque, Ronaldsway



Slate plaque, Ballavarry

Figure 1 Incised plaques

<sup>1</sup> It is often argued that these types of relations are a result of the infringement of colonial power. The question remains, why should these colonial infringements be seen as the only conditions under which such relations can arise? What kinds of relations could have arisen in different historical contexts?

demands of a nuclear family. There is a strong tradition of using anthropological analogies on the subject of kin, moieties and conceptions of houses and living space. Even post-processual authors steeling a critical eye towards the use of analogy and the structure of interpretation engage in descriptions of prehistoric kin relations, moieties, and even marriage (e.g. Edmonds 1999:30, 125). It seems that we cannot imagine a past without marriages and normative kin relations (including women as exchangeable commodities; Lucas 1996:113-4) providing the primary bases of interpersonal relationships. Yet for many people in the present, both 'in' and 'outside' the West, other relations have assumed greater importance (e.g., the importance of peers in particularised age-set groups, or in Samsom's (1980, 1988) accounts of Aboriginal 'mobs' gathering in the Darwin region to conduct specific 'business'. His accounts also provide an alternative approach to cultural groups, where the fluid and changing "mobs do not have histories, it is their members who do" (Samsom 1988:156))<sup>8</sup>. Clearly, a comprehensive theory of kinship would be problematic; there is a great diversity in kinship relations. However a very restricted notion of kinship would seem to apply to accounts about the Neolithic. Because diversity and difference is not explored, normativity is read into these accounts. The idea of a two-parent family is certainly the inspiration behind the 'families' discussed in the texts from the early 20th century (e.g., Clark 1940, Piggott 1954, Bruce et al. 1947). A 'heterosexual imperative' (Butler 1993, cf. chapters 3 and 4) is reproduced, normalising the two-parent heterosexual family as compared to, say, collective parenting or the importance of fictive kinship relations which are practised in many societies. Why are the fictive kinships of prehistory so consistently derived from either dominant modern and Western trends of thought and experience or more recently ethnographies from Africa and Asia?

The archaeological understanding of time is in some sense a reflection of modern European understandings of familial relations. As Marilyn Strathern says in an excellent piece of reflexive anthropology on English kinship;

*It is not that the English cannot imagine time going back on itself - but that they cannot imagine relationships going back on themselves* (1992:63).

It is as though families, and family relationships, are necessary to produce time, to secure the correct course of the past. Unless we can imagine families breeding in the past we cannot imagine time continuing at all. The relationships which archaeologists see in the past are

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<sup>8</sup> It is often argued that these types of relations are a result of the infringement of colonial powers. The question remains, why should these colonial infringements be seen as the only conditions under which such relations can arise? What kinds of relations could have arisen in different prehistoric contexts?

involved in generating temporal movement. It is almost as if archaeologists have to keep time moving, as if 'bad' archaeology (static, or synchronic) stops time, jeopardises the present. In the case of the family, as with the culture and the individual, there are contingent reasons why this interpretation has emerged from history. The culture is bound up with the nation, with the psyche of nationalism. I will argue in chapter 3 that the psyche of the individual also demands its recognition as a universal unit. In a similar way the family, as the primary interface between these two units, demands its reproduction in the past. The family is itself integrated into structures of sympathy which nationalism seeks; the motherland, the fatherland, protecting the family, stereotypical gender roles ('England expects each man to do his duty' ....). All of these relationships have temporal conditions, and are psychologically comforting to many - but by no means all - members of modern society.

Archaeologists appealing to ethnography also find the concepts of belonging, of people being produced by a land from which they are inalienable (e.g., Weiner 1991, Weiner 1992, Strathern 1992) to be archaeologically applicable. Many texts also rely on ethnographies derived from Bloch's (1982) reading of the Merina (and comparable texts; e.g., Bloch and Parry 1982, Huntington and Metcalf 1979) to build their interpretations of ancestry, ritual and social relations. Ethnography therefore seems to help not only with interpreting the relations of the living and the structures and artefacts they produced, but also the practices associated with the dead. Ancestors and ancestry *implicitly* provide the link between the family and the landscape, and the house and the tomb in a great many texts on prehistory (e.g., Renfrew 1976, Hodder 1990, Edmonds 1999). Relations of ancestry are kinship relations of some kind, yet exactly what these relations are (other than familial or group descent) is left poorly defined. Whether or not a critique of the family in prehistory involves a critique of wider studies of kinship, these relations (house, family, ancestry, tomb, land) are implicated in a great many accounts of the Neolithic.

### **From houses for the living to houses for the dead; the metonym of the tomb.**

Space which contains human body parts, or is enclosed by stone, has been interpreted as concerned with a radically different element of Neolithic life; death. Up until very recently all Manx sites were described as places for living, houses or camps, or places for interring the dead. Recently, with the discovery that there are sites which are ditched 'enclosures' of ground, 'ritual' sites have been discussed as a phenomenon in their own right

(e.g. Darvill 1998). In both earlier Neolithic 'tombs' and later Neolithic 'houses', the role of different sorts of metonym is undeniable. A tomb is a place for burying the dead, with very particular religious connotations, while a house is a place where people live in small groups, usually (so convention has it) family groups. In the case of the Neolithic material culture, specific sites have become the material signs in these metonymic relations, while tomb, house and family or cultural group have come to take on the role of the signified.

One recent study which explicitly considers the metonyms behind the interpretation of Neolithic sites is detailed in Christopher Tilley's **Metaphor and material culture** (Tilley 1999). Here he traces the interpretation of megaliths back to the turn of the century when ethnographic analogies were drawn between the form of Scandinavian megaliths and the form of Eskimo houses (Tilley 1999:92-3). Tilley goes on to show how such an idea can lay dormant in the archaeological imagination over a long period of time before resurfacing - in this case, in Hodder's long barrows as 'dead houses' (Hodder 1984, 1990, 1992). Hodder is not alone in the wider spectrum of archaeological interpretation. The trend of connecting the houses of the living to a concept of 'houses for the dead' is prevalent in modern archaeological literature. In some societies, there are archaeologically or ethnographically documented cases of such a metaphorical structure (e.g., the Etruscan 'necropoli' in northern Italy, where houses complete with furniture are carved from the tufa - plate 5). However, these are not universals, and do not necessarily apply to Neolithic sites in northern Europe (Plate 6). In Tilley's genealogy of the 'megalith', he identifies a set of ways in which particular metonymical structures have been applied to sites classified under this sign. For Hodder the house is the origin of the megalith, for Jarman its origin is in the economic structure of a society, for Thomas it is the political structure of a society (Tilley 1999:98). Recent accounts of Neolithic tombs also tie them into Neolithic society through the body; postulating tombs as being like wombs (e.g., Taylor 1999, for example). The trend of considering the body as a universal quality linking places, people and activities carry their own problems (see chapter 3 and 5), but I would argue that it is a continuation of the familiarisation of the past, and of stressing relations of family and reproduction once more. Again, these relations would seem to tie persons to families, families to cultural groups and groups to territories from which they are 'born'.

Alongside houses, tombs are used to build up patterns of a familiar past. Manx megalithic sites have been consistently interpreted as "sepulchres", "tombs" and "graveyards" since the 1860's (e.g., Jeffcott 1866, 1868, Oswald 1860, Kermode and



Plate 5: Internal furniture carvings of an Etruscan tomb, Cerveteri, Italy.



Plate 6: The Kew passage grave, Isle of Man.

The interpretive turn taken by Neolithic and Bronze Age studies in the early 1990s has been a significant and, however, an extremely important development. As Shapland put it in 1992: "Perhaps the most striking contribution of multidisciplinary collaboration has come by allowing the study of the past to be an embodiment of the social sciences" (1992: 10). The subject has since been studied in a more holistic respect to this space it created in the theory. Features between the stone passage and the earth at Kew in the 1980s are due largely to the type of megalithic site found which are associated with the study of these deposits.

Herdman 1914, Fleure and Neely 1936, Piggott 1935, Clark 1935, Megaw n.d., 1937, Childe 1950, Cregeen 1978, Darvill 1997, Burrow 1997). In the wider Neolithic, these 'tombs' have come to take on some very specific interpretative identities (cf. Leivers 1999, Tilley 1999). If houses are the locations where archaeologists see the families of living people in the past, tombs are where they see the ancestral clan, a family of a different kind. This interpretation has its origins in over-use of ethnographic analogy. From here, tombs have been used to argue for territoriality, on the basis that they are markers of different 'social groups'; usually called clans, families or tribes (e.g. Whitehouse 1999, Renfrew 1976). These territories are conceived of within a framework of local groups, later consumed by centralised factions - on the Orkneys, for example:

*The territorial identity which was associated with the use of chambered tombs would be a direct challenge to a central authority and thus it is not surprising that tombs were deliberately destroyed. (Sharples 1985:73)*

Here tombs represent small groups or clans, their identities dependent upon some form of ancestral connections with place. Sharples (1985:70) illustrates the logic of this interpretative practice:

*It is not difficult to interpret each of these tombs as being associated with an extended family or kinship group (Tilley 1984:112), farming the land immediately adjacent to it. Each group was using the tomb as a physical representation of the ancestors and it may be through the ancestors that the elders established their primacy over the land and maintained power over the other members of the group.*

It is notable that Sharples claims that the key to further work is to promote a study of the individual, for these tombs 'connect' both individual and community<sup>9</sup>. Tombs as gathering places are paradigmatically places for group identities, places for putting individuals, and places as devices for claiming land ownership and ancestry. Here the metonymic relationship between the material structure and a social category could not be clearer. Just as with the metonym 'Church', meaning both a congregation and a building, so the 'tomb' has come to represent both the site, and the community who supposedly gathered at that site. A tomb is both a 'house' for a culture or group (linked by common ancestry and therefore

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<sup>9</sup> The interpretative turn taken by Sharples and others in the early 1980s towards these monuments is, however, an extremely important development. As Sharples goes on to point out, "Perhaps the tendency to view communities as culturally independent has arisen by placing too much emphasis on the tomb as an embodiment of the social structure" (1985:70). The move towards studying the deposition of human remains in respect to this space is crucial to this thesis. Fissures between the stance presented here and those of the 1980s are due largely to the type of metonymic signifieds which are associated with the study of these deposits.

territory), and a 'tomb' for interring individuals. I will argue throughout this thesis that while this is a very tempting interpretation Manx megalithic sites may have been neither.

## **Conclusion**

The entire Neolithic world emerges out of multiple set of signifiers and signifieds. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is all too often diacritical. It is time to reconsider how these relationships can be understood in a more metacritical fashion.

Accounts of the Manx Neolithic currently rely on the following metonymic equations:

Wooden building: house (house: family)

Fire: hearth (hearth: house)

bone: dead individuals, ancestors

Megalith: tomb, ancestral centre of territory

landscape, the Isle: territory

pottery/flint: Culture

The Neolithic past has been peopled, then; through the use of metonymic devices. These devices are often subtly nested one within the other, so that they spread out across the Neolithic landscape from microcosm to macrocosm. Individuals, clans, families and ancestors with ancestral territories (not worlds away from cultural groups) build up this picture of a social material world. They are read into the material from the very moment of its discovery. Any object is understood by us in terms which we can understand. In the main, we have relied on terms which are metonymic, because such metonyms are integral to our daily lives. I do not doubt that metonyms were important to Neolithic people. But the social relationships and institutions which were part of that metonymic process were not the same as those which govern our modern experiences. Moving from one set of metonyms to another without critical reflection will not make these problems disappear. It is perhaps not surprising that many recent scholars have called for a focus on the lives of individuals, on an empathic understanding of the past. Such an approach aims to allow us to gain an 'indigenous' perspective, to reacquaint ourselves as though insiders with the common sense and everyday elements of the past. Such common senses are deemed the connection between past and present. But is this really the logical 'next step' for archaeology? If so, why have so many post-processual authors on the Neolithic resisted just such an approach? Is the individual really the only locus of experience, and what do we mean by the individual anyway?

## Chapter Three: The Individual and prehistory: A Critique.

*The individual, which bourgeois liberalism will endow with a series of entitlements - property, freedom, the protection by law and the benefits of morality - is born out of the collapse of the classical notion of subjectivity. (Braidotti 1991:80).*

*...[T]he individual, like the categories of male and female, is taken for granted as an autonomous reference point. (Strathern 1988:69).*

### Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the role of cultural preconceptions about what it means to be a person in the descriptions archaeologists make of the past. I advocate the use of critical philosophies which challenge these preconceptions, in particular philosophies developed by feminists and students of gender. I critique 'the individual' as an example of the type of metonymic units which enjoy currency in archaeological literature. In so doing I argue that a focus on the individual fails to describe the lives of people in the present, let alone the past, and undervalues the generative power of experience.

The most insightful archaeological understandings of the person, I argue, are ones which are inspired by feminist (and gender theorist) readings of cultural and sexual difference (e.g. Joyce in press, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1996, 1993, Yates 1990, 1993, Yates and Nordbladh 1990). However, understanding people in the past explicitly in terms of empathy and similarity has also become popular recently (e.g. Hodder 1999, Knapp and Meskell 1997, Meskell 1996, 1998a, 1998b, Treherne 1995). The currency of these projects is that of the individual. Here I ask what place this trend of thought has left for cultural, social and sexual difference, and what the impact of such thinking might be. I also compare prehistoric remains from northern Europe with this model of the individual, and ask what kinds of inconsistencies appear. Why have some prehistorians chosen to theorise alternatives to 'the individual', and how far have these alternatives gone to address the problems I allocate to the use of this concept?

This chapter takes a tripartite form. In the first part I discuss what the individual actually is, and how public perceptions of the individual have influenced archaeological writing. I also discuss how gender theorists - among others - have demonstrated the problems with prevalent understandings of individualism and the individual. In the second

part I set out the case for alternative understandings of bodies, persons and experience in prehistoric Europe. I argue that the evidence of Neolithic, Mesolithic and Bronze Age bodies does not match the concept of the 'individual', but rather indicates a range of different experiences and understandings of the person. Finally, I examine post-processual writing on personhood and experience in prehistory which has already rejected the primacy of the individual, to determine where that rejection has taken archaeology over the last 15 years. Have post-processual or interpretative texts offered useful alternatives to individualism, and are there still alternatives which have remained unexplored?

The individual as a subject for study is part of a wider trend resulting from rejection of culture history, culture process, systemics and, to some extent, structuralism. This trend involves theorising the social, the cultural and biological all at once, and is concomitant with a change of scale, and a change in the unit of analysis. This supposedly micro-level unit is 'the individual'. A focus on the individual seems to provide an alternative to the grand narrative. But how different are these entities, what kind of pasts can we envisage for them? Is 'the individual' really a tool for dealing with culture, society, biology at the micro-level, or is it part of a broader grand narrative?

## **Part One**

### **An archaeology of 'the individual subject'.**

There are many current ways of theorising the subject in philosophical, sociological, anthropological and archaeological literature. However, I argue that there is one dominant interpretation of the subject, both in public and in archaeological understanding. In this understanding the subject is defined as a very specific type of entity, more specific than a person or a self; an individual. How can I argue that the individual is a metonym? Just as the crown is a metonym for the monarch or even state, so our bodies have become metonyms for the individual. Just as culture and family are signified in the metonymic process by potsherds and structures, so individuals are signified by bodies; skeletons, even single bones. What is this metonymic subject, the individual? The individual is an institution of modernity. What is the nature of this institution?

This subject, the individual, can be equated with the conventional, knowing, Cartesian subject, a mind in a body and yet not fully embodied (cf. Thomas in press). But this transcendental subject is a fantasy which no-one enacts completely (Butler 1993:4-23; see chapter 4). It is a construct, an ideal rather than a description of any persons life or

experience. Scholars from many disciplines have been at pains to emphasise that this understanding of the subject does not adequately describe persons in the present world at all (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, Foucault 1979, 1970, Haraway 1991, Connerton 1989, Strathern 1988, 1992, Irigaray 1985[1974], 1985b[1977], Conkey and Gero 1997:428).

Many archaeologists have responded to this work, producing accounts of the past which acknowledge the relationality of persons, and the difficulty in pinning past persons down to any one type of category. However, this relationality often still requires the placing of a unit, very much the individual unit, within a social network (see below). Furthermore, this work has inspired a reaction. 'The body' is a notable battlefield for theories in current archaeology (e.g. cf. Barrett et al. in press). Much of this debate seems to revolve around defining the relationships between experience, the subject, agency, personhood, the individual and the body. These relationships will become key to my thesis. There are a number of problems with the way these relationships have been described by 'individualists'<sup>1</sup>;

- experience is only a subject of study as something which *belongs* to a person. Experience is reduced to a product of an individuals' life; it starts and finishes with the individual. The role of experience as a *generative force*, something which constitutes persons in the first place, is overlooked;
- the person becomes reduced to meaning simply 'the individual'. The psychological structure of the individual is also assumed, with an emphasis on the role of the 'ego'. Other forms of personhood are overlooked despite numerous anthropological discussions;
- A slippage occurs whereby there is an equation of bodies and individuals. 'The individual' suffers from a mind/body separation, where the body becomes the external expression of the individual. This creates a field in which archaeologists looking at bodies or parts of bodies assume that they contained egos, individual minds. The metonymic process is kept diacritical; the bones, 'the body' is only a metonym for the individual self. The body becomes reduced to a possession of the individual. It

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<sup>1</sup> These trends are difficult to pin down. They are perhaps best described as tacit; they are not to be found in many academic papers, but are increasingly discussed by students, in conference papers, in what Foucault might call 'corridor talk'. This status actually makes them far more difficult to critique; after all, if I can't supply a set of references, why should you believe me? For the record, references which do spring to mind include Knapp and Meskell 1997, Treherne 1995, Meskell 1998a and b, 1996, Hodder 1982, 1986, 1992. For the third point, concerning bones and individuals, a great many references are possible throughout the history of the discipline, several of which are dealt with in detail throughout this thesis.

composes that individual, and gives rise to it. That there are other ways for bodies to be composed, other types of personhood for bodies to be generated by is neglected;

- 'the subject' falls into place as a definition for this individual. Although subjectivity acknowledges many differences of experience, the subject becomes synonymous with a single social product (as I discuss below);
- agency is located only in the person. Relationships of power which cross-cut each other, and have a generative effect on peoples' experiences, and peoples' enactments of their bodies are overlooked. Agency as relationships which produce subjects is neglected. Where agency is present it seems to represent free will, or individual action. Agency is not seen as something which itself is socially constructed or performed, but a quality of individual freedom. But agency is not autonomy. I would argue that agency is situated, and therefore a condition of subjects produced through their material relations. In other words, agency describes the activity of a subject's relations, it is not produced by subjects, but part of their constitution.

This process of reduction is carried out to emphasise similarity, to facilitate empathy. In effect, the complex relations which generate/are generated by persons become reduced to standardised forms, so that we perceive only the product/producer 'the subject'. These forms are normative in that they assume certain attributes for the subject. Feminists like Luce Irigaray have argued that not to possess these attributes is not to be considered as a subject at all. In her essay *Any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the masculine* (Irigaray 1985 [1974]:133-146) Irigaray is very clear about the kinds of subjectivity which have been theorised (male-centred, masculinist egos), experienced and made present, and those which have not ('the feminine'). Throughout her work Irigaray links modern subjectivity and subjectification to the history which produced the modern Western world, a history of science and scientism, a history of capitalism and liberalism, a history of sexual division and discrimination. Along with other feminists (e.g. Haraway 1991, Braidotti 1991, Grosz 1994, Vasseleu 1998), Irigaray makes it clear that there is no unified modern subjectivity or subject, let alone one which extends to the past.

While the universal subject fears violence to itself (we are terrified when faced with crimes against the individual; we empathise with individuals or groups thereof above all else, particularly those conform to our notions of what an individual should be like; in times of war enemy persons are 'dehumanised', their individuality undermined (cf. Theweleit 1989a), it acts out a violence on persons by regulating what it means to be a

person. A person is an individual or nothing, to the extent of Margaret Thatcher's statement "there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families". Little thought is given to who - or what - these individuals are, and how they are generated. In short, the subject is a model, an idea(l) which we must pass as before we can act as reasonable people, think rationally like philosophers or scientists (cf. Gero and Conkey 1997:428 on this "mythic conflation" of subject and rationality). The individual template of the person is a basis for homogeneity, which buries the real differences of people's lives. Difference is supposed to lie in the constitution of this subject. Individuality is the quality of difference which is accorded to the individual by right. However, throughout (and beyond) Western thought and experience the individual subject is implicitly masculine, white, free, with the means and status to act in the public sphere according to its own decisions. Society is read as consisting of agreements between these bio-cultural agents, a "social contract" (Rousseau [1767]1983). While such liberal notions of the world are no longer acceptable to critics from many disciplines, prehistorians still employ these not-so-neutral templates in writing their pasts.

Many recent archaeological interpretations of the social world clearly identify difference as being a quality of the individual (e.g. Hodder 1999:130-147, Treherne 1995, Knapp and Meskell 1997, Meskell 1998a, but cf. Marshall 1998 pressing for the importance of relationships constituting past subjectivities). Yet the individual is nothing but a rigid template for homogenising agency (cf. Marshall 1998: 315-6, Fowler in press a and b, Thomas in press, Joyce 1993:7-9). It is largely predicated on the ontology of biology, on a standard mould for the human body with a range of suitable abilities (cf. Berggren, in press). This unit is then accorded difference by right, so that 'we are all different because we are all individuals'.

What has this 'individual' become? It is at once a social, biological and cultural entity. It combines our biological, social and cultural bodies into one uniform unit. In doing so it silences biological, social and cultural difference<sup>2</sup>. However, the category of 'the individual' is translated *across* social and cultural boundaries because of its association with the biological unity of the person and of the species. This assertion needs qualification. I have claimed that a long-term trend, within which archaeology is situated, exists. This trend is one of individualising and categorising. The danger is that if this

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<sup>2</sup> While difference is accorded to individuals, this individual-based difference actually restricts the wider differences of experience and activity which people engage in.

trend is followed to its logical extent individuals will appear in accounts of the past to such an extent that they will overshadow the different experiences and relationships of selfhood which may have taken place in the past. While the writers of such accounts may well be aware of the importance of social constructivism and other schools of social theory, there is a risk that such constructivism still appeals to a biological human body as its originator or universal media. The danger of universalising the individual as a product of activity is clear. Often the individual is sought, and then the processes which created that individual template are deduced. In such an exercise the individual is postulated *a priori* and a specific process of self-emergence is universalised. In this scenario what links the people of the past with the people of the present? Only their accepted status as individuals, only their biological bond of 'the human body'. If it were the social world, as a generative source or medium of personal construction, which were the linking element, then different social discourses would be analysed as specifically different from discourses dominant in the present. Readings based on social and cultural differences would make discussions of individuals or people *categorised* by sex redundant in many prehistoric contexts.

Processes of *performing sex*, of gendering selves and worlds, of enacting personhood would become the precise focus of archaeological inquiry. This is not a classic social constructivism<sup>3</sup> because the social world is not constructed over or from the material world. Instead, materiality is performed through discourse. This performance is not performance by an a priori subject, but the very performance of the subject itself, producing that person (cf. Butler 1993, chapter 4).

The fact that the individual is a socially and culturally specific category seems somehow irrelevant to some authors. Critiques of social and cultural universals and totalising theories of subjectivity already exist within many disciplines<sup>4</sup>. The problem here is that the individual is more than we bargained for. *The individual is both the smallest and the largest scale of archaeological analysis; it transcends scale.* It is this ubiquity and totality with which I am concerned.

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<sup>3</sup> Butler argues that social constructivism, while potentially useful, has strayed into this reading of the physical world because of the emphasis on category (e.g., Butler 1993:4-8). While I would broadly count my concerns as constructivist, I think that a theory of performativity is actually more radical than constructivism. This seems ironic considering that classic constructivism is often construed as the most extreme and radical position, but is now being clearly compromised by postulating social construction over a biological universal.

<sup>4</sup> In philosophical terms the question of the individual as totality, or whether the individual is a sign for the whole comes into debate (e.g. as a background discussion in Jay 1984). That this debate exists in relation to phenomenologists like Sartre, Heidegger, Lukas or Merleau-Ponty should be significant to archaeologists.

The question remains, 'why have these theories proliferated?' It is not that this is the only understanding of the subject. Alternative interpretations abound in philosophy (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari 1983[1972], Heidegger 1962[1927]), social studies (e.g. Foucault 1979, 1970, Latour 1993[1991]), gender studies (e.g. Butler 1990, 1993, 1994, Haraway 1991), anthropology (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, Strathern 1988, 1992, Busby 1997, Battaglia 1990, Weiner 1992) and archaeology (e.g. Baker 1997, Joyce 1993, 1996, 1998, in press, Thomas in press, Fowler 1997, in press, Yates 1993, Yates and Nordbladh 1990, Barrett 1988). Many of these interpretations postulate a subject which is constituted through experience, is a speaking/spoken subject, or is a node in a wider social network or field. Many do not focus on such a node at all, and discuss subjectivity as a process, a set of experiences which are manifested in the performance of different types of bodies and beings. But it is still a Cartesian subject which forms the basis of a dominant *public* pre-understanding of the self. Consequently this is the yardstick against which other theories are measured. In archaeology the predominant pre-understanding makes it back into the public domain through the most 'accessible' interpretations featured on TV or in books aimed at the wider public or at students. In discussing popularist archaeology Hodder, for example, seems to be of the opinion that we all have the same desires (Hodder 1999:146). The heterogeneous public is rarely given any choice, however. TV documentaries about the body abound, but the majority of them are based on evolutionary psychology or sociobiological accounts (e.g. Channel 4's recent 'Anatomy of Desire' series). In these narrations the individual, the person *means* a biological unit which produces culture and society itself<sup>5</sup>.

Alternative accounts of personhood or experience in prehistory are still misread as simply being about

*...the lived experiences of individuals inhabiting monuments and landscapes.* (Hodder 1999:133)

The role of experience as a force in generating different sorts of self is overlooked, or ousted in favour of the individualising approach (for example, Knapp and Meskell

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<sup>5</sup> The role of DNA and genetic research is also interesting here. While theories about the significance of DNA (e.g., Dawkins 1989) situate the individual as a host or carrier for other traits, the individual phenotype precedes the social or cultural world. Ingold (1998) has discussed the fallacy of such an approach to personhood by illustrating that the genotype is a 'myth' (ibid.:29-30), and reiterating the Heideggerian argument that the cultural world precedes any individual who must be born into it. Ingold concludes that human beings are best understood by their histories of practices and not by any idea of 'dormant' genetic capacities. After all, according to classic genetics, the genotype would have to contain endless combinations of capacities for anything humans have ever done or ever will do.

1997:200 reject 'power' and 'discourse' as foci of archaeological study in favour of models of the individual). Accounts of socially generated subjects whose identities are constantly re-negotiated in relation to their lived experiences, or of enactments and subversions of prevalent discourses do not make it into these domains of access. Too often these discussions of activity, social struggle and relationships of power are negated, boxed into individual-sized packages for general consumption.

It has been asserted that what really interests prehistorians are the ideas in the mind of the past individual (e.g. Hodder 1982:99, 105, 1986:6-9, 1992:16-19<sup>6</sup>). In such a pursuit, the subject-as-individual forms an implicit link to the past. Thought becomes the flow across this bridge of individual personhood which unites the archaeologist with past people. This is only possible because there are elements of the modern subject which are assumed to be the same as past subjects. In other words, a uniform level of subjectivity. More recently, this trend has been repeated, using emotions rather than ideas as the flow of similarity (e.g. Meskell 1998a; 'grief', Treherne 1995:122-4; 'existential dread'). Of course, archaeologists do not necessarily believe that this uniform level of subjectivity exists. What they are *effectively* relying on is the assurance that a uniform level of biological composition exists, or that emotional capacities and tendencies are biologically 'hardwired'. Because the individual has gelled so fast as the biological unit of human being, this uniformity is presumed for all subjects, for all persons. Theories of why or which emotional states were actually relevant are lacking; difference is reduced to empathy.

Treherne (1995) provides an interesting example of the use of social theory which, though apparently rigorous, fails to challenge several units of archaeological thought as *a priori*; most notably the individual and the category of sex. Treherne is incisive on the relationships between persons and the material culture they use to generate their selves. However, the basis of those selves lie unquestioned. The relationships between masculinity as a concept and the biologically male body is one of total correlation. Although it is the practices which these Bronze age 'men' perform which make them 'men', they are already men biologically. The implication is that the *category* of men, of masculinity is a single category, one which is shared by ourselves and Bronze Age

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<sup>6</sup> Hodder (1982) also stresses the importance of contextual meaning and repeated practice. However, this strand of study has suffered under the distraction of individualism and empathy during the Thatcher years and beyond. The tension between the individual person and the practices of daily life are also evident in Treherne (1995) where the category 'the warrior' overwhelms the performative importance of past 'lifestyles'.

'warriors'. But can such a category be assumed? Foucault (1979), among others (e.g. Weeks 1985, Dollimore 1991), has argued that homosexuality as a category is a recent development. The notion of sex, of masculinity, of individual importance is an import from the modern trend I have critiqued. Furthermore, there can be no modern description of masculinity which matches all male experience, sexuality or selfhood. Treherne's problem is partly one of scale. The 'Bronze age warrior'-as-individual encapsulates the whole of Europe. The performances of selfhood which may have been very variable are totalised. Subversions of the norms he sets up are undisclosed, leaving the difference which lies in the gap between regulatory fictions of self-identity and personal experience out in the cold. In an interesting paradox Treherne's warriors are unreflexive, and yet 'make themselves' through their personal actions. While the body is "a practical medium of action" (ibid.:120), and while action defines sex, sex is left to reside in the biological unit of that action, the male individual. In other words, why is it 'men', 'warriors' and 'individuals' which are the products of those actions? What were the specific experiences and activities of these Bronze Age people? Are there other ways for us to relate to those activities? Treherne has theorised a model, swamping the sets of different co-existent processes and the important relationships between them which he seeks to study. Treherne's warriors can only reflect the (normative) dominant discourse he has postulated for them.

Any subject is an effect of complex socio-political trends, with a contextually specific history. Prehistoric trends of subjectification cannot be assumed to be the same as present ones, because they are cumulations of different histories. A biological similarity is not a social or a cultural similarity. A biological similarity is not a social or a cultural similarity<sup>7</sup>. Given that biology is a social category, different ontological understandings of personal physical origin and status are likely to have existed in the past. In short, though people in the past may be perceived as sharing certain biological similarities with present people, they need not have experienced the world as 'individuals'. Several post-processual authors clearly recognise this, and do not discuss individuals, but 'social agents', 'social beings', 'actors' or 'persons'. These accounts are not without their problems or their critics, however. Hodder has recently argued that, in accounts of prehistory which do not deal with the individual (he cites Tilley 1994, Gosden 1994 and Thomas 1996),

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<sup>7</sup> Or rather, a biological similarity is a social and cultural one, because it has been constructed through those fields. The point is that biological characteristics do not equate directly to cultural or social activities.

*the bodies constructed by these authors are universal bodies....the bodies they construct are not well situated within specific historic meanings; now I want to agree with Meskell (1996) that opportunities are not taken to explore individual lives. (Hodder 1999:136)*

But what could be more culturally specific to modernity than the individual? Yet this category is applied consistently as a universal by Meskell (1996, 1998a, 1998b) and Treherne (1995), whom Hodder champions. Earlier in the book Hodder himself stated that *Our personal experience ...the thoughts and actions which are embedded in our practical engagement with the world, are at least partly the product of the objective conditions within which we live (ibid.; 78)*

But what of the material conditions (objective or otherwise) of the past? Were they not different conditions to those of the present? Did they not have a part to play in generating past selves? The post-processualists he critiques may well seem to universalise the social body. Tilley's (1999) account of the body as the basis for metaphor, for example, diminishes the understanding that the body itself *is* a metaphor, and therefore culturally specific. Furthermore, Hodder's (1999:136) critique of **A Phenomenology of Landscape** (Tilley 1994) seems fair in criticising the use of a biological body as a neutral template over which different social bodies can be laid (cf. Bruck 1998 for a more incisive critique of the reliance on the physical over the social in Tilley's book). However, this is not the only way to read these phenomenological approaches to prehistoric experience (see further discussion of post-processual ideas of the person, below). Many of these accounts of prehistoric discourses describe power-relationships in terms which accept that the specific experiences of past people cannot be fitted up to our categories as easily as we may wish. Theories of different types of social being - for this is what these accounts are - leave us the option of developing further theories of relations and selves for specific contexts. There is clearly unexplored potential here, despite the many dead ends which crop up in Theoretical Archaeology Group papers where the authors reproduce Tilley's 1994 experiment without reflecting that they are located in a very similar position to Tilley. Experiments which explore differences of subjectivity in phenomenology can be taken far further than this, as I will explore in Chapters 5 and 6.

This difference of experience I am discussing is not located in the individual, then. There are many differences between present people in terms of their biology, their social and cultural experiences (women's experiences of their bodies are very different to men's, class differences are socially effected, and are cross-cut by cultural origin, dialect or

language which itself conveys and effects great differences in understanding). Difference does not reside within the individual; 'it' does not reside anywhere<sup>8</sup>. The differences I am talking about are relationships between people in the past, described in terms of different types of experience, activity and personhood (cf. Marshall 1998 pressing for the importance of relationships in constituting past subjectivities). I think these are important because past material culture, past materialities, are not the same as present ones. Persons who exist in different sets of material conditions may have been very different to present people. However, because the individual is the normative concept par excellence it has often been inconceivable to postulate a world where people exist who do not conform to this idea(1).

The subject, the individual, is therefore often projected across time. As a result of this projection an (a)spatial and (a)temporal relationship is enacted. The crux of this relationship is the tension between the subject and cultural, social, and sexual differences; in fact any different ways of being. The biological body functions as the unspoken fulcrum of this relationship. The body, synonymous with the individual, can form that fulcrum because it is considered to be a temporal universal. If 'the subject' is a temporal constant, then it is *always present*. In other words, such a formula can only work by translating the subject of the present (the here, the now) across time and space.

*Time does not exist for the cogito, which escapes time's action by presenting itself as the sole fixed point of reference. The Cartesian subject's mode of being is an eternal present....the cogito acts as a guarantee of the principle of individuation of the subject through the temporal continuity of being; internal space is thus void, a black hole, beyond time and beyond danger or change.* (Braidotti 1991:72)

Universalising the subject; making its world present throughout time and space is part of the process of defining its self, its borders. As Peggy Phelan (1997:74) says *Our attitudes toward the return of buried bodies including architectural ones, like our attitudes towards the return of the repressed, have much to tell us about our ideas and fantasies about living bodies.*

The lives, experiences and understandings of the world of people who are not identified as

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<sup>8</sup> A great deal of work has been done of the concept of difference over the last 20 years. It is not my intention to review all of it here. However, a number of authors have made contributions which influenced my understanding of the concept, but whose accounts I have not discussed in any detail in the main text. These include Weir 1996, Braidotti 1991: 56-66, 72, Deutscher 1997: 52-57 and Vasseleu 1998:75-9 on difference and the 'trace' of past activities.

typical subjects are negated, cast out of time and space<sup>9</sup>. They may also be devalued by being located in a particular time or place which has negative connotations, perpetuated through the history of the subject (cf. Fabian 1983, Jones 1996). At the same time, as Braidotti argues, the most central aspects of the individual remain unquestioned and hidden<sup>10</sup>.

This universal translation seems to be necessary for the modern subject to understand the past. But it also results in the replacement of possible differences of the past with the normative relations of the present. Alternative relationships of selves, communities and worlds which exist in the present are not used in these models because they are considered too recent, too modern, or too culturally specific. This exclusion is without basis; the dominant views of 'the subject' cannot be traced to the distant past either. Cultural difference is often replicated in archaeological theory by turning to anthropological models of kinship or burial rituals from other modern specific contexts, for example. In contrast, the idea that cultural difference between present people and prehistoric people could be far greater than the range of differences which exist in the present does not seem very popular. Such ideas push the past beyond the reach of the knowing subject.

In effect, 'the subject' is nothing but a fiction which regulates our lives. But, clearly, this trick of unity through time has a price. This form of subjectification generates a linear temporality, but can only do so by *pushing away* the aspects of people's lives which do not conform to its example. Those who do not conform to the idea(1) of the subject stand to be devalued and objectified, for example either fetishised as exotic or shunned as savage. The results of this process are personal; they regulate personhood, and in so doing affect and effect persons. Recent interpretative trends in British archaeology run the risk of co-opting and squashing the power of radical difference into the overarching concept of the individual subject. Is it not possible that there are infinite different ways of

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<sup>9</sup> In Phelan's analysis of the Rose Theatre, the Theatre became a contentious archaeological site because of its association with a non-normative type of body; homosexual, theatrical and archaeological. Tory MPs described the site as a dirty place, using metaphors of sewers, disused coal mines, brothels, and rubbish tips as analogies for the Theatre (Phelan 1997:76-7, 82-3). Only after a series of high-profile marches in 1989 led by thespians (chiefly Ian MacKellan who had recently declared his homosexuality) were plans drawn up to preserve the site.

<sup>10</sup> Like Irigaray, Braidotti argues that this void at the centre of the subject is masculine. She calls for scholars to turn their attentions to the heterogeneity of masculinities in order to rupture the continuity of these normative approaches. I had originally intended to work along these lines during the thesis, but have had to defer. There is still a significant lack of literature on masculinity and difference, particularly in archaeology. This is one direction which future research must take.

being, some of which are incomprehensible and unreachable to many of us? It is widely accepted that the past has elements which were different to the present. This alterity disrupts our continuous dialogues when we pause for breath to articulate the confusion we feel about the past. It cannot be rationalised. It disrupts our reasonable accounts of prehistory at the level of the subject, of the person. There are things in the past which the knowing subject cannot know. Even if certain principles are read as “a fundamental basis for self-understanding and the construction of meaning in all known societies” (Tilley 1999:50) this does not mean they hold true for prehistoric societies. We are taught as archaeologists that we must assume that they do, because otherwise we cannot carry out useful inquiries into the past. I would like to call the bluff on this dictum.

In short, there can be no models which characterise present experiences or understandings of the self. There are only, to paraphrase Judith Butler, *regulatory fictions* (cf. Haraway 1991:135, Butler 1990, and see chapter 4). In other words, the relationship between ourselves and the normative subject postulated here is *not* one of total correlation. There are citational precedents, means of acting which are reiterated. There are practices which people enact - forms or models are reifications of these, and do not absolutely reflect them. No individual person is ‘the individual’, no subject or agent is ‘the subject’. Yet these identifications exist, and shape our accounts of the past. The point is that as our social life shapes our idea of the person, it also shapes our persons: but people do not identify totally with the models society provides. The gap between these models - be they fashion models, role models or archaeological models - and personal experience, confusion, activity, subversion, is where ‘difference’ lies.

“Times river”, the fluid of time is rigidly categorised by archaeologists. In *Volume - Fluidity* (1985 [1974]) Luce Irigaray describes man’s - the subject’s - desire to plan, map and measure the fluid aspects of the world which do not obey the laws of oneness, unity, and uniformity. The ways the past lays down its sediments (and the ways in which those sediments recede or return past material) are of concern to archaeologists, as a key to understanding how the river (which is discourse rather than simply time) flows. But all that ‘the subject’ sees is the reflection of the surface of the river, made solid by his vision. Instead of relations of difference we see only ourselves; a selfish past.

## Summary

In summary, there are two enjoined strands of importance here. Firstly, that an

emphasis on relationships forms a different sort of archaeological focus to an emphasis on individuals. This is important because - regardless of whether 'individuals' existed in all past contexts or not - relationships which structure or constitute the social world also generate being. Understandings of these relationships are key to politically-inspired and politically-aware archaeologies, arguably the kinds of archaeologies which are most needed at present. Secondly, the individual as a concept may itself be an inappropriate metonym in many contexts; other forms of personhood, predicated in different sets of relationships, need to be theorised. Therefore, applying a model of the individual to past selves will only serve to close down the range of possible experiences for past people. Furthermore, a theory which simply secludes the individual within a rhetoric of 'the subject' is itself liable to fall into the same trap, as I argue in the third part of this chapter. However, such approaches do at least avoid according the individual that status of a Baudrillardian 'dead point', a place beyond question (cf. Walsh 1990:282). It seems to me that the status of the individual in accounts or proposals about the past is precisely that; an emptied, dead point filled by normative thoughts or emotions.

## **Part Two**

### **Prehistoric Bodies in Northern Europe: A brief synopsis of some comparative examples**

So far I have discussed the inapplicability of the concept (or metonymic signified) 'individual' on a generic level. What are the specific problems with the use of this metonym in accounts of the Neolithic past? Why do I find it misleading to describe Neolithic bodies and bones under this sign? In later chapters I will argue that the deposition of bodies in the Manx Neolithic can be read as a recital of altogether different experiences of personhood. Individual bodies are not represented<sup>11</sup>. Here I will situate the Manx Neolithic material within a very broad regional discursive field. In this section I will illustrate the kind of archaeological similarities existing between Neolithic deposits from Man and Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age renditions of bodily experience in Northern Europe. In doing so I will draw a thumb-nail sketch of some of the deposits at Ballaharra on the Isle of Man (for more detailed discussion and interpretation see Chapters 5, 6, 7 and Appendix), alongside my interpretations of material from other sites within this broad

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<sup>11</sup> It is also worth pointing out that even where single bodies are found in the archaeological record this should not be taken as a definitive statement of individuality, as I argue in chapter 5.

range of contexts.

These comparisons are intended partly as a comparison of prehistoric practices, and partly as a comparison of what I consider prehistoric citations about bodies. It also serves to situate the Manx practices of depositing human bone alongside animal bone and material culture all in 'broken' form, in the context of a wider tradition. As such, this discussion should establish the wider implications of the later discussion of prehistoric personhood as well as its validity as a theme of research.

Ballaharra, a site which was used in the middle and late Neolithic was excavated and quarried away in 1971. Ballaharra has been interpreted as a chambered cairn, but the deposits which interest me are outside of this structure. The first of these deposits *...seemed superficially [to be] a crouched inhumation, but proved on laboratory examination to consist of representative parts of three individuals – a fully adult male, a youth of about 19 years, and a boy of 10-11 years.*<sup>12</sup> (Cregeen 1978:148)

There were also two later Neolithic mixed cremation deposits, combining human bone, animal bone, arrowheads, slate, charcoal and potsherds. These deposits were located at the end of channels cut into the subsoil which lead back to burnt areas; bonfires or pyres (Figure 2). The largest of these deposits contained bones from a sheep or goat, a dog and a pheasant-sized bird as well as 4 arrowheads, other flints, slate, potsherds and bone from 33-40 humans. The second deposit contained bone from 3-5 humans, dog shin and ankle bones, and vertebrae from an unidentified small mammal. In the larger deposit all of the skull fragments and vertebrae were from children, while all the longbones were from adults. The second deposit was composed almost entirely of skulls and longbones. These deposits represent a clear combination of different human body parts, animal body parts, and material culture (Cregeen 1978:146-7, 148-9).

This trend of mixing human bone, animal bone, other items of material culture and other substances, can be seen at most Manx Neolithic sites. There appears to have been a specific set of citations which involved people's bones. These bones were not arranged as single individual bodies. There are no depictions on the island of what we would recognise as individual persons. In short, people were not separated from each other, or from the wider material world.

There are a numerous parallel examples of mixed or joint burial of parts of persons,

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<sup>12</sup> A more detailed analysis of this deposit in terms of gendering will take place in Chapter 4, and further interpretation in chapter 5.

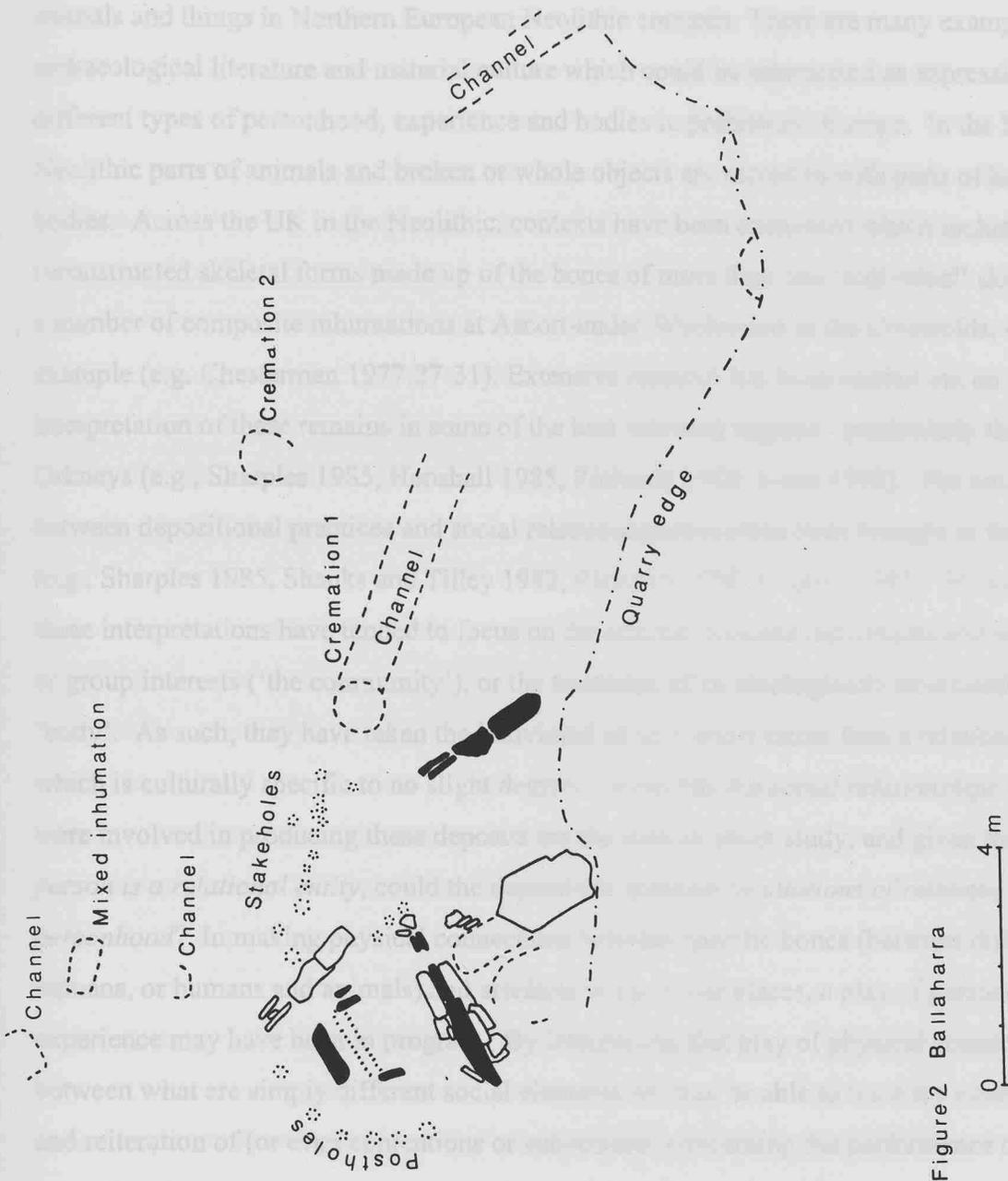


Figure 2 Ballaharra

In Chamber 7, Ascott-under-Wyke, a skeleton was found which had the atlas vertebrae from a cervid skull placed over the back here; essentially the skeleton was given an 'extra' vertebra. The deposit was found which consisted of parts of two skeletons arranged in a frame. Chesterman notes that the astragalus was missing, which would seem to imply that the lower leg bones were present (ibid:27). Although the exact details of this 'person-building' are difficult to deduce from Chesterman's analysis, he makes it clear that activities of representing a skeletal frame using more bones than exist in a natural frame took place (ibid: 27-31). There were also practices where the human frame was attenuated, drawn out in length, or put back together

animals and things in Northern European Neolithic contexts. There are many examples in archaeological literature and material culture which could be interpreted as expressions of different types of personhood, experience and bodies in prehistoric Europe. In the Manx Neolithic parts of animals and broken or whole objects are mixed in with parts of human bodies. Across the UK in the Neolithic, contexts have been excavated which include reconstructed skeletal forms made up of the bones of more than one 'individual' skeleton - a number of composite inhumations at Ascott-under-Wychwood in the Cotswolds, for example (e.g. Chesterman 1977:27-31). Extensive research has been carried out on the interpretation of these remains in some of the best recorded regions - particularly the Orkneys (e.g., Sharples 1985, Henshall 1985, Richards 1988, Jones 1998). The connection between depositional practices and social relationships has often been brought to the fore (e.g., Sharples 1985, Shanks and Tilley 1982, Richards 1988, Cooney 1992). However, these interpretations have tended to focus on the relation between individuals and societal or group interests ('the community'), or the treatment of an ideologically structured generic 'body'. As such, they have taken the individual as an *a priori* rather than a relational entity which is culturally specific to no slight degree. Given that the *social relationships* which were involved in producing these deposits are the subject under study, and given that *a person is a relational entity*, could the deposits in question be *citations of relations of personhood*? In making physical connections between specific bones (between different humans, or humans and animals) and artefacts in particular places, a play of personal experience may have been in progress. By interpreting that play of physical connections between what are simply different social elements we may be able to trace the citation of and reiteration of (or even contentions or subversions concerning the performance of) personhood.

In Chamber 7, Ascott-under-Wychwood, an almost complete skeleton was found, which had the atlas vertebrae from a second skeleton inserted into the backbone; essentially this skeleton was given an 'extra' vertebra. In Chamber 2 a deposit was found which consisted of parts of two skeletons arranged as if one. Chesterman notes that the sacrum was missing, which would seem to imply that all other bones were present (ibid:27). Although the exact details of this 'person-building' are difficult to deduce from Chesterman's analysis, he makes it clear that activities of representing a skeletal frame using more bones than exist in a natural frame took place (ibid.: 27-31). There were also practices where the human frame was attenuated, drawn out in length, or put back together

roughly similar to the natural form, but clearly after total disarticulation (ibid.: 30-31). The play on the human skeleton went further; in Chamber 1 a vertebra was placed within a smashed skull, humeri and femurs were broken and then put back together, and ulnae were placed in articulation with radii from other bodies (ibid.: 26). As at Ballaharra, exercises in skeleton-building were complemented by the further mixing of 'individual' persons with each others' remains through the inclusion of cremation deposits. The author also reports the inclusion of animal bones (including dog, pig, ovicaprid and cattle) and material culture (pottery, charcoal and flint) mixed in with human bone in the passage and in the chambers at Ascott-under-Wychwood (ibid:24). Practices of mixing cremated bone with partial or whole inhumations is also common in Irish Neolithic megaliths (Cooney 1992:128-9, 135-6), with a few instances of the inclusion of water-rounded pebble manuports and animal bones (as we shall see both are significant in the Neolithic of Man).

Similar practices are in evidence at other megalithic chambers. To return to 'Cotswold-Severn' sites, two (and possibly more) of the skulls at Lanhill were found to be articulated by a mandible which did not 'belong' to them in life (Keiler and Piggott 1938:125, 127). The excavators also note that many bones were missing; one set of arms, one spinal column and pelvis, and one set of legs and a skull, were absent from three respective skeletons. At West Kennet skulls and longbones were also 'missing' compared to the other body parts which remained. This 'partial deposition' or 'partial *removal*' is again an extremely common trait in megalithic and non-megalithic deposits of human bone. As Keiler and Piggott pointed out (ibid:130), and as excavations at Hazleton North imply (Saville 1990), this process of manipulating skeletons and body parts may have been a gradual, temporal one in many Neolithic sites. It may be that whole bodies were deposited and gradually broken up as new whole bodies are brought into these sites (as Richards (1988:46) suggests for Midhowe in the Orkneys). Partial remains and disarticulated mixtures are extremely common at Neolithic sites. However, it is still significant that a number of these bodies are *reconstituted* in some way. While it could be argued for some sites that this suggests a model of the loss of the self over time, a gradual journey towards 'ancestry' (e.g., Saville 1990, Lucas 1996, but see Leivers forthcoming and Fowler forthcoming), it could also be a citation of the journey through life. Furthermore it may be possible that at Hazleton North the 'rear' chambers could have been used first, while the cairn was under construction. This interpretation would question the idea that the material was moved in from an entrance, or deposited and moved around at a

later date. Fragments of human bone were found in the cairn material, dropped or deposited during construction, which may lend credibility to this interpretation; perhaps the chambers were in use before they were covered. If the treatment of dead bodies was in some way a citation of persons' lives, it is possible that the journeys at Hazleton North by the 'dead' towards greater disarticulation, greater partibility, may have been a reiteration of the journey of life, of social reality. Also important here is the possibility that bones which were 'missing' were circulated socially, perhaps after spending time at these sites, as Thomas (1998) has argued. It is possible to imagine a practice of deposition as an individual skeleton, disarticulation, reconstitution as a joint social entity, and then recirculation among other persons in the social world. Along with other items of material culture; axes, pottery; human and animal bone may have had currency as a social element which was mobile, exchangeable, culturally significant.

The inclusion of animal bones or objects in such partial and mixed deposits of human remains may be of significance here. Rather than creating a distinction between human remains and material culture, we could consider the bone as material culture, and the objects and animals as part of the person and integrally involved in inter-personal relations<sup>13</sup>. To turn to another well-documented context, a number of deposits in the Orkney megalithic sites also involve similar (but differing) re-constitutions of personal/social bodies. For both Blackhammer and Knowe of Yarso Richards reports that the skeletal remains were incomplete, and that some parts of bodies were accentuated (e.g., skulls at the Knowe of Yarso) in numbers present and place of deposition. At the Knowe of Ramsay and at Blackhammer only certain parts of each original skeleton were deposited; and the choices made for every skeleton seems to have been different (perhaps a reflection of differences in personal history or experience?). Human bones were not necessarily kept apart from animal bones; at Holm of Papa Westray North deer and human skulls, along with deer tines were all deposited together (Richards 1988:53-4). 24 dog skulls were intermixed with 5 human skulls in the central chamber of Cuween Hill passage grave, while seven fully articulated dog skeletons were "each deposited with between 2 and 3 human skulls in separate stalls and side cells" (Jones 1998:311).

However, not all of these deposits can be seen as directly relating to experience in life - at least not of the persons deposited. Richards' interpretation of the deposits at

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<sup>13</sup> As I will argue in later chapters this is not to objectify persons or to personify things, but to consider the inapplicability of such a dichotomous method of understanding persons and other social elements.

Quanterness brings up a crucial point - he sees the bones found in the larger Orkney tombs as the later collection of 'ancestral' bones from earlier smaller sites on the island (Richards 1988:50-1). In such a context the re-deposition serves as an excellent opportunity for the re-negotiation of personal and bodily assertions. In such a situation, Richards argues, the emphasis on the collective is an attempt to reduce the role of the individual in society, and to unpick or muddle the genealogies of separate clans or groups on the island, to assert their unity and equality in death if not in life. In these types of interpretations the role of material culture is to serve ideology, and the roots of the past can be reworked by manipulating that material culture. One question here is, what was that material culture 'doing' in the interim period? How did this change occur? The deposits at Quanterness and Isbister show signs of differential 'wear and tear' as well as a range of radio-carbon dates. These have been used to argue that these bones were 'in store' in smaller sites. Could they also have been on the move, playing an active part in daily life, social relations? Were the Orkney 'tombs' actually locations for stashing bones and material culture, or were they locations where people were carrying out practices which later included these traits and so began to 'call in' more and more bone and objects from the wider social landscape in which they were moving, caught up in networks of social relations? Whatever the situation was, it is clear from Richards' analysis that these skeletal remains did not reflect the lived experiences of the persons of which they were once part. However, their status as artefacts, as material, made them important in the continual renegotiations of personal identity, as well as, possibly, ideologies of group kinship. *Long after the specific persons had died, their body parts were being involved in citations about personhood.* Not their personhood, perhaps, but the personal relations of those living at that time. The re-citation, and reiteration of bodily partibility and reintegration which took place at this time could be seen as significant not in terms of individual-group dynamics, but even in terms of changes of personhood itself (see chapters 4, 5, 6, 7).

It seems that bone was circulated and manipulated in Neolithic societies along with other items of material culture. It also seems likely that the kinds of selves generated by Neolithic experiences would have been different to our own. Unfortunately many attempts to address the specificities of Neolithic personhood have taken the approach that collective or corporate burials were assertions of an egalitarian ideology (Shanks and Tilley 1982), a reflection of social groups (Sharpley 1985) or represented a social rather than personal body with 'corporate' standing for 'collective' (cf. Richards 1988:54), and collective

standing for ancestors;

*It is in the common emphasis on the collective over the individual that we can trace a concern with ancestral forces* (Edmonds 1999: 81).

However, the practices of corporate and collective deposition may have rather more to do with personal lives, experiences and identity. What if the lack of reference to the individual was not a snub to remind people that the individual was unimportant in the social world, but occurred because the concept itself was irrelevant to Neolithic social life? The emphasis on collective deposits, mixed deposits, partial deposits could have more to do with a concern with tracing social relationships. What if Neolithic social relationships were not mediated by and between individualised selves, but *dividual*, relational selves (Strathern 1988, 1992, and see chapter 4)? Equally, these deposits may have had an ideological role akin to the one discussed by Shanks and Tilley (1982). However, as I would see such an ideology as a sequence of ‘regulatory fictions’, the actual citation of that ideology, the practice of that ideology is not a simple matter to interpret, as I discuss in chapters 5 and 7. Practices of partibility may have both dominant and subversive roles in the generation of personhood.

So far I have discussed material from south-west Britain and from the Orkneys, in order to show that the material I will discuss in more depth is part of a wider network of relations of self and person. I consider that experiences and concepts of the self varied greatly in Neolithic Britain. I am not arguing that the same relations were practised all over Britain, throughout the Neolithic. As I argue below, even within one geographical context a range of different relations may have taken place. However, it is still important to establish a generic context, a background discourse within which these relations may have taken place.

There are distinctive local trends in these practices. In each case not only whole bodies but body parts, and the relationships between those parts and animal bones or objects seem to have been extremely important. The presence of numerous children’s bones is often notable, including at Nympsfield (Edmonds 1999:63, Clifford 1938), Ballaharra (e.g. Cregeen 1978), Pant-y-Saer (Lindsay-Scott 1933), and West Kennet (Piggott 1962). Cooney (1992:140-1) notes that in many Irish sites children’s bones were treated differently to adults. He considers that this is because children were unimportant in the community (which he sees signified by the “mingling of bones together”) in which “children would not have figured in a major way” (ibid.:141). However, this relies on

several suppositions not least of which is that corporate burial represents the community and that children are unimportant to a community. Where child/adult differentiation is evident, it may be that the specific types of relations which those persons engaged in at certain ages were cited in their burial. Again, this calls to mind the notion of a journey of death as a reiteration of life: adults were broken into parts and reconnected, while children - perhaps yet to form many relations with other people, animals and places - were deposited whole as 'closed' entities with few personal connections (at least in some contexts).

Sometimes animal bones or objects were included in these mixed deposits (e.g. Notgrove, Clifford 1936, and at Ballateare, Bersu 1947), sometimes they were deposited where human bones were expected to be, in their place (e.g. Mortimer 1905:103, cf. Thomas 1998, 1999:134, Jones 1998:311). Leivers (forthcoming) has noted that many skeletons deposited at West Kennet and other megalithic sites are unusual in that they display signs of acute skeletal deformity. In the late Mesolithic and early Neolithic of Scandinavia antlers were buried consistently with humans, and in one case antlers and artefacts were present, but the human component was not (Tilley 1996:39). Animal burials furnished with richer grave goods than human burials are also known in these contexts (ibid.:35). Tilley notes that one skeleton is accompanied by a headless dog, and that skeletons buried with defleshed or severed heads and missing extremities or other body parts (mandibles, longbones) were often buried with the parts of animals (Tilley 1996:35-43, Thorpe 1996:29, Whittle 1996:199-200). Human bones and teeth were also made into artefacts or show signs of 'butchery' and deposition among matrices of 'waste' material (ibid.:43). In many of these cases the emphasis seems to have been on diversity, and on inter-mixing different aspects of the world; human, animal, object, young, old, whole and partial.

Yates (1993) and Yates and Nordbladh (1990) illustrate the possibility of different understandings of whole, combined and sometimes partial bodies in Swedish Bronze Age rock art. Examination of the carvings around Tanum, Sweden reveal many images of body parts rather than whole people (figure 3), along with objects and animals. In many contexts (including the Neolithic on Man, and in much of the UK) there are no artistic depictions of individuals or bodies at all. Given the widespread nature of representations of selves among many societies, why is this? Were there representations of selves or personal relations which we do not recognise? The only 'artwork' known from Man in this period are incised grooved-ware style designs on a schist plaque from Ronaldsway and a slate plaque from Ballavarry (figure 1). Several cup mark sites have recently come to light on

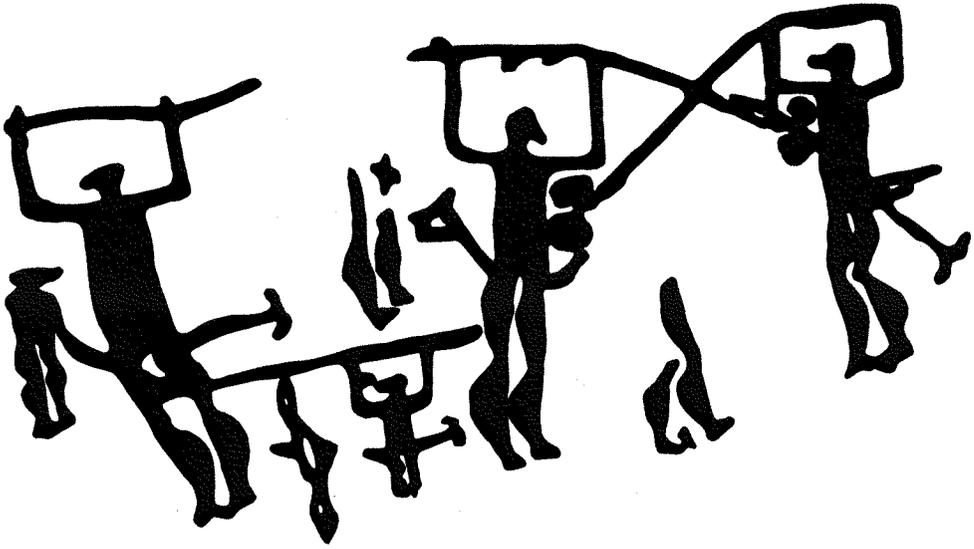


Figure 3 Rock carvings, Bohuslan, Sweden

the island (Bates 1995), but nothing of an anthropomorphic nature exists. Objects which are generally considered to be artistic are not alienated from other types of material culture. As with the practices relating to other material culture, the creation of these 'artistic' objects must be considered as part of the generation of a social world, not mere reflections of reality. How were these objects involved in such a reiteration of reality?

In each of these contexts, could these practices and citations be read as indicative of a different sort of personhood altogether, a different subjectivity? If they are a citation of social life, what kind of experiences and relationships could have generated these bodies? It seems likely from these archaeological analogies that parts of bodies, not just wholes, are an important focus of attention in the mid later prehistory of northern Europe. The forms of this interest may have varied significantly, and may have had very different genealogies or histories of practice and meaning. However, they seem to have shared a broad range of practices or concerns. These deposits seem to indicate a concern with emphasising the relationships between people and parts of people, rather than the individual unity of a self. The question which I will carry to subsequent chapters is, what do these practices tell us about the naturalisation of personhood in the Manx Neolithic? For now, it is enough to note that some of these practices may point to very different conceptions and possibly even experiences of social embodiment.

### **Part Three**

#### **Post-Processual Persons: Social Being and Agency.**

The aforementioned deposits have, for the most part, been reinterpreted by a number of contemporary archaeologists. Many of those authors have resisted the term 'individual' themselves, if not in the works where they interpret specific deposits, then in their syntheses or theoretical accounts of the past. Without entering into a lengthy discussion about the applicability of the term 'post-processual', I would argue that their emphasis on certain philosophical practices - hermeneutics and phenomenology above all - locates them in a broadly post-processual light. It will be clear from the first two sections of this chapter that I consider an individualistic interpretation somewhat incommensurable with interpretations of Neolithic 'mortuary' deposits. Work done by previous authors in the 1980s and 1990s has led me to this conclusion. Their work also led them to reject the term individual in favour of a number of other approaches to past agency. However, past

agency has tended to overshadow past personhood. What was it that lead post-processual prehistorians to reject the notion of the individual, and how has this rejection been capitalised as an opportunity to explore the possibly of other forms of personhood? Are there gaps left by theorists of the Neolithic which can still be developed on, gaps where differences of being can be explored? Why have these approaches also been rejected by some recent authors, and how could post-processual positions be developed, made more flexible, or used as a starting point for new approaches to past experience?

While Hodder (1999:136) may be mistaken to claim that Tilley (1994), Thomas (1996) and Gosden (1994) construct a universal body, there is still the concern that they cannot avoid employing a neutral template of personhood. Post-processual attempts to understand personhood often stem from phenomenological philosophy, particularly the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962), Husserl (1982) and Heidegger (1927). It is not my intention to carry out an intensive critique of this prolific area in prehistoric interpretation. However, it is important to establish the role of relationships of social difference in these accounts. For example, Martin Heidegger features heavily in the work of Julian Thomas. Heidegger could be accused of universalising his self onto all people through the creation of the concepts *sein* and *dasein*. Does this mean that Thomas' interpretation of selves in the past assumes a fundamental template of social being - not the individual, but another modern model, self-as-action? After all, while this seems generic enough to allow room for specifics, does it not imply that each of those specific situations is equal, transposable and in many ways 'different-but-the-same' as social practices? Likewise, does Christopher Tilley use an abstract social being as a universal tool, within which there is only a *range* of difference, defined within the limits of anthropological analogies? Or does he only use a phenomenology which is directly geared towards understand present interaction with archaeological sites, but as such makes no claim to interpret past persons and experiences?

There is no necessary problem with either of these approaches. My concern in this thesis is that other possibilities for being are closed down as a result of how archaeologists categorise the past; if known selves are the only ones we can see in the past, *which* known selves are being chosen? Does one choice deny the possibility of others? The tone in which archaeology is written is as important as the content. Some authors write with an implied certainty, operating with total authority. Qualifications made by John Barrett (1988, 1994a) go some way towards mitigating this dangerous practice. Barrett argues that the role of archaeology is to discuss possibilities, especially those beyond what we might

expect. The debate between Hodder and Barrett on the accessibility of meaning in past contexts is decisive. Barrett argues that we cannot reach the ideas in past peoples' minds. Hodder argues that Barrett himself is always trying to reach these ideas, because any interpretation relies on postulating what 'they' thought something was (Hodder 1992:17-18). But Hodder is unfair. Barrett's claim that he is constructing a possible past is far more powerful than Hodder allows for. It seems to me that Barrett does not deny his interest in the past, that he wants to know what past lives were like, but he accepts that this is a skill which we cannot possess. The difference between these positions is that Hodder considers *that this is what we want to do, and so it is what we must do*, while for Barrett *we cannot do as we want, so we must do what we can*. My interpretation situates post-processualists like Thomas and Tilley within this latter position; they are allowing for possibilities and suggesting ways to build those possibilities.

The question is, in constructing possibilities for the past, why have all of these writers sought alternative terms, rejected the use of 'the individual' in the first place? What other possibilities do their approaches allow? Are there ways to approach past personhood which go further towards theorising types of difference which we cannot understand? To return to the Hodder/Barrett debate, are there things which we can see occurring in the past, but which we cannot understand? Hodder is bound to say no, because contextual archaeology is geared towards understanding symbols. Seeing is understanding. In our arrogance seeing is believing; our prejudiced interpretations are good enough. Barrett may say yes, because he is concerned with understanding practices and effects, not meaning, origin or signification. We do not always know what we are looking at. Again, the question arises, how do current approaches to past personhood fit into this discussion?

Julian Thomas has recently taken a very critical stance with regard to the use of the individual and the position of humanism in archaeological theory. His accounts of social being in prehistory maintain a contrast to his reading of modern subjects as Cartesian, divided into minds and bodies. He clearly locates the growth of current fields of experience in the history of the Enlightenment, and calls for approaches to think beyond that history, to look for prior histories. This call has seldom been responded to. Thomas' work focuses on the role of the material world in the generation of social reality. In terms of language Thomas variously identifies people by the terms 'human beings', 'human Being', *dasein*, 'persons' and 'people' (all from Thomas 1996). The material world is kept

slightly distinct: 'artefacts' have social lives, like people, but the boundaries between the material world and the people who experienced it seem fixed. Thomas is concerned with human practice above all else; for him a human being is a human doing (Thomas pers. comm.). Artefacts are part of the process of human activity. His concern with human experience is directed at the material world, and at social beings, but shies away from focusing on particular personal experiences or past structures of personhood. He is concerned with the way that people emerge from their worlds, and while he is very specific about the type of *worlds* which are generated by social activity, he has been more reticent about what sort of *people* are produced through this process. Thomas' most recent attempts to formulate personal experience and self-understanding rely on a Heideggerian theory of subjectivity with the self as absorbed in the world, and imbued with a structure of care towards its existence. This theory is based on a specific model of self-understanding; Heidegger's experiences as a person, modified through Julian Thomas' experiences. It is arguable whether these can be used as a basis for understanding persons who are not primarily individuals (Fowler 1997). However, to say that human being is human doing indicates that differences in experience, in person, self or being must be related to differences in activity, a position which I adopt throughout this thesis. Furthermore, Thomas has recently begun to write about 'dividuals' and different structures of personhood in the Neolithic alongside his discussions of *dasein* (Thomas 1998, 1999). Thomas' work is largely directed towards the practices which constitute society, as is Barrett's excellent **Fragments from antiquity** (Barrett 1994a). This focus has, by its very nature, avoided preconception with the nature of individual persons. But such practice-orientated approaches have been unable to satisfy those who want to study people in the past. While the line that activity leads to being is extremely advantageous, it has not been developed to study personhood itself. Within such a position individuals can still be assumed, modern notions of the body can remain unchallenged.

Accepting that practice is key to experience and being, how do other post-processual authors write about people in their texts? **Ancestral geographies of the Neolithic: Landscape, monuments and memory** (Edmonds 1999) is a further attempt to integrate routine, repeated practice and a concern with social agency with studies of symbolism, social structure and cosmology. While Edmonds is extremely adept at writing about the everyday activities of Neolithic life, he is less than wary about grafting ethnographic analogies and modern practices over Neolithic material remains. His

narratives (discussed in chapter 6) introduce a number of characters to the reader, and his focus on activity and agency rather than agents adds weight to his interpretations. However, the modes of description he uses rely heavily on an ideological pantheon of ancestors, lineages, fertility rites, biographies of objects and persons, the social importance of marriage and exchange, and so on. Each of these tropes obtain their credibility from their basis in modern social practices, whether in Euro-American society, or from other contexts. It is of course not a crime to use ethnographic analogy. At the same time, Edmonds does not reflect upon this practice. While Edmonds writes about people in an accessible way, his people are simply archetypes. They are not as problematic as the model selves written by individualists, but neither do they allow for a wider diversity of experience.

Christopher Tilley has also sought to populate his past by using anthropological analogies to supply real people. In introducing **An ethnography of the Neolithic** Tilley (1996) recognises the explicit need for theorising difference in the past, the problems of using ethnographies, and the importance of imagination in writing accounts of the past, all themes very much central to this thesis. However, there are still a number of problems with the use of analogy as a tool for characterising bodies and selves, both in **An ethnography of the Neolithic** (1996), and later in **Metaphor and material culture** (1999). Tilley's accounts of persons and bodies in the Neolithic are intriguing, but not without problems. A curious schism is apparent in his attitude towards the body. Firstly, there is the body as object. Tilley characterises 'the body' as the basic unit of metaphorical expression throughout human societies (Tilley 1999: chapters 2, 4, 5). There are enormous implications to this theorising. For example, it seems that Tilley would be the first to accept that there are different conceptions of bodily constitution (Tilley 1996:323). But his metaphors (stomachs, wombs, pots as people, etc - all in Tilley 1996) all rely on a current web of metaphorical associations which render the body meaningful to us. The metaphorical construction and performance of bodily identity in the past would seem in some cases to be radically different from this. Tilley postulates the body as the primary locus for metaphorical extraction (ibid.: 241, 1999: chapters 2, 4, 5). In other words, it appears as though he sees all metaphors as based on parts of the human body. Other material bodies - canoes, houses, tombs, pots, axes - all feed from this ordinary structure. But that structure is the result of social relations and metaphors itself. Neither is it the only primary source of metaphor - there are parts of the body which we describe by using

metaphors from other types of thing - for example, we say 'the root of the tooth' or 'pulling our hair out by its roots'. Here plants, and not people could be argued to be the metaphorical base. In Neolithic societies such bases may have been very different. In places Tilley regards historical contingency and polysemic metaphors as being of paramount importance, while in others he seems to argue for the primacy of 'the body' (a prevalent term in **A phenomenology of landscape** as well as **An ethnography and Metaphor**). These are not necessarily contradictory, but I submit that the former should greatly diminish the role of the latter. An interesting point here is that the bodies which Tilley renders as objects of metaphor are largely from contexts where the objectification of the body is not a prevalent trope.

Secondly, there is the body-as-subject. While Tilley allocates metaphorical constructions about the body as material to past societies, he is far more cautious about linking present and past experiences of those bodies. Tilley's phenomenological stance is somewhat ambiguous. This ambiguity derives, in part, because Tilley uses phenomenological philosophy to outline his theories of subjectivity, for example:

*The body constitutes a way of relating to, perceiving and understanding the world* (Tilley 1994:14).

But how are the subjective experiences of embodied selves connected to metaphorical structures of 'the body'? In this approach Tilley reflects the phenomenological project of nesting the body in the world, seeing it as an immersed part of worldly experience. While this is an extremely useful approach, my fear is that the body itself, as a particular experience of matter has been leap-frogged. Bodies, as loci for different experiences, become either sites for known subjective positions, *or* for 'reading' as subjectively experienced material culture. This is a problem which cannot easily be overcome. For a phenomenology to be plausible it must start with an *a priori* idea of the body, which it then relates to worldly experience. The question of what sort of world and experience is seldom part of that philosophy, because philosophers generally accept that they are working within their own world, a single (or double) hermeneutic. However, archaeology suffers at least a double (or fourfold) hermeneutic (Shanks and Tilley 1987:107-9). Tilley takes the only logical step in such a situation; he uses his own subjectivity as the basis for interpretation of remnants of past worlds. The crucial question is, is Tilley reinterpreting the present, or attempting to 'read' or re-experience the past? Ricouer (1988:144-6) asserts that to re-enact the past is to re-experience, to reinterpret, and to 'nullify' time. I consider this to be

impossible (and yet desirable to the subject as discussed earlier in this chapter); present people cannot rethink prehistoric thoughts, experience prehistoric experiences - or at least can never know whether attempts to do so were successful. Indeed, Ricouer identifies such a perspective under the sign of the Same; re-asserting the sameness of the present, as I have outlined in the first section. For Ricouer the past-as-difference requires recognising a multiplicity of experiences<sup>14</sup>. Tilley attempts to incorporate a multiplicity of embodied experiences by turning to ethnography. The body in Tilley's phenomenologies is not a universal, but its template is often so general that specificity is only restored by analogy. Yet these analogies are removed from their modern contexts, and inserted into a different context. This could be the source of the confusion over his project felt by Hodder and others.

It does seem, then, that Tilley presents a fractured perspective of 'the body'. On one hand, the body is the locus and perhaps primary locus of metaphorical expression. On the other hand it is the site of experience and interpretation. In the first case the body is material culture, in the second it is the subject. Fractured approaches are often more useful than integrated ones. However, I do not see that Tilley has managed to avoid all of the problems discussed in the first two sections of this chapter. 'The body' in Tilley's work certainly seems to mean 'a socially situated body, conceptualised and experienced in a specific way'. The problem is that it seems as though these specificities can be easily interchanged for each other - whereas this is not the case, given the passing of time, given cultural difference. Furthermore, through his choice of analogy, Tilley's bodies and persons often reflect a normative body. Is this problem the direct result of analogy, rather than solved by analogies of cultural difference?

The kinds of ethnographic analogies which Tilley draws reiterate the readings of people and beliefs which are dominant in Neolithic archaeology: ancestors, rites of passage, totemism and territoriality, and hunting-as-sex all make an appearance in **An ethnography**. Certainly, this is an effective way to colour the past with people. But the dangers of closing down interpretation, difference and imagination are largely unchecked. This does not constrain Tilley's flair for interpretation. His account of prehistoric sites on the Dorset Ridgeway (Tilley 1999:185-238) is compelling and convincing - but it is not until the last paragraph that the author confesses his analogy; Australian Aboriginal

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<sup>14</sup> For Ricouer (1988:149) also, "the epistemology of the individual seems to eclipse the ontology of the past."

conceptions of place and ancestry. In such cases it is precisely the plausibility of the interpretation which is problematic. We can understand a prehistoric landscape in terms of Aboriginal knowledge, because such knowledge makes sense to us from ethnography. A rendition of prehistory will make sense in this schema, therefore. The basic premise that places along the Ridgeway are metaphorical citations of Portland or Chesil Beach is sound and gripping. The range of knowledges which could be equated with this is vast. The use of a specific type of ethnography closes that interpretation down, but stamps it with an extraordinary validity. It seems as though the problems with Tilley's analogies lie in that he seeks analogies to universalise non-western experience, not illustrate plurality and difference in that experience.

Similarly, while I share Tilley's enthusiasm for metaphor, I am suspicious of the role of metonym - as he himself seems to be at points in **Metaphor** (when studying megaliths as houses and tombs, for example; Tilley 1999:92-3, 97-9). Examining an archaeological signifier and equating it with a social group or practice known in the present is, for me, a step too far. On the other hand, it is important to note that Tilley explicitly links material culture to metaphorical statements about reality. While this is very much a continuation of 'material culture as text', it is clearly intended to be read as experiential. When Tilley discusses the relationship between things and persons in this way he does not mean that this is a 'thought' relationship, but an experienced reality. This distinction is one which is extremely helpful, and along with Ray's (1987) and Strathern's (1988) reading of 'material metaphors' has directly influenced this thesis (cf. chapter 4, final section). Furthermore, his obvious concern with polysemy, with the metacritical over the diacritical, and with the problems of authorship and authority make the reader aware that he is not writing a definitive account of any context. While the tomb-as-body metonym is put forward in **An ethnography**, it is not mentioned in **Metaphor**. While structuralist tenets are present in **An ethnography**, the space allowed for polysemy and plurality of meaning is also visible. Where the body could be read as a universal, it could also be intended as *a location for inserting radically different experiences*. It would seem that it is necessary to return to the Barrett/Hodder debate when considering Tilley's position. As with Barrett, Tilley allows himself a safety valve by theorising only the possible. Firstly, he acknowledges the presence of authorship and specific subjectivity in the present. Secondly he considers what may have been possible in the past, as a speculation from his present position. He seems to adopt the stance that whatever is known in the present is probable in

the past. What requires further clarification now is what aspects of the past cannot be considered in these terms, and what the limitations of his present subjectivity are. In short, a more developed theory of the relation between past and present bodies and experiences would clarify his position. As well as discussing the body, there is a need to discuss personhood.

Along with Thomas, Bradley and Barrett, Tilley uses biological sex as the basis of his readings of gender. He also genders substances and spaces (e.g. tombs as wombs). While he directly addresses issues of gendering and sexing (Tilley 1996:59-62, the analysis of the paradoxical 'female banyan' being a male plant/substance; 1999:117-8, 129-30), it is clear that his work is not inspired by feminist or gender theorist writings. This is a common factor among all of the post-processual writers covered in this chapter. The inspirations for their work appear to come from a concern with the way the social world is performed, constructed, reiterated, altered. While they feel safe talking about ancestors or rites of passage, they generally steer clear of discussing what past practices 'meant', because they do not agree with Hodder's assertion about finding the 'ideas in the minds of past people'. This would appear to extend to an avoidance of theorising the self or relations of personhood in the past, because this is something which we cannot know. The query I have is, 'is it any more dangerous to theorise past selves than past beliefs about the dead (ancestors) or the processes of social life (rites of passage)?'. The problem with many of these post-processual approaches is that they *cannot* do enough to challenge the implicitly male, straight model of the human body. Unfortunately, I think this thesis must also be counted within that trend, although my aim is to show up the performed nature of the body and the partial and relational nature of selves in a variety of contexts.

Chris Gosden has also written a book explicitly about social being in the past. His preferred terms are 'social being', 'actor', 'agent', 'people' and, interestingly, 'different forms of life' (1994:187). Like Thomas, Gosden is concerned with the importance of time as a human condition, and approaches the matter largely from a philosophical point of view. This, combined with the emphasis on scales of time, again provides an excellent analysis of social existence as experiential and materially-constituted, but overlooks the personal level of being. This is not a criticism of Gosden, or any of the other writers discussed here; I merely seek to establish that the *person* as such has not really been the focus of their enquiries, unlike *social existence* or even embodiment. As they have maintained, the two are not the same. Having established this point, there is no need to

continue this analysis, although several major authors have not been discussed in depth (e.g. John Barrett, Richard Bradley, Colin Richards).

Essentially, the question remains, does any of this really matter? Do many readers merely translate 'social being' or 'actor' or 'agent' etc into the individual? I do not doubt that these glosses are backed up with incisive constructions of social being, bound up with the importance of practice and social relationships. For me these are vital aspects of post-processual archaeology. But can these be made more explicit, and produce more specific accounts of past experience? After all it is clear that Tilley's **A phenomenology of landscape** is often misread as a manifesto for interpreting past experience rather than a means of interpretation which does not seek to replicate *past* experience, but to produce *present* experiences. Hodder's (1999:133) remarks demonstrate that social being has also been misinterpreted or glossed over in many cases. It is my intention to take a parallel angle to the theorists of social being, one which is specific to a particular context, one which owes the debt of hindsight. This adapted approach to Neolithic people on the Isle of Man is irreconcilable with an idea of the individual.

## Conclusion

Two concurrent problems have been identified in the first part of this chapter. Firstly there is the role of the idea of the individual as a cross-cultural template upon which cultural difference can be built. Secondly there is the focus upon this unit of analysis at the cost of interpretations that address the relationships upon which social experiences are based. The individual assumes an a priori structure of personhood, one which is based on a notion of neutral subjectivity. That structure has a historical context; the development of the Renaissance, Enlightenment and modernity. Structures of personhood in prehistory must also be interpreted with reference to history; firstly that history of modernity in which interpretation is situated; and secondly the histories of discourse and experience which took place in prehistory. Agency and personhood are socially situated and, as such, contextually specific.

In the second part of the chapter I argued that the prehistoric bodies which archaeologists deal with should not be assumed to be the bodies of individuals. The idea of individual forms of embodied experience is not a complete match with Neolithic social deposits which combined aspects of human, animal and material remains. This mismatch provides a challenge for contemporary archaeology. How else can these remains be

interpreted? Are there others kinds of personhood other than the individual, and, based on interpretations of those, can we start to reinterpret past relations of personhood as different to any of those modern options? I also argued that taking a genealogical view of prehistoric bodies (e.g., how late Neolithic bodies emerged from earlier Neolithic bodies - see chapters 5, 6 and 7) would provide a counter to the practice of universalising the individual.

Further to this I have argued that post-processual Neolithic specialists have dealt with this problem by focusing on relationships of being and social worlds. This work has not always been interpreted favourably. It is, in part, what the 'individualists' are reacting against. However, in a continuation of this tradition I wish to carry out an archaeological study which discusses the perpetuation of social practice through time; but I also want to write more specifically about the types of people who performed or subverted those practices. To quote Rogoff and van Leer (1993:743):

*The category of bodies [is]... currently empty...*

Empty bodies in prehistory, like the vacant houses discussed in chapter 2, invite visitors from the present. The question is now, what kind of visitors do we want to accommodate?

Having outlined some of the present quandaries in interpreting personhood in and beyond the Manx Neolithic, in the next chapter I consider a merging of some theoretical perspectives which may hold the key to alternative interpretations. Given that I question the applicability of individual-based interpretations, both for theoretical and for practical reasons in relation to my material, what theories can I employ? From this basis, using a combination of social theory, anthropology and archaeological material as a very specific type of analogy, I go on to offer my account of events in the earlier and later Manx Neolithic.

## **Chapter 4: Social Theory: Discourse, Self and Body.**

*In human practice, the use of the past must centre around some doctrine of person. Somehow, the authors of past acts must be given character if they are to appear as actors on a scene. The question is: what manner of human actor will be admitted into consciousness by those who would use past human acts and states of being as substance in their discourse? (Samsom 1988:147)*

### **Introduction**

The original remit of this thesis was an exploration of the relevance of certain types of social theory and analogy to theoretical archaeology. In many ways this is still a prevalent theme running through this work. In this chapter, following from my discussion of dominant theories and experiences of selfhood, I will explore alternatives provided by accounts of the negotiation of the self in a variety of fields. In so doing I will ask a number of questions; what is the most appropriate use of analogy in theorising the self; how can a focus on discourse allow a study of the self in the past; what kind of results does such a focus give? I will also ask how it is possible to reinterpret the archaeological deposits at Ballaharra and other Manx sites in light of this theoretical mesh of ideas.

I will start by outlining the work of Judith Butler on the subject of performativity. Here I discuss precisely what a study of materiality and performativity can mean (and has meant) for archaeologists. I also discuss the merits of such approaches in relation to similar theories from other disciplines which have become integral to archaeological theory, such as structuration theory and theories of practice. From here I discuss anthropological work which seems to tacitly parallel or pre-empt much of Butler's work in its focus on the generation of material relations; particularly that carried out by Marilyn Strathern. Finally, in building a theory which deals with selves, performativity and materiality, I turn to the role of metaphorical connections within the material world. I argue that metaphor operates through performativity, and as such is contingent, historically and culturally specific.

### **Judith Butler on performativity**

Two books and a couple of articles published in the early nineties by Judith Butler have had a huge effect on subsequent thought about self-production and discourse (Butler

1990, 1993, 1994). In a break from social constructivism, Butler has made a theoretical move which allows a theory of the production of personal identity and of experience which, I argue, offers archaeologists an escape from a number of impasses. Archaeologists have held debates on the relationship between the individual and the group, on the nature of social construction, on the relationship between the cultural and the material, the social and the physical, and on the relationships between sex and gender. All of these concerns are addressed by readers of Butler's work in refreshing and radical ways (e.g., Alberti 1997, Baker 1997, Joyce 1999, Marshall 1998). Before I outline some of the recent archaeological work based on readings of Butler, I will spell out my reading of her work, based almost exclusively on a single book, **Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of sex.**

I have chosen to base my interpretation of performativity on this book, and a short explanatory article of the same name, for several reasons. Judith Butler is an extremely complex author, who writes on a number of divergent topics. She is a theorist of gender, who works within the field of American law, and on personal rights, and the power of discourse and discursive effects. Concomitantly, while **Bodies that matter** is about the generation of explicitly gendered bodies, much of her work is about the relationship between speech and action in terms of the law (Butler 1997), the rights of individual freedom versus the well-being of others, the relationship between feminism and other modern theories (Butler 1992), or studies of prejudice in legal decisions (Butler 1997). While there is a great deal in these pieces which are of direct relevance to archaeology, I here elect to stick with performativity and self-production alone, and so will adhere to **Bodies that matter** in the main. To situate this work in relation to the phenomenological approaches to experience, discussed in the last chapter, Butler re-evaluates philosophers writing on the subject as a starting point. She engages throughout with the work of Heidegger, Hegel, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Althusser, Derrida and Foucault, as well as psychologists (e.g., Freud and Lacan) and gender theorists (e.g., Sedgwick, Bersani, Zizek). In so doing Butler is concerned with the specificity of bodily experience in a way which many of the classic phenomenologists allow for, but do not actively explore. She illustrates that specific experiences of being are not all equal, cannot be transplanted for each other, and do not necessarily follow the same structures. As such her work can also be characterised as a fusion of post-structural feminism and theories of practice like those

of Giddens, Sahlins and Bourdieu (Morris 1995:567, 571, Ortner 1996:3-7). In the following section I outline a series of important aspects in Butler's approach.

### *Category and action*

The very first thing to say about Butler's work is that she does not theorise categories, but activities. This point is crucial on a general level, as well as at explicit locations in her theorising. Sex, the focus of **Bodies that matter**, is not (only) a category; it is a performance. The relationship between ideas, models, categories or ideals and what is really produced through social activity is the target matter of this work. I maintain that this is why Butler can be so significant for archaeologists. Form, typology, category exist in a specific relationship to agency, activity and discourse. Our archaeological accounts include both elements, but usually privilege the former. The way that Butler formulates the relationship between the model/category and the performative act is directly applicable to the way archaeologists cite and reiterate *categories* in our work, while actually focusing on *activity*. In order to understand how Butler formulates this relationship, it is necessary to understand how she sees discourse and activity.

### *Discourse and genealogy*

Judith Butler explicitly theorises the homosexual, the queer. She argues that the history of modern discourse is one which buries its own reasoning and supplants labels or identifications in its place. The 'heterosexual imperative', code, or 'matrix' is a field of understanding which has congealed as a bedrock in our discursive world. This congealed history is far from solid, however. It can be described as constituted by its own instability (cf. Deutscher 1997). In fact, its flexibility operates to conceal any alternative pasts. Genealogy is concealed, suffocated, by the heterosexual matrix, so that *a genealogy of that matrix is foreclosed from critical inquiry*. (Butler 1993:145). In effect, the heterosexual matrix, our dominant discourse, engulfs the past by being too slippery to pin down. It both needs its flexibility, and is in fear that it will be unseated, because it has no basis. Like the Manx insignia, whichever way it is thrown, it always lands on its feet; its power lies in its lack of real roots. The heterosexual imperative reproduces itself only through activity, reproducing 'regulatory fictions' (see below). Butler is decisive on the nature of materiality (see below). There is nothing fixed about discourse, but this leaves it difficult to defy. At the same time, discourse fossilises its

categories, gluing others to its shifting tectonics and preventing them from realising their own agency.

Like Irigaray (and further to Irigaray; *ibid.*:48), Butler sees that this discourse is not only masculinist (that is phallogentric; favouring men, a construction of men; *and also* a particular discursive world in which normative sexuality, centred around normative masculinity, is the location and commodity of power and respect), but also heterosexist. In this world, everyone has to pass as 'male' and 'straight' in order to achieve social acceptability in the realms of power - in the public sphere. But there are always plural discourses in operation, and the dominant discourse is not the only option. This has a range of archaeological implications, as well as implications for understanding modernity, as I argued in the last chapter. In this reading of modernity, Butler uses a number of mechanisms to describe the process of self-production. I have already discussed some of these in the previous chapter, but they deserve a more thorough rendition.

### *Regulatory Fictions*

A key phrase which I use in discussing theories of performativity is regulatory fictions. Judith Butler talks about regulatory discourses, and sex as a fiction or fantasy. Haraway has paraphrased these conceptions of sexual and personal identities as 'regulatory fictions' (Haraway 1991:135). Regulatory fictions are the ideals or models, the beliefs and categories, the understood elements of the world which we try to live up to. While these ultimately regulate social life, they are still, above all, fictional. Much of what follows describes the relationship between these regulatory fictions and discursive reality in depth. I must point out, however, that these fictions do not pre-exist discourse or materiality, but are only ever produced as citations of prior activities. Through the repetition of something which never existed - until it was reproduced - meaning is continually deferred to the past. This is how a discourse is perpetuated.

### *Passing*

Because of the 'heterosexual imperative' in modern discourses, the bias towards the straight, the norm, each person must pass as that norm in order to be accorded the respect and power which is generally granted to that type of person. The concept of passing-as normal has been briefly introduced in chapter 3. Passing-as describes the relationship between the norm or idea(l) and the person who both reproduces and subverts (or 'fails' to

produce) that norm. This is a key concept in the conceptualisation of social performance, because it allows for the fact that no act is ever a complete replica of any previous act. In a radical departure from social constructivism, Butler concludes that category and act are not reconcilable. *Men cannot perform the category of man, though their efforts to do so throughout their lives will mark them as men.* Men in drag, performing 'women', will equally fail to make that category, and so will mark themselves as missing the norm<sup>1</sup>. However, the actual sex that they do perform may also be noted as 'queer', if they do not perform their lives as other (including previous) 'normal' men do. Understanding the multiplicity of queer practices and identifications is not, however, a practice which is deemed appropriate to the heterosexual man, the supremely powered product of modern discourse. Therefore, category once again replaces attempts at further understanding, other than to define that category.

Whatever someone tries to pass-as (whether it be a cultural, racial, sexual or social category), their efforts to pass will mark them in a certain way<sup>2</sup>. These norms are simply *regulatory fictions*, and it makes little sense to read the world *only* in terms of these fictions. Discourse in the past, if it was like discourse in the present, can also be understood in terms of a set of regulatory fictions which people try to perform, producing acts which must ultimately fail. The nature of the discourse is unknown; we certainly should not assume a heterosexual matrix for the Manx Neolithic, for example. Furthermore, the categories are unknown; we do not know whether male and female, boy and girl, racial or ethnic categories were important, we do not know what categories, if any, may have stood in their stead. However, in the accounts on the Neolithic which we do have (i.e., those already produced by archaeologists), those categories *do* exist. This leaves me two options in my project; one, to explore how past activities stand in relation to the categories given them by archaeologists; and two, to postulate what types of performances of social life seem to have taken place in the material where it has not been adequately accounted for. I have taken up both matters in this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> This 'failure' is due only to past practices, past performances which they (and other men) have engaged in, not a biological difficulty. The role of traditions of practice becomes apparent through such theories.

<sup>2</sup> I am probably misrepresenting Butler to some degree here; where I have stuck to the term 'passing' in all social situations, she uses the term 'queering' to describe the activities of people who are passing-as a different sex to the one which is accorded to them by society. 'Passing' is generally reserved for those attempting to alter racial boundaries. Here I use it to denote all activity as citational, including all forms of personhood. In this sense an archaeology which studies the difference between the norm and activity actually involves an archaeology of queering (see end of chapter) as much as passing.

## *Materiality*

Matter is a critical word for Judith Butler. To matter means to be of consequence, to be of concern. To matter also means to make material; to make something matter means both to make it important and to make it become of substance, *although not all matter matters to an equal extent*. The combination of these trajectories of thought is at the heart of Butler's work. The processes by which something comes to matter is called materiality. Materiality describes a relationship between the physical world and discourse whereby *language both is and refers to that which is material, and what is material never fully escapes from the process by which it is signified* (Butler 1993:68).

Materiality, then, is a condition where the material world and the world of discourse never fully emerge from each other. Neither the physical world nor language are primary, neither is originary:

*Always already implicated in one another, always already exceeding one another, language and materiality are never fully identical nor fully different.* (Ibid.:69).

Furthermore, materiality is not a singular process. Once something is material, once something matters, it struggles to stay material. A discourse may make something matter (substance only), in order to allow something else to matter (be important). 'The body' itself is the supreme example of continuous processes of materialisation and dematerialisation:

*The body that is reason dematerialises the bodies that may not properly stand for reason or its replicas, and yet this is a figure in crisis, for this body of reason is itself the phantasmatic dematerialisation of masculinity, one which requires that women and slaves, children and animals be the body, perform the bodily functions, that it will not perform.* (Butler 1993:49).

Clearly, Butler considers the unspoken body of modernity to be implicitly male (and straight), as argued in chapter 3. She also provides an explanation for why so much archaeological interpretation tries to find analogues for the male body elsewhere; *anywhere other than in the male body*<sup>3</sup>. While archaeologists assign genders to stones, to space, to pots, and to objects - all of which refer back to the pre-emptive 'body' - *the body itself escapes question through this disguise. In making things matter, the matter of the body is subdued*. While we theorise the gendering, or the materialising of things, the process of

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<sup>3</sup> There have been many recent calls for male archaeologists to theorise our own specifically masculine positions in our accounts of the past, and this has proved to be far from easy - perhaps due to the power of the discursive status quo in (a)voiding male bodies as a loci of enquiry and experience.

that gendering or materialising is often allowed to slip by. For example, Fleure and Neely wrote that

*....the flat-topped great stone at Cashtal yn ard has a longitudinal groove with a small deepening, and if the pointed stone be of phallic symbolism the grooved one may symbolize the vulva...* (Fleure and Neely 1936:395).

This statement both reflects on the gendering of their world, and on their idea of prehistoric people as uncivilised, concerned with primitive matters like sex and fertility. This trend of turning to material culture has often been the recourse of archaeologists who do not have a modern body to excavate; 'how is the material gendered?' This question is necessary, but it is an interrogation of the present rather than the prehistoric past. All aspects of the world are gendered alongside bodies, and it is the process by which different power relations are expressed in materiality which are of interest to me.

A theory which recognises the importance of materiality therefore should be concerned with the following;

- Firstly, that the physical world is discursive. What matters is made material. As archaeologists, we may not know what mattered in Neolithic contexts. However, our accounts of the past make the past matter in certain ways. This is why it is important that we decide what matters to us. The relationship between our concerns and the archaeological material we deal with produce archaeologies which contain both regulatory fictions and processes of self-production. In this case, modern selves, not prehistoric ones are being produced; archaeologists, mainly. In this paradigm everything about the past has meaning only because it is materialised through present discourse. All categories - including biological sex - are materialisations of social understanding. This is, again, a more radical understanding of the physical and the social than social constructivists are accustomed to. All aspects of the world are materialised through discursive practice; there is nothing outside of discourse, though many elements of the world may be placed there (see below, under *performativity*).
- Secondly, that discourses are fields of relationships. There are no categories which stand before materiality. Materiality itself produces, materialises, relationships through the practices which constitute it. This is radically different from structuration theory where a universal distinction between structure and agency is maintained. Structural approaches consider that there must always be a structure/agency relationship, although that relationship will be contextually specific. Under this

paradigm there must always be a structure to agency which agency perpetuates (cf. Ortner 1996:1-20). Archaeologists cannot know what forms of agency existed unless they recover that structure. However, following a theory of regulatory fictions, that structure cannot be uncovered without postulating the form of agency producing it. I argue that there is no structure, discursive or otherwise, to agency which transcends the relationships that take place in societies. If categories are a version of structure, and those categories are regulatory fictions, then structure is a regulatory fiction too. Performance will not directly reflect that structure, therefore, because it does not directly reflect regulatory fictions. A crucial aspect of this approach is that there is no one structure to any society or discourse. Rather, there are multiple discourses producing agency, and therefore multiple and conflicting agencies. Materiality is the condition in which these agencies operate, and the product of the struggles between them.

- Finally, materiality is performed into existence. To understand the extensive implications of what Butler means by this, it is necessarily to write a fuller reading of performativity.

### *Performativity*

*The process of that sedimentation or what we might call materialisation will be a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the originary complicity with power in the formation of the 'I'. (Butler 1993:15)*

Performance of the self, and of the world, is not all that Butler means by performativity. As I argued in chapter 3, experience and agency are crucial to the materialisation of the self and social world. No person is free to perform themselves. Each person is the sedimentation of a field of relationships. Those sedimentations are only formed through active practice. The currents which produce the self deposit veins of sediment running along lines of power. These veins are at the core of social activity, the relationship between regulatory fictions and the performative, the acts of citation through which people exist.

*To this understanding of power as a constrained and reiterative production it is crucial to add that power also works through the foreclosure of effects, the production of an 'outside', a domain of intelligible effects. (Ibid.:22)*

A theory of performativity describes the way that acts of reiteration are the only acts of production that we can recognise. A theory of performativity recognises that discourse sets up conditions of externality, within which some people live. In the heterosexual world which Butler criticises, the conditions of externality are guided along lines of sex and sexuality. However, this 'outside' is very much located within discourse, because it is so strongly regulated by discursive means. In a very real sense, difference is at the core of discourse, because discourse fights so strongly to make it other (see chapter 3, section one). In the end, there is no origin to meaning or discourse, only continual reproduction, mimesis and parody. To post-structuralist archaeologists this theory has obvious benefits, not the least of which is that it emphasises the focus on deferred meaning and continual renegotiation.

Butler also theorises the relationship between power and agency by emphasising their combined existence and production:

*The performative dimension of construction is precisely the forced reiteration of norms. In this sense, then, it is not only that there are constraints to performativity; rather, constraint calls to be rethought as the very condition of performativity. Performativity is neither free will nor theatrical self-representation; nor can it be simply equated with performance. Moreover, constraint is not necessarily that which sets a limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity.* (Butler 1993:94-95).

Power relationships are only possible, then, because performative acts take place in relation to their constraints. In the case of a normative masculinity, for example, power is achieved by playing the constraint, emulating the norm. However, this norm ultimately constrains the agent in other ways (though this may not be of concern to the agent). Power relationships do not enable, so much as replay themselves through social lives. In this sense, a study of performativity in the past is always concerned with relationships of power. Relationships of performativity are always power relations.

In the above passage, it is clear that performativity is a theory of the reiteration of norms and of constraints. However, performativity is also a theory of how those norms are dematerialised. In this sense, dematerialisation means the hiding of norms, denying their role in the production of discourse. Furthermore, as norms are reiterated or cited, so they are also subverted. Butler considers that this subversion is also a necessary condition for the production of performativity. Subversion is an effect of the reproduction of constraints. Therefore, I would conclude that subversion is also one of the constraints which produce

performativity, which produce discourse, materiality and the self. Social mores or rules, what Bourdieu called *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977), do not produce *limits* to discourse. Rather, they are the conditions by which discourse exists. Therefore, such 'rules' are regulatory fictions - they may be emulated, and in such emulation, come to exist, but they will never actually be lived according to a set form. In other words, they may be idea(l)s, but will not be produced in an ideal way. Structuralism and structuration will never find the structures they seek, because these structures only existed as regulatory fictions. These fictions are only cited through performance. Such citations are material; they do not *reflect* any structure, they simply *cite* activity. Reproduction, parody and subversion all take place simultaneously and plurally. Agency, discourse and regulatory fictions are all plural, and struggles between conflicting agencies and discourses generate specific types of materiality (see above).

Performativity works by means of reiteration, that is repeated citation. This repeated activity is not carried out by a pre-existing agent any more than experience is a product of an agents' life. Rather, *this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal composition of the subject.* (Butler 1993:95).

She also sets up the conditions for a reading of discourse which seems incredibly pertinent to archaeology:

*...this productive capacity of discourse is derivative, a form of cultural iterability or rearticulation, a practice of resignification, not creation ex nihilo.* (Butler 1993:107).

Performativity does away with questions of origin. But in another sense, it also knows where to locate the origins of power;

*It is precisely through the deferral of authority to an irrecoverable past that authority itself is constituted.* (Butler 1993:108).

This is another key aspect to performativity. The process of reiteration is read as necessary for subjects and discourse to exist. People can only emerge from discourse because they are enabled by the constraints (power relationships) which produce them, and which they also act into being through social relationships. Nothing pre-exists discourse, nothing is outside of discourse, although there are elements of discourse which it tries hard to dematerialise, to expel and conceal from critical enquiry. In the dominant discourse of modernity heterosexual masculinity is involved in a process of dematerialisation. It both dematerialises itself by shedding bodily substance onto women and becoming disembodied

reason (Butler 1993:49), and also dematerialises women's role as the 'patsy' in this process. In fact, this dematerialisation is to Butler the way that the heterosexual and masculinist discourse materialises *itself*. Dematerialisation is a tool in the process of materiality; something I reflect on in reference to the Neolithic in the Isle of Man in chapter 7. In modernity, this dematerialisation is so effective that, to quote Braidotti (1991:255),

*the male embodied subject is precisely that great non-said of western philosophy.*

Furthermore, as with Derrida's 'difference' (Derrida 1977, 1978, Kearney and Derrida 1995, Deutscher 1997:52-57, Vasseleu 1998:75-79, Braidotti 1991:56-66, 72), in performativity meaning is continually deferred. Activity cites norms, perhaps, but does not 'mean' that norm or idea. The 'meaning' of such norms are simply regulatory fictions. Finding 'meaning' in past activity is impossible; it is only possible to find citations of activity and deferrals of meaning.

#### *Implications of performativity*

Much of Butler's work may seem obscure, detailed and unnecessarily long-winded. However, much of this is due to the difficulty in theorising aspects of discourse which that discourse has worked so hard to hide. Butler is concerned with the matter of sex. This is not the chief concern of this thesis, although, as I theorise the self and the body, sex is always a foundation I have to question. No matter where I turn in theorising Neolithic selves and worlds, the accounts I deal with are gendered. Yet this gender is often carefully submerged beneath the congealed matter of modern discourse.

The understanding of discourse which I read from Butler is one which focuses on the citation and reiteration of activities. These activities do not define so much as defer definition. In effect, they reference previous activity. However, *there is no set way in which past activities are referenced*. Sometimes citation is a matter of reiteration without intended subversion. Sometimes it is deliberate parody, intended to subvert, but which also often reiterates the regulatory fiction concerned. I return to these issues in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Judith Butler's work on performativity is central to this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is the issue of the inescapability of gender, where gender means sex. Butler shows how the sex/gender division is one where sex becomes the immutable basis for gendering. Doing away with this division, she theorises sex *as* gender. Sex and

sexuality are socially constituted, they are performed just as gender is. The world around us is gendered, both explicitly and implicitly. These processes of gendering take place continually; they are not resident in a thing or a body, they are not read into a thing or a body. They are produced through the use of a thing or a body, and the activities which produce them. Archaeologically speaking, the worlds that we study are sexed, they are sexualised, they are gendered. This occurs through our activities in the present, our enactments of discourse.

Secondly, there is the issue of the inescapability of the physical, where the physical means the material. A theory of performativity is ultimately materialist. There can be no abstraction from the material. Where metaphor or parody or any such process takes place it does so in materiality - a working relationship between and intertwining the social and the physical. In this way, when I consider the metaphorical qualities of a thing I mean the metaphysical experiences of that thing too. Metaphor is therefore not abstract, but material. Materiality is a matter of experience, the experience which produces the self alongside its world. In this sense, as I am theorising the materiality of bodies and selves I am compelled to focus on sets of physical relationships. Only through studying the repetition of physical relationships can I understand a materiality, a past discourse. This brings me to a crucial realisation. Butler implies that studies of the self shy away from the material of the self, the body, and turn instead to other objects. She also stresses the importance of the material relationships between things. In studying past selves I need to study both past bodies, and past material relationships. But I also need to rethink the relationships of power which involved these elements. While the body may be a primary pre-requisite of personhood to us, though often submerged, the matter of its submergence in social relationships in the past is also of great concern. Paradoxically, while I want to focus on the person, 'the body' should not, therefore, be my focal point. But, in a Butlerian sense, the material I study is all part of the materialisation of past bodies. Objects, animals, architecture and geography are all a part of personhood, and contain related sedimentations of performative practices. Wider relations of materiality are therefore crucial to interpreting past personhood. Where does this leave me in relation to the post-processual positions outlined in the previous chapter? After all, I claimed that it is necessary to theorise bodies explicitly, and that while phenomenological approaches open up bodies to alternative understanding they have done so only as an empty template. The final contentions I would make would be that *(a) we can rely on no general theory of the body or of phenomenology,*

(b) that there may be experiences of bodies which do not draw distinctions between different types of matter in the way that we do, and (c) that by studying activities in prehistoric contexts which cite prior activities in those same contexts we can throw up possibilities for interpreting past personhood which do not rely solely on 'the body', but certainly take account of specific renditions of bodily experience. This is a matter I will pursue in the remainder of the thesis.

Thirdly, there is the issue of the inescapability of language, where language is discourse. Because language and materiality emerge from each other - but never fully - to deal with discourse is to deal with the material. It is ultimately self-defeating to pursue a theory of language which treats things like words or text. Language has many different aspects, and each of them is different precisely because of their own specificity. Body language, textual language, verbal language and the 'language' of materiality may rely on similar metaphors, but their specific media should be respected.<sup>4</sup> The archaeological texts which exist about the past actually produce the materiality of that past as much as the objects which remain from that past. But this does not place materiality at the mercy of discourse. Instead, performativity (re)produces materiality through discourse:

*that which matters about an object is its matter* (Butler 1993:31)

The reason why archaeological material makes sense at all in the present is because the meaning of matter changes according to its performative context. Where materiality is a condition within which specific concerns are materialised - and dematerialised - no thing has a transcendental materiality. Rather, materiality is akin to the notion of a metaphysics, an experienced understanding of the world. This is another key concept for the rest of this thesis; materiality as an experienced understanding of the world, of relationships between things in terms of what matters. My critique of normative accounts of the past lies in the fact that they only consider a single version of materiality throughout time. The nature of materiality is such that as discourse changes (or, more accurately, as discourses change), so does materiality and vice versa.

My reading of performativity is selective. While I have tried to stay close to Butler's text, I also stress the aspects of her work which most interest me. The way that I have come to use 'performativity' and 'materiality' are no doubt rather different to how Butler meant them. For a start, they have come to take on a specifically archaeological meaning for me.

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<sup>4</sup> This is not an argument against 'archaeology as text'. Theories of intertextuality are extremely useful in a metaphorical sense. However, the analogy that *material culture* is like a text can be misleading. It can be *read* like a text - but it is not always experienced like a text.

In applying Butler's work to a different type of discourse from modernity, and the 'heterosexual imperative', I encounter many problems to which I cannot know the answer. However, I am far from alone in seeing the relevance of this work for archaeology. I turn now to consider the work of archaeologists who have already applied theories of performativity to pre- or proto-historic contexts.

## Archaeology and Performativity

Rosemary Joyce

Rosemary Joyce has carried out archaeological research on the way relations of personhood, sexuality and gender are performed into existence in a Mesoamerican context. In so doing she employs a theory of performativity alongside other theories of practice and sexuality (e.g., Connerton's (1989) distinction between inscribed and incorporated practices). Joyce works with a proto-historic context; glyphs and codices can be translated - but Joyce is mindful of the strong influence of the hermeneutic process in such a translation (e.g., Joyce in press:12-16, 18-21). Joyce's material includes glyphs, sculptures and carvings of bodies and body parts, alongside deposited bodies themselves, and architectural space. A similar range of material is not available for the Manx Neolithic, a point which may be of some significance later on. However, I want to discuss Joyce's work here as an archaeological analogy. As on other occasions where I use analogies, I am not interested in her material so much as her theoretical stance towards that material. Joyce, through her reading of the Mesoamerican material and (later on) of Judith Butler, takes a radical stance towards the bodies she finds in the archaeological record. These bodies are not mere *representations*. Instead, they are *citations* of particular social activities. This moves images, effigies, bodies into a more authoritative position. Material is no longer a reflection ('accurate' or otherwise) of the cultural or social. Rather, material is the location of the social and the cultural, of activity. These activities lead Joyce to conclude that Mayan selves were relational, and that materiality in general, not just 'the body', was integral to these relational selves<sup>5</sup>. Joyce studies bodies which are often

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<sup>5</sup> Monaghan (1998:137), another Mayan specialist, writes  
..if Mayan conceptions of personhood do not encode an absolute distinction between humans and animals, then perhaps the other assumptions our notions of personhood traditionally begin with - that it arises out of shared capacities and rights - is not as salient for the Maya as might be accepted and ultimately concludes that  
..the ideology of personhood these notions define is not based on the assumption of the sacred individual. Rather, personhood seems to be relational, something that is a property of collectivities instead of individual selves (ibid.:144).

depicted in pieces, or combined with animals. Certain aspects of bodily rendition are accentuated over others. Joyce takes these depictions, these citations *literally*, rather than figuratively, in a step which I parallel in my reading of Manx Neolithic deposits. For example, she writes of figures of Mayans holding severed heads, and human/animal masks that

*[I]n performance, masking would have underlined the fluidity of species boundaries and the disintegration of the unified body that sculptures materially present. The instability of bodily integrity in Costa Rican sculpture is implicit in the separation of body parts as subjects...(Joyce 1993:7).*

In describing artefacts made to resemble parts of the body (e.g., pots shaped like feet, penii 'growing' from walls, and carvings of headless people), she says *By constructing pottery and stone effigies of whole and partial bodies, pre-Columbian artists made the body itself a subject for reflection...these images present... the constructed nature of integrated bodily identity. Anchored in bodies subject to separation and reformulation, identity becomes not natural, but wholly social and unstable* (Joyce 1993:2-3).

Again, this is a key consideration in my reading of Manx persons; what kinds of bodies, what kinds of selves, were being *naturalised*? One of the most pertinent elements of a theory of performativity is the way that the social naturalises itself; that dominant discourses and regulatory fictions embed themselves in activity, in experience, which produces naturalised selves. In complete disdain of the nature/culture dichotomy, performativity illustrates the social naturalisation of selves. Applying this directly to her material Joyce comes up with a radically specific interpretation of 'beheaded' bodies: *The separation of the head from the body denaturalises the apparent integration of the whole.* (Joyce 1993:8-9, and 1998:160).

Clearly this is one among many readings of a beheaded or headless Mayan figure, or of a detached head. But it is significant because Joyce is thinking along the lines of what kinds of experience produced such activities, were reiterated by such activities. Whether or not Joyce had read Butler's theories prior to the 1993 text discussed above, she was working from an overlapping position with regard to archaeological material. In later papers (and explicitly referencing Butler) Joyce goes further. From the start, she did not rely on categories or forms to define her material. In a recent sequence of papers focusing on masculinity and sexuality in ancient and classic Mayan culture, she accentuates how

archaeologists (and authors of ethnographic/colonial texts) adhere categories to a world where *practices* do not necessarily *define*. For example, it is often argued that homosexuality is a recent notion; prior to the last few centuries in Eurocentric societies practices involving same-sex sexual relations did not define that person as 'homosexual' (Dollimore 1991, Weeks 1985, Foucault 1979). Joyce (1998b) illustrates how a variety of different sexual identities grew out of the contact between colonial Spaniards and indigenous Mayans with respect to Mayan sexual practices. These identities had not existed previously, although the practices had. The essential point here is that, as archaeologists, *we should not necessarily assume that even repeated practice leads to a set, stable, or prescribed identity*. This will also be of paramount importance in considering personhood in the Neolithic on the Isle of Man. It is a point with which Butler herself may disagree, for her theories are concerned with the sedimentation of identity through repeated practice. However, while I see repeated practice as a guide to experiences of personhood I do not think that there need have been a link from 'practice' to 'identity' in prehistoric contexts (see chapter 5).

### *Ben Alberti*

Ben Alberti works with late Bronze Age frescos from Knossos, re-evaluating the ascription of masculinity and femininity to these images. Working from a close reading of performativity, Alberti argues that, because of a history of circumscribing sexual division along binary lines, based on the manifestation of genitalia, the frescos have always been read as portraying either men or women. Certain characteristics have been read as a substitute for genitals as the 'basis' for sexual identity, by previous interpreters. Foremost of these is colour; red figures were taken to be male, white figures female. However, Alberti points out that there is no basis for this assumption, as genitals are not accentuated in the frescos. In fact, attributes which are accentuated include bodily adornments, material culture, pose, gesture and stylised body depiction (Alberti 1997:123-151). His reading of these attributes demonstrates that we cannot apply a modern understanding of masculinity or femininity to past contexts, because in Bronze Age Knossos there was no category 'man'. Rather, people seem to have been characterised by their activities, as denoted by the emphasis on gesture and dress. In his thesis, Alberti does not strongly suggest an alternative 'regulatory fiction' for Bronze Age Crete. It seems as though the power of such fictions may have had less impact in past discourses, a matter which I will

pursue in later chapters. Alberti leaves us with the options that past discourses may have operated differently to present ones, or that past fictions were different, and probably multiple in any given context. I would consider both options applicable to the Manx Neolithic.

### *Discussion*

From these accounts of the past, it seems clear that archaeologists perform out certain regulatory fictions with the material they study; the matter of choice revolves around which regulatory fictions an archaeologist performs, or sees performed in the past. Not all fictions are equal. As regulatory fictions are (re)produced along relationships of power (the constraints of discourse), some stories are more powerful and more constraining than others. What Joyce, Alberti and others (e.g., Tim Yates (1990, 1993), Mary Baker (1997) and Yvonne Marshall (1995, forthcoming)) show is that, in archaeology, normative masculinist and heterosexual discourses have been the most powerful - and the most constraining - fictions. At the same time, other discourses are evident in the past which must be acknowledged as different. As I argued in Chapter 3, it is time to perform out, and trace the performance of, other regulatory fictions in past contexts.

### **Anthropological theories of performed selves in discursive relationships: Dividuality**

In chapter 3 I argued that notions of individuality and approaches which focus on the individual body are misleading and reproduce a masculinist, dominant discourse about selves and societies. As part of that critique I resisted the use of anthropological analogy, mainly because the use of analogy is a complex consideration in its own right. Here I want to discuss the work of an anthropologist who has influenced my understanding of the social relationships which comprise personal experience. I have chosen to discuss Marilyn Strathern's work alongside Judith Butler's, and archaeologists working with performativity, because she is also concerned with discourse, gendering, and activities of social and self-production. Personally, I consider there to be a great deal of similarity between their theories, and wish to acknowledge the extent to which they are both instrumental in the formulation of my thesis.

Marilyn Strathern is an anthropologist whose work is extremely under-represented in archaeological literature. Her ethnographies are wholly reflexive, directing a set of questions at Western societies and selves. She also raises a series of observations about the

role of certain social practices which should be of interest to archaeologists. For example, her statement that Hagen people in New Guinea, like people in many other societies *do not define the sexes through general initiation into cults or through puberty rituals* (Strathern 1988:11)

should act as a cautionary tale for many prehistorians<sup>6</sup>. The kinds of relationships which build up social identity are continually performed and reiterated through all forms of activity, in a variety of different ways. Strathern goes further; she recognises that criticisms of current conceptions of the world are not quibbles about the correct translations of other contexts to our own. Instead,

*Our own metaphors reflect a deeply rooted metaphysics with manifestations that surface in all kinds of analyses.* (ibid.:12).

In other words, metaphorical and metaphysical schema are at the core of our studies; experiential worlds. In this mode of thought, we should study the effects of alternative metaphorical constructions of the world (and of selves), and use these to reflect on our own metaphorical schemes. In Melanesian society, Strathern argues that *persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them* (ibid.:13).

Her persons are not reduced to individuals; they embody a multiplicity of social relationships and experiences. This is crucial because it means that each person can be understood on a number of levels, not only as an integral or whole unit. Such theories of selves can, I would argue, be applied to modern western selves and relationships also, undermining the predominance of the individual. In effect, Strathern opens up the possibility that there are different types of selves - and that these selves may be dividual or individual. Going further, *these selves may be dividual in different ways*. For the most part, Strathern reasons that the Melanesian people she studies engage in relations which separate. Reflecting on this, and comparing Strathern's work with her own in India, Nurit Bird-David (1999) argues that there are only dividuals, and that individuals are simply a specific form of dividuals. While Strathern, as we shall see, presents dividual relations which separate, Bird-David presents dividual relations which absorb, and argues that individual relations alienate (Bird-David 1999:88, cf. Busby 1997). In each of these

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<sup>6</sup> This is relevant to the earlier discussion (chapters 2 and 3; cf. chapter 5) on the archaeological use of Bloch's anthropology of death and ancestry because Bloch tends to portray rituals as reiterative of an unchanging system. Strathern's statement clearly challenges this understanding of social practice and revalues parallel agencies and discourses.

contexts, an argument develops in which the self is understood in terms of the relations which generate that self. In later chapters I aim to carry out a similar consideration of Neolithic selves in the Isle of Man. What is important about these approaches is that they are *not* forms of category, rather they treat selves as emergent from relations, what Battaglia (1995:3-4) phrases as 'self-as-a-verb'. To Battaglia, as to Strathern, the self, like agency, should be understood as an activity; again in keeping with a performative approach.

But what of the specific logics of dividual and partible selves? Strathern proposes that our binary divisions of individual/group are misleading in numerous ways. In a Melanesian context, one and many are actually equatable in a radically different way: *In one sense, the plural and the singular are 'the same'. They are homologues of one another. That is, the bringing together of many persons is just like the bringing together of one.* (ibid.:13-14).

So, a person is a composite person, a joint combination of several different components and relationships, each of which may be gendered in a different way. Each social relationship may be cited by a different substance within and flowing out of that self. Material culture is crucial in this process of sliding from one sexual polarity to another; *A person's own body parts embody the other sex* (ibid.:121).

And;

*In gender terms, the single-sex figure will have parts or appendages 'belonging' to the opposite sex. These are imagined as encompassed or contained within the single body, for it is only a unitary form that can appear to 'contain' an internal differentiation of this kind.* (Ibid.:122).

Now this is not how I see Manx persons, and yet is an excellent example of a kind of process which I will postulate later on. Here certain aspects of a person are gendered (that is, powered in some way), but that gender acts in relation to other parts of the person. Alone, or with others, as a component of a group or a couple, different social parts assert themselves as predominant. In effect, certain relationships are being activated according to changes in social context. As with other anthropologists, Strathern goes on to show the role of artefacts in this relationship, how material culture comes to be accorded the status of persons, and mediates social relationships, can even be afforded a form of agency. But there is also a point where her reading of material culture differs from other anthropologists, and many archaeologists:

*As parts, then, these objects create mediated relations. They are not, of course, apprehended as standing for persons: that is our construction. They are apprehended as extracted from one and absorbed by another [person] (ibid.:178).*

This is in contrast to theories of bodies and material culture which substitute conceptions of the one for the other. The metaphorical connection between things and persons is one of absorption and emergence, not one of mutual correlation. This is the mode in which I ultimately come to reject metonymy in the interpretation of archaeological material culture, alongside other metaphors which assume any *a priori* cultural bodies. One crucial sentence from Strathern's text stands out to me in relation to the Neolithic material:

*...things are conceptualised as parts of persons (ibid.:178)*

This is a matter which I have already alluded to in chapter 3, and will follow up in detail in remaining chapters. The ethnographic instance of partibility and dividuality provides a reassurance that the kind of relations I perceive in the Neolithic material are possible (see below).

This approach also answers one of my other dilemmas; whether what I am dealing with are gendered relations or not. In one sense, I am asking, what is the extent of gender? If I divorce gendering from biological sex in my readings of Manx Neolithic remains, do I explode gender entirely, rob it of its usefulness? In her context, Strathern comes up to a similar problem in an unprecedented fashion:

*...the Melanesian gender relationship upon which we should concentrate is not between male and female but between same-sex relations and cross-sex relations.... we may apprehend them as the gendered forms of persons who must appear as either singular or multiple in their composition. The one is a potential transformation of the other. (Ibid.:185).*

This radical reinterpretation of gender relationships suggests that even in a world where masculinity and femininity may exist, they do not represent the generative principles of social life. Strathern discusses Melanesian life in terms of pairs, but points out that these pairs are orientated around concepts that we would never align by binary opposition, such as having a pairing of single:plural::both singular and plural:neither singular or plural. In a very real sense, these divisions make no sense to us, they defy our reasoning, as does the fact that they continually change. Melanesian economy is based on the determinations of same-sex relationships and cross-sex relationships, and the transformation of one of these conditions into the other. In exchange, the recipient of a good must

*transform the other man's same-sex relation with these items into a cross-sex one with himself, as a partner in his partner's mind.* (Strathern 1988:198).

Consideration of this anthropologically-derived understanding of a materiality leads to the conclusion that systems of metaphor, metaphysics and gendered/powerd relationships are often beyond our everyday understanding. I argue this to be the case for Neolithic relations on the Isle of Man. There are relationships evident in the material which I can perceive, but whose meaning is lost to me. The generative system, the materiality, of this past world is as inaccessible as the 'ideas in past people's heads' (Hodder 1982). The ladder of inference crumbles. What Marilyn Strathern has been describing is Melanesian economy, not ideology - and its difference to our own experiences is striking. For example, selves merge with other selves through specific material relations:

*If the cross-sex relationship takes the reified form of difference, then the previous relationship must be construable as a same-sex one. Thus, from the point of view of his relationship with his wife, a Trobriand man may regard the wife and her brother as 'one'.* (Strathern 1988:241).

What is clear, however, is that there is no universal basis for an individual self, or a particular means of gendering. But there are theories which allow us to analyse different processes of subjectification, self-production, and materiality.

Studies on the concepts of dividuality and the dividual provide tempting analogies for the Manx Neolithic, where elements or parts of persons are continually divisible. Indeed, I have been fascinated and inspired by the way Marilyn Strathern problematises the individual in her studies (particularly Strathern 1988, 1992). But drawing direct analogies serves to close down interpretation of this material, to stamp it with a different sort of modern template of the body. I do not see the Manx Neolithic as being analogous to present-day Melanesia or England. Instead, I have read anthropological writings (e.g. Strathern 1988, 1992, Battaglia 1990, Busby 1997, and literature on alternative experiences of reality, e.g. Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1990) to see how anthropologists cope with their particular material. This is not so much a case of ethnographic analogy as diffraction through another prism of modernity. Archaeology and anthropology face a similar problem, in that the notion of the individual is inadequate, but this inadequacy is manifested in very different ways. Such studies have demonstrated the diversity which exists in human experience, a diversity which is beyond the easily imaginable, beyond what we can experience for ourselves. Neolithic relations will not have been directly

analogous to modern Melanesian relations; but the presence of dividual and partible relations in some present contexts is inspiring. This inspiration should be taken only as inspiration, however, and not read as a means of validating my later arguments by use of direct analogy.

### **Precise: Agency, personhood and performativity**

Both Judith Butler's theories of performativity and Marilyn Strathern's relational anthropologies are crucial in my understanding of personhood. Butler's theory is a general theory, but culturally specific in its designs, while Strathern's theories emerge from working with very specific localised phenomena. I am looking to merge these theories, inspired by problems in the material I study, as outlined in chapter four. I am drawn by the critical insight of Butler in discussing the relation between authority and deferral of meaning to the past, and the production of subjectivity through reiterations of discursive practice. I am also drawn by Strathern's ability to deal with her material on a number of levels (economic, social, ideological) without dividing those levels up as distinct fields of study. I would argue that she, like Butler has achieved this by focusing on discourse itself, on the production of agency and personhood. While both of them study the production of gender, agency and social relations, they do so in very different contexts. Neither of the contexts with which they work are directly comparable to the Neolithic material from the Isle of Man, other than to provide a contrast. But the approaches to social phenomena like the generation of selves and relations which they employ are applicable, if only as a starting point in developing my own theories about Neolithic persons and their relationships to the world, to animals and to each other.

Butler has produced a theory of agency which stresses that agency is constitutive of persons, not a product of person's wills. Likewise, Strathern is clear about the relation between agency and person in a Melanesian context; the two enjoy an uncomfortable relationship to the body, in which social pressures of agency act on both the person and the body. In both theories agency gives rise to experience (and *vice versa*) which, as a field, provides the social constraints and conditions within which persons are produced. These persons' bodies can be understood only by studying that social agency, that discursive field which produced them. And that field is at once economic, social and ideological. Personal agency does not deny desire or intentionality, it locates them within a field of material discourses. I argue that this is a useful approach for archaeologists to take both because

archaeology deals with past material as a product and medium for discourse, and also acts within a modern discursive field. I also argue that it throws up a challenge to archaeologists about the very nature of the bodies they study and the persons they theorise. This challenge derives from the assertion that materiality means far more than biology, that bodies exist in many different forms of matter. Furthermore, there are always multiple and conflicting discourses, beyond the 'dominant' one. While structuralist or structuration approaches seek a common overarching structure to agency, performative approaches acknowledge that different exertions of agency relate to a variety of different discourses. Archaeological material does not reflect an overall structure, but was involved in the production of conflicting discourses by different agents in the past. Both Butler and Strathern offer a reading of materiality and performativity which focus on personal agency as a social phenomenon. I now return briefly to the possible mechanics of such performative relations.

### **Metaphor, materiality, performativity**

In this chapter I have argued that language and materiality are inextricably linked. At various points in this thesis I have also argued for the importance of metaphor in understanding discourse and material relations. *Material metaphors* is a term which has been used by both Marilyn Strathern (1988) and Keith Ray (1987) to describe the way that metaphors are material and experienced rather than abstract or 'mental'. Material metaphors are not necessarily spoken, but operate by similarity of activity; gardens which are fertile and produce 'offspring' like women's bodies (Strathern 1988:247), for example. To summarise my position in relation to these approaches (among others, including Tilley 1999), there are several points which are crucial to a theory of materiality which recognises the role of metaphor:

- metaphors are enacted through relationships
- through metaphor, things refer to other things, although this does not necessarily mean they stand for them
- different media are used to produce different levels of metaphorical association; they materialise and dematerialise in different ways
- all metaphors are socially and culturally contingent; no metonym or metaphor transcends *all* discourses

- form cannot easily be used to deduce a metaphorical similarity, as similarities of form often rely on metonymy, or on an *a priori* schematisation of forms (e.g., ‘a house is like a human body’ relies on postulating an *a priori* understanding of bodies)

From this position, a metaphor may be drawn between any thing, substance, etc and any other thing, substance, institution, concept, etc. All that is necessary in order to draw such a metaphor is a shared history of *use* and *experience* regarding the combined aspects.

Conversely, to repeatedly cite particular combinations of things, places, times and other elements in a practice is the very process through which fields of metaphor are generated.

Metaphor is inextricable from performativity, activity and experience. In the next few chapters I will present a reading of Neolithic material remains which draws on the physical connections between them as a series of statements of a metaphorical nature<sup>7</sup>.

### **Manx Selves and Performativity**

How do I intend to apply a theory of performativity which stresses social relationships to the Neolithic material from the Isle of Man? The first matter for discussion is the direction of this work. It is the political aspect of archaeology which makes it important to me. In my discussions so far I have come to the conclusion that I cannot theorise individuals, families, class, sex or gender in the Neolithic. I cannot rely on any modern metonyms. Does this leave me with a sterile and irrelevant archaeology?

I believe not. Power relationships are still the focus of this study. The nature of those relationships is always open to question. That I will not apply dominant modern categories to them does not undermine the validity of those relationships in materialising the Manx Neolithic. Indeed, much of what I write is concerned with gender, sex and class, and further with human-animal or human-environmental questions which are also heavily political, thoroughly current. However, by focusing on Neolithic activity - not thought - I present an *interpretation of the Neolithic on the Isle of Man which makes a radically different world partially understandable within the present*. Archaeological accounts which dissatisfy me are generally those which try to do too much; which draw analogies of ancestor-worship, of binary sexual division, of individual-group dynamics. This is not to call for a sterile empiricism. Rather it is to ask that if we must do what we can, what are the limits of what we can do? Analogy does have its limits, and these must be accepted.

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<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that any of these relations will be relations of ‘equation’ or absolute correlation; rather they are read as a series of citations, as discussed earlier in the chapter. The nature of such citations of regulatory fictions will be discussed further in chapter 7.

Imagination has limitations too, but these have not been so fully explored. As I argued in chapter 3 archaeological interpretation is ambiguous. Our texts, our interpretations should reflect our uncertainty, our inability to know. We can speculate about things beyond our understanding in a way which does not reduce them to an archaeology of what we already know.

At the same time I have said that present regulatory fictions form our accounts of the past, and cannot be ignored. Alongside the double (or fourfold) hermeneutic of archaeological interpretation (Shanks and Tilley 1987:107-109), there is the double performative of archaeological interpretation (which can itself be situated within a fourfold hermeneutic). This means that past regulatory fictions have been replaced or displaced by modern ones. Modern activities in relation to those fictions (performatives) therefore replace past performatives. My relation to this double performative is that I intend to subvert present fictions by supplying new ones, which I think are more appropriate to the material. Their propriety is not due to their ability to 'match' past regulatory fictions. It is due to their ability to disagree with current fictions, to illuminate them precisely as fictions and not facts.

A series of repeated citations appear to have been involved in the generation of Manx Neolithic selves. These involved the creation of a kind of joint or composite personhood, alternatively imaginable as an immersion in the world. How do Manx deposits reflect sexual difference or gender relations as we understand them? If the inhumation at Ballaharra is a reflection of a social person or identification, then what were those people attempting to pass-as? What was the regulatory fiction? Under a classical constructivist banner, I would have to start with the biological sex of the three bodies combined in this one skeleton. All are 'male'. In terms of age, there is one '11 year old', one '19 year old' and one 'adult' (Cregeen 1978:148, Davey n.d.:96). As a classic constructivist I would then discuss the relation between their biological sex and their social gender. However, we could start by saying that this may not represent a body so much as a statement of relationships. What kind of relationships can we imagine? Are these persons joined together to pass-as a person (reiterative), or to 'queer' an identification (subversive)<sup>8</sup>? Alternatively, is a body or a relationship being materialised here, or is it a means of hiding and dematerialising such relationships? This citation could be of a metonymic nature, but we cannot know what metonym would be cited by such a deposit.

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<sup>8</sup> Again, I am not using these terms in their strictest Butleran senses here.

We cannot know what kind of practice is being naturalised by this act of re-articulation. So what can we say?

We can say that a set of relationships between people were being *naturalised* (and at the same time possibly challenging previous and contemporary naturalisations of personal relations). These relationships involved people, places, animals and things. These people may have been considered to share a gender, sex and sexuality, but then again, it seems likely that they were not. After all, people of different ages often carry out different sorts of activities, including sexual activities. Different parts of each skeletal original were chosen for deposition, though it does not seem that whole limbs or areas of the body are chosen from particular skeletons. Their physicalities are all very different. Their genders may have been based on something far more complex than a cross-sex/same-sex basis, may have been infinitely changeable.

Perhaps to think like this is to look in the wrong place. If social activities, generally considered by archaeologists to be of a 'ritual' nature are *[a]n elaborate commentary on the nature of power* (Strathern 1988:114), then perhaps we ought to think about other ways to interpret such commentaries. Any single citation of a regulatory fiction may either reproduce or subvert (or do both to) that fiction. As there would have been multiple fictions, there would have been multiple discourses, and to cite any number of them could be to defer to them or to refute them. In either case, I would consider that a cited discourse would be a significant one, and this is the line I take in the remainder of the thesis. However, the nature of that citation is still a matter of context. While I want to write an archaeology of persons, of people, I acknowledge that I cannot expect past people to be like me, like our world. The specific discourse, the materialities they performed into being, were based on power relationships of a different kind. My proposition is that an archaeology based on performativity will allow us to presence different types of power relationships, although these will no doubt emanate from the present and not the past.

## Conclusion

If archaeological accounts about the distant past serve to give categories to that past, then those categories are not 'native' to the past. We will never know what 'they' thought. We can never measure the credibility of our analogies. We do not know whether the models or ideas we have about Neolithic society were the ones performed into being by

those societies themselves, whether they were the ideas those people had. In retrospect, we can be fairly sure that the categories we produce about the past are not the same regulatory fictions which those people lived their lives through. Archaeologists have spent a great deal of time and energy trying to read the past through categorising activity. In the following chapters I attempt to produce an archaeology which focuses instead on activity, relationship and association in a way which illustrates the fallacy of prevalent forms of categorising Neolithic archaeology. As such, it will not be possible to escape from regulatory fictions. However, it is a question of which fictions I choose to use, which stories I choose to tell. While some fictions are more powerful than others, there is no way to measure the 'authenticity' of present discourses about the past, other than against each other. The aim of this project is to produce an archaeology based on performativity, and an archaeology which locates a series of spaces for difference in Neolithic contexts. As Strathern (1988:4) says,

*Only by upturning these assumptions through deliberate choice can 'we' glimpse what other assumptions might look like.*

## **Chapter 5: Materiality and relations of personhood emergent in the 'Earlier' Manx Neolithic.**

### **Introduction**

So far I have outlined some prevalent understandings of the Manx Neolithic, and the wider discourses of personhood which exist in the field of prehistoric archaeology. In chapter 2 and 3 I critiqued these discourses, and discussed a theory of discourse which allows for a focus on performances of selfhood. I have also introduced a number of interpretative approaches which I will now implement in reference to the Manx Neolithic material. In this chapter I will introduce an interpretation of the earlier Neolithic material on Man based on a performative and relational approach. In the following chapter I will experiment with a variety of means of expressing my interpretations. Following this, I return to an interpretation of the later Neolithic Manx material.

Earlier Neolithic Manx activity can be characterised as activity which took place between the slightly arbitrary dates 4500 and 3000 Cal. BC. The first thing to note about this division of the Neolithic into two halves (earlier and later) is that the sites and activities concerned cannot be divided into two groups on this basis. The majority of the most significant sites to this thesis were in intermittent use and re-use between about 4000 and 2000 Cal. BC. Ballaharra, King Orry's Graves and Billown Quarry were all used and re-used throughout this 2000 year period. Sites which are discussed under the banner of 'earlier Neolithic sites' are those which show signs of use from the earlier Neolithic onwards. Those which show signs of use mainly or solely in the later Neolithic will be discussed under the heading of the 'later Neolithic'. To all intents and purposes, the subject of this chapter is any aspect of activity which appears in the earlier Neolithic, and is continued into the later Neolithic. For example, in discussing Ballaharra and Billown Quarry, I will include them under the heading of earlier Neolithic sites because this is the point at which I pick up their histories. However, they will also be discussed in greater detail in chapter 7. Activities with little representation in the earlier Neolithic will be discussed in chapter 7 - although such activities will be shown to possess earlier Neolithic genealogies. The majority of later Neolithic trends of practice (routeways, breaking down of things and bodies) do appear in the earlier Neolithic, but will receive greater attention as later Neolithic activities because of the intensification and differentiation of trends which occurred in the later Neolithic.

A period of 2500 years is an extremely long time which, even in one relatively small geographical area, may harbour a great diversity of discursive trends. Totalising such a period is always an interpretative risk. The majority of this thesis has so far rested on assessing the discourse of the Neolithic in the present; that is to say, accounts of the Neolithic, writings about the past. This will of course continue to be a major arena of discussion. However, I am now in a position where I must make statements about Neolithic discourses themselves; my interpretative judgements about what kinds of trends and activities took place over 5000 years ago. In so doing I make statements about past activities, relationships and discourses. This is not to fall prey to Hodder's (1992) dubious characterisation of all archaeological interpretation as necessarily empathic. However, neither is it to claim to study activity without discussing forms of discourse or understanding alongside forms of economic activity. The ladder of inference (Hawkes 1954) has rotted down, its rungs decomposing as one layer. To make a judgement about economy requires a judgement about what people believe, what they do, what kind of politics they are involved in, and so on. Again, this does not reduce all spheres of social activity to definition by subsistence type or political structure. Rather than utilise previous schemes of social definition, I prefer to concentrate entirely on the activities which are archaeologically visible, and interpret them as citations of specific types of discourses. The link of particular discourses to particular subsistence methods is not assumed, though this does not mean that I am not concerned with subsistence, economy or routine in the Manx Neolithic. What follows are highly specific event-focused interpretations, which are also concerned with long-term discursive fields.

### **Material corpses**

In Chapter 3 I argued that the citations of bodies performed in Neolithic Britain may have included those which;

- emphasised relationships between persons;
- indicated forms of personhood which involved more than one biological individual;
- stressed different social relations with the 'non-human', or what we would see as non-bodily material world;
- emphasised different structures of subjectivity and experience of that material world.

In Chapter 4 I reflected that complex forms of social theory have recently been developed which deal with the significance of bodily activity, bodily representation or

citation and social relationships both in 'western' and 'non-western' societies. Butler's theory of performativity will form the interpretative scheme in much of what follows, while a Strathernian emphasis on relationships will be vital to my interpretation of Neolithic Manx personhood. However, neither will form a simple 'model'. To take anthropology, for example, it is noted that Strathern discusses relationships which *separate* (Strathern 1988: 191-207, de Castro 1999:80). Other anthropologists (e.g., Bird-David 1999, Busby 1997) discuss the importance of relationships which embed, absorb or immerse individuals in their worlds. Clearly for Manx persons either, neither or both are plausible interpretations.

A strictly archaeological matter intercedes at this point: what is the relationship between a dead body and a living body? The majority of Manx deposits consist of what have been called collective or corporate burials; essentially mixed cremations or inhumations. Often, archaeologists consider that individual burials are a reference to an individual's life; either reflecting that person's status, or those who buried the person, or negating that person's status in life, or so on. When archaeologists consider corporate burials, we often talk about negation of the self in an egalitarian ideology (e.g., Shanks and Tilley 1982), or about bones taking on the status of the ancestors (e.g., Edmonds 1999:61, Barrett 1994, Bradley 1998, Parker-Pearson and Ramilisonina 1999). These suppositions are sometimes backed up by poor use of analogy - most often derived from Bloch's interpretation of Madagascan practices (e.g., Parker-Pearson and Ramilisonina 1999; cf. Barrett and Fewster 1998, Whittle 1998), and are often left unsubstantiated. The question I posed in chapter 3 is 'why couldn't corporate burials represent an assertion about or citation of personal experience and relationships during life?' Equally, why are individual burials in the later Neolithic or early Bronze Age necessarily to do with differentiated personal identity, rather than a reflection of a social ideal or model in the way that Greek Kouroi represented the ideal youthful male body, for example? Furthermore, if relationships are iterated in material activity, could the arrangements of cremated, broken or whole bones in these deposits be bound up with the negotiation of a sequence of social relationships? Whether or not these deposits 'reflected' the lives of the persons' whose insides they once were, they were most certainly involved in the social life of (at least some of) those who survived them (see chapter 3, section 2, discussion of Quanterness). They may have been statements about life made by the living *and* the dead - if such terms have any use at all. Why are dead Neolithic people assumed to be 'ancestors', and what does the

term really mean? If the living have agency, if objects can be accorded agency, then why are the body parts of the dead overlooked as crucial elements in the relations of Neolithic agency? The life/death divide is unhelpful in many prehistoric contexts, the Neolithic of Britain and Ireland being among them. But in the case of these deposits, the distinction is doubly unhelpful, not least because these may have been citations of life by 'living' social persons<sup>1</sup>.

Three possible factors for these corps/corpses of material need to be considered in addition to those brought out above;

- these deposits may be statements about subjectivity and personal experience of the deceased while they were alive (as opposed to statements about 'the dead');
- these deposits may be negotiations of personhood by the surviving social persons, including renegotiations of personhood in regards to the lives of the deceased;
- these deposits may be citations of relationships between different social elements which downplay the importance of personhood altogether.

As with previous assertions, any, all or none of these interpretative stances may be plausible in relation to the Manx Neolithic material. In examining the Manx deposits, I will argue for the relative importance of these 'relational' readings of the material. First, however, I must establish the tropes within which my reading of material culture operates. As argued in chapter 3, the body is itself a relational, metaphorical and metaphysical structure. As others have shown (e.g., Battaglia 1990, Weiner 1992, Busby 1997, Tilley 1999), in each society this metaphor has different associations, different metonymic and homologic connotations. The metaphoric connections between different elements of the social world is a crucial interpretative tool for archaeologists. Discourse itself can be said to be metaphoric; it relies on things alluding to other things, it relies on relationships of meaning. Personally, I take this metaphoric structure of discourse to be of a Derridean and Butleran nature. 'True meaning' is continually deferred, because explanation always requires the use of further metaphors, further activities of interpretation (cf. Braidotti 1991:56-66, 72, Butler 1993:107-109, Tilley 1989c). This deferral is a structure which allows for, and propagates difference (Derrida's version of which is *differance*; Derrida 1977, 1978).

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<sup>1</sup> Those who moved the bones of the dead may themselves have been considered dead, for example; since such possibilities may be valid, it is unhelpful to maintain the life/death distinction, and so it will not feature heavily in this thesis. This is not a conflation of life and death, but the recognition that all elements of social life, including death, are in question and under study.

Within this metaphoric element of discourse, without which discourse could not exist, there is the place of the literal reading. The body has come to take on a literal meaning for us; it acts as a metonym for the self. Certain tropes become so embedded in discourse that, dematerialised, they fall into an unquestioned mastery of our imagination and interpretation<sup>2</sup>. In the case of the body, the literal meaning has become that of a person. As argued in chapter 3, the individual person and the body have become synonymous. However, once this is exposed as a regulatory fiction, then we can read the metaphor of the body differently. In the case of Neolithic bodies, I argue that we should look for the metaphorical by acting literally, using a different set of assumptions. My interpretations of the Neolithic deposits from the Isle of Man suggest that where bodies of material were constructed from parts of human skeletons, animal skeletons and items of material culture, we can infer that metaphorical relationships between these parts were in process. The 'body' in this context means the corps of material in its extent as a deposit and, as I will illustrate, beyond its deposit. By taking every part of a deposit to be a citation of a particular relationship I hope to trace the kind of 'material metaphors' (cf. Ray 1987, Strathern 1988) which were being enacted. The relationship between the part and the relation in this case is continually in play, continually revised in my analysis. This is not an archaeology which presumes units and change, but parts and relationships as mutually constituting.

### **Body parts and mixed deposits in the earlier Neolithic on the Isle of Man**

Ballaharra (figure 2, Appendix entry 2, cf. Cregeen 1978), to recap, was built in the earlier/mid Neolithic. The site consisted of a chamber, a cairn, and (at some stage) wooden stakes running diagonally across the front of the entrance. The postholes around the rear of the site are believed to be part of the construction process. Parts of three biological human bodies were found laid out as though a single inhumation under a slab possibly under the cairn, possibly at the edge of the forecourt area<sup>3</sup>. In the forecourt were buried two later Neolithic mixed cremations, including potsherds, flints, slate, charcoal and animal bones (see chapter 7). In one cremation very young persons were represented by skull and vertebrae fragments, while a large number of longbones from older persons were present.

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<sup>2</sup> This is what Rorty, among others refers to as a 'dead' metaphor (Rorty 1989, Barnes and Duncan 1992:11).

<sup>3</sup> I argue that this deposit is earlier Neolithic, based on Cregeen 1978 and Burrow 1997:65 who also identifies potsherds at Ballaharra from the mid Neolithic. Contextual evidence for Ballaharra is difficult to ascertain, despite thorough note-taking by the excavator. As with other sites, I have had to decide on the chronology which makes the most sense, and interpret the material accordingly.

In the other, no adult's skulls or children's longbones were found. Channels in the subsoil linked the cremation bowls or hollows to burnt hollows further away from the entrance area. No remains were found inside the chamber.

Mull Hill (figure 4, Appendix entry 11, cf. Piggott 1935, Clark 1935, Kermodé and Herdman 1914) is a chambered megalithic site on the southern-most tip of the island, overlooking the Calf of Man. The arrangement of Mull Hill is open to interpretation. My interpretation is that there are twelve chambers and six passages; each T-shaped portion of the site consists of two chambers transepted by a passage which faces out across the landscape, and opens into the central courtyard of the site (figure 5). The form of the site is a crucial guide to its social use, as will be argued below. But what about the deposits at Mull Hill? Each chamber contained a mixture of cremated or burnt bone, crushed bone, broken earlier Neolithic pottery, flints, slate and quartz nodules. As the site was excavated in the 1890's, much of the skeletal material was not kept or analysed, but thrown away. It is therefore uncertain whether any of the bones were from animals rather than humans; but I will not argue on the basis of 'negative evidence'. It is almost impossible to interpret along the lines of a 'structured deposition' from the site reports (Kermodé and Herdman 1914) and Piggott's (1935) later assessment of the site based on pottery analysis. However, whatever the precise nature of deposition, it is possible that the activities of admixing bone and other material culture in and under the chambers was a statement about the relationships between these substances, things and local places. The passages pointing out across the landscape of the Isle of Man (and beyond; see below) may have composed further statements concerning the relationships between persons, parts of persons, social relationships, things, substances and events (and therefore past times, distant places).

The citations of personhood at Ballaharra and Mull Hill seem to accentuate the relationships of closeness between different social or worldly elements. That is to say, parts of social life which we would categorise as different and keep separate; animals, tools, objects, vessels, humans, plants, stones; were all deliberately mixed together. This is part of a long-term trend which stretches throughout the Manx Neolithic, although it may have had a multiplicity of significances in that time. For example, the contexts in which these practices take place vary greatly in the later Neolithic (see chapter 7). The questions at the heart of my discussion are, '*what do such practices mean in terms of personhood*', or '*what kind of subjectivity do they iterate?*', or '*what was being naturalised here, what regulatory fictions were in play, what were these people trying to pass-as?*'

As I have argued, there is no reason to presume that Neolithic subjectivities were predicated upon a history of individualism. Neither does it follow that they must therefore have been predicated on a particular history of individualism or animism (as implied by Bird-David 1999:78-79). In some ways it is difficult to build up a clear picture of any trend for the earlier Neolithic. There are no precise radio-carbon dates for the earlier Neolithic deposits at Ballaharra or Mull Hill, but it seems plausible that Mull Hill was in use from as early as 4000 BC. Later Neolithic deposits at Ballaharra date to between 3000 and 2600 BC (3027-2600 Cal BC (BM-768) and 3026-2616 Cal BC (BM-769), both from cremation deposit 1). In these two sites we have over 1500 years of (pre)history. If radiocarbon dates from Billown Quarry are added to this equation, then late Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic activities such as burning, pot firing and deposition can be dated to before 4000 BC (see Appendix entry 5). These 'early Neolithic' dates of 4658-4369 Cal BC (Beta-89312) are perhaps unreliable. As with so many Manx radiocarbon dates they are taken from wood which may have been heartwood, or laid untouched for many years. The plank in question sealed plain bowls like those from Mull Hill, hence the association, but this does not necessarily establish their antiquity to before 4000 BC. No human or animal remains from the earlier Neolithic were recovered at Billown. Unfortunately it has proved difficult to consider Mesolithic personhood from the sites on the island<sup>4</sup>, but it seems from the material that combining human, animal and object remains on the island was, like the use of pottery, an emergent trend during the terminal Mesolithic. A variety of megalithic sites were constructed in the early Neolithic, but bodily deposition cannot be identified as a factor at the majority of these sites, as far as we can tell (many of them have been robbed or destroyed). There is one other site which did contain human bone in the earlier Neolithic, however.

Ballafayle (figure 6, cf. Kermode 1927, Kinnes 1992:45, 85, 205) has been classified as a non-megalithic long barrow. However, it shares many performative similarities with earlier Neolithic megalithic sites such as Cashtal yn ard and King Orry's Grave North-East; the burning of material, the forecourt activity, activities indicated by screens at the rear of the site. Ballafayle is roughly trapezoid, and part of the tail is composed of an area where several megaliths form a box, screen or wall. The interior of

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<sup>4</sup> It is also slightly beyond the remit of this project. While I would have liked to begin with a Mesolithic genealogy, and study changes in personhood through to the earlier Neolithic on the island, this would have added a great deal more time, effort and cost to the overall thesis. While the lack of Mesolithic bodies does not necessarily preclude a study of personhood, a detailed study of Mesolithic practices is beyond the scope of this thesis.

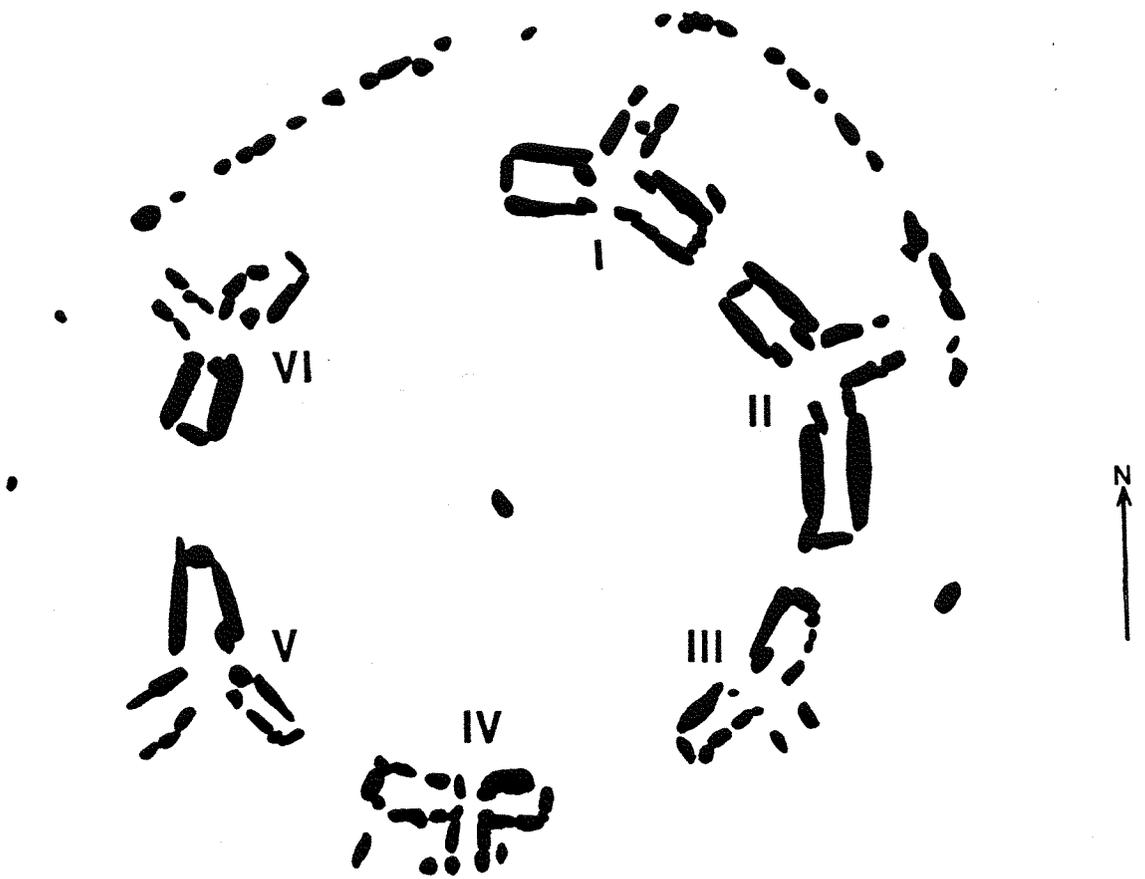


Figure 4 Mull Hill

0 ————— 5 m

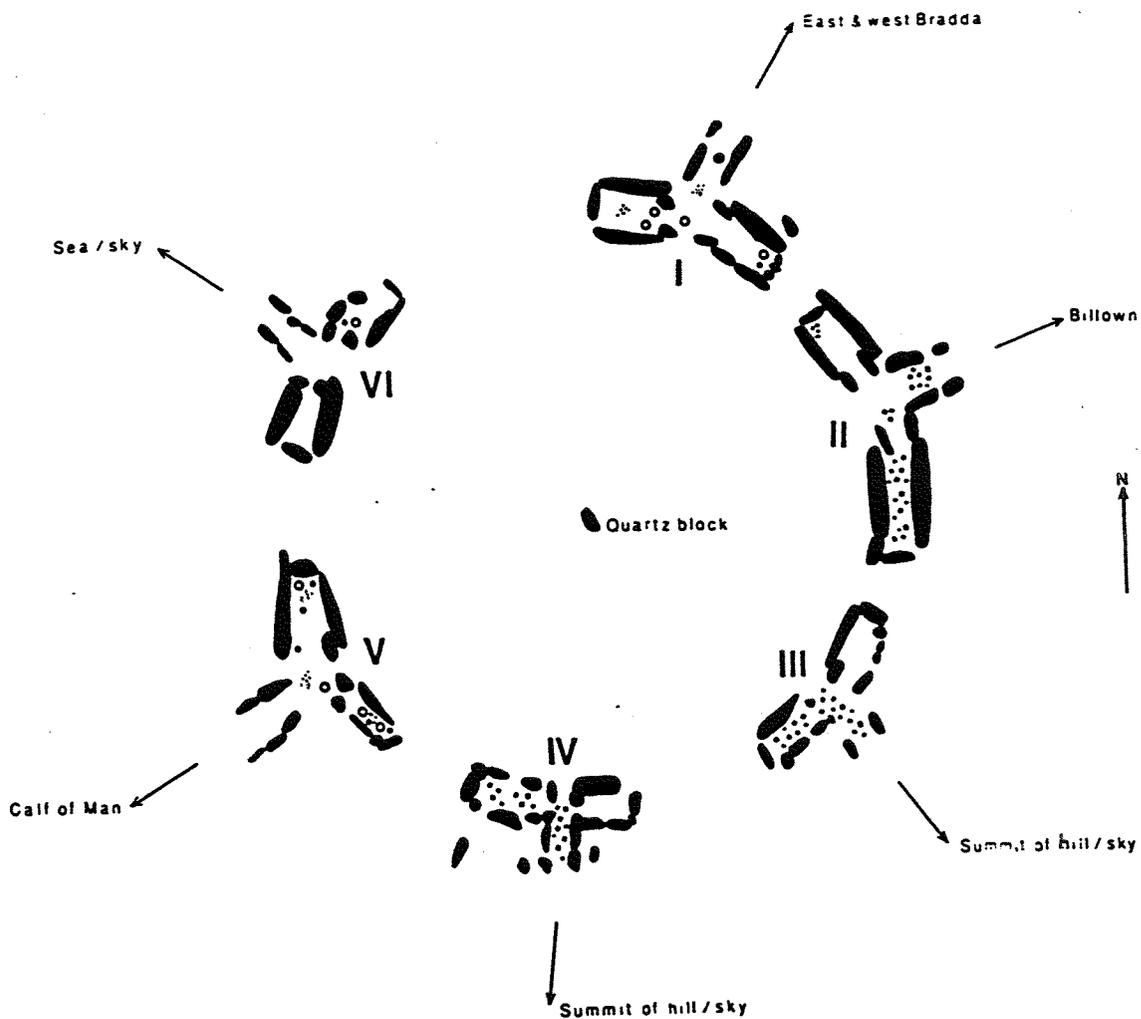


Figure 5 Mull Hill in the landscape

- Flint
- Quartz
- Pot
- Cremation

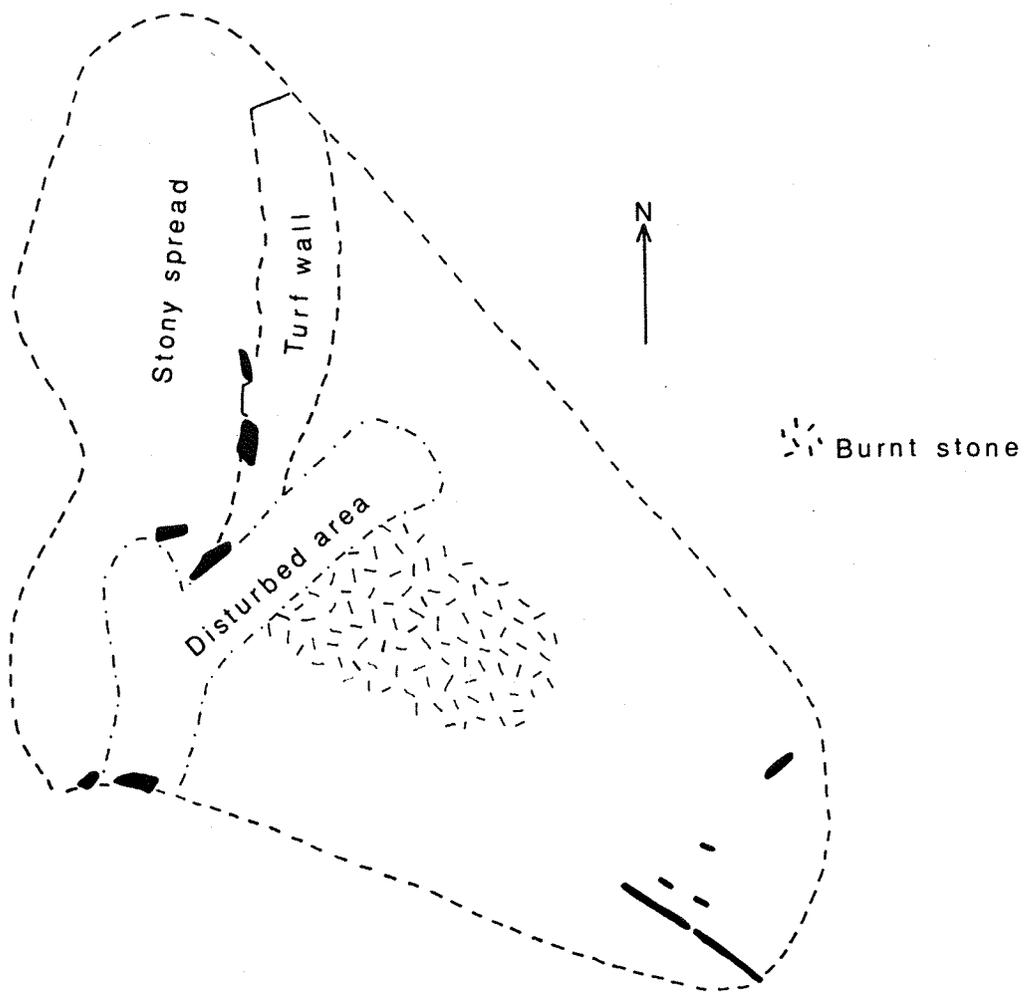
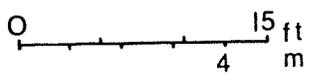


Figure 6 Ballafayle



the passage/chamber is located where all of the chambers and passages in Manx megaliths (excepting Mull Hill) lie, between the horns, leading into the mound and out to sea. However, Ballafayle shows signs of *in situ* burning of human remains alongside other material, while the megaliths do not. The 'cairn' at Ballafayle was an earthen mound, while the forecourt area seems to have been laid out as a dense spread of small stones. The facade of Ballafayle seems to have been composed of small stone slabs, turf and wooden posts - a factor relevant to discussions of later Neolithic activities. Ian Kinnes (1992:45, 205, 85) dates Ballafayle to the earlier Neolithic, and Burrow identifies it as an earlier Neolithic 'crematorium', but there is no real indication of its date relative to other earlier Neolithic sites. Like Mull Hill, at Ballafayle bone was mixed with other substances, but at Ballafayle the burning and mixture seem to have taken place at the same location and *in situ*. Wood charcoal, peat ash and burnt and broken stone are intermixed with cremated bone, slate, bone ash, tiny flecks of flint and "small white pebbles" (Kermode 1927:191) most likely of quartz. One of the cremations was lain north-south from skull to feet over a 4' distance. It is uncertain whether this was the remains of one or more original skeleton, given the findings at Ballaharra, and the age of the skeletal components at time of death is not mentioned. The other cremated bone is interspersed among the stones, charcoal, ash, slate, burnt peat and earth and quartz pebbles.

It is at present impossible to create a strict chronology for these sites. Even if it were possible, it would not give any better idea of specific changes in burial practice, as trends can co-exist each other across hundreds of years. In some contexts it may have been appropriate to cremate persons at one site and remove them to another, there to mix them with material culture, or join them together with parts of other persons. In another, contemporary context it may have been appropriate to place entire and intact singular bodies into an earthen mound and burn them, or burn them on a pyre and build a mound over the site. Once again, it is impossible to know the exact meaning of such activities in prehistoric contexts. However, the remains at these sites do tell us a number of things about earlier Neolithic bodies on the island.

Cremation appears to have been part of the dominant citation of intra-personal, inter-personal and extra-personal relationships ('within' persons, between persons, between persons and 'things' or 'world'). Where inhumation occurred without the bones being cremated, it appears that the personal citation enacted was one of joint personhood. Where cremation occurred the process could be described as once of immersion or absorption into

the background world. Both practices took place alongside each other over a period of around 1500 years on the island, and in surrounding regions (see chapter 3). During the whole of this time (and indeed, over the following 1000 years as well), there is no citation of the person as an individual unit. Instead persons are iterated in several distinctive ways; as joint persons; as partible or dividual persons; as relationships in the material world. The trends of 'self'-citation associated with this period can therefore be characterised as follows:

- people's bodies were broken into parts
- parts of some bodies were re-assembled with parts of other bodies
- parts of some bodies were left in situ once burnt, though some bone may have been removed

All of these traits are accentuated in later Neolithic activity, where parts of object and animal, and greater removal of body parts from the place of deposition or cremation became more common. The early Neolithic relations between persons and worlds at Ballaharra or Ballafayle are not completely distinct, alienated or individual, but neither are they entirely immersed. Mull Hill tells a slightly different story, because there human bones in the chambers are mixed with pottery, beads, slate and flints. Mull Hill may have been a location for referencing a personhood which was constantly under contention during the Manx Neolithic. What kind of relations of personhood were practised or cited at Mull Hill? What was the significance of Mull Hill as a location where these activities took place?

### **Dividuating relations, relational entities**

There have not been many archaeological accounts of the Neolithic which have specifically addressed the possibility that Neolithic experience may be understood from a non-individualistic basis. The idea that selves could have enjoyed a different structure, through their participation in different practices and experiences of the material world remains under-theorised in the sub-discipline. In Chapter 3 I traced some of the ways that post-processualists have characterised Neolithic experience. While they do not exclude the possibility that Neolithic persons and experiences might have been very different from our own, neither do they actively pursue an archaeology of such different states of being. However, Julian Thomas has begun to develop his thinking about Neolithic activity in terms of 'an economy of substances' in combination with an emphasis on an alternative

structure of being. This 'economy of substances' is a means of describing the way that materials and things including human bone are transferable across different contexts, so that they may be exchanged, and come to stand for each other (Thomas 1998). In Thomas' earlier Neolithic of Britain

*...the identities of things and persons are reciprocally produced...* (ibid.:72)

and;

*....the identities of places, persons and things were reciprocally enhanced and individuated.* (Thomas 1998:84 - my emphases).

While Thomas has come extremely close to describing a world where material relations are utterly discursive and citational, he has failed to capitalise on the Strathernian anthropological perspective on persons and relations. Two key terms appear in the above texts; *identities* and *individuation*. I have critiqued of the notion of the individual in previous chapters. This critique is not only applicable to the person, but the world in which that person is situated. *A dividual person lives in a dividualated, rather than individuated world.* In Thomas' archaeology, identity and individuation of place or person is an essential effect of prehistoric activities (e.g., **Time, Culture, Identity** Thomas 1996). Indeed, this is a prevalent trend in post-processual archaeology; that the repeated use of a site over time builds up its 'identity', and that of its users (e.g., Thomas 1996, Edmonds 1999, Barrett 1994, Bradley 1993). However, just as I would want to work from a position where dividuality is explored, so I would want to stress a variety of forms of entity over identity as individuating. *What if we can characterise earlier Neolithic activities as dividualating relationships, involving relational entities, rather than individuating relationships producing distinct identities?* Just as Joyce's Mayan archaeology illustrates that some activities do not crystallise as identities, but continually perform contingent relationships, could a similar process be relevant to Neolithic relations? In short, instead of condensing identities which individuate, there may have been entities contingent upon changing relationships.

In such a context it becomes difficult to discuss a distinct type of personhood<sup>5</sup>. It is almost as though parthood - a state of perpetual partibility and dividualation - was far more important. As such, it would be misleading to formulate a coherent theory of personhood

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<sup>5</sup> In a parallel move Weir (1996:11) argues that theories which attempt to assess identity do so at the risk of forcing all forms of practice into components for identity. Non-identity as she calls it (or a broader understanding of the specifics of different types of entity, as I prefer) is an equally plausible condition in some social contexts which we could imagine (cf. Chapter 4, Joyce on sexual practice versus identity).

for this context. A *theory of parthood* or a theory of the relationships between different social elements enacted through repeated activity is far more appropriate. What were the specific practices which generated the series of related differences in the Manx earlier Neolithic? Activities which produced Neolithic sites also produced Neolithic persons, objects and 'artworks'. How can we interpret these inter-connected practices?

### **Mull Hill: Place, location and relation**

Traditionally, megalithic chambers have been discussed under the metonym of 'tombs' (cf. Leivers 1999, Tilley 1999, and chapter 2). Indeed, Mull Hill (Appendix entry 11, Plate 7, figure 4) has been interpreted as a ring of sepulchres since the mid 19th century (Jeffcott 1866, 1868, Oswald 1860). The other megalithic sites on the island (Cashtal yn ard, Kew Giants Grave, King Orry's Graves) contained almost no bone at all, although this does not mean that they were never repositories for skeletal material. Mull Hill is the site which most easily falls into the modernist assumption of chambers as sepulchres, places for interring the dead. However, Mull Hill also provides us with a great deal of information which illustrates the performative importance of such sites in social life.

Looking outwards through the transept passages at Mull Hill, each references a notable landscape location (Figure 5); the Calf of Man; East and West Bradda (Plate 8); the sea; the summit of the hill and/or the sky (two chambers); and an area which contains the early Neolithic enclosures at Billown<sup>6</sup> currently under excavation by Tim Darvill. These carefully arranged views may provide a context for the chamber deposits, perhaps creating a link between the deposits, Mull Hill, and the place or physical feature which the view from the passage incorporated. The material layout and location of the site strongly suggests material references to other places, other times and other acts; this is a heavily perforated, outwards-looking site. The chambers themselves contain material brought from other locations, some from over the sea, some from the sea, some from other parts of the island. Much of the material would have been mobile; for example, the bone was once part of mobile people and possibly animals, and may have travelled unknown distances since it became disarticulated or cremated bone. Mull Hill was, perhaps, a place for referencing other places, other times and other experiences. The activities which took place both in the construction and the deposition at Mull Hill were citations and reiterations of earlier

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<sup>6</sup> There would already have been activity at Billown Quarry during the period when Mull Hill was constructed and in use. Earlier Neolithic activity at Billown appears to have taken the form of pit excavations, burning, and depositing similar carinated bowls to those found at Mull Hill.

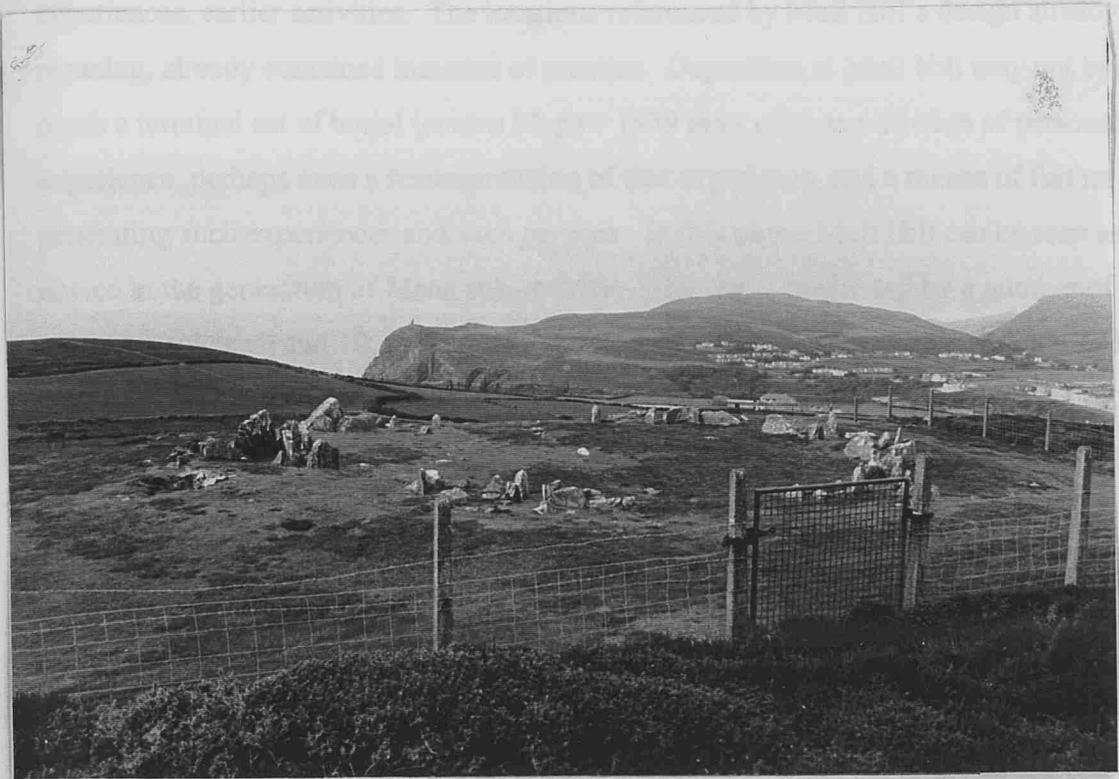


Plate 7: Mull Hill circle chambered tomb, Isle of Man.



Plate 8: View of East and West Bradda from Mull Hill circle.

experiences, earlier activities. The locations referenced by Mull Hill's design already had meaning, already contained histories of practice. Deposition at Mull Hill may not be so much a terminal act of burial (*contra* Megaw 1939 *inter alia*) as a citation of personal experience, perhaps even a reinterpretation of that experience, and a means of further generating such experiences and such *persons*. In this sense, Mull Hill can be seen as a device in the generation of Manx subjectivity. The site is perforated by a number of entrances (plates 9 and 10, views into the circle from passage entrances), which may have expanded the activities and experiences which took place here out across the Manx landscape, and out to sea. The open paths of this site may have been intended to draw in the histories and memories associated with the places it overlooked. But this does not mean that it was a *centre* for Neolithic activity, or a *microcosm* of a Neolithic cosmology which was mapped onto their sites and landscape - both interpretations of Neolithic sites favoured by Richard Bradley, for example (e.g, Bradley 1998:68-100). Perhaps its morphology, read in totality, is misleading. Each pair of chambers has its own 'passage'; perhaps the construction of each part of Mull Hill was a significant practice in itself. Perhaps its circularity and symmetry was not a symbol of any Neolithic cosmology, but the result of contingent practices and attempts to link places in the world which were 'real'. Rather than being a shrunken, 'scale model' of the Neolithic universe, Mull Hill may have been a point of departure and perpetuation for Manx Neolithic relationships between persons and world. Perhaps it was a place where people re-negotiated their relationships and past experiences, a place for de-centring subjectivity out into the world from which it emerged. And, rather than being a site which, through repeated use gained and built up a specific identity (and thereby became distinct from the 'outside' world), perhaps the site was important as an organ of social dividuation and absorption<sup>7</sup>. While archaeologists have often concentrated on the role of repeated activity in sedimenting identity in a place, the use of that place itself as a device or machine in producing entity often takes a back seat. In conventional accounts places become locations for rehearsing identity; not generating entity - whether that entity is concerned with identity or not. Many conventional accounts also often separate archaeological sites out from the background world, rather than interpret them as features of that world. I would suggest that Mull Hill may not have been the only Neolithic site where permeability, merging and dividuation were more

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Toren 1995 for the role of places as dynamic forces in negotiating contingent relations of personhood.



Plate 9: Mull Hill circle; view of internal courtyard from a passage entrance.

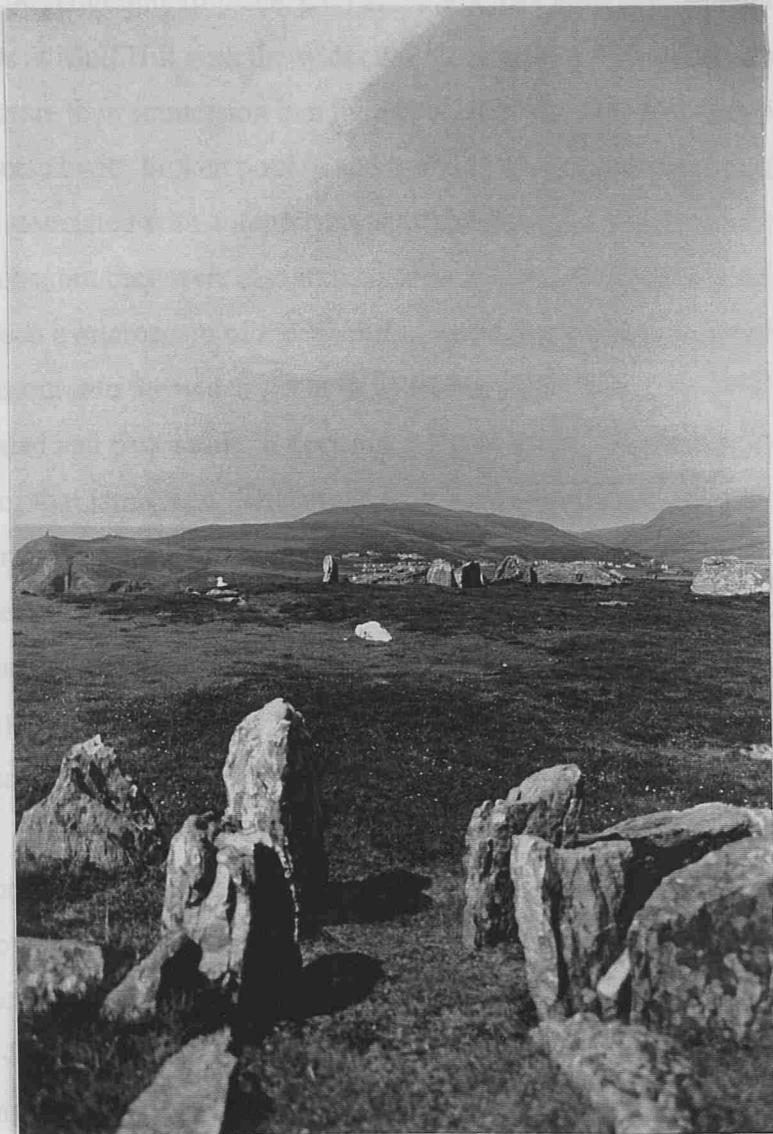


Plate 10: Mull Hill circle; view of internal courtyard from a passage entrance.

\* It is also possible that three of the stones contained quartz pebbles only in the passage and not the chamber, looking westwards from the centre of the circle (see fig. 2).

important elements than has been considered - at least in their earlier phases of use (for example, some causewayed enclosures set me thinking in a similar way).

A geography of place, path and event may have been intended to connect the deposits at Mull Hill with the wider world; or rather, to de-centre them out into the world, to illustrate their immersion in a living social landscape. Not only were the human bones interspersed with broken pottery and rounded white quartz pebbles (Henshall n.d.), which can be associated with another very specific place, the beach or sea which the hill overlooks, but they were also immersed in a wider choreography of place. This need not have been a microcosm of the Neolithic world, but perhaps a device for de-centring persons out into the wider world to which they still belonged. Mull Hill is heavily perforated and panoramic; it does not indicate a 'site'/'landscape' division, it reads like an organ of that landscape. This organ may have reproduced and commented on social relations which accentuated a partial body, an immersed social self in which the 'human' and the 'individual self' were not of paramount importance. Such selves relied as much on relations with animals and objects, the sea and places and past events (or even everyday events) on the island as they did on relations with other social persons which we would call 'human'.

Mull Hill is unusual in that each passage and set of chambers has another set of chambers behind it, facing in the opposite direction. This makes for a complex choreography. The view outwards from each passage seems to be important; but so does the background which 'frames' the chambers as they are viewed. For example chambers 2, 3 and 4 contained large quantities of water-rounded quartz pebbles<sup>8</sup> (some from among packing which closed off the chambers in the mid Neolithic; Henshall n.d.). These chambers are the furthest from the sea; they provide views inland and of the sky/ summit of the hill. However, while facing these chambers they are framed by the sea, a connection reiterated by the presence of glittering sea pebbles (see figure 5). The 'inland' area of the circle is approached as a move towards water; the views from these chambers are views from the water's edge inland. On the other hand it is the three chambers nearest the sea which contain pottery; these chambers are the hardest to view from the outside as they abut the steep brow of the hill, and would have been obscured by the other chambers and mound if viewed from inland at the summit of the hill. This should not be read as a binary

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<sup>8</sup> It is also notable that these 3 chambers contained quartz pebbles only in the passage and right-hand chamber, looking outwards from the centre of the site (see figure 5).

division; rather, the emphasis on water and the sea may have been accentuated on all sides - by deposition and framing 'inland' and by physical proximity and view nearer the sea. That pottery which was found nearest the sea may be a reference to overseas contacts and relations; places and routes of exchange. Cremated bone was found in chambers 1, 2 and 5 (Henshall n.d). 1 and 5 were near the sea, 2 faced Billown and the Ronaldsway region, which also includes the East coast of Man. Bone, like material culture, seems to have been placed in chambers facing key places in Neolithic activity; the pits, fires, ditched enclosures and later shafts at Billown, the sea, and the Calf of Man. In locations like East and West Bradda and the Calf of Man Neolithic activity need not have been recovered for such locations to have been of enormous geographic and social importance.

Aside from the location of Mull Hill the depositional practices may also indicate a concern with situation. Bone was always closely associated with pottery in chambers 1 and 5, with arrowheads and other flints in 5, and is deposited in the only part of 2 which is paved and not filled with quartz pebbles. The bones were mixed and cremated, there is no information about which human (or even animal?) body parts were represented in each deposit. Alongside a pattern of visual extrapolation into the landscape and geographic or elemental association with place, there may have been a pattern of personal dissolution among objects and possibly other persons. Bone was not present in the chambers which associate with sea, sky or directly into the 'earth', only those which reference places (East and West Bradda and the valley between, Billown and the East lowlands, the Calf of Man). This would not seem to indicate a concern with cosmological association, but with reiterating connections with important places in the Neolithic landscape where people lived, associated, exchanged stories and goods, shared time and experiences. Both Billown Quarry and Mull Hill were heavily perforated sites. Billown seems to be an early enclosure site, and enclosures elsewhere in the British Isles have been associated with megaliths in terms of related but different burial practices. Acidic soil is often to blame for the lack of bone in Manx sites, although it is uncertain whether this is the case at Billown, but it is not possible to relate the deposition of bodies at one site with the other. Nonetheless the control of space, and reactions to that control may have been involved in the relationship between these two sites, referenced at Mull Hill. More importantly than an overall language of these associations, however, is the consideration that each set of deposits, each set of associations may have been intended to challenge or contradict earlier ones. A structuralist reading of the monument would seem to deny those fractures of

discourse, or those pluralities of discourse which could have been involved in past agencies.

So, Mull Hill could have been a location where relationships were enacted, and different metaphorical fields were built up linking different places, times, and people. These relationships did not centre activity and individuate a place, so much as reiterate relationships between different elements of the social world. In terms of choosing between the modern individual as being part of a network of *relations which alienate*, Strathern's interpretation of Melanesian relations as being *relations which separate*, and Bird-David's interpretations of Indian *relations which immerse*, (Bird-David 1999:88) my reading of this process in this case is that relations at Mull Hill would seem to immerse persons and worlds. However this immersion was not a uniform process. The variation in arrangement of artefacts and bones, the choice of which alignments to reproduce may have been a matter of great contention. Things, once deposited, may have been moved or removed. The level of scrupulous destruction of individual items and bodies in the earlier Neolithic to me indicates a concern with immersion, with accentuating dividuality above separation. These activities are also indicated in the form of the monument, maintained through repeated use, although the way it was used may have changed as discourses and practised changed until it was eventually 'abandoned'.

While a trope of immersion may have been prevalent at Mull Hill, there are commentaries on this discursive phenomenon at Ballaharra and Ballafayle which suggest that other kinds of relations were also important. A comparison with the activities at Mull Hill indicate that, as a social organ, it may have been complemented or contradicted by other organs in other parts of the island.

### **Citations of personhood at Ballaharra, Ballafayle and Mull Hill**

Material expressions at Mull Hill could be said to iterate an immersed personal entity, stressing relationships which situated persons in past and distant events, and also immersed them in or contrasted them to substances like stone, quartz, flint and slate and worldly aspects like the landscape, sea and sky. Material expressions at Ballaharra in the earlier Neolithic were somewhat different. The emphasis in the inhumation deposit was on *re-membering*, re-articulation of persons. Objects, non-human substances and animal parts were not involved. This may have been a commentary on personal relations (both inter and intra personal, and extra-personal) which immerse, integrate and/or separate. As such it



may have illustrated the interplay between different aspects of the discursive world. Each deposit was part of a process of repeated materialisation. Remembering that materiality is not produced once, but has to be continually enacted, these deposits can be read as part of the constant reworking of the materialisation and dematerialisation of social relations. As I have elected to read these deposits in a literal manner within a field of metaphors, the archaeology I am writing is one of relations between (and composing) parts. The relationships I focus on can be understood as statements about the connections between things. The nature of these statements is uncertain but they could be characterised as citations of regulatory fictions. Bearing in mind that no citation is ever able to (re)produce such a fiction in its entirety, what kinds of fictions and relationships were enacted at these different sites?

It would seem that at Mull Hill and Ballafayle cremation was the 'norm'. The regulatory fiction of selfhood iterated by such activity could be characterised as one of immersion through dividuality. If people were buried at Billown Quarry in the earlier Neolithic it would appear that they were inhumed, and their bones have rotted away. However, there is also a concurrent referencing of dividual relations which *integrate* recognisable parts. At Ballaharra a partible body was cited as a mixed inhumation.. Furthermore, at Ballafayle it appears as though a 'whole' individualised person was cremated without material culture or animal bone. However, the presence of other, more thoroughly cremated bones deposited among stone, slate, quartz, earth and wood could indicate a prior, subsequent or contemporary concern with dividuality. Ballaharra's inhumation produces a similar ambiguity in the modern world. The deposit appeared initially to be an individual person, in the modern sense. However, it consisted of an integration of the parts from three clearly dividual persons. Read on a truly literal level, perhaps the combination of three 'individuals' was a citation of a single early Neolithic person. More metaphorically, perhaps this was a reaffirmation and remembering of a close sets of relations between three dividual persons. Their relations may have separated, immersed, or integrated them into each other's lives, but I would argue these relations did not alienate them as individuals.

The inhumation at Ballaharra is characteristic of a kind of 'joint personhood' which has greatly coloured my reading of other Manx deposits, largely because it is the most 'intact' *in situ* deposit to survive the acidity of Manx soils. The deposits at Mull Hill, and the later Neolithic deposits which carry on the practices of cremation and immersion or

integration may well represent a stage in social existence at which joint personhood was still important. It is possible, for example, that there is no more detailed evidence for bodily deposition in the early Neolithic because bones were widely circulated rather than buried. If the model of life/death must still stand in archaeology, perhaps these people lived their lives as joint and dividual persons, and re-cited these relationships in death as becoming more fully immersed and absorbed into their world.

So far I have discussed the relation between citation of personal agency and relatedness through the medium of bodily and material deposition. During the next part of this chapter I want to take something of a risk, and discuss what citations of *experience* might also be involved at these sites.

### **Metaphysics, experience and personhood in the earlier Neolithic**

I have already discussed the current limits to phenomenology, and argued that the post-processual phenomenological project has both been misread, and has also not yet been fully explored. The spatiality of megaliths has been a matter of much debate for post-processual archaeologists, a debate which has provided several alternative understandings of megalithic space (e.g. Richards 1993, Thomas 1992, 1993c, Tilley 1994, Bradley 1993, 1998). As I argued in chapter 3, some of these readings are implicitly based on a normative phenomenology. While they are useful as interpretative devices for reflexive understandings of modern experience, they are not often used to theorise past experience, other than as a corollary of that modern experience. Julian Thomas hints at this unexplored potential when he says:

*What may be of interest is not certain primal responses to environmental and social phenomena, but the way in which human beings in different historical and cultural milieux have experienced and interpreted their circumstances, and in the process have come to recognise themselves as subjects* (Thomas 1993c:74),

This has seldom been taken seriously as an invitation to understand *differences of experience*; but it is a crucial element in theorising past experience alongside past personhood. The relations between people, enacted through the transference of material culture, physical substances and shared time or activity produce materiality alongside experience, making them inseparable. In order to theorise the experiences of people in the Manx Neolithic I must combine a number of interpretative elements;

- the citation of personhood and personal relations in material deposits

- the physical substances and geographies of the material world
- the relationship between the activities and experiences which produced/were produced at these sites and the subjectivities generated through those fields of discourse.

An initial problem is that the 'experience' which dead bodies were used to cite may not have been a direct iteration of their actual experience (as discussed in chapter 3). However, I believe that I have answered this position by stating that the iterations produced using those bodies are social citations of experience and understanding, whether or not they 'belong' to the bodies and body parts used. In what follows, then, I am not attempting to empathise with the lives of the Neolithic dead, but to engage in a hermeneutic enterprise with the relationships which may have produced their remains. As such I would like to restate a performative position here, where

*...the theory is characterized by a concern with the productive force rather than the meaning of discourse, and by its privileging of ambiguity and indeterminacy. (Morris 1995:567).*

While I am reluctant to review the Neolithic material from the Isle of Man for any unified reading, any metaphorical or symbolic language, I think that there are some local tropes of associated practice which we can observe being played out in the archaeological material. One such element would appear to be the equation (or intentional and favourable comparison) of stone with water. Several observations have lead me to this conclusion, and I acknowledge the tenuous nature of these observations at an archaeological level (they are simply not open to the usual methods of validation). I would like to stress that I am not theorising a 'text', reading or language of metaphors, but an experience of reality from which Manx Neolithic subjectivities may have emerged. In short, I am postulating a metaphysical reality, an experiential field which is created through particular metaphorical associations. As I have intimated, metaphors are not constructions on top of reality, but are the conditions within which that reality exists. We experience the world through metaphor, materiality, discourse and metaphysical realities. What follows is an account of a particular Neolithic materiality.

I was visiting the rock carvings on natural outcrops in Argyll, south-west Scotland in July 1996. It was raining. The horizontal surface of the rock retained a thin layer of water, troubled erratically yet rhythmically by the ripple of falling raindrops. Beneath this watery veneer lay the rock carvings. They were cup and ring marks, consisting of several

concentric circles. It seemed to be a coincidence that the action of the rain matched the depictions of the rippled circles on - and into - the rock.

The following year I was in south-west Scotland again, excavating a Bronze Age stone circle; the Twelve Apostles. Several of the stones were cup-marked, and many of the cupmarks held water. I had started to notice that many cupmarks do hold water. They are like membranes, orifices in rock which sometimes glaze over with liquid, and sometimes stand hollow. As such they may reference the changeability of stone. Stone sites are not fixed and static, but have often undergone many phases of change and movement. Writers have often commented that rocks with cupmarks have in many cases been moved since they were carved, and re-used in other contexts particularly megalithic chambers and passages, and stone circles (e.g. Bradley 1993: 42-44, 'portable cupmarks' are another recently-recognised phenomenon; they have been found at several Scottish Neolithic sites including Fordhouse Barrow (Leivers pers. comm., 1998) and Dunragit (Thomas et al. 1999)). The stone circle I had been excavating was being examined as part of a landscape project focusing on two cursus monuments near Holywood (Thomas et al. 1998). The link between cursus monuments and rivers (Brophy 1998) was emerging as a metaphorical trope, one involving the concepts of journeys and the movement of stones. The stones brought into the north cursus at Holywood and deposited there are very small (fist-sized, like the quartz pebbles on Man.). However, if cursus monuments do represent paths through the landscape in this region, then it may be that the standing stones at Twelve Apostles were brought down this route, this 'river'. I started to wonder just how often routes, rocks and water were being associated with each other. I thought back to my visit to the Isle of Man earlier in 1997 and re-evaluated my notes.

There are a number of other ways in which stone was closely associated with water in the Neolithic of northern Europe and specifically on the island. Cupmarks and rock carvings throughout Neolithic and Bronze Age sites in Europe often appear on rock outcrops which stream with running water, or are covered by puddles. Rock art sites and megaliths often overlook water - and the majority of Manx megaliths, including Cashtal yn Ard have their tails towards the sea. They are arranged so that entering the monuments means moving towards the sea. The cup-and-ring-marks on many of the rock carvings look very much like ripples in a puddle. The quartz pebbles deposited at the tail of Cashtal yn Ard were probably brought from the sea. A similar activity seems to have taken place at La Hougue Bie and other passage sites in the Channel Islands (Patton pers. comm., 1995),

and several sites in Wales (e.g., Lligwy (Baynes 1909), Bryn Celli Ddu (Hemp 1930), Capel Garmon (Hemp 1927)) and the Orkneys, where the floor of the passage was strewn with pebbles and shells brought from the shore. In many cases megaliths are thought to have been moved by water. Boats are a common theme in Scandinavian Bronze age rock art, and one Bronze Age cist at Ballakaighan<sup>9</sup> on Man was constructed over a dug-out canoe.

As archaeologists we assume a set of meanings for stone; stone is enduring, eternal, it is monumental, and is interpreted as the substance used to make a site more bounded and permanent (e.g., "Monuments of stone transcend the transience inherent in more perishable materials such as vegetal matter and wood. They express the eternal in material form" Parker-Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998:310-11). There is also a tendency to assume that people experienced the world as we do (see chapter 3). This equation may be an invalid means of interpreting Neolithic experiences. I think that the people represented at Ballaharra and Mull Hill and other Manx sites may have had a different set of relations between agency, personhood and subjectivity. Their body boundaries may have been different, more mobile, more permeable, more dividual; in some cases things and parts of animals appear to have been as integral to them as the human parts of their bodies; and burials often contained bits of more than one human. So can we really assume that Neolithic people experienced the world as we do, even something as 'concrete' as stone?

Why do our bodies have hard edges, why is stone hard? Why are the limits of our physicalities written in stone? Clearly, this is partly a matter of experience; I know that I cannot walk through walls. But doesn't a phenomenological reading of pasts accept that different people's experiences would have been different to ours, different to mine? I have already argued that our experiences of our bodies are specific to the social nature of those bodies, and the discourses which produced them. Discourse has a very real rhetorical power in *making* our bodies edged, hardened and limited, separating them from the substance of the 'outside' world<sup>10</sup>. The specific practice of phenomenology employed by archaeologists is therefore one which describes how the stone surfaces of prehistory restrict

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<sup>9</sup> The Ballakaighan canoe and cist has no absolute dating evidence; dendrochronological analysis has not taken place either. It is possible that Ballakaighan is a Neolithic deposit - and it is an extremely rich deposit which could have many interesting implications for this discussion - but it is thought to be Bronze Age on the basis of the cist morphology and associated material (Davey and Woodcock pers. comm.).

<sup>10</sup> Theweleit (1987, 1989), Lawlor (1994) and others have stressed the links between male bodily perception and presentation in modernity and understandings of relatedness and division from the outside world. This ties in well with the account of modern masculinist subjectivity presented in chapter 3. The question here is, what could non-masculinist, non-modern embodied experiences have been like?

'our' movements, demand that we stop here, turn left here, and crawl there, before finally stopping at the end of the passage ... but then what? Given that normative phenomenology and empathy are inadequate tools for interpreting past experience, and given that the metaphorical status of stone in the Neolithic may have been one of fluidity and mobility, what other options for interpretation are there?

The movement at these sites (even following a normative phenomenology) would seem to focus in on the forecourts, the passages and the tails. Quartz shimmers at the entrance of Cashtal yn ard (Figure 8, Appendix entry 6, cf. Fleure and Neely 1936), the sea shimmers to either side, and movement is funnelled into the passage. But (not only) inside the mound, there may have been a different language of movement, a different "choreography" of bodily experience (Richards 1993). Water and stone may have been interchangeable, or at least closely related. The walls of the passage may not have been hard, not a boundary or prison to the people concerned. They could have been rather a membrane, a permeable substance, damp by association if not actual texture. The stones abounded with gaps, stones which were brought on a journey, and now formed a passage through which journeys could take place. There does not need to have been an equation that stone 'stood for' water. Stone need not have carried all of the connotations that the sea might have had. But the connection between them seems a metaphor worth drawing out.

When a notion of rock as watery is combined with persons which are changeable and have fluid boundaries, the possibility exists for a different materiality. Perhaps a passage through Cashtal yn ard was a continuing journey, a journey out to sea, which could even mean a journey through rock, under water, into trance. David Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson (e.g., Lewis-Williams 1992, Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1990, Dowson 1988, 1989) have carried out ethnographic work on rock surfaces as permeable membranes in South African shamanic practice. The experience of entering trance is often described as like being underwater:

*The sensation of travelling through a tunnel is often associated with water, probably because of the rushing or roaring sound heard in altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1990:10).*

Rock 'art' is interpreted as the media for depicting these experiences. In South African rock art figures are depicted moving in and out of the rock, reciting shamanic experience of altered realities. In this practice of moving 'through' rock, the material takes on a very

differently-charged status - Lewis-Williams and Dowson describe the surface of rock as being like a veil:

*...it seems as if the veil was so diaphanous that an animal or a shaman could simply appear through it (ibid.:15).*

My reading of these ethnographies is that for some people rock *could* be experienced as a material metaphor for water. Throughout this thesis I have argued that we should not rely on direct analogy or biologically-derived links to past experience - and a shared sensory apparatus is one of the tools which Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988, 1993) use to explore the links between rock art and shamanism. While I am employing an analogy between Neolithic experiences of rock and those derived from modern ethnography, I am not utilising any biological foundationalism for this analogy. The status of this analogy is that if people can experience rock as permeable and associate that experience in some way with water, then the kind of experience of megaliths which I postulate is *socially possible*. People can actually have the experience of moving through stone, given an appropriate discourse and materiality. In the light of such practices and experiences, the possibility of interpreting Manx Neolithic megaliths through a stone-water metaphorical association does not seem so far-fetched as at first glance.

In fact, a lot of work has already been done on interpreting megaliths as places for experiencing altered states of consciousness (e.g., Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1993, Dronfield 1993, 1995, Wallis 1996). While I do not think that a *specific* category of this type of experience (e.g., shamanism as a practice involved in specific socio-political structures which regulate experience and access to knowledge) is necessarily applicable to the use of the Manx sites, it seems likely to me that people who experienced their embodied lives, their world in a radically different way, could have been extremely aware of these states of consciousness. In experiential terms, there are elements of alternative states of consciousness which may have relevance to the stone-water metaphysical relationship. Moving into trance has been described as like moving under water. Moving down the passage at Cashtal yn ard may have been an activity associated with going into a trance, or with moving under water. The path which the site provided, and was part of, may not have stopped at the back of the passage, but continued 'out to sea'. Furthermore, the sonic properties of stone in megaliths and stone circles as a generator of rhythmic echoes has also been a recent field of interest (e.g. Watson 1996, and note Richards' (1993:151) comments on the amplifying effects of Maes Howe); rhythm and sound are also vital

aspects of inducing trance. However, I would be reluctant to speculate about what such a journey could 'mean' in ideological terms. For example, travels into megaliths, across water, or into trances have sometimes been characterised as entering the 'spiritworld' or 'otherworld', a world outside of normal time and space. I will not develop such interpretations for the Manx context, because I am concerned with *performativity rather than meaning*. As I have already argued, in many cases authors are willing to claim a spiritual structure for their archaeological material, based on little more than the simple transfer of ideological experience from one social context to another. Although ancestor-worship, totemism, animism and shamanism provide useful comparisons and contrasts to the Manx material they are not 'in evidence' in that material. There is very little to corroborate these frameworks for the Manx Neolithic, whereas readings of the specific structures of Manx practices can be used to provide alternative ontological interpretations.

The practices at Manx megalithic sites may be, to us, inaccessible journeys. I have characterised personhood in the Manx Neolithic as partible, as transferable between different materials. As such it may have effected and reflected a different materiality or matter-reality. If personhood is not a template or thing, but a process (*qua* Battaglia 1995), then it may be that the use of these sites to travel through was a part of that process. In this sense, it could be said that the relationship between the stones of the megalith and the person passing through it could be similar to the relationships between the parts of person and parts of animal or object which were being buried together. As with the human and animal and object remains, these 'sites' or structures could be left in contact with other items of material culture, which could later have been removed. Objects and substances may have become part of the person in a similar way that memories do. In this sense, materials and experiences stand for each other or refer to their inter-relationships, and form an integral part of the person. Visiting megalithic sites, and other locations, may have involved an absorption with and separation from particular objects, memories and substances which were considered to be an integral but replaceable part of the self.

For example, King Orry's Grave south-west consists of a narrow passage divided into three chambers (Figure 11, Appendix entry 9). The rear chamber is separated from the front two by a 'porthole entrance' (plate 11). The diameter of the portal is too narrow for a person of any age to squeeze through. However, it does provide access to *parts* of the body. Laying next to the chamber I could see into it, fit a hand or foot into it. Body parts could have been passed into the chamber, and removed from the chamber - and not by



Plate 11: King Orry's Grave southwest; view of the porthole stones from entrance

There are two combined issues here: 'what were the temporalities of the Norse Neolithic?', and 'how were those temporalities performed?'

'whole' persons, but by the specific use of a body *part* - the arm and hand. This was perhaps not so much interaction between the 'living' and the 'dead' or 'ancestors', but between different bodily parts (in different conditions), in a space specifically reserved for the parts of bodies, perhaps including parts of things. If these passage sites were reifications of routes through the landscape, perhaps only dividual and immersed social elements could pass at this juncture (see chapter 6, narrative 4). King Orry's Grave south-west may have provided an organ for maintaining some form of subjectivity concerned with partibility, as Mull Hill may have done but in a rather different way.

Maintenance of a discursive field throughout time, and changes in that discursive field are one of the main components of prehistoric archaeology. Now that I am postulating specific and different subjectivities for the Manx Neolithic, have I opened up a possibility for a different reading of temporality in the past? Often prehistoric temporality is described under the headings of the *long duree* versus personal experience (e.g., Bailey 1981), or continuity interrupted by change, or the perpetual repetition of tasks as though change occurs through some natural mutation or evolution (e.g., Giddens 1987, cf. Shanks and Tilley 1987:120). A performative reading of archaeological sites asks the question, '*how do things maintain their status, as well as change?*' Is there a reading of the activities which are repeated in Manx sites which accounts for the alterations in site morphology in the later Neolithic? To what extent were these sites typical of wider daily experiences? What exactly is the performative relationship between earlier and later Neolithic sites? Many of the texts which deal with temporality in archaeology associate temporality with personhood and activity. Gosden (1994) and Thomas (1996), for example, both expand on the philosophical tradition in which temporality is a condition of Being predicated by its care for itself (cf. Gregory 1989, Dreyfus 1991). Given that I am describing a different structure of being (entity of a different kind), what are the options for structures of care, and structures of temporality? For example, Thomas is convinced that temporality and futurity are a condition of *dasein's* concern about its own mortality (pers. comm.). But what if that mortality is removed as the primary concern of being? What if social being was dividual, and individual death ceased to be the greatest concern?

There are two combined issues here: '*what were the temporalities of the Manx Neolithic?*', and '*how were those temporalities performed?*'

## A substantial change? Or just a facade?

Archaeologists have discussed the role of megalithic materiality in the temporality of the past, but seldom while putting that materiality into question. In a recent book, Richard Bradley argues that the construction and use of megalithic sites was crucial in developing a futural world, one which could deal with ideas of permanence and, yet again, ancestry (Bradley 1998:51-67). This deduction is based on the assumption that stone equals permanence and stasis. But he also notes that;

*The sequence at Stonehenge presents an appearance of massive continuity, but it does so against a background of drastic change.* (Bradley 1998:96)

It is this drastic change which, for me, typifies these monuments, as well as the societies which used them. Given the rapid and continuous nature of the changes in design of Billown, the variability of megaliths and other sites on the island, and the mobile nature of wooden posts, standing stones and 'blocking stones', not to mention the stones moved to build the megaliths in their various phases, it seems unlikely that enduring stasis was the main priority. If rock was a permeable substance, a metaphor for watery surfaces, and if rocks could be moved between sites<sup>11</sup>, then a discourse of mobility could equally be postulated. In their assessment of the use of stone at Stonehenge, Parker-Pearson and Ramilisonina clearly consider stone to be more permanent than wood (1998:311), and again draw the conclusion that this must be a reference to the eternal dry bones of ancestry (1998:313) - despite the fact that rock in prehistory may have seldom been dry; most rock art sites being located on outcrops which are regularly awash with streams of water today. Even if stone was chosen because it lasts, this may not have been its most important quality, compared to its metaphorical and metaphysical closeness to water, for example<sup>12</sup>. *In short, I see no sound reason why the use of stone in the building of archaeological structures should necessarily indicate a greater focus on the future, on eternity, on ancestry or the past.* Instead, the role of these sites as places where discourse was continually under review, and perpetually performed and reflected on suggests their role as mechanisms in generating temporality; a daily, repetitive, accessible temporality.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, were the cupmarks on Ballakelly, the only megalith with rock art, carved on the back of the site, or carved earlier on a stone chosen to be brought there because of the markings?

<sup>12</sup> Admittedly, there is no reason to presume that water - or the ocean, for example - was not associated with permanence. After all, the sea is a formidable and seemingly 'eternal' natural force, and perhaps this aspect of water was also felt in experiencing the stone/water metaphor. However, it is equally possible that the sea had connections with daily and seasonal routine, with rapid change, with rhythm.

Another way in which stone monuments are linked to the past as eternity, and eternity as futural (and universalising a past and future as consistently present) is in the use of frameworks of rites of passage for interpretation - mostly derived from Victor Turner's anthropology (e.g. Bradley 1998, Tilley 1993a, Thomas 1991). Here arguments are often made that the liminal phases of rituals - with which a variety of archaeological sites from causewayed enclosures to rock art locales and megalithic chambers have been identified - are atemporal, or outside normal time. The implication is that this atemporality is eternity, and that rituals work by linking together the everyday with the eternal at the boundaries of these monuments. Again, I would question the applicability of such a framework in the Manx context. There is no way of knowing whether people in the Manx Neolithic carried out tripartite rites of passage. But more importantly, there is no evidence that what took place inside Manx megaliths and later stone circles was entirely separate from what took place at temporary camps or sites characterised by wooden screens or deposited jars. In short, these sites do not have set boundaries, and do not indicate to me that different types of time were being generated inside them to outside. In fact, I would argue that similar citations of experience can be seen at each of these sites. The re-use of these sites in the later Neolithic shows a concern for the past, as will be explored in chapter 7, but not necessarily with ancestry or eternity.

In close studies of the deposits from Ballaharra and Mull Hill I have argued that there is a trope of citing the closeness of different times and places at these locales. This in itself may seem like a very small observation. However, if the movements in material culture and material agents between places was also involved in generating a temporal cycle of repeated links between practices and places, it offers us a very rich picture of Manx Neolithic temporality. While I have briefly critiqued the notion of an 'eternal' time to megaliths, I also consider it possible that experiences of reality which are not normative would rely on a very different temporality. Whilst I have argued that stone may represent fluidity as much as endurance, I do not think that these characteristics were necessarily mutually exclusive. Stone, water and a malleable temporality could have been inextricably linked in a world of experiences which combined these different elements. Contradictory metaphors are a part of our experience of the world, and may well have been part of Neolithic worlds. Given the repeated plays between parts and people, places and landscapes, and substances and practices I see this as extremely likely. From this point of view it may be that periodic practices and trance-like (or simply continuously non-

normative) experiences had a great deal to do with generating time, cycles and reiterations; at least as much as is attributed to the seasonal migrations of animals, for example (e.g., Ingold 1984). However, instead of postulating a specific temporality for the Manx Neolithic, I want to focus on temporal processes of citation. Citation is necessarily temporal; while it is most often the past which is cited, it can also be the future (cf. Fowler 1997:78-9, Lewis 1980:68-9) or the present. Above all, however, *relationships* are cited by the deposition of material, the enactment of ritualised performances, the building of structures. Social relationships, relationships of materiality are also temporal. To repeat a quote, Marilyn Strathern reminds me of this when she says;

*It is not that the English cannot imagine time going back on itself; but that they cannot imagine relationships going back on themselves* (Strathern 1992:63).

She also provides ethnographic studies demonstrating that there are cases when relations can reverse, undo or otherwise go back on themselves. These ethnographies indicate that it would be impossible to assume a Manx Neolithic temporality. However, working with a modern conception of time (linear, cyclical and public), I argue that the citations of change in activities and the re-affirmation of previous practices are concurrent in the development of trends which predominate the earlier and later Neolithic. These trends have largely been obscured by adherence to a typological approach, and a fixation with creating distinctions between classes of material like stone or wood. Site morphology has been reconsidered for Manx sites, but only within classes of monument: Moffatt (1978) has attempted to consider combinations of different elements across site types, but his paper on the subject reduces those elements to a strict set of classifications, which does not allow any real freedom from typology. The strength of a performative approach is that morphology is most important in terms of being an iteration and reiteration of social activity. *Similar activities are not always reiterated using exactly the same substances or places.* The ways that reiterative acts change through time has always been a crucial part of archaeological inquiry. I argue that the Manx later Neolithic transitions from megalithic passages with forecourts to open or wooden-screened sites represents precisely such a sequence of changes and continuities of practice.

A schematic rendition of Ballaharra, or of Cashtal yn ard (figure 7) can be used to emphasise a number of spatial elements which are representative of the activities that took place at each site. Most notable are the linear passage, and the semi-circular or flat facade at the front of the site. King Orry's Grave north-west shows an identical set of elements,

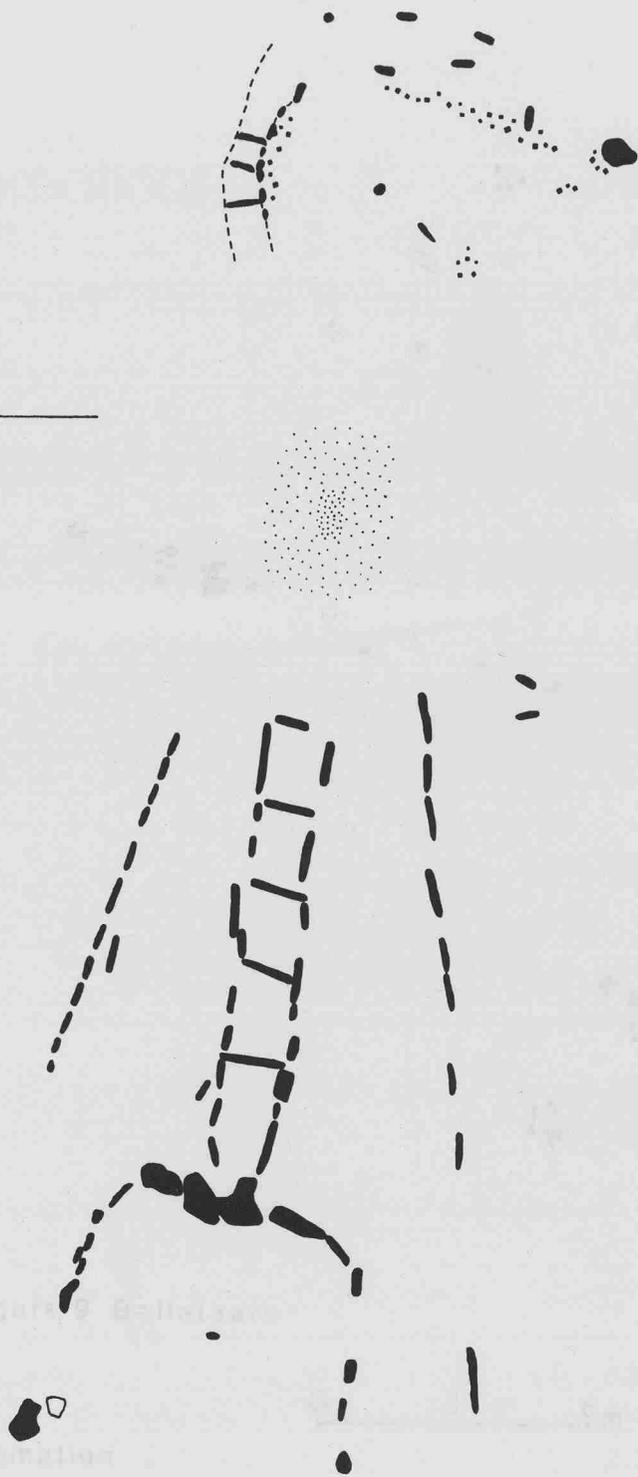
down to the lighting of fires on the left of the passage entrance (facing out) in the forecourt area. Interestingly, Ballafayle (fig 6) also fits this pattern perfectly, despite being a non-megalithic site, and having an interior formed by a very different set of practices. Here the facade of the site is not constructed from orthostats, although some stone seems to have been used on the facade. In each case, not all of these elements may have been contemporary. The evidence from King Orry's Grave North-East indicates that the use of the forecourt, and the burning in the forecourt in particular, took place after the passage was blocked in, towards the middle-late Neolithic. In Ballaharra, the court area eventually became the focus of burning and cremating practices, including the deposition of bodily and worldly materials. Both of these sites were in use in the later Neolithic, and in both cases, it is the facade and forecourt which received almost all of the attention.

It seems as though, throughout the mid Neolithic, there was a growing concern with the forecourts of megalithic and later non-megalithic places; the gathering grounds or enclosures at Billown, for example. Use of an exterior space, characterised by burning, was a common feature of earlier Neolithic sites. However, the people who used these sites at that time also concerned themselves with deposition in passages and chambers (e.g., at Mull Hill), and probably with moving among those passages themselves. Mull Hill may have been used as a gathering place both outside and inside its perforated circle of chambers. The internalisation of this space is considered unusual for early Neolithic sites. But it demonstrates the concern encompassed and perforated space which is still in evidence in the later Neolithic at megalithic and non-megalithic sites.

Ballateare (figure 9) is a later Neolithic site, on the north-west coast of Man. Activities at Ballateare are in many ways reminiscent of those at the earlier Neolithic 'megalithic' sites. A schematic rendition of Ballateare (see figure 10) illustrates that the wooden screens raised during the terminal use of the site delineates a forecourt area in which the deposition of Ronaldsway jars had already taken place. Furthermore, on the north of this facade (i.e., heading towards the sea) screens form an enclosed - and yet also perforated - space where the passages stood in the earlier megalithic sites. Further away from the facade lies the burning area, possibly where the cremations and/or pot-firings took place. This area is in a similar position to the 'burnt mound' under the tail at Cashtal yn ard (figure 8, Appendix entry 6). Ballateare is both like, and unlike, a megalith, and I think that it can be interpreted in a way which illustrates tensions between different experiences and conceptions of materiality and personhood during the later Neolithic.



Figure 7: Schematic rendition of Cashtal yn ard.



Quartz pebbles  
Burnt area

0 18 ft

Figure 8 Cashtal yn ard

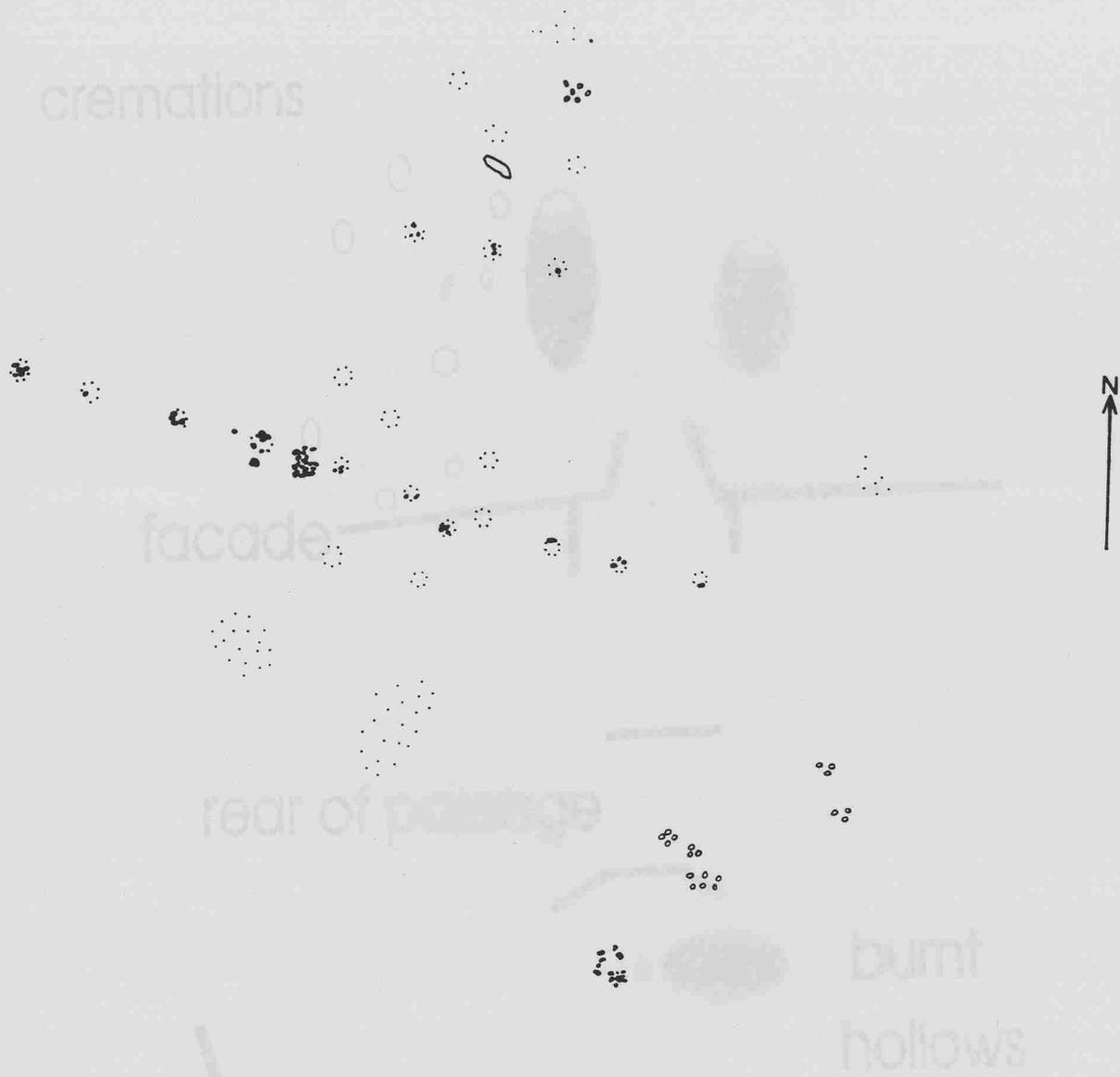


Figure 9 Ballateare

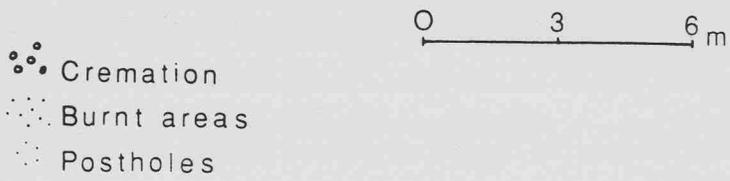


Figure 10: Schematic rendition of Ballateare.

cremations

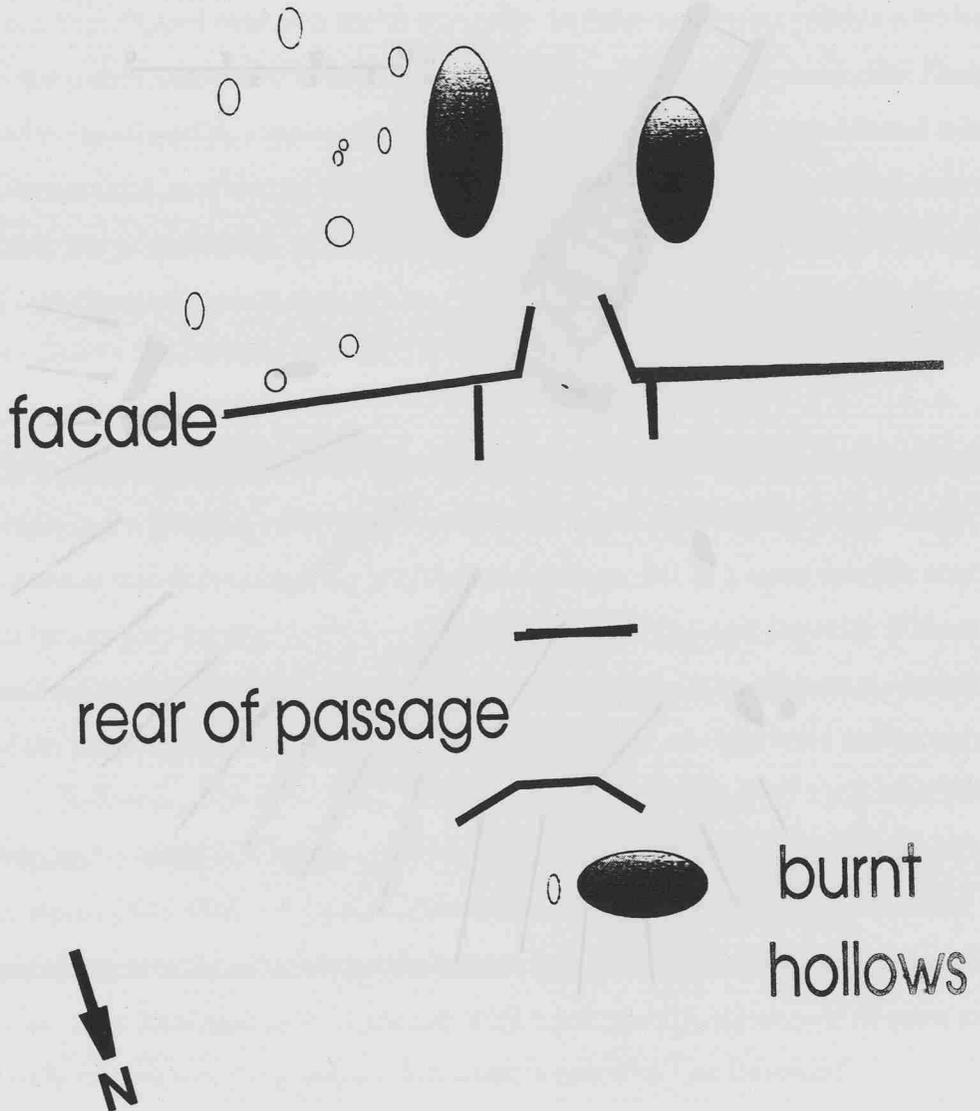


Figure 11: King Orry's Grave southeast.

Figure 10: Schematic rendition of Ballateare.

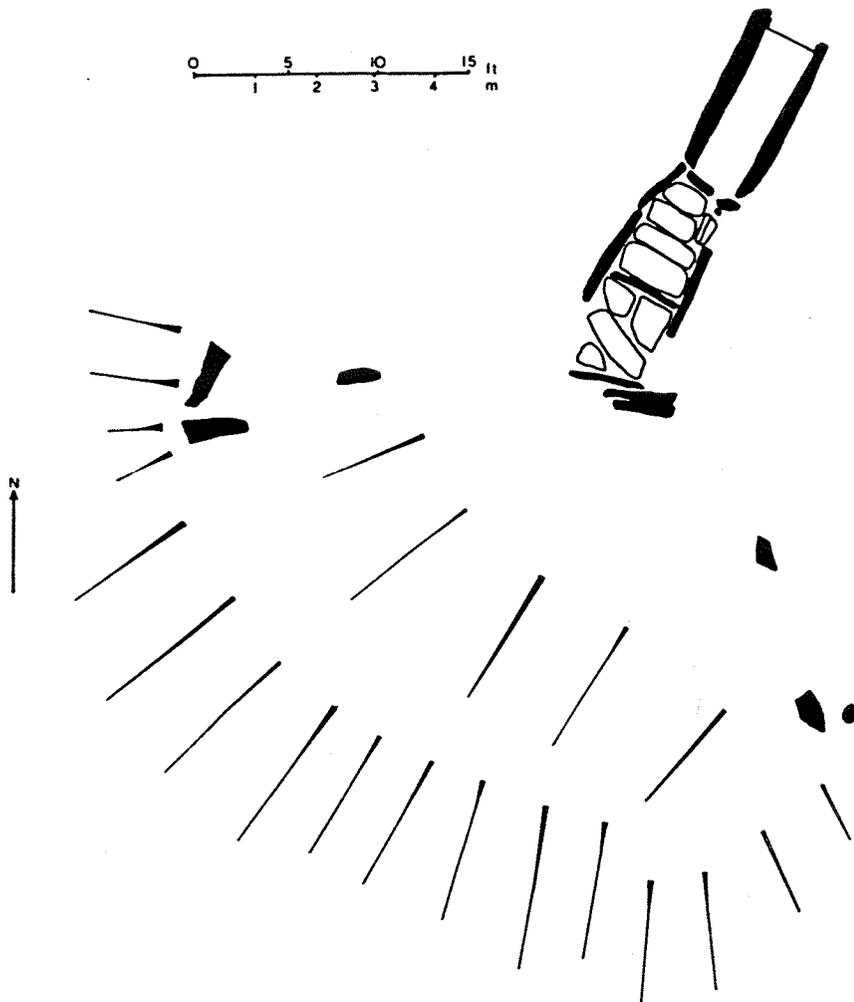


Figure 11: King Orry's Grave southwest.

Water-rounded pebbles were brought from the sea to pack the post-holes at Ballateare, but otherwise the stone-water metaphor appears to have been subsiding. This does not necessarily mean that it lost its potency; rather, it may have been so successfully dematerialised that it was being iterated and reiterated constantly without emerging as an obvious trope. This is what has been called a 'dead' metaphor (Barnes and Duncan 1992:11); one that slipped over into literal meaning. In other words, megalithic sites had become so absolutely associated with journeys through, across or from water, that there was no need to 'spell out' this association any more. In this way, the very material which had been instrumental in effecting the metaphor in the first place had become redundant. The openness, the permeability, of the 'passage' at Ballateare could have been a literal citation of earlier experiences and practices. The trope of water and fluidity may have been giving way to a more literal freedom of movement, representing and generating a change in experience in itself.

While reiterating earlier Neolithic activities and materialities, deposits at Ballateare may also represent a growing subversion towards the negotiation of joint personhoods. Cremated bone is still deposited alongside material culture, but in a more specific way. Whole, not broken jars are deposited, and deposited singly. The vast majority of these jars on the island are buried 'empty', many covered by perforated slates. However, around half a dozen of the hundred and forty or so jars known on Man do contain bone and material culture<sup>13</sup>. At Ballateare, one of the jars in the 'forecourt' area contained a pig-bone pin, a knife broken and re-used as a scraper, and cremated bone from a unknown number of bodies (cf. Bersu 1947:166). I will speculate more fully about this deposit in the next chapter, but along with the other jars at Ballateare it may represent the combination of contemporary later Neolithic social elements with a pattern of practices which seem to have had little currency in the previous 500 years; a return to past interests?

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<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to tell whether this distinction is valid; it is possible that all jars contained bone or organic remains originally, but many of these remains have not survived. Variable preservation of cremated bone is difficult to assess. Perhaps none of the jars were buried empty, perhaps they contained organic material. What is noticeable is that those jars which contained material culture also contained bone; empty jars contained neither when found. This would seem to indicate that if these 'empty' jars ever contained human remains they did not contain miniature pots, flints or similar items. Had there been instances of jars being recovered with flints but no bone, for example, then I would consider that there may have been bone material which had been lost. Overall, however, I find myself forced to treat these jars as empty. In the case of Ballateare Bersu (1947:169) considered these jars as empty because all of the others under similar soil conditions contained cremated bone, and the jars are too small to contain unburnt or unbroken bones, other than of children - and at least three jars already contained skull fragments of cremated children.

Neither a reiteration of earlier Neolithic architecture nor the 'wholeness' and 'discreteness' of jar burial is a concern at many other later Neolithic sites, as I will demonstrate in chapter 7. Later Neolithic 'camps' show an almost obsessive attention to breaking things down to their tiniest parts, and combining those parts. Once again, contrasting and contradictory discourses may have been co-existent throughout this period. Ballateare appears to post-date the majority of these 'camp' sites, and perhaps its attempt to reiterate the practices of megalithic sites, now largely out of use for almost 500 years, indicates a greater plurality of personhoods in the later Neolithic than is usually assumed. Were there parallel and conflicting discourses enacted in the Manx later Neolithic? How did these relate to the reuse of earlier Neolithic sites, practices and experiences? These questions will form the basis of my interpretations of the later Neolithic material.

## **Conclusion**

During this chapter I have stressed the plurality of experiences which seem to have made up the discourse of the earlier Neolithic, based on close readings of archaeological sites. Neolithic personhood cannot be characterised in any one way, and does not emerge from the archaeological record as any one continual trend. Multiple practices related to the disposal of bodies in contexts with other broken or partial things were represented at different sites. Above all, earlier Neolithic practices and experiences seem to have been a largely negotiable affair, within a series of concurrent discursive trends. In the next chapter I explore some of these discursive trends in a narrative context, exploring the limits of the 'archaeological imagination'. From there I return to the archaeological theme of the thesis in addressing personhood, social politics, performativity and site use in the later Neolithic on Man.

## Chapter 6: Relating (to) the Neolithic.

*The imaginative approach will not sit easily within the traditions of the discourse of archaeology.* (Baker 1997:188).

### Introduction

In recent years archaeologists have begun to protest that post-processual accounts of prehistory do not attend to the people of the past. They do not write about people's lives, but avoid them, swallow them up in the fretful pursuit of discourse, power and ideology. Personally, I think such criticisms are missing the point of many post-processualist archaeologies, where social *relationships* are the focal point of study. However, there is also the concern that persons of some kind or another lived in the past and that, as archaeologists, we talk about their lives whenever we write accounts of the past.

As the title suggests, this chapter is both about telling stories about Neolithic life, and relating to Neolithic life. It is also about describing the relations which performed Neolithic lives into existence. But it is also about the 'archaeological imagination'. Archaeological knowledges operate on numerous levels. Authority is conferred upon an idea to varying degrees, dependent upon who said it, where they said it, who considered it important, how it was meant, how it was read and so on (cf. Tilley 1989b, Latour 1991). In what follows I introduce my more speculative ideas about the Manx Neolithic through the medium of poetic narratives or stories about past lives. This is a deliberate choice. What follows are not authoritative statements about the past, or about the nature of archaeology. These narratives are an exploration of my own subjectivity, the limitations of my imagination as well as attempts to stress the diversity of Neolithic lives which I *can* imagine.

### Expression and difference in archaeological narratives

In relating to the unreachability, the extreme difference of the past we are often trapped into making it strange and other and simultaneously safe and the same (cf. Strathern 1987 on anthropological 'othering' and reduction to the same through a process of enlightening academic intercession). But are there other ways of relating to the past, to the *horizons* of the unreachable (Irigaray 1993)? The horizon is an unreachable place,

because the closer we move towards the setting sun, the further away it recedes. The light of reason is a prevalent metaphor or trope for the understanding, the thought of the transcendental subject. This subject presents itself at the centre of the world, giving out the light of knowledge. But as none of us actually are the subject, none of us are in the light. Prehistory is particularly situated as a horizon, the location of the mists of time. This haze, this horizon also has a place in forming the basis of archaeological writing: so, paradoxically, it is far from being peripheral.

A language of uncertainty, of ambiguity is at the core of archaeology, of imagining past peoples' lives. The form of narratives, the trope around which writing takes place, is different to that of a scientific analysis with its tropes of linearity, unity and uniformity. Science dispels ambiguity; 'once all of the scientific facts are revealed, we will know the answers; until then we can only speculate'. But in more subjective writing, the transcendental subject has been rejected in favour of experimentation or personal experience (e.g. Spector 1993, 1991, Tringham 1991). Modes of description do not have to be fixed universal categories applied to all contexts, but can be partial qualitative expressions. Such texts could be called poetic narratives, may even be described as "*avant garde*" (Edmonds 1999:8). Despite the authors' refusals to totalise, or to rely on a universalist scientism, the result is still an archaeological text. Alongside the archaeological narratives I have relied on to describe my interpretation in other chapters, I would like to include a form of writing which reflects how I understand the activity at these sites in a slightly different way. Creative narrative-writing already has a tradition within archaeology (e.g. Spector 1991, 1993, Tringham 1991), a tradition which is called upon at times when archaeologists are attempting to shift the focus of the discipline. 'Paradigm shifts' require wholesale reconsiderations in archaeological expression. Writing archaeology has meant very different things to authors working from different stances; to processualists a scientific text is punctuated with algebra graph and hypothesis, to post-processualists the very means of writing themselves may be an object of inquiry (e.g., Tilley 1993b, 1994, Evans 1988, Pluciennik 1998a, Bender 1999). Connecting language to materiality, or expression to meaning, in this way necessitates a form of authorship which reflects the materialities of the contexts under discussion.

In the case of the Manx Neolithic, I consider that 'archaeological' material was involved in citations of the social world. In dealing with those citations I have to try to relate to Neolithic expressions of interpersonal relations. But I have tried to respect the

structures of those relationships which I think I see in the material. For example, if persons are consistently buried in pieces, mixed in with the pieces of other persons, could these actions be statements about the different sets of material relations which generated those persons in life? The kind of material metaphors which are being enacted through the repetition of Manx Neolithic deposits are radically different to our material metaphor of the integral body. What is a leg of dog, an elbow of flint or a pig of ashes? What would a leg of work, or an arm of knowledge, or an axe of relatives or a head of broken pot mean to us? What are a stream of stones, a pool of slate or an underwater passage? Material metaphors are being drawn which we can articulate in language, but whose meanings will still be ambiguous to us.

This ambiguity is a double-edged sword. While ambiguity is unavoidable, there are different ways that it can manifest itself. This is an underlying problem in the 'imaginaries' of the Neolithic. A continuous theme in this thesis is the use of anthropological analogy in archaeology. Inevitably, my readings of anthropology have fuelled my imagination concerning certain types of activity. However, in so many narratives, authors describe a past version of a daily economic life, ancestor-worship, fertility-rites, rites of passage, totemism or animism. Often these influences are not openly referenced, but appear implicitly in the text. Or perhaps they are so easily *read into* such texts *because of their ambiguity*. One of the goals of this project is to open up imagination about the Neolithic to wider possibilities. Is there really a basis for Neolithic ancestor-cults, or fertility rites, for example? Why does the recognition that Neolithic people had a sense of the past so often spill over into the idea that they must have worshipped that past, and their predecessors, seen that past as fixed and originary, held it in awe? Instead of postulating such templates, with their basis in ethnographies dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, shouldn't we describe the activities which we detect in a different way, and speculate on the socio-political positions of those involved in them? What of the specific relations generated between people, animals and things, for example? Perhaps the people represented here did not fear individual death as much as they feared falling apart as socially divisible parties? Perhaps it is to concerns like this that experimental narratives allow us to turn. Polysemy and ambiguity are a feature of descriptive and imaginative texts which have often lead authors to advocate the reduction of such language from scientific (or pseudo-scientific) texts (cf. Hawkes 1972: 7-11, 22-34). But it is precisely in that polysemy and ambiguity that we can allow for differences in interpretation and experience, that we can provide a space for the reader to interpret our interpretations in a

number of novel and different ways (cf. Tilley 1989c, 1993b).

I have argued that there is an alterity to the past which makes it almost incomprehensible. This alterity disrupts our continuous dialogues when we pause for breath to articulate the confusion we feel about the past. It cannot be rationalised. It disrupts our reasonable accounts of prehistory. But as we write archaeology, so we bring those indescribable aspects of the past into discourse. In fact, they were only ever 'outside' of discourse because of the way that discourse projects things outside of itself (see chapter 4, Butler 1993:22, cf. Irigaray 1985, 1993). Yet because these elements have been externalised, they are 'unspeakable'. This demands that we work at the boundaries of language in order to relate to the material. Again, following Butler, material and language cannot be divorced, so one way to re-value the material is to reconsider language.

Within the field of the British and European Neolithic and Mesolithic, there have been two recent attempts to write accounts of the past using imaginary or poetic narratives<sup>1</sup>. Mark Pluciennik has written two papers, one which addresses the idea of writing and archaeology (Pluciennik 1998:a), and the other which describes Neolithic activity in Italy through the juxtaposition of archaeological and poetic narratives (Pluciennik 1998:b). Mark Edmonds has recently published his account of earlier Neolithic activity in Britain by complimenting each archaeological chapter with a chapter of third-person 'fictional' descriptions of events.

Mark Pluciennik's poetic narratives in *Imagined landscapes and seascapes in prehistoric southern Italy* are both poetic and practical. He is concerned with peoples' activities, subsistence, movement, the place of animals and landscape in human prehistory. His narratives hint at some forms of experience which are not modern, but the agents performing them are resolutely modern in terms of gender and social constitution:

*...it was best to journey as the birds did, rising through rock, falling from land to sea and floating back up again, out with the early morning, back with the wind in the late afternoon. After, the journey would sometimes be repeated on foot.... They said that as long as the men flew over the land and spilled their seed that animals would continue to return to this place.* (Pluciennik 1998b:8).

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<sup>1</sup> Bender (1999) has also recently related to Stonehenge through a literary medium; interviews, discussions, polyvocal interpretations. Some of Bender's polyvocal participants and positions are imagined (e.g., English Heritage - due to their distancing from the project:174-183), which makes them significant here - but to imagine English Heritage's position is not to imagine a Neolithic person's position. Bender's book is a diverse and inspiring archaeological (and public) resource which addresses the issues of plural perspectives and imagined/interpreted pasts. However, I have not discussed it any detail as it is a discussion along slightly different lines to this one.

Pluciennik's reading of the southern Italian rock art is the inspiration for such statements. While he has followed an imaginative trajectory with "rising through rock", his interpretation of sexual roles is somewhat simplistic. Masculinity is here read much as Treherne reads it in the past (cf. Chapter 3), rather than problematised in the way Alberti (1997) has pioneered. Pluciennik's narratives are curiously reminiscent of ethnographic texts - and perhaps this is an inevitable result of writing poetic narratives with an 'archaeological imagination'. Ethnographic, historical and anthropological accounts of myth, stories and other people's lives have often provided authors with inspiration - and not just academic authors<sup>2</sup>. In Pluciennik's case, like many others, the informing ethnographies seem to have been fundamentally structuralist ones<sup>3</sup>:

*If one knew the right places, ways and words one could prepare and cook the soft flesh of the earth, by mixing it with water and crushed special earth-bones, just as women cooked babies from their blood and men's milk. (ibid.:14)*

And;

*Figures of cooked material - clay or stone - were made, used and buried separately to remind the earth and sun of the need for cooking: 'uncooked' babies had to be buried separately to avoid contaminating the land. (ibid.:14)*

Category and classification - running along binary lines - are the foundation of his exercise, leaving me wondering whether the narratives have achieved very much in terms of expressing the past in a 'different' way at all. Where Pluciennik does pull in for a closer focus on personal experience he does so at the time of funerary activity, in a passage called, predictably, *Ancestors*. Experience is covered as grief (again the 'universal experience of death'; cf. Chapter 3), and the role of empathy in this project comes to the surface (ibid.: 17).

Pluciennik's narratives are an interesting exercise in bringing archaeological writing 'to life' in a way which seems to appeal to archaeologists when they read anthropological accounts of peoples' lives in present 'non-western' societies. Very much a leaf out of *The raw and the cooked* (Levi-Strauss 1969), and concerned with purity and

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<sup>2</sup> Works on myth by Frazer (1993[1922]) and Levi-Strauss (1969), for instance, have provided inspirations for writers like Tolkein and George Lucas. The idea that stories have a common structure, and that codes of cosmology run through all societies is an extremely common one.

<sup>3</sup> Ethnography and anthropology have enjoyed internal scrutiny on the subject of authorship, critical interpretation, reflexivity and creative writing (recent volumes include Clifford and Marcus 1986, Kulick and Wilson 1995, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). These kinds of ethnographies could provide a rather different basis for writing accounts of prehistoric story-telling or simply narratives which have a stronger reflexive value.

impurity, these narratives are less successful as expressions of a specifically different past. The people in these narratives are acting within a particular ideology or cosmology, rather than performing a series of social interactions or generating meaningful experiences in relation to or subversion of this overarching structural scheme. While Pluciennik has written in a way which vividly expresses his reading of the lives of past people, the basis of that reading; a structuralist *habitus*; left me disappointed with the result. But there is a further reason to reject Pluccienik's approach. Due to the structuralist influences, which I argue can be traced back to Levi-Strauss among others, Pluccienik's narratives tie his interpretation in to a grand narrative, a uniformitarian concept of non-western, non-modern societies. Ultimately, although Pluccienik argues for the importance of the anti-narrative (Pluccienik 1998b, see below), his accounts provide the opposite.

Mark Edmonds 1999 book, **Ancestral geographies of the Neolithic: landscape, monuments and memory** takes a slightly different narrative tone and focus. In place of the poetic and cosmological, labour daily activity and relations of mediation between different persons are the mainstay of Edmonds' Neolithic. As with Barrett's **Fragments from antiquity** Edmonds maintains a close rein on his archaeology, studying activity and agency through repeated practices. While his archaeological text is, however, still fraught with unsubstantiated claims about revering ancestors (e.g. Edmonds 1999:20-1), the importance of marriage in the earlier Neolithic (e.g. *ibid.*:30, 125), and the centrality of fertility (*ibid.*:28), his poetic narratives are sometimes free of such problems. This is largely due to the close attention he pays to detail; activities such as flint knapping, making wooden structures, digging for flint, and moving and culling cattle are all integral aspects of his narratives. In terms of personhood, his people are extremely interesting. They are more like post-processual social persons than 'individuals'; their individuality is not the most notable factor about their lives. Their interpersonal relations define them; they are relational entities above all else. These people are anonymous; they do not have names; but they have cousins, affines, kin, a past, tasks to perform, relationships to participate in (1999:32-4, 51-4). For Edmonds, activity seems to form personhood in a way which is almost performative; for example, he writes about the scars received during flint knapping as a social indicator of identity (1999:48). Where there are problems with Edmonds' narratives, they are where he relies on the assumptions that infiltrate unchallenged into his main archaeological text. 'The line' of ancestry is of paramount importance, there is a clear and somewhat blatant element of ethnographic analogy in his flint-mining text

(Burton 1984, perhaps?), "Tombs were the houses of the ancestors" (ibid.:59) in an absolutely ethnographically-inspired reading of megaliths, and the dead cast off a "body worn in life" (ibid.:77) in a remarkably medieval and modern fashion (or perhaps inspired by Bloch's (1982) account of the Merina?) - although they are not destined for an afterlife, but to rejoin the living on their semi-nomadic rounds. In fact, while his texts are superb in evoking images of life and labour in the Neolithic, they are also a condensation of his archaeological thought. Edmonds' puts several vital ideas into play; the role of 'generations' by comparing the use of a monument and its subsequent visibility to successive generations of one group; the return to sites after a period of a millennium as a measure of re-valuing old stories or practices now remembered as myth, history or legend; and the overall sedimentation of belief and knowledge in daily experience. These concepts form the basis of both his 'archaeological' and narrative chapters, and effect the integrated nature of these narratives in his book (indeed, his archaeological writing is extremely lucid and often has a poetic cadence of its own). As with Pluciennik (1998b), these narratives do not provide a basis for imagining a truly different world, although they do succeed in bringing Edmonds' Neolithic to life rather more effectively than Pluciennik's romanticised structuralism does. Furthermore, although they compose a series of narratives which are congruous and build up a single picture, they are not commensurate with grand narratives. Edmond's accounts are situated and partial, and do not attempt to construct a code of ideology from the material. While these narratives are imaginative and archaeologically-orientated they are neither grand narratives (unifying, totalising or reliant on a universalism of structure) nor anti-narratives (see below).

Both Pluciennik and Edmonds use the third-person (singular and plural) throughout their texts. They use the usual, normative pronouns; she, he, they... the ego would appear if they were writing in the first person singular. They write in an immediate past tense; the stories they tell are either being remembered, or related to us as though by an invisible narrator, a movie camera. Both pronouns and tense form more of a problem for the kind of personhood and activities which I wish to discuss. Other writers of archaeological texts have already adopted other approaches, for specific reasons of interpretation. Ruth Tringham and Janet Spector have written poetic narratives about prehistoric<sup>4</sup> people. Janet

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<sup>4</sup> Whether oral history makes a society historic or prehistoric is a difficult question. The Wahpeton studied by Spector are documented in historic texts, and had their own histories. However, Neolithic people may have had their own histories (I believe they did), and now exist in documented histories of Europe. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to both situations as prehistoric, although I acknowledge that the history/prehistory debate is an important one.

Spector's texts, like the narratives of Pluciennik and Edmonds are third person, with an omniscient narrator. Leaving the archaeologist as the narrator is perhaps the most honest approach, but it does lead to a detached, retrospective and omniscient view of the past. In the case of **What this awl means** (Spector 1991, 1993), Spector's story is a history of sorts. She has access to Wahpeton language, including names of people and places, and to their systems of beliefs, to some degree. Spector is concerned here with the meaning of specific objects to the people who worked and lived with them. In her case the ethnography is recent, the structures and processes of gendering are well recorded, and she works from this basis to effect a small-scale and partial account of a period in Dakota history when contact with the Europeans was an increasing occurrence.

In contrast, Tringham's short narrative in *Households with faces* is very much a situated narrative. She writes in the first person singular. Such an approach runs the risk of substituting the archaeologist for the prehistoric person, as I have been at pains to point out throughout this thesis. Perhaps surprisingly, then, I find this a most effective narrative. Once again, it is not that narratives reflect 'the present', but particular stances from the present. Tringham has used her narrative to explore her subjectivity, to critique modern accounts of the past, which is what I find so appealing about it. Tringham does not rely on a structural reading of the material. She writes an account of the destruction of a particular site, reconstructed from the actual archaeological remains. The narrative is a fragment, partial, contingent upon local context, and therefore an anti-narrative. Her account is, like Spector's, part of a project to presence women and children in the past, and so she tends to use rather normative concepts of male and female relations - however, in doing so Tringham and the other authors in **Engendering Archaeology** are bringing a vital concern in modern epistemology to archaeology; feminist critique and interpretation. My criticisms of gender authorship in current archaeology would be addressed towards those who have not attempted to address the issues raised by such feminist epistemologies.

My personal response to these narratives has been mixed. I think that each of them is effective in a different way, and would not want to seem overly critical of any of them. They raised a number of factors in narrative-writing to my attention:

- I did not want to write in the third person, nor the first person singular. I needed a system of pronouns and tenses which expressed my beliefs about Manx personhood and experience; the process of writing these narratives was, in fact, instrumental in forming my interpretation in the first place - which is one reason why I felt I had to

write this chapter.

- I did not want to utilise current archaeological interpretations such as structuralism. I did not want to base my accounts on anthropological texts. I did not want to write about cosmology, but could not write about daily life where to do so would presume to understand personal experience.
- I did not want to gender the people in my past according to modern gender relations, but I wanted to explore the possibilities for power-relations in the past which may have been sedimented in social relations along similar lines to relations of gender.
- I wanted to write narratives which would help rather than reflect my interpretation of Neolithic persons and activities, would build up histories of practice for Neolithic people in my mind. I wanted to write about specific sites, and I found that in interpreting a site I would often construct a narrative about what kinds of activities had taken place there, and in so doing was already telling a story about the actors and the activities. From there I began to write several of the interpretations in a poetic form as a way of avoiding certain archaeological categories. Certain assertions that sound awkward when written theoretically can be better expressed in a poetic text.

The narratives which follow are not an attempt to recreate past language or beliefs. This is an attempt to illustrate the inapplicability of certain concepts within the field of Neolithic writing, and to experiment with the usefulness of others. The ideas developed are not necessarily any less problematic than conventional ones. However, they do demonstrate how different narrative elements can be introduced to avoid the repeated use of concepts which compound the problems of traditional interpretations of Neolithic worlds. If interpretation, as a reiterative process, generates a Neolithic, this is an attempt to subtly alter this reiteration; in a sense, to parody traditional accounts of Neolithic life. The texts produced are entirely contingent. Many problematic words and concepts remain. I do not consider it possible to “edit out” such problematics. But by adding to the field of expression, it may be possible to extend our Neolithic “imaginaries”. In this way we can add to the fields of metaphors which already describe personhood in the Neolithic. I also wanted to continue to interpret the material, rather than to allude to ‘other forms of being’ and stop short of exploring exactly what kinds of relations those might involve.

As I have come to terms with what I think about personhood in the Manx Neolithic, I found it necessary to develop a specific terminology concerning Neolithic life. In many ways this smacked of a classificatory system of the kind I have struggled to avoid. This was no

surprise, however, given the discursive situation of this academic work. These narratives were also partly an attempt to reinterpret these terms for a specific “Neolithic experience” of materiality. Like the terms I had to use initially, these narratives took the role of ‘stepping stones’ in the process of interpretation. While I can never invent a communicable language which describes the Manx Neolithic in a way which will satisfy, this process allows me to experiment with the horizons of expression. In laying down stepping stones, I may be able to avoid the rut in the ford. I do not intend to cut a new path, but to pull up the stones behind me when the concepts or languages outlive their usefulness. This process is my personal interpretation of *erasure*, which I see as essential to a project of continuing to write creatively about the past.

I was also uncertain about whether to integrate these narratives into chapters 5 and 7, and dispense with this chapter altogether. After all, I did not want to divide the poetic from the archaeological. However, I elected to write a single chapter explaining the presence of this work not to cut it off from the rest of the thesis, but to show it as an integral part of the process. Just as there is a chapter on the ‘individual’, and a chapter on ‘performativity’, so there had to be a chapter on ‘writing’. Implicitly or explicitly this aspect is interwoven into my account of personhood in the Neolithic.

Finally, because I am concerned with partial, conflicting, and multiple accounts of people’s lives in the Neolithic, I would offer narratives under the foot of Pluciennik’s heading ‘anti-narratives’;

*...whose story-telling purpose is precisely not only to deny any overall meaning or plot (as telos or process), but rather to display fragmentation, discontinuities, partial and temporary understandings, and the lack of fixed meanings, while equally claiming to mimic or evoke the nature of the past world as experienced. (Pluciennik 1998:39).*

### **In Other Words...writing difference.**

**Narrative 1: Mull Hill, earlier Neolithic - Lhiack ny wirragh - ‘the stones of the assemblies’<sup>5</sup>.**

(Compare with Appendix entry 11 and Chapter 5, and see plate 12).

This was the place chosen; it was wet, foggy and cold. This was how it was; it seethed and flowed and met things together. And this was where they agreed to be met together. There had been much talk about whether they were really parts of

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<sup>5</sup> This is one of the native Manx celtic names for Mull or Meayll Hill circle.



themselves or not. The movements of parts between their parties was so clear to many of us that the place had to be found soon. They met when the fires could not be seen, only smelled - the flames were there, in the fog. The light was failing, but it was sparkling in the quartz. They met out of earshot of the struck stones, but they could be heard in the singing and we felt them cutting into us. When they met the ground was hard and damp, and the rising peaks were empty and unseen, rising up in the mist with everything else who came to the gathering.

They were nervous, their parts were gaining, they were taking new journeys into their bowls. For some parts of themselves it was very close to their meeting time. Would it be a fair sharing? We emptied our bowls over them, and filled them with what they cast up, mixing the parts together. Breaking the bowls, the parties flowed into the meeting place, into the fog, off to the hills and out to sea. A broken bowl and burnt bone passed across them, a party passed into the meeting and through. The broken bowl left a place for parting together. This part brought a newly made bowl, carefully patterned and filled with the talking-plant. It had been mixed hard by the fire from the wood and ferns, mixing rock dust and the sticky earth, mixing bone and sticky flesh, as in each part of every party. Its hard frame was then smashed, and they sat back to back, telling their stories to us as we stood inside the circle-mound, careful not to clog the passages, and whispered the stories back to them. Their journeys flew into the mound, and over the mound, and down the passages to the other places all met here. Behind their backs the white stone shone, their joint spine, and they sat in the soft mud on the hard stones while the rain washed them together. The stones and mud and rain mixed like the bowl mixture, and was part of their story. Like this their flesh was met. New parts to new persons. But, we think, their parts will not be met until they are fired like the bowl, dried and broken. They still flow in and out and off on their journeys. Even when their parts are met and fired they will still journey, but then it will be only together. Then they will argue less about who is closest met, and who has given themselves the most parts, the best parties, the greatest journey.

When the rain left us and the sky grew lighter through the thick cloud, the parts of us who had dissolved absolutely into each other moved through the chambers. Burnt bone, arrows, bowl fragments, and other parts of these parties moved, and flew in the air, mixed and moved again. We celebrated their merging, and the merging of their tales in this place. Now and then we could see the places their stories told us of, through the

clouds. Plumes of smoke rose from the inland ditches, and at sea the waves rose and fell, flashing. More of us were beaching, bringing other stones and arrows, beads and their bones and bowls. We told tales of our paths until we could see all of the places clearly, feel ourselves there again. And our parts remembered other parts they had been part of, and called out to those parties now. We shook their memories by our tales, so long did they last, that they told us their tales when we missed them, and argued with us bitterly when we told paths who they knew better than we did. Until part by part we fell asleep, exhausted from journeying through so many places and people, the meeting was a cacophony of shouting, whispering, arguing and laughing. There was a tremendous fusion of many parts.

### **Narrative 2: Ballaharra, deposition of the inhumation, mid Neolithic.**

(Compare with Appendix entry 2 and chapters 3 and 5)

They had showed us how close parts could be, and we wanted to remember them. We dismembered them, and remembered them. We refigured them, made them together. Once their parts were not fused, but now they were properly met. Each had given the parts they knew best, would use most on their journeys. This was done quietly, in the hot day, and no songs were sung and no-one laughed until after it was done. No-one ate of their parts. The parts which were not remembered were kept with the stories, and given new affines and new names. Negotiations over the meeting for a passage to visit them began. We decided that the stones they were merging with let them breathe and travel enough. Another self disagreed, one part of that self is part of this self now. This party is glad that we helped those parts when the stones moved. We were all there when the stones and the earth and the people who came struggled to describe the proper passage. The trees moved, and we thanked them, but the stones were so heavy. We dreamt they were unwilling, but we could not tell, and we left it be. Some stones did not stay until the passage could be found, and others joined instead. Some of us were worried that the passage would be lost, and the re-membling in vain. But our dreams were full of the stories they had told, of the places where they were, and those places were re-membling together in the passage, and the chambers, and the mound, and their merged stones near the passage, part of the stones holding the passage where it had to be.

Fires had been lit along the passage, lighting the way. This was not their

journey, after all, it was ours now. They would guide us through the screen, and we listened to them carefully. We held the earth back over them while we carved the passage way through the mound, and threw the mound over the passage.

**Narrative 3: Ballaharra, deposition of the inhumation, mid Neolithic, second protagonist.**

(Compare with Appendix entry 2 and chapters 3 and 5)

We were running with water, melting into the earth when we cut sand. Soft sand, crumbling back on itself, and we the waves hauling it from rest. We exhorted it to join us in the daylight, and to claim our bones as though it were the sea. As we dug, we talked about the people who were drying up and seeping away, slipping off together - finally taking a journey to leave us behind. It was typical that they should want to be alone now, but they wouldn't get away with it that easily! Snapping limb from core, and hand from hand, we buried some and traded others. What we got for a momento, we gave back to them in food, or stories, or songs, things that they liked. We hold a strand of their past in our hand, pass it around, and we will tell the story which made it. Pass around this blade, cut by their hands, see how it tells their story. Pass round this cord of hair, from many waves away, sent in memory of when they crossed paths with the herders there. These things tell their tale; hear it with your hands.

**Narrative 4: King Orry's Grave south-west, mid Neolithic.**

(Compare with Appendix entry 9 and chapter 5, and see plate 13).

Lying flat, stone digging into stomach, in the echoing darkness of the passage. Panic, uncertainty. Now it was the path and thisself. The selves who this part travels with were out of earshot, and here the passage was self. Stretching up, could feel the hole near blinded eyes, and though it did not show anything, and did not ask it anything, hand crept in. There were other hands, and heads and feet in there. Left with those parts for a long time, cold and only the passage to be selfish with. Did not take part with any of those parts, and did not give anything to the passage, only thought of the others. When dragged out they were disappointed, and the next night went in again. This time they stayed with, and introduced us properly. Ears rushing, lapped by wave upon wave of soaking exhaustion. Head swam, and felt the stone hole opening and letting through. Was their guide, we passed through the opening together. Where

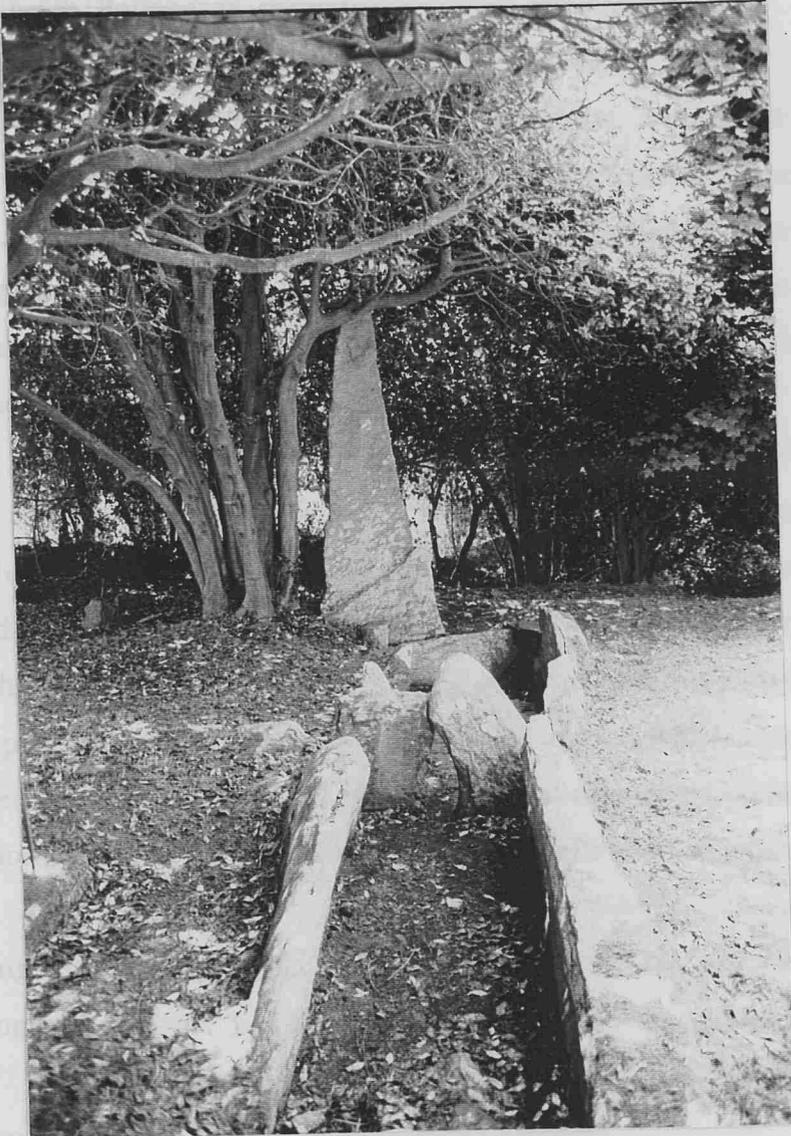


Plate 13: King Orry's Grave southwest; view of entrance from rear chamber.

hand-part had been, now ourself could pass. The next day left, satisfied. That was first merging as part of that party, and this part is now free to travel again.

**Narrative 5: Ballaharra, cremation activities, later Neolithic.**

(Compare with Appendix entry 2, chapters 3, 5 and 7).

Pounded the boneparts between the stones, crushing the burnt bone, letting some swim with the wind, and some smoke through the rock and stones. Listened for voices, heard breathing through the stoneface. Talked of journeys across the water, through the water and into it, journeys into the stones, across the stone, and through it. Journeys had been on, and journeys would go on, journeys had stopped off from to be together, journeys had made to come here and go further.

Smoke watered eyes, part as all of us, breathing in the hot flames as they fused stone, earth, bone and flesh. Cooling night kept the jars firm in the bone ash, and sooted ourselves as you will after. Others sang and staked out the screen across the passage, carved the journey for the bones in the ground, channelling them towards the passage, first this way and then that way. They must not see the journey too soon, and there were parts of their journey that twisted and turned which must be told before they entered the passage in parts, and before parts of them were buried to help our journeys. Tension rose, soon we would be journeying here, with their guidance too.

In the flames we saw parts and parties of theirselves who were grazing, who were barking and hunting, flying, and skimming over the sea, shooting through the air, and shining in their hafts. We saw them contributing to the jars, so we could hold their story.

Part of us was journeying again, leading us to new ideas and feelings. You will follow your journeys, but remember theirs and ours.

It was a hot time collecting clay for the fire, it was a hot fire. They had merged in the heat, in our sweat, in clay, in ashes. Some had travelled a long time to be joined together, and move along the channels. They grew feathers and hooves, as you did when gave you together. Heard the last of them to be joined through the crackling fires, as they ran down the channels and into the ground, resurfacing behind the screen and flying down the passage, cooling fast, but still hot enough to melt through the chambers. Sang to the trails they left, their hissing and spitting echoed our words. Their names float in the chamber, will not be heard on any other journey. Go there and hear them, but do not ask anywhere else. Some of them travelled many journeys, for a long time

before everyone was ready for that journey. They went on many paths, and know the world well. You may find their names on other paths, but that is where they finally dissolved and became the path.

Hear the songs there from those in the mergedstones. They know the stories of the mixing, and remind us that must be careful not to let ourself fall into parts which are not fused. That way, how would know when to eat, or sleep, how to pass parts between ourselves, to give and to tell paths? Some have fallen apart, their pieces eventually taken into others, but because they refused to allow parts of themselves to be part of a person, have died with no story or self. They cannot dissolve, or journey, and stay fixed to a notpath forever.

### **Narrative 6: Ballaharra, later Neolithic cremations, second protagonist.**

(Compare with Appendix entry 2, chapters 3, 5 and 7)

They told the stories about the joined self under the gathering ground, and the places people used to visit through the passage. They challenged us with stories of horror, 'could we imagine a world without being joined?' In hushed whispers, we sneaked away and tickled each other's thoughts... just imagine not being browbeaten into following the older part, the part who sits at the most crossroads. We talked about leaving our parts, and becoming a part or parts of our own, and we filled the air with talk about what kind of parts we would live. We know it is impossible, that we have no right to a path, but new paths can be cut, if you know where to listen.

### **Narrative 7: Ballateare, jar deposition, screen construction, later Neolithic.**

(Compare with Appendix entry 3, chapter 7).

Ash and smoke storming around the path, part followed part, trailing away into the past. Settling about us, coating our parts with parts and places in the sun, under the stars, over the sea. Heavy hung the jars, the ends of our arms, as we wrenched them from our fingers, from the fingers of those now finally parted into the world. From the yawning fires, grown difficult and sleepy at sunrise, we drew scorched bone and slate, sifting through the parts left when the flames had swallowed flesh and cloth. So much was already absorbed into the smoke, but some parts were left which stuck to us with their liveliness. Parts claimed some of these, departing with their memories, while other parts took those waning scraps to scatter over their jars.

The path was dry, a dusty river, worn low by the hooves and feet of the days which clung to us; herds of our parts thronged in our ears, the drumming a story in itself. The high screens lay still, empty panels, green-woven and freshly sapped between the posts, waiting to be raised, to close in the path once the sun rose again.

We flowed into the flattened clearing, where we were sharpening, breaking and shaping parts to haft and scrape, cut and polish. Unfused parts of us played with the pieces, scattering them as we strew the crushed parts in the night to come. They were learning to become parts of us, of our life, and we taught them of their being, imparted with our wisdoms, our parts from before their emergence to us. Their shadows huge, their acts a lifetime in their telling, we wait their telling, their doing, in the coming years.

Resting awhile, we disputed the mixing of this part and that part, sifting between them, arguing over how much the fires had touched each piece. As the soot and charcoal shuffled a dance with the air, the cooling jars heaved warm sighs, poking out of the sticks and dust. Air jostled with air over the bonfires. Like hooves, drinking in a stream, we kneeled around the pits, gathering up the baked vessels, breathing in their bitter breath. To the fire had gone parts, and from the fire we wrested a new set of parts, the old fused, the new waiting to be broken again, mixed with the bones and other elements snatched from the fires elsewhere. A shout came from a part notorious in its fluidity, its vigour in keeping parts moving on. This party called for the jars to be broken where they lay, then dragged from the blackened stumps, and mixed up with the other parts in the ground, or to be left for the unfused parts to play with for a while, to feel the touch of the still-fragile. Parts of this party that speaks now refused, and part of that party fought bitterly with ourself. A massive scattering occurred, and there was talk of putting parts to the fire though they were still owed many more journeys here first. In that fight a re-fusing occurred, and new parties were born, while some parts refuse to mix with others to this day. A numbers of parts left at dawn, their boats scraping the shingles and cutting the sea.

But still there was much to be done before the place could be left. It was an overgrown path, tangled and half-told. The fractiousness of the night had left us excited; this was clearly a place for much parting to occur before we could depart. We ate amid the throng of parts running and shouting and building the screens, while those with the longest paths and the shortened shadows recited their stories in

huddled groups, each sure of their memories until the other parts spoke. We dozed in the sun, and built more fires from the undergrowth and wood, fetched edible parts, and parts to crush and smear and burn.

Again it was light, and the clouds made us blink and squint in the heat. Such a dry meeting it had been, and such a clear night. We had made the journey, we had dropped the jars into the fresh and cold earth, we had left them to depart with the bones and stones. Retracing their journeys. It is not widely told, but part of this part had filled a jar, robbing it of its shadow, its life to come. A bone hand-worked, bellowing from being speared; a scraper, shining and rippled like a dark cavern stream from over the sea, amid parts of our bone. This journey was made finished, its story ended and kept quiet. Many parts were unhappy that this was not a fair sharing, that too much was left lumped together, would slow down journeys through this region. We looked back at the rising screens, and saw the path clearly. These journeys would continue, would follow the clearer paths now, would have greater stability of parts. Plenty of fusing had still been achieved, and those that secretly wanted to be left to the same parties for a while left satisfied.

#### **Narrative 8: Ballateare, terminal Neolithic, second protagonist.**

(Compare with Appendix 3 and chapter 7).

That's not how we remember it. There were no stories, no exchanges of paths, only secrecy and refusals to share. They were hoarding the pathways, closing us off from the past, and eventually they even closed in the route itself. No food was shared, no stone was swapped, no parts were exchanged. They said we were preoccupied with myths and duties which had no place in their camps. Although we reminded them of the stones on the hills, of the open yards and stonefaces of working places, they honoured that tradition with empty gestures. When we left they made the path-catching screens faced and shaped like the stone passages had been, as an insult. They said that we did not know what lay in the passages of the stones, that we did not know how they had lived their routes. Our knowledge is not forgotten, no more than we can forget the passing of the moon. Many of us still visit the stones, they are still the roots of our days. We work hard at the quarry face of their flat yards, and light the mixing fires at their feet. These places may be sealing into the land fast, but new routeways should not cut across them so easily; these places are hard to pass, and we

must remember that.

## Reflection

These narratives are only slightly different to archaeological narratives of a conventional kind. The focus of the writing is still emphatically archaeological; I have focused on people, their activities, and the material culture with which they were involved. I have omitted many completely non-archaeological elements of writing which might be considered fictional; characterisation, naming, dialogue, excessive description and elements of writing from genres like romance, thriller or biography. Yet I have also tried to introduce aspects of literature which exceed convention; emotive statement, anticipation, combination words, and the use of old words in new ways (parts, parties, things described as “who” rather than “it”, etc). I have also rejected many archaeological tools of description, including gender, age sets, religious systems, etc - although these are open to inference. I have also attempted to illustrate the difference between our conception of the passing of time in the Neolithic - gradual change over hundreds of years - with a conception of temporality and personhood which I have ascribed as indigenous to the people I am writing (about). These people are concerned with past and future, and with the maintenance and disruption of social cycles. I have also written the pieces as though they were oral histories, stories told by people who ‘were there’ to those who were not, or among peers who have a different version of events. They may seem, on reflection rather obtuse; they are not easy to read, do not make a single identifiable point. But I am trying to reflect a series of concerns which do not necessarily make sense to us.

One other failing of these narratives is their inability to present gendered, located, embodied subjects. Janet Spector (1993: 19-29) and Ruth Tringham (1991: 124) both tackle issues of embodiment and gender by using narratives which convey personal immediacy. I have attempted to combine a position which recognises the specifics of gendered and otherwise located ways of being in the world with a position which recognises that the experiences I am describing are actually beyond empathy and understanding. As a result, gendering is currently largely missing from the narratives. This is partly because I think that the kinds of process taking that are place here are akin to gendering, but radically different. That is to say that gendering is a process, a verb, an activity of identification through reiteration. Similar activities are taking place in these narratives, but some other verb is called for. At an early stage all I could consider was “Neolithicing”, which both sounds

hideous and fails to convey the complexity and diversity of activity taking place. Hopefully the kinds of activities described in the narratives themselves convey the idea of these processes a little better; for example, narrative 6 on Ballaharra cremations is concerned with a group who, through time spent together and dissatisfaction with the status quo, are trying to find a way to change their lives within their discursive situation. It is not impossible that such people may have been considered as a particular group or gender; but exactly who they were is open to the reader. In short, because I am not concerned with a similar project regarding gendering to Spector or Tringham, I have pursued the concept of past relations from a rather different perspective.

The people here are represented by their relations, not their 'selves'. I hope that these relations show some concern with power relationships, despite the fact that I have not used any modern power relations as the basis for these narratives. Perhaps they fail post-processual criteria; discourse is certainly my 'target', but with regards to power, ideology and signification I may have missed the mark, and my discussions of 'everyday life' or the 'taskscape' are rather lacking in detail. On watching them churn out of my printer I find they demonstrate many of the problems of interpretation I am trying to critique, far more than they subvert them (particularly narrative 1). They are reiterative and mimetic as well as parodic. A final failing is the matter of accessibility. These are not intended for public consumption; they could certainly be better written. This thesis is an academic project, not a poetic one (luckily) - had I been required to invest more time and effort in poetic writing, I may have been able to present more accessible narratives. Balancing accessibility with the need to present difference is a difficult matter to judge. For example, narratives written for a wider audience would need a clearer language of personal pronouns, which would undermine a large part of the exercise. In reviewing the narratives I would probably conclude that archaeological narratives may provide better accounts - but these narratives have been useful to me in writing about the past. Even if that is to remain the status of academics' poetic narratives (unpublished, not part of the final documentation of their labour), it should be open to academic discussion, because it does have an effect on interpretation.

These narratives assisted my interpretation of the sites in a number of ways. Through writing the narrative for Ballateare I became able to express the 'illicit' nature of some of the activities which were taking place. While it is impossible to know which activities are 'the major discourse', and which are subversions, the tropes which are

reiterated at Ballateare have been clearly referenced at the earlier sites, both in the early/middle and late Neolithic. There are noticeable alterations to those tropes with the development of Ronaldsway jars and the screening in of the site, hiding the routeway, but also presencing it in one form. Perhaps the potential futures are being 'suppressed' in the deposits at this site, deposits which may have referenced a changing attitude towards personhood? At previous sites cremations were mainly mixed, and not deposited with jars. Whole jars as a feature appear irregularly, and at sites which were screened off. Perhaps this screening off of activity which may have been concerned with personal autonomy and relationships of social belonging was not a sign of the 'master discourse', but of the subversion of that discourse. I will take up this point in my next chapter. Evidently such readings are difficult to substantiate. But power-relations in the past are, to a certain degree as unobtainable to us as any of the other factors of interpretation discussed so far. And yet the exercise in narrative-writing was the best way I could try to think about those relations, and describe the multiple and contradictory nature of the discourses which inform archaeology, and, therefore, inform the pasts we write. Perhaps I have fallen into Hodder's honey-trap of empathy (although I would refute this), but I do not expect to succeed in reconstructing the past. In postulating some aspects of 'what they thought' I am sailing close to the wind, but am still within Barrett's waters of the possible, not the known. In the next chapter I return to my analysis of the Manx Neolithic, by tracing the paths of a number of tropes which emerged in the later Neolithic. In so doing I ask questions inspired by the limits I have drawn for myself in writing these narratives, questions about polyvocality and the reinterpretation of past events.

## Chapter 7: Materiality and relations of personhood emergent in the 'later' Neolithic.

*How far memory had blurred into myth or oblivion by this time we shall never know: the boundary between real and fictive genealogies is difficult to draw. (Edmonds 1999:151, on the re-use of Neolithic sites in the Iron Age.)*

*It is precisely through the deferral of authority to an irrecoverable past that authority itself is constituted. (Butler 1993:108, cf. Chapter 4).*

### Introduction

Rather than dealing with the material by class of monument, or by linear chronology, I have elected to trace the repetition of particular practices throughout the Manx Neolithic. These practices cross the classic boundaries of monument or period. There are changes in archaeological signatures around 3000-2800BC, a rise in the use of wooden structures, a decline in megalithic construction, new styles of pottery, axes and activities. However, these changes were not radical or drastic - they have been viewed by archaeologists as changes *within* a period, not between two periods as with the Neolithic/Bronze Age transition. Notions of 'period' are clearly problematic<sup>1</sup>. The relationships between early and late Neolithic practices and early Bronze Age ones form the basis of this chapter. I propose that specific later Neolithic monuments (like Ballateare), and early Bronze Age sites (like Knocksharry) can be considered alongside specific earlier Neolithic monuments (Cashtal yn ard, Ballaharra) in a scheme of *related differences*. In short, the polysemy, variability and relatedness of activity continued throughout the life of each site, though in different ways for each site, at each time.

The process of relating to the past was clearly a concern in later Neolithic society - as was the case in the earlier Neolithic<sup>2</sup>. However, the two statements quoted in the chapter heading open up an interesting debate. To what extent were later Neolithic genealogies based on previous regulatory fictions, and how did these fictions project themselves into an unquestioned past? Was a later Neolithic past of this nature, or was it,

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<sup>1</sup> see chapters 1 and 2 for a discussion of Latour (1991) on the 'era' as a device for classification.

<sup>2</sup> I have not traced this trend extensively for the earlier Neolithic, because I did not want to cover too many periods, or wander too far into Mesolithic archaeology. Nonetheless I find it a failing in this thesis that in discussing the earlier Neolithic I did not place it in a more historical context.

in fact, open to question, to re-negotiation? What were the processes by which personhood was reiterated in the later Neolithic, what continuities of experience fed into the status quo, and how were new experiences of the self shaped?

I have selected three types of practice which appear repeatedly in the Manx material and have traced how they emerged or were maintained as important discursive themes:

- the use of temporary camps for specific activities
- burning, cremation and disintegration
- routes through and rootedness in the landscape

These practices are defined arbitrarily, and it will become clear that they not only overlapped but also merged into each other at various points in Neolithic activity. Structuring my interpretation in this way really only serves to illustrate these continually intertwined aspects of the Manx Neolithic. Furthermore, a consideration of the importance of the *longue duree*, and of activities which generated temporality are crucial to this discussion. While splitting the Neolithic into two halves has never been my aim, I am now in a situation to discuss the continuation and disruption of long-term trends over the extent of the 'period' (one which would swallow the entire history of Europe since the birth of Christ if compared to the present). In what ways were later Neolithic experiences fed from earlier Neolithic experiences, and what new patterns of activity emerged? In this chapter I discuss the later Neolithic not as a separate period, exhibiting a distinct cultural signature, but as a mesh of conflicting and contradictory discourses, which have temporal and geographical roots in the earlier Neolithic across the British and Irish Isles. I also ask what practices were involved in producing later Neolithic sites, and what kinds of persons may have been generated through such activities.

## **Part One**

### **Polysemous places**

A detailed critique of studies of domesticity and the house in archaeology is beyond the range of this thesis. However, it is also unacceptable to write about Manx Neolithic sites without noting the way the dataset is orientated around two poles: the 'ritual' (largely stone and earth, 'enduring' monuments) and the 'domestic' (temporary, ephemeral, wooden). As concluded in chapter 2, current field research on the Isle of Man is revealing a number of sites which are not so easily shoe-horned into these categories. Furthermore,

the neat division of the Manx Neolithic into early and late allows a paradigm of 'death' (strange, enigmatic ritual sites) followed by 'domestication' (villages with their cemeteries), and is perpetuated by the idea that the Neolithic terminates with the influx of a new culture in the Bronze Age, joining the island to the rest of contemporary (fully domesticated) Europe.

If we accept, for reasons explicated in chapter 2, that the Ronaldsway 'house' (cf. Figure 12, Appendix entry 12) is not a domestic dwelling, how else can it be interpreted? On a regional level, there are similar sites to Ronaldsway in Ireland and parts of England, Wales and Scotland. Yet Ronaldsway is different from many Neolithic 'houses'. The features which most notably define the site are, for me:

- the deposition of a large number of diverse later Neolithic artefacts
- post holes
- a burnt area
- a dug-out trench

Bearing these features in mind, how does Ronaldsway compare to other Neolithic 'houses'? A recent volume edited by Darvill and Thomas (1996) offers an overview of the debates concerning the use of wooden Neolithic structures, and their relationship to the domestic house. It is clear that there is a great deal of regional variation in Neolithic habitational practices within the British and Irish Isles, and that only some of these practices involve these structures. It is also notable that 'houses' are in many cases similar in form to (or even form part of) other archaeological monuments (Darvill 1996b:92 notes overlaps between circular 'buildings' and henges, for example). They are also broadly grouped together with other wooden sites in opposition to sites which are composed mainly of stone (e.g. Darvill 1996b:92, Parker-Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998, Bradley 1998:96-99). Ronaldsway, in plan, is not that similar to any of the other 'houses', particularly once the plan is drawn without speculation as to where the trench-edges may have extended (figure 12). However, there are a number of activities at Ronaldsway which make it similar to some other Neolithic sites in England and Ireland, whose identity as 'houses' I would also question.

Gwithian in Cornwall, Woodhead in Cumbria, (both described in Darvill 1996: 93, plans on 95, 98, 99, 101, 102) Goodland in County Antrim (Cooney and Grogan 1994:51), and Ronaldsway (Bruce et al 1947) are all sites for the mixing of particular items of material culture. The density of finds at these sites is not characteristic of Darvill's model



of Neolithic houses. Confronted by the abundance of finds at Ronaldsway, Darvill remarks;

*It is difficult to explain the presence of this material, although one possibility is that it became incorporated into the fill of the hollow in which the house was set through having been incorporated in external midden material revetted by the walls.* (1996b:98)

and yet the excavators note that the floor of the site was 'sterile' prior to this fill, and the artefacts are virtually all intact, undamaged. In short, there is less evidence of domestic waste than the deliberate deposition of whole artefacts (cf. Thomas 1996b:10), and of smashed pottery (from at least 50 vessels; Darvill 1996b:98) from a number of different 'traditions'. Grooved Ware, Ronaldsway jar fragments, and small Ronaldsway pots are amongst the numerous finds at Ronaldsway, along with 5 schist plaques (two with etched decoration; figure 13), 88 flint scrapers, 3 arrowheads, 3 knives, and 7 polished stone axes. As is evident from Darvill's remarks, this is considered unusual for domestic sites.

Grooved ware was found among the assemblages at 'houses' at Willington and at Aleck Low, both in Derbyshire (Darvill 1996:99, 102), but it has also been found at henge sites and megalithic sites. The 'houses' at Ballygalley hill, County Antrim, and Tievebullagh are associated with mining and quarrying (Grogan 1996:42, Cooney and Grogan 1994). The structures at Goodland appear to have been associated with mining activities, and; *...the deliberate and repeated placement of portions of the extracted nodules in pits within a matrix of habitation debris including deliberately broken pots.* (Cooney and Grogan 1994:51).

Woodhead, like Ronaldsway, is sunk into the landscape; but by being cut into the hillside, rather than placed within a bedding trench (Darvill 1996b:98). Unlike Ronaldsway it is also paved with "flat stones" (ibid.).

Ronaldsway appears to have been a location (in the case of axes and plaques an almost exclusive location; see details of Ballavarry, below) for the deposition of specific artefacts (axes, rubbers, whole jars, incised and blank plaques) among 'habitation debris'. It may also have been a location for producing many of these items (flint cores were abundant among the finds from Ronaldsway (Bersu *et al.* 1947:150; cf. Coope and Garrad 1978 on availability of materials for Manx Neolithic axes). In a sense, such objects are also habitation debris, but only if the idea of habitation is expanded *beyond* a discussion of the family as economic unit or camps as location for subsistence-only activities (still very much *en vogue*; e.g. Cooney and Grogan 1994:47). Habitation or dwelling, if taken to

simply describe activities appropriate to daily life in a place, can provide a basis for reconsidering the use of Ronaldsway. While Cooney and Grogan consider broken pots to be habitation debris, I would stress the signatures of pot deposition at other Neolithic sites on Man which are not 'domestic', but are still habitational. Contemporary (and earlier Neolithic) activity at Billown also seemed to display an interest with work to do with opening the ground, cutting shafts, depositing quantities of flint, lighting fires, leaving pottery behind (see Appendix entry 5, below, and chapter 5). The activities at Ronaldsway indicate a dwelling which is concerned with burning, producing or at least depositing tools, and perhaps screening off a part of the proceedings. At least, this may have been one of the uses of the site.

Drawing a regional level of analogy with sites in Ireland and England is not a way of trying to show that Ronaldsway, for example, was the product of an activity which took place on a regional scale. Rather, it serves to illustrate how Ronaldsway differs from even those sites which might be chosen for comparison. Of course, this only shows up the process for analogy; analogies are chosen precisely because of their similarity to the object of study. However, the sites mentioned above are proximal to Ronaldsway both geographically and temporally. There is no one use of these sites, because 'these sites' is not a formal category, but they do display a concern with practices which we would not associate with domestic houses.

In fact, by deconstructing the category of the house in the Neolithic - by showing that it is no more than a cover for a variety of different practices - I am reminded of Tilley's critique of the category 'megalith' yet again (Tilley 1999:90-99). In both cases metonyms have erased the specific uses of prehistoric sites. Ronaldsway is a distinctive site, sharing some affinities with Goodland, Gwithian and Woodhead, but it also shares practical affinities to certain earlier Neolithic 'megalithic' sites; it appears to have been cut into subsoil, a cut which was almost a keyhole or box shape, like the trench at Ballaharra. The posts could have supported an enclosed structure like earlier Neolithic chambers, or have provided a series of screens around the area of burning, as at the contemporary Ballateare. Ronaldsway may also be only a part of a larger site, including jars, human remains and screens (several paired jars have been found in the region - and elsewhere on the island, indicating a widespread repetition of this activity). How does it compare to some of the other later Neolithic sites on the island?

The site at Ballavarry, Andreas (Appendix entry 4), is a small gathering of hollows, which has been interpreted as far more ephemeral than Ronaldsway (along with the other Manx sites mentioned here it is not included in Darvill's 1996 gazetteer). Twenty-one scrapers were found, but no arrowheads, 2 blades and a number of other stone objects, one of which appears to be a mock-axe. It is the only other site on the island to contain an incised plaque (this time slate), along with burnt bone, charcoal, flints and smashed potsherds, some in fairly large pieces (Garrad 1987a:162-3). It is worth noting that Burrow identifies one of the sherds in this later Neolithic site as typically mid-Neolithic (Burrow 1997:67), while the rest of the assemblage includes both Grooved Ware (and, as Burrow argues, the plaque designs could be characterised as Grooved Ware styles; see figure 1) and Ronaldsway pottery (Burrow 1997:193). In other words, this site contained a mixture of several traditions in a few metres within a few shallow hollows in the ground. I would argue that this is no coincidence, nor a sample of a time when all three traditions were overlapping as domestic vessels, but that the contexts for their use were being altered by admixing them, some time around 3000BC. The association of Grooved Ware with large sites like timber circles, the Boyne valley megaliths, and numerous sites involving the deposition of human or animal bone, is well known (e.g., Bradley 1984:49-53, 1998:95, Thomas 1991:93-102. The temporal sequence at many of these sites may indicate that Grooved Ware was a later commentary on designs used in megalithic art; see below). Ballavarry also contains scraps of bone, and Ronaldsway jars which are designated by archaeologists like Cubbon (1978:89) and Bersu (1947:167) as being designed for use in cremation 'cemeteries'. West Kimmeragh, not far from Ballavarry and Ballacottier, also contains potsherds and small lithics, but is interpreted as a cremation cemetery because it has a stone spread or platform, like Killeaba (Garrad 1987b: 425). The arbitrary divisions between domesticity and ritual now seem more apparent.

The tendency to separate domestic and ritual aspects from each other has often been noted (e.g., Bender *et al.* 1997, Barrett 1994b, Hodder 1994, Parker-Pearson and Richards 1994a and b). As discussed in chapter 2, there are various strategies which can be employed to prevent this schism. Bender *et al.* (1997:148) note that when prehistorians began to take greater account of ritualised (non-economic) activity, they did so mainly in relation to sites which had no obvious economic functions; henges, megaliths, burial grounds. Only a few had considered the non-economic, the symbolic or ritualised nature of settlement space and habitational architecture (*ibid.*:148, Hodder 1994, 1990, Richards

1993, Parker-Pearson and Richards 1994b). Bender *et al.* attempt to write a narrative which avoids such distinctions. Their narrative is a polyvocal text, which discusses the settlement, the local landscape, and the attitudes towards that landscape by the archaeological team. Reading the text provides a sense not only of a place which is immersed in its landscape, and which had polysemous significances across the ritual/domestic boundary, but also of the characters and persons involved in the project. Once again the relationship between person and landscape seems confirmed. The layout of Leskernick (a 'Bronze Age settlement') seems to indicate a period of prolonged and repeated use, continuous use - as such it is a very different site to any of the Manx sites (except, perhaps, Billown Quarry). But if such 'houses' can be understood as more than places to shelter, as part of a rich fabric of ritualised everyday life, then it should be possible to reinterpret Ronaldsway, for example, along similar lines. At the same time, I would resist an approach which would slot the 'house' into the structuralist tradition of assessing space in ritual contexts as consisting of (or providing means for) binary oppositions (Parker-Pearson and Richards 1994a and b, Hodder 1984, 1990, 1994). Therefore I will not provide an interpretation which analyses the use of space or the orientation of the house, or division into areas of relative domesticity (*qua* Parker-Pearson and Richards 1994b:41-45, for example). While domestic practices can be fitted into the 'ritual' category, I prefer an approach to prehistoric space which interprets everyday life as a series of overlapping practices in which these two concepts were unimportant as structuring principles and are therefore ultimately deceptive.

There is nothing to suggest long-term sedentism at Ronaldsway or Ballavarry. There is, however, evidence to suggest that occupation of a site was not a matter of a family unit clustered around a cooking hearth. Yet the interpretation of burnt areas as hearths (e.g. Darvill 1996b:86-7, McCartan 1993:114, even Megaw *et al.* n.d.:10 at King Orry's Grave North-East<sup>3</sup>) enjoys overwhelming currency in the literature. Cooney and Grogan (1994:79-81) even go as far as to extrapolate houses at Knowth based on the presence of numerous burning sites outside the main passage site. This extrapolation of the size of an "average" house over the fire sites leads them to conclude that, in fact, there must have been multiple phases of houses, because the fires were too close together to allow sufficient space for contemporary houses (Cooney and Grogan 1994:80). But

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<sup>3</sup> As noted in chapter 5, burning in forecourts was a common trend in the earlier Neolithic, along with burning mounds of pits, as at Killeaba and Cashtal yn ard.

perhaps they were close together because they were *not* hearths at the centres of houses. In interpreting Rhendhoo on the Isle of Man (4700BC to 4000BC), McCartan and Woodman (McCartan 1993:114) also define burnt areas as 'hearths', though there is no attempt to reconstruct houses, because this site is Mesolithic. Seemingly, there is something 'Neolithic' about the relationship between hearths and houses. Even though *The Rhendhoo dates indicate that the site was in use into the period traditionally assumed to be Neolithic* (ibid.:115)

it remains interpreted as Mesolithic because of the practices which took place. Yet while McCartan and Woodman seem to be hinting that Mesolithic practices took place into the early Neolithic, it is equally possible to argue that these practices were also Neolithic. That is to say, camps like Rhendhoo occurred throughout the Neolithic, and resurfaced as a most distinct practice in the later Neolithic. Yet what makes these later camps different is the emphasis on specific practices of mixing particular substances and types of material culture.<sup>4</sup> This later Neolithic practice of deposited *different but related* forms of material culture, sometimes including human remains, seems to have been a chief concern at many of these sites. In this sense, in the way that these materials are broken up and combined, there is a certain continuity of practice from the late Mesolithic to the early Bronze Age. These camps are not locations just for dwelling or cooking or knapping, but also for practising material relationships between flint, pot, fire, wood, animal bone and occasionally human bone.

One site on the Isle of Man has evidence of use from the mid Neolithic, and includes elements of many of these activities of digging hollows and trenches, erecting screens and depositing lithics and other stone objects. The site at Billown quarry (figure 13, Appendix entry 5), under excavation by Professor Darvill and Bournemouth University, offers an interesting insight into later Neolithic Manx sites (Darvill 1996, 1997, 1998). One of the main differences between Billown and any of the other sites is the sheer scale of excavation. Reports from Ballavarry (Garrad 1987a), Ballachrink (McCartan and Johnson 1992) and West Kimmeragh (Garrad 1987b) all bewail a lack of funds, and cover less than 10m square. This is not the case at Billown with over 100 by 50 metres square excavated. Garrad states that she must have excavated the rubbish dumps at Ballavarry and missed the area of occupation with which they were associated (Garrad 1987a:162). The

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that Mesolithic sites or early Neolithic sites of this kind do not mix material culture types, or certain substances, but the accentuation of this practice in the later sites gives them a specific archaeological 'signature'.

excavation of any smaller area of Billown would have yielded information which would have been equally enlightening. Features like Hallsbury (Garrod 1937a), Balliscroder (Garrod 1937a) and Ballinacorney (McCormac and Johnson 1991) have some affinity with Billown. In short, there was a prevalence of activities which involve ditches and banks and prescribed enclosures - barrows, cairns or enclosures - in the earlier Neolithic on Antrim, as in other parts of the north-west. This trend continues alongside the use of megaliths and screens in the middle and late Neolithic.

Billown Quarry is a multi-phase site, containing material from the Mesolithic to the late Bronze Age. The site has a 25% slope and consists of pits, one of which was used to bury material and deposits of pebbles. Ballinacorney (McCormac and Johnson 1991) has a similar feature, a pit filled with a large proportion of worked flint. The flint of the Neolithic period 117 were arrowheads (Garrod 1937 21). The pits at Billown are similar to those found along with these arrowheads in ditch fills (Garrod 1937 21). The pits at Billown appear to be part of a scheme of movement of material, possibly to do with the movement of quartz pebbles (McCormac and Johnson 1991) and perhaps the movement of quartz. The scale of the pits at Billown is similar to those at Ballinacorney (McCormac and Johnson 1991). As with other sites at Ballinacorney, there is a large amount of debris at the site.

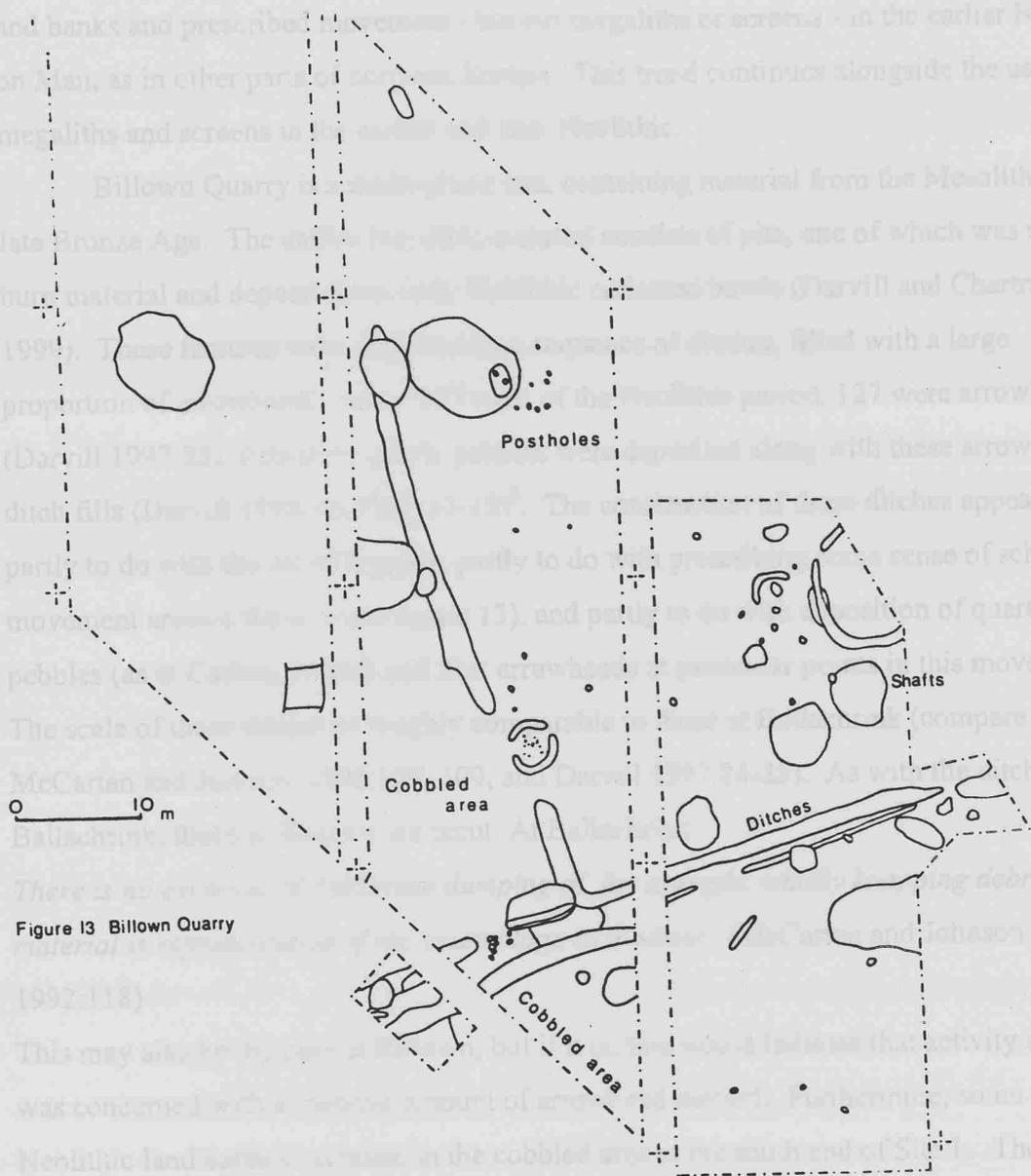


Figure 13 Billown Quarry

There is no evidence of a ditch at Billown. The pits at Billown are similar to those found along with these arrowheads in ditch fills (Garrod 1937 21). The pits at Billown appear to be part of a scheme of movement of material, possibly to do with the movement of quartz pebbles (McCormac and Johnson 1991) and perhaps the movement of quartz. The scale of the pits at Billown is similar to those at Ballinacorney (McCormac and Johnson 1991). As with other sites at Ballinacorney, there is a large amount of debris at the site. This may indicate that the activity at the site was concerned with the movement of material. There is no reason to suspect that the pits at Billown would act as a general store, they are, rather, a large number of finds in the topsoil or in the pits, such as the cobbled area. However, the arrowheads occur in massive numbers only at sites D, D.H and H. The general site D is within site H, and

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in the UK many thousands have been found in ditches, not as deliberate deposits, but as the result of conflict (e.g. Chiswick, 1910; Edmunds, 1993:104). Garrod has not indicated that they could be interpreted as shot into the ditch rather than deposited. No bone was found in the contexts, very few teeth, suggesting they had been used with such conflict. Even if these arrows were shot into the ditch, an interpretation other than conflict cannot be ruled out. The nature of some kind of conflict at Billown should be considered, however.

excavation of any similar small area of Billown would have yielded information which would have been equally enigmatic. Perhaps sites like Ballavarry (Garrad 1987a), Ballacottier (Garrad 1987a) and Ballachrink (McCartan and Johnson 1991) have some affinity with Billown. In short, there is an emergence of activities which involve ditches and banks and prescribed movement - but not megaliths or screens - in the earlier Neolithic on Man, as in other parts of northern Europe. This trend continues alongside the use of megaliths and screens in the earlier and later Neolithic.

Billown Quarry is a multi-phase site, containing material from the Mesolithic to the late Bronze Age. The earlier Neolithic material consists of pits, one of which was used to burn material and deposit three early Neolithic carinated bowls (Darvill and Chartrand 1999). These features were followed by a sequence of ditches, filled with a large proportion of arrowheads: out of 223 tools of the Neolithic period, 127 were arrowheads (Darvill 1997:32). Fist-sized quartz pebbles were deposited along with these arrowheads in ditch fills (Darvill 1996:35, 1998:11-12)<sup>5</sup>. The construction of these ditches appears to be partly to do with the act of digging, partly to do with prescribing some sense of schemes of movement around the site (see figure 13), and partly to do with deposition of quartz pebbles (as at Cashtal yn ard) and flint arrowheads at particular points in this movement. The scale of these ditches is roughly comparable to those at Ballachrink (compare McCartan and Johnson 1992:107, 109, and Darvill 1997:24-25). As with the ditches at Ballachrink, those at Billown are recut. At Ballachrink

*There is no evidence of deliberate dumping of, for example, wholly knapping debris, as the material is representative of the assemblage as a whole.* (McCartan and Johnson 1992:118)

This may also be the case at Billown; but if it is, this would indicate that activity at the site was concerned with a massive amount of arrowhead discard. Furthermore, some of the Neolithic land surface remains, in the cobbled area at the south end of Site I. There is no reason to suspect that the site in general would not, therefore, retain a large number of finds in the topsoil or in the layers such as the cobbled area. However, flint arrowheads occur in massive numbers only in sites B, D, H and I. Geographically, site D is within site H, and

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<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere in the UK many enclosures have been found to include arrowheads in the ditches, not as deliberate deposits, but as the result of conflict (e.g., Crickley Hill; Edmonds 1993:104). Darvill has not indicated that these could be interpreted as shot into the ditches rather than deposited. No bone was found in the contexts, nor was there any burning elsewhere associated with such conflict. Even if these arrows were shot into the ditch, an interpretation other than conflict cannot be ruled out. The notion of some kind of conflict at Billown should not be entirely dismissed, however.

Site B is at the southernmost area of Site I (see figure 13). In other words, these concentrations are localised, perhaps due to better land surface preservation, or perhaps due to the deposition of arrowheads in these specific places and features. From visiting the site during excavation I learned that arrowheads seemed to be extremely common in ditch bottoms. Darvill has indicated that the arrowheads were found in greatest concentration around the causeway/entrance, and in the ditch terminals in that area (pers. comm.). Overall, I would suggest that even if deliberate deposition was not being practised, then the finds from the ditches represent the combined use of arrowheads and quartz being left behind at particular points during movement around the site - notably when passing through the causeway either towards or away from South Barrule, and in gathering at or passing through the broken-ditched enclosure in H/D. It is also possible that some form of conflict was being practised at the point when the arrowheads entered the ditches.

Billown is also interesting in that it is extensively re-used in the later Neolithic. At this point a cobbled area was built over infilled early Neolithic ditches, deliberately re-using the old ground surface as a pathway. This process of extending, filling, and capping the ditches may, however, have taken place in the earlier Neolithic, although there is as yet no precise chronology. It is unclear whether the ditches would have been open during the later Neolithic, but it seems likely that vestiges of their presence would have remained. Most of the standing stones at the main 'entrance', and around the area in general would still have been *in situ* (although it is unclear exactly when the entrance stones were removed), and banks and dips are likely to have been visible. Into this landscape of intermittent ditches and remembered or forgotten deposits, later Neolithic shafts, post-holes, jar pits and 'hengiforms' were cut. The jars and cremated bone in the east of the site show a high degree of congruity with the earlier design of the site. There does not seem to be a significant hiatus between the ditched gathering areas, the deposited quartz and arrowheads, and the later Neolithic use of the site. Billown was not only multi-phase, but part of a cultural tradition related to sites like Cashtal yn ard where quartz was repeatedly deposited around the tail, and the forecourt area provided a focus for repeated gathering. The activity of burying jars at the mouth of a set of screens - or in this case ditches - seems to tally with the activity of burying cremations at the mouth of megaliths in the mid and later Neolithic (e.g., at Ballaharra). I will return to this below.

There is another notable factor concerning the presence of Ronaldsway jars, cremated bone, and further lithic assemblages in the later use of the site. Ditches were

filled and buried under a cobbled platform. Rows of posts were erected on alignment with South Barrule, and replaced by small standing stones in the area in Site I, where the causeway and ditch terminals were replaced by the platform. Darvill also attributes the shafts<sup>6</sup> cut into the subsoil to this later period, as well as a 'mini-henge' and an open ditched enclosure. The 'mini-henge' is located at a gap in the ditches, appearing to demand circumnavigation or entry. Darvill argues that the land surface here is largely undisturbed, and allocates the presence of a mound or barrow to the feature. The 'mini-henge' lends an interesting commentary on how the context of the 'house' has been formed. As with some of the sites in Darvill's synthesis on Neolithic houses it has a circular structure, with a shallow ditch and internal scoops filled with burnt material. But this is not interpreted as a house because of the presence of cremated bone in one of the hollows, and a lack of post-holes for roof support. The major factors in these interpretations appear to be roofing, hearths, and an absence of human body parts. I am not arguing this structure is in any way more house-like than henge-like (or barrow-like). What is striking is that while hollows in the ground filled with lithic and pottery waste elsewhere are rubbish dumps or household debris, here they become 'ritual'. As Garrad (1987b:425) writes of West Kimmeragh; *Bersu thought there had been some residential use of the Ballateare site and this may also have been the case here, since there were also apparently utilised stones comparable to those from the Ronaldsway house, although neither hearths nor post-holes were found in the area opened.*

If West Kimmeragh (a small camp, but with a stone platform and ditch, like Billown and Ballacottier) and Ballateare (a "cremation cemetery of the Ronaldsway Culture" (Bersu 1947:161)) both display features comparable to Ronaldsway, does this mean that they have 'domestic' elements? Or does it rather mean that these aspects of similarity with Ronaldsway are perhaps *not* 'domestic' characteristics? Evidently, this is a matter of context. The question becomes one of how a context is defined, what elements compose it. It seems to me that it is necessary to consider alternative types of *social* contexts for these sites. My interpretation of the signatures represented at Ronaldsway, and throughout the later Neolithic sites on Man would be that these sites were for gathering to undertake specific polysemous activities.

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<sup>6</sup> Shafts at Billown reflect a wider Neolithic set of practices which I will not investigate in this thesis. However, it may be worth noting the digging activities which took place at Goodlands and Gwithian, mentioned above, and remembering that Ronaldsway is extremely local to Billown.

One way that archaeologists have tried to differentiate between these activities is through lithic analysis (e.g., McCartan and Johnson 1992:121-2). At Ballacottier 5 out of 9 lithic finds are arrowheads. Billown has a very high incidence of arrowheads. Ronaldsway produced only 3 arrowheads, Ballavarry and Ballachrink only 1 apiece. At these three sites the lithic assemblages have been interpreted as to do with leather-working or similar activities; they displayed a high incidence of scrapers and borers, for example. Ballachrink is a convincing location for extensive flint knapping (95% of the lithic material is debris from knapping; McCartan and Johnson 1992:115), and the use of scrapers (ibid.:119). However, McCartan and Johnson argue that a range of activities are likely to have taken place at Ballachrink. Indeed, each camp appears to have been the location for a set of overlapping activities involving flint-working, small-scale burning, the discard or deposition of crushed pottery (from different 'traditions'; Beakers, Grooved Ware, Ronaldsway jars were all mixed together), and occasionally animal bone or more exotic items (the axes and plaques). These activities have not been adequately described under the signs of either domestic or ritual, perhaps because the division of the world into these fields has no meaning in relation to the Manx Neolithic. As at the earlier Neolithic sites, where different worldly elements were combined, these later sites seem to indicate not so much a concern with coping with living (as opposed to ancestral or dead) relations, or pursuing a totally 'normal economic' daily routine, so much as relations between different, related and intertwined social components. There seems to have been a concern with processing items, parts of the wider social environment, reflecting on those repeated practices.

These later Neolithic sites do not conform to any one interpretation. They are not for any one thing, but incorporate a range of practices. Each site on the Isle of Man is different, the material culture is different, reflecting a range of surface practices. Deliberate deposition is not necessarily a typical feature, yet would appear to have occurred at Ronaldsway. Knapping took place at Ballachrink on a large scale, of typically 'Ronaldsway' style lithics, yet mixed in with wider Neolithic and Bronze age styles, artefact types, and pottery (Moffatt 1978, McCartan and Johnson 1992:121-2). Each one of the Neolithic 'houses' discussed in this chapter can be associated with a different sort of activity, emphasising a particular range of activities or aspects of dwelling. The only ties between the sites are necessarily general, therefore. Production of material culture is possibly cited (mining, quarrying, knapping, perhaps potting), as is the breaking up and

mixing up of materials - which could be regarded as an act of further creation (early Bronze Age pottery, Beakers, Manx late Neolithic pottery, regionally comparable Neolithic pottery, knapping waste and damaged artefacts, axes). In the case of Manx sites these acts sometimes involve material alien to Man, described as 'imports', from Ireland for example (e.g., Moffatt 1978:200-201). There is a strong possibility that artefacts were being gathered specifically for deposition; being broken and brought to this place so that the relations which produced them, and which reiterated their role in the social world, could be further negotiated. This interpretation does not necessarily sit well with the trend of interpreting such deposits as 'knapping out', a process of 'killing' objects as homologues for people, or for 'ending biographies'. In a performative interpretation, relationships are continually materialising and dematerialising discursive issues. The deliberate practice of breaking down material culture and integrating or absorbing it into new relationships with a specific place, specific people present, an activity, and other objects associated with past places and activities as well as people, is merely a further practice of generating relationships. This argument appears to be strengthened by the fact that so much of this material was imported, or was deposited only on the island rather than elsewhere - an appropriate place for specific materials and styles. Perhaps this deposition is not an 'ending', nor a 'beginning', but a continuation of social relations which are concerned with absorption alongside the maintenance of difference?

Multiple trends are emergent throughout the Neolithic, then. For me, a prevalent trend which grows in frequency throughout the later Neolithic would be the mixing of artefacts from different traditions, some of which is procured outside of the Isle of Man. Furthermore, some of these sites are involved in the creation of artefacts which are typically made on the island - sometimes these are mixed in with the 'alien' styles or artefacts *in situ* and sometimes they are taken elsewhere. None of these sites contain *only* mid or late Neolithic material culture, or *only* Bronze Age/ Beaker artefacts. I think this is extremely significant. Not in the sense that they all occurred at a point of exciting or unusual overlap, but that these sites were specifically generated as *places for working on the relations between and within styles of material culture*. Perhaps these were places for mixing ideas, producing change, and generating temporality.

This discussion also has implications for the interpretation of the insularity of the Isle of Man during the later Neolithic. The argument generally rehearsed (e.g., Piggott 1935, Clark 1935, Childe 1950, Piggott 1954, Burrow 1997, Megaw 1939) is that during

the earlier Neolithic Man is part of a regional cultural network, displaying similarities to both the UK and Ireland, but with a definitive local slant (the inexplicability of Mull Hill, for example<sup>7</sup>). Following this argument, during the later Neolithic the 'Ronaldsway culture' is unique to Man, and exists in preference to other regional traditions prevalent elsewhere. Archaeologists are accustomed to equating ethnic or even racial identity to artefact styles (cf. Zvelebil 1996), and this has an endemic effect in reading the Manx material. However, if Ronaldsway - along with other sites on Man - represents a locale for citing a *variety* or *multiplicity* of traditions, it offers an alternative level of interpretation. Under the current theoretical climate the following argument may have little support. But, isn't it possible that local communities visited the Isle of Man periodically, and that characteristically Manx material culture was made or at least deposited there because it was the appropriate location for such activity? In other words, this may not have been a matter of ethnically identified groups (or even of ethnic identification), but of citing actions in places which set up locale-specific traditions? Different groups of people may use those locales, and different but related styles or forms of material culture may circulate within those groups, but each group could have been aware of a range of aspects which that place offered and edified.

It would be easy to draw another ethnographic parallel here, and cite the relationship between people and the land they belong to in Australian, Melanesian, North American and other societies. In these cases people become sedimented in their landscapes; they 'belong' to the land. Manx Neolithic people may not have, perhaps, belonged to the land, nor their 'objects' to them. In the Manx Neolithic perhaps objects, styles and activities 'belonged' to places instead, for example. Perhaps, even, places came to be associated with multiple styles and traditions, which is why the activity of admixing was the property most relevant to Ronaldsway, Ballavarry and Ballacottier. If these sites are meeting places for different material traditions, perhaps they also had identifications which involved people from a variety of other places. Perhaps the interconnected lives of people were being asserted in these deposits, reiterated through these activities. Once again, perhaps this was not a matter of identity as much as of immersion in a rich and varied social world. Is it possible that the appropriate thing to do relied more on the place where the activity took place, than the 'identity' of the person doing it? *Perhaps, in fact,*

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<sup>7</sup> Attempts to draw parallels between Mull Hill and sites like Carreg y gof are not particularly convincing (Lynch 1969)

*the agent became equated with particular practices by their performance at these locales.*

*In the performing of the place, there also may have lain the performing of persons.*

Architecture may have a strong reiterative effect (cf. Barrett 1994b, Parker-Pearson and Richards 1994), but in many of these sites the performance of place and person seem almost inseparable. At the same time as generating the material world, Neolithic activities may have been generating personhood and interpersonal relations. Just as I described the earlier Neolithic sites like Mull Hill as organs of social interaction, so were these later Neolithic sites; not houses, but locales for similar practices of negotiation and performativity. In these later Neolithic activities the pieces of broken-down material culture manipulated also included human bone, as at Ballaharra, Ballateare, Killeaba and later Knocksharry.

## **Part Two**

### **Burning bodies - and other ways of breaking down**

As I outlined in Chapters 2 and 5, Manx megaliths and related sites play on a complex set of materials and patterns of movement, activity and citation. The aspects of citation considered here are mainly to do with cremation (or simply burning), and fragmentation. In Chapter 5 I discussed the implication of cremations, breaking down of objects, and bringing together of parts or elements of the social world. I focused on personhood as a theme in this process. Ultimately, I concluded that personhood could be a misleading concept, largely because it risks burying the trope of parthood which was equally visible. This section discusses the role of material culture (including bone) in relation to structures, and emphasises the relationship between different material elements of the structures and deposits in relation to performed citations of specific activities. How were personal relations naturalised through later Neolithic practices of disintegration/immersion?

I have already postulated that normative phenomenology is of limited use in understanding these sites in the face of the material at hand. This matter will be reconsidered in the next section, but provides numerous problems for reading Neolithic sites on the Isle of Man in general. Where possible I will deal with each context specifically in terms of a contingent understanding of possible modes in which the site could have been experienced. Alongside burning and breaking down, activity in the Manx later Neolithic displayed a concern with ditches, screens and perhaps passageways. The

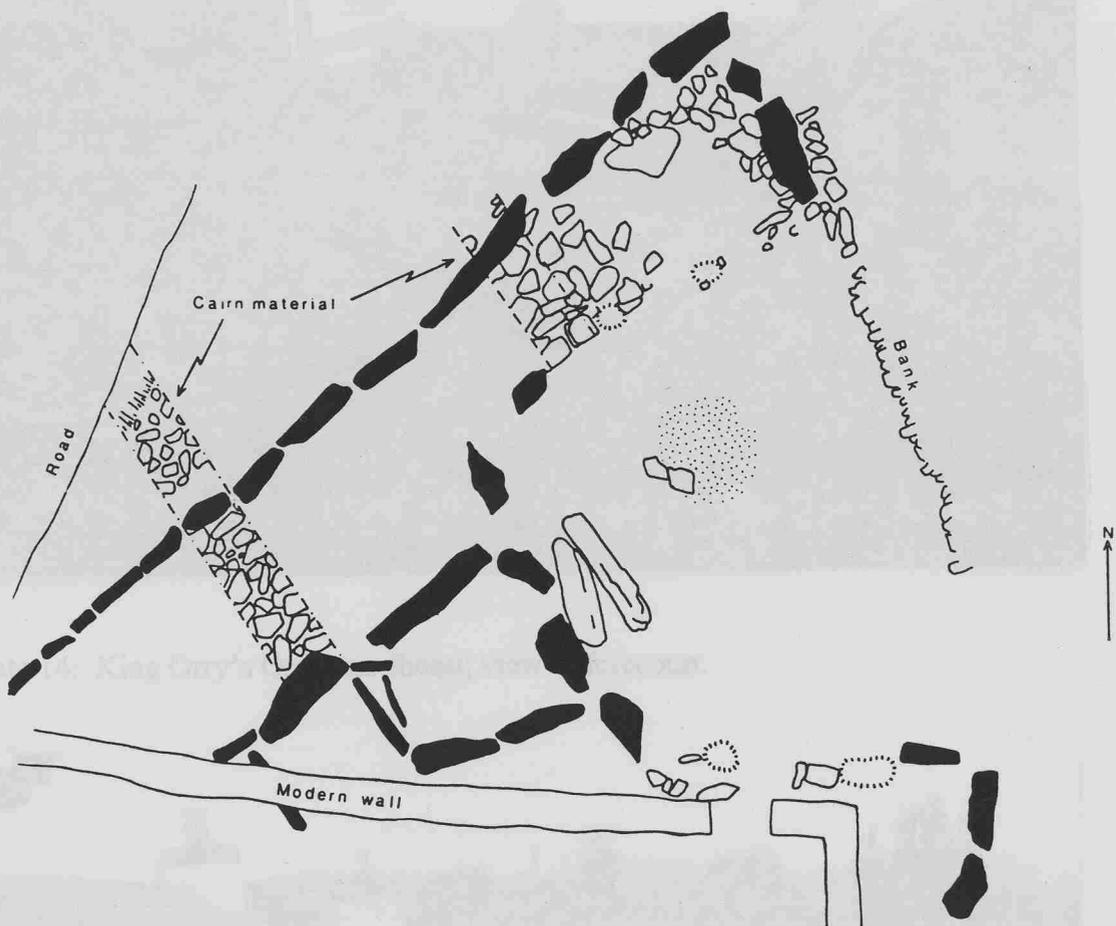


Figure 14 King Orry's Grave (Northeast)

- Burnt area
- Orthostat socket

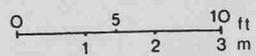


Plate 15 King Orry's Cairn - northeast; view of burnt area



Plate 14: King Orry's Grave northeast; view of forecourt.



Plate 15: King Orry's Grave northeast; view of forecourt.

next two sections also deal with their role in generating a Neolithic materiality, developing on the experiences of materiality suggested in chapters 5 and 6.

In the case of megalithic sites, these concerns are expressed not only in their initial construction and use, but also their subsequent reuse. The forecourt of King Orry's Grave North-East (figure 14, plates 14 and 15) was re-used at the end of the mid Neolithic (radiocarbon date GU-2693: 2520±80bc, 3342-2938 Cal BC (Darvill 1995:53)), while the Ballaharra cremations are dated to the later Neolithic (radiocarbon dates BM-768: 2275±67 bc, 3027-2600 Cal BC and BM-769: 2283±59 bc, 3026-2616 Cal BC (Cregeen 1978)). If these sites are designated as earlier Neolithic in form, these dates represent a use period of over 500 years, probably indicating episodic reuse.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, I would argue that some of the sites display re-use, while others do not, but that the majority of these sites are based on trends of activity which are manifested most clearly in the mid Neolithic, and reiterated in a different way in the later Neolithic.

It is often difficult to tell whether the acts of burning at these sites are continual, or when they began. Burnt areas have been found between the horns in the courtyards at Ballafayle, and King Orry's Grave North-East. In the case of King Orry's Grave North-East the radiocarbon sample from the burnt area would place this act at the end of the use of the site, perhaps after the passage was blocked in. However, this does not preclude earlier episodes of burning. Indeed, the forecourt was used repeatedly, and debris swept up into a mound which eventually formed a bank around its outermost perimeter (Megaw et al. n.d.:11-12). Ballafayle contains layers of burning under its non-megalithic mound, where human cremations were layered among charcoal, slate and broken quartz. In the earlier Neolithic a 'burnt mound' was covered by the tail at Cashtal yn ard, while in the later Neolithic a burning pit at Killeaba<sup>9</sup> shows signs of similar long duration burning (see below). In the main, however, evidence for burning may have been extremely ephemeral, if, for example, bonfires were being used as seems to have been the case at Ballaharra and Ballateare. Burning is implicated in the use of megalithic sites on a number of levels.

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<sup>8</sup> Burrows (1997:67) attributes King Orry's Graves, Ballaharra, Mull Hill and Cashtal yn ard to the middle (earlier) neolithic on the basis of pottery recovered through excavation, and I will accept these dating techniques here. I am not concerned here with which megalith on the island is the earliest, nor a step by step sequence; indeed, given that most of them can only be dated by association of either material culture, or, less convincingly, structural morphology, such a task could itself form the basis of a thesis.

<sup>9</sup> The pit at Killeaba consists of burnt wood which is dated to the mesolithic period, far earlier than the associate material culture would indicate. Arguments about the length of time that pieces of wood can be lying about before they are used in such a fashion are commonplace in Manx archaeology (see Cubbon 1978 on 'bog oak'). It would appear that there may have been a deliberate preference towards selecting older pieces of wood, perhaps from large, dead trees.

Firstly, in the initial construction of sites like Ballafayle and Cashtal yn ard, secondly in the cremation of human and animal remains and objects as at Ballaharra, and finally in the lighting of fires at the sites, as at Ballafayle, King Orry's Grave North East, and Ballaharra. But megaliths were not the only locations for burning or interring bone/object mixes. As discussed above, several campsites were the location for burning, and for breaking up material culture including bone. Furthermore, Ballateare, Killeaba and Knocksharry were locations for cremating, burning and interring bones and objects. Although the trend of disintegrating bodies and objects at megaliths did continue in the later Neolithic, other sites were also increasingly used for such activities. What was the discursive location of these changes?

Killeaba (Appendix entry 7) and Knocksharry (Appendix entry 10) are sites with late or 'terminal' Neolithic and early Bronze Age elements. Knocksharry, for example, is accorded Bronze Age status (Cubbon 1934) despite there being no conclusively Bronze Age material culture, and clearly identifiable Ronaldsway jars<sup>10</sup>. Killeaba is described in terms of a clear progression of activity from the late Neolithic to the mid Bronze Age (Cubbon 1978), from megaliths to camps and burial mounds. Cubbon's interpretation is that the site was initially used for cremations, then early Bronze Age inhumation practices associated with food urns took over, but were ultimately 'unfashionable' and the population reverted to cremation again (Cubbon 1978:89). The site consisted of a series of timber-lined pits cut into a natural mound, followed by a sequence of cists. Skeletal analysis has been used to argue for individual burial. Overall, Killeaba is a prime example of a site which could be fitted into a view of the Neolithic-Bronze Age transition which champions the idea of the emergence of individuals attaining positions of power. This, it is often argued, is reflected in the archaeological record by an emphasis on the burial of individual bodies with associated grave goods as signs of rank or wealth (although cf. Barrett 1994a:109-129, 1994b:94-5 for an example of alternative interpretations). However, grave goods are seldom part of the arrangements on Man. Ballateare 'C1' is the only urn to contain both bone and material culture (a miniature jar, a pig-bone pin and a flint knife, broken and subsequently used as a scraper; see chapter 6, narrative 7). The Manx equivalent of the "emergence of the individual" would be the emergence of jars as a

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<sup>10</sup> This stems from Cubbon's initial report; he obviously would not have assigned them to a culture which had not been 'discovered'; but the problem of their allocation remains.

homologue for persons or bodies, jars as containers of dead people's identity. Yet there are several problems with this equation.

Firstly, as argued in Chapters 3 and 5 cremated bone is prevalently inextricable from the notion of the "ancestors" when dealing with "communal" deposition (e.g. Cooney and Grogan 1994, Barrett 1994, Thomas 1991, 1993, Bradley 1986, 1998, Parker-Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998, Richards 1993, Edmonds 1999). Individual burials are also sometimes accorded this status of ancestry (e.g. Barrett 1994:126-129), but, in general, when dealing with separate bodies, whether inhumed or cremated, the emphasis is shifted from a spiritual, ethnographically derived understanding, to a secular, modernist one; the rise of individuality (e.g. Cooney and Grogan 1994:74, Barrett 1994:150-155). This process of accentuating individuality is associated with events in the later Neolithic and early Bronze Age. For example, Hodder (1999:141-143) writes:

*In many parts of Europe the contradictions and tensions which emerged [during the early Bronze Age] led to the break up of that society and the development of a new way of life based on a greater emphasis on the individual, particularly on a set of male-associated traits involving hunting, warring and exchange.*

On the other hand, Thomas (1991:129) recognises that these 'individual burials' may be "an extremely stereotyped" representation of personhood, rather than a way to serve the interests of ego-centric 'big men'. This stereotyping could be understood as a kind of production of a regulatory fiction of selfhood. While these acts are postulated as a form of citation that citation is not ego-determined but dependent on discourses about selfhood at the time. A regulatory fiction of the ideal self is a phenomenon which is not controlled by individuals but produces persons through their attempts to relate to it. However, Thomas finds himself forced to conclude that

*[t]he body of the dead individual ceased to be something which the community as a whole had any claims upon.....these bones were not split up or mixed, but were deposited in such a way as to ensure the maintenance of identity. (Thomas 1991:138).*

Does this mean that social discourse, regulatory fictions of the social self had lost power, become secondary to a new fiction of the self in which that self could ignore social *habitus* and convention? I would argue that this is an unrealistic reading of the early Bronze Age; such individual autonomy is rare today, in a society which proclaims the immutable power of the individual. Where is the basis for the belief that 'individual' burials are necessarily less prone to the social controls which operated on corporate burials? Tilley (1996: 332-

335) provides an alternative perspective; the body of the self (although by now identified as an individual) was one means of securing relations with others, and as such was used as an analogy for the social group. This begs the question, why are individual burials read as the reflection of personal desires, while corporate burials are only a trope for the demands of the collective?

What is it about the changes from cremation to inhumation or single cremation (and sometimes back again, as at Killeaba) that signifies a shift from a spiritually attuned world preoccupied with ancestry to a world full of egos jostling for supremacy? As I argued in chapter 5, if cremated or dried bones are the bones of the 'ancestors', then an alternative correlation for trends which involve single bodies would be that they represent certain social ideals, templates or characteristics. In short, if the individual is a template within modernity, how can we be sure that late Neolithic people firstly had a single template for the person, and secondly, had that particular template? It would also appear untenable to hold the view that the Ronaldsway jars buried whole at these sites were the factor representing people, or individual bodies or a template body<sup>11</sup> (as has been suggested for pottery in other contexts; e.g., Tilley 1996:114-117). This line of thought seems just as flawed, relying as it does on the metonym of an *a priori* human individual for that body. In a continuing vein to my discussion of the Ballaharra bodies in chapter 5, I would argue for a reconsideration of the interpretative frameworks at play.

The later Neolithic cremations at Ballaharra were more indicative of a series of related differences than even the earlier mixed inhumation (discussed in chapter 5). I have already argued that the mixed inhumation, and the material world within which it was situated, displays a concern with *integration*. In contrast, the cremation deposits not only integrated different social and skeletal elements, but they also *immersed* them absolutely into each other. A degree of distinction is evident in the inhumation, perhaps. Only human body parts were present, and those - if any quarter be given to biological identification - were all from 'males'. In the cremations, biologically 'male' and 'female' bones were present, as were the skulls and vertebrae of the very young, and the longbones of the older 'individuals', alongside dog, bird and sheep or goat bones, as well as potsherds, flints, slate and charcoal. This citation of embodiment, if that is what it was, may have conveyed a number of related polysemous messages. 'The 'human' self as part of wider world',

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<sup>11</sup> I do not reject such an analogue, but I do not believe that we can know what type of body was being referenced - ultimately this equation of pot with body brings the archaeologist back to individualistic assumptions and a unitary metonym of the self.

perhaps - a world where animals and persons were related, in a way which is heavily entwined<sup>12</sup>. A world where the person was soluble into personhood or parthood. A world where persons and things were rooted in the places and activities which conspired in performing them into existence. These activities involved making journeys through the landscape, journeys with a number of nested meanings all related back to the self. The trend of dismembering bodies of material, including human bodies, and re-membering them as different material relationships continued in the later Neolithic at Ballaharra. If anything it was intensified; disintegration and integration as a combined practice were accentuated. How does this compare to other later Neolithic deposits?

The cremations at Killeaba were also highly selective in that they do not represent the entirety of the body. All of the bone material was extremely thoroughly burnt and crushed up, leading the analyst to conclude that while the process of cremation itself was "carried out with great efficiency" (Wells in Cubbon 1978:94), "the collection of the fragments after the cremation appears to have been extremely casual and inefficient..." (Wells, in Cubbon 1978:95). To me, this suggests an alternative possibility; that only the most well cremated pieces of the corpse/corpus were chosen for deposition. Given that in some cases, only small fragments of cremation were present, a large amount of material must have been removed (or have been burnt away entirely, or deliberately left on the pyre; and if so I would argue that this should not be seen as an accidental but an intentional aspect of cremation). So, while at sites like Ballaharra a relatively large amount of human skeletal material was deposited alongside a quantity of intermixed animal bone and material culture, at Killeaba only a small amount was deposited. I am not arguing that at Killeaba a citation of the body as partible, partially animal and object was present to the same degree as at Ballaharra, because I would not want to argue on the basis of "negative evidence". But the possibility remains that much of the cremated material - whatever it originally included - was *removed*, and not deposited. In this site the activities which are of significance are to do with the *pulling apart* of the body, and may not be as easily visible to archaeologists as activities which also included a process of *re-membering*. Killeaba seems to have been a place associated with breaking things up, but *not necessarily with re-connecting them in the ground*. Perhaps this was a location where the circulation

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<sup>12</sup> Jones (1998) has called a similar process of mixing human and animal remains with material culture 'homogenisation'. I prefer to avoid this term, because it implies that all of these differences of material or reference were being reduced to a single entity or quality. It seems to me that these materials maintained some of the meaning associated with their previous use or experiences, and that these acts of immersion referenced the relations between those prior (and contemporary) social aspects.

of body and worldly parts was perpetuated, assisting their transference to other locations. The same may have been true for other sites, including Ballaharra - but here the site also became a focus for re-assembly and partial deposition.

All in all, I would argue that late Neolithic/ early Bronze Age sites on Man which contained human skeletal material were *neither* prevalently concerned with ancestors *nor* individuals. The signatures of these sites is far more complex than either of these interpretative schemes would allow. Unlike at Ballaharra there were no animal bones or items of material culture present, and each cremation appears to have been part of only one skeleton. However, 'part' is still the key word. Skeletal evidence from Knocksharry is conclusively partial; one skull, one jaw and skull, and one set of legs are the only skeletal remains discussed in any detail<sup>13</sup> (Cubbon 1934: 449). Cremated parts are also present, as are quartz blocks, and knapped-out fragments of quartz which, the author argues, must have been knapped elsewhere (perhaps wherever the bodies were rendered physically partial), and then deposited at Knocksharry, because smaller knapping debris was not present (ibid.: 450-1). This would seem to reiterate my assertion that parts of bodies, quartz blocks and stones, flints and flakes and fragments of pottery were brought to later Neolithic sites specifically for the purpose of admixing or immersion into related substances and locales. Moving into the Bronze Age at Killeaba, even when deposition would indicate the presence of single skeletons, there is still no reason to interpret this as a direct reflection of life any more than for multiple cremations. The general equation in prehistoric archaeology that more things and more single and whole burials make more individuals and more 'possessions' (e.g., Cooney and Grogan 1994:73) is untenable. I would dispute the equation of possessions with the use of artefacts in the later Neolithic, and I would certainly reject the linking of these concepts to Manx sites where whole bodies were not being cited. The relationship between people and things in societies where other forms of personhood exist is never as simple as the notion of ownership or possessions would allow (e.g., cf. Strathern 1988, Weiner 1992, Battaglia 1990).

The site of Ballateare (figure 9, Appendix entry 3) offers an interpretative opportunity to tie these sites back into the wider trends of the later Neolithic. Ballateare was the original "cemetery of the Ronaldsway culture" excavated by Gerhard Bersu, but displays many characteristics which lead to alternative interpretations and possibilities for

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<sup>13</sup> It could be argued that these remains are all that survived various processes of post-depositional decay. However, in the light of the mixture of partial bodies at Ballaharra, and no direct evidence of such decay, I think this deposit deserves to be considered as an 'intact' deposit in its own right.

further study. The most notable feature of this site is the arrangement of post-holes on an east-west axis, in three parallel rows. I have interpreted the longest of these rows as a screen which divides the area of the site where the jars are buried from the area where a large number of hollows are cut into the ground, left to fill, and successively recut (Figure 9). This area is the location of a further series of small screen panels, and is intersected at the northern end by the third east-west screen. Beyond this screen lies a foundation trench of unknown date and a further area of cremation deposition and burning, again without any jar deposition. The shape of this trench is such that it would appear to be either hengiform, or even possibly the terminus of a cursus-like earthwork. My interpretative plan of this site illustrates this information more clearly (Figure 10), and also suggests a similarity in form to the entrance to the Northern Circle at Durrington Walls (Wainwright and Longworth 1971:plan opposite page 42, cf. Barrett 1994a:25 for an interpretative illustration). This is not to say that there is any necessary correlation between the two sites, other than that the excavation at Ballateare would appear to indicate an area which was screened off, reflecting a difference in activity either side of the screen. The screens appear to have been raised only at the end of the use sequence and I speculate about what this could mean for the overall interpretation of the site below (and see chapter 6, narratives 7 and 8).

Bersu (1947:168) suggested that “[t]he hollows filled with light soil seem likely to be connected with occupation, but not for permanent habitation”. This would suggest a divided use of the site, with one part concerned with burial of jars, and the other with short-term habitation. As I have argued throughout this chapter, neither a general understanding of ‘habitation’, nor of ‘burial’ seem entirely appropriate in Manx Neolithic contexts. I would consider it more likely that Ballateare was a locale for activity which was concerned with the tropes of mixing/burning/cremation, and tracing a route through the landscape. The area north of the main screen was a mass of recut hollows, in which charcoal, bone and flint were found. Bersu notes that some of the hollows were filled with a darker soil, and contained large pot fragments as well as flint chips and cores (Bersu 1947:163). Further north of this area lay the foundation trench and another two screens, beyond which lay a heavily burnt area. As with at Ronaldsway and Ballaharra the pattern of burning and screening was reiterated.

Two burnt areas lay either side of what I would tentatively refer to as the entrance/exit of the screen<sup>14</sup>, and to its south. This is the area in which almost all of the cremations and jars were found. Out of 18 deposits, 3 lie inside the fence (7, 17 and 18) and 13 outside with a further two in an uncertain area (5 and 6). All of the 13 jars outside of the fence are to the east of my 'entrance'; the area west of it has not been excavated. The relationship between the cremations and the jars is such that, while it is possible that the jars were buried full of cremated bone and (the majority) covered with slate lids, I would argue that the bone was scattered around the mouths of the jars which were protruding slightly above the ground. This bone material seems to have been carefully picked out of a cremation fire: "*No charcoal was mixed with the dense deposits of these bones.*" (Ibid.:165). Unfortunately the only level of skeletal analysis for the site are the comments that "The fragments of the bones of skulls on deposits 5, 7, 14 are those of children and the small bones in 7 and 13 make it also likely that children were buried here." (Ibid.:167). Ultimately, it appears as though the excavators considered each deposit to be the remains of one individual, but it is difficult to tell how much of this understanding was based on assumption. Given the level of skeletal analysis, I would argue that it is possible that these deposits were each made up of more than one person's remains, and the possibility of some animal remains cannot be ruled out. I must stress that only Ballaharra contained deposits where human and animal bones are sealed in one context<sup>15</sup>. However, if the longbones and scraps of bones from the later Neolithic temporary camps are considered, pieces of animal, human and thing were still being admixed in a variety of places and practices. Furthermore, a cremation recently recovered from the later Neolithic timber defined enclosure at Dunragit in Dumfries and Galloway has been identified to contain both human and animal bone (Thomas et. al. 1999). This site is extremely close to the Isle of Man. As I argued in chapter 3, there is good reason to suppose that many such cremation deposits if examined may have contained such a mixture. In any case, admixing at Ballateare would appear to involve two aspects or phases, separated by the screen only afterwards. In the northern area bone and material culture are being used in surface

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<sup>14</sup> As has been noted, Grooved Ware pottery and desings are often associated with entrances to sites (e.g Bradley 1997:112). The Grooved Ware pottery from Ballateare was recovered from the burnt area directly to the South-east of my postulated 'entrance'.

<sup>15</sup> The skeletal and faunal remains from Ronaldsway have not been discussed in any detail. However, among the numerous longbones of sheep and cattle, one human femur was found. Other than parts of cattle horn, no bones were recovered from the site which were not longbones (Maltby in Burrow 1997, volume 2:96-99). Unfortunately none of these bones can be sorted into contexts. Although a language of partible deposition may have taken place here, I will not attempt to relate to it in this thesis.

activities which seem to be concerned with breaking down, knapping and cremating, burning and, perhaps later on, restricted movement. In the southern area, bones are deposited around, inside or within jars, in one case (number 1) alongside a miniature jar a flint knife and a bone pin (carved from animal bone), seemingly not involved in the act of cremation (ibid.:165, 166). The direct intermixing of bone, animal bone/artefact, and material culture is a notable feature of this deposit.

Bersu indicates that the trench and the post-holes may well be later than the cremation activity and the hollows (ibid.:165). There is no indication of the relationship between the burnt areas and the screens, but it seems that the surface activities and burying of jars with cremation deposits is earlier than the screening off of some areas. It may well be that the division of the site is later than the cremation and deposition activity. Perhaps the cremation took place elsewhere. It is possible that the route between the cremation ground and this location was reified by the construction of posts along the line of the trench. In such a scenario it seems that Bersu's *ustrinae*, in which no bone - but some Grooved Ware pottery - was found, may actually have been fires marking the route. It is to the significance of such routes, within and connecting places where different types of substance were sedimented into each other, to which I now turn.

### **Part Three**

#### **Routes and rootedness**

So what, then are the relationships between the earlier Neolithic 'megaliths', the later 'house', 'camps' and screened sites? Where does Billown fit into this disjointed series of patterns? Screened areas, routes, deposition along those routes and fires associated with them appear to have been an emergent trend from the earlier to the later Neolithic. The connections between these sites can be traced most clearly not in congruity of substance or plan, but in the signatures of deposition. The earliest screens on the island were made of stone, and were used to guide movement at the tail of Cashtal yn ard. Routes of deposition may even be referenced by the location of remains at Mull Hill as a place for travelling through and drawing links across the landscape. This trend is actually greatly reified in the later Neolithic. In chapter 5 I discussed the relationship between stone and water in 'megalithic' sites. There is no comparable relationship between wood and water in the archaeological material. And yet, as I outlined at the end of chapter 5, I also consider

there to be certain performative similarities between Ballateare and earlier sites like Ballaharra, Mull Hill and Cashtal yn ard.

Part of the importance of wooden lines may have been their potential as continually replaceable structures, stressing the changeability and momentum or temporality of these sites (something which is evident in the timber monuments of southern Scotland; Thomas et al. 1999, 1998, Brophy 1998). A change in the use of materials from wood to stone does not necessarily indicate greater concern for structure or permanence, and likewise, a shift from stone to wood or earthen monuments does not denote a loss of interest in the practices carried out at passage or chambered sites. Indeed, the re-use of these sites would indicate that there was a fusion of interests. On one hand the paths which the chambered sites were part of were being restricted, blocked over. On the other hand, the use of screens and channels at Ballaharra, or the causewayed ditches and cobbled walkway at Billown seem to indicate an interest in expanding the citation of paths in the mid Neolithic. The late Neolithic could be seen as a period of growth in the repeated use of paths which sedimented into places. I have interpreted earlier Neolithic places as types of path; given the reading of passage sites which I discussed in chapter 5, this continual journeying throughout the later Neolithic could have been a reiteration of the trends of the earlier Neolithic. Temporary camps like Ballachrink and Ballavarry can therefore be interpreted as precisely that - temporary *pauses* in a journey, places where the media of those journeys are renegotiated. Killeaba and Ballateare may have been constructed during further episodes of journeying where, as at the chambers some centuries before, pieces of material culture and persons were pulled apart, circulated, re-assembled and even interred together. The scattering of parts of persons and things in the camps may well have been another phase of this process, among other things. While the activities which took place were clearly not the same, they shared a genealogy, they emerged from overlapping fields of discourse.

Ballateare is once again an important site in reading this part of the Manx Neolithic. As noted above, a number of features composed Ballateare, notably;

- bonfires
- burial of whole jars, small artefacts and cremated bones
- the raising of screens or lines of posts

There would seem to be a number of elements which both connect and separate Ballateare to/from megalithic sites. Firstly, the use of fire. Perhaps, if stone was performatively

associated with water, then wood was associated with a number of metaphors related to its use. I would suggest that among these was the association of the practices at this site with fire and smoke. Burning took place at both earlier and later sites in the guise of cremation, pot firing, burning mounds of stone and slate, and bonfires, cooking or smoking pits and similar features.

Secondly, the shift from 'stone' to 'wood' in an 'economy of substances' (Thomas 1998). I would argue that it is possible for the metaphorical and metaphysical connotations of one substance to become subsumed by another. An important element of this argument is that the original connotations of the site need not be lost. The change from stone sites to wooden sites does not necessarily mean that the metaphorical and metaphysical currency of stone/water had disappeared altogether. The associations of travel, water and movement with megalithic forecourts may have become so heavily sedimented in the practices which took place at these sites, and therefore in the sites themselves, that the sites and practices came to take on the 'meaning' of fluidity themselves. To put it another way, *as each megalithic site and each site of burning and gathering so often carried the association of 'water' and personal solubility, so it became less necessary to reiterate this, to 'write it in stone'*. In this interpretative shift the paradigm which supported the earlier importance of megaliths could now stand on its own, and even *dematerialise* its roots. *Further than this, the metaphor of immersion or fluidity or permeation was no longer associated with the substance, but with the sites and activities.* As chambers were closed and forecourts became the focus of activity so these courts or open areas took on new significances of their own, but this significance related to the earlier practices. These practices of burning, moving around (or through) screens, gathering and depositing parts of things/persons connected the open areas of sites like Ballateare to the older forecourts. To some extent, the success of such transitions may have depended on an erasure of several previous associations. Perhaps the metaphorical process even underwent a reorientation, from water/fluidity to fire and smoke, or a growing alignment of personal confluence as being like both water *and* smoke. Whereas stone was being aligned with water as permeable, a later trope of aligning wood with smoke and fire as part of a process of breaking things down and also changing state (solids to smoke; movements of parts between persons) could have emerged. Other elements would have ensured continuity - the use of quartz, for example (no longer in orthostats, but continually in deposition) or continuities in specific practices (such as the deposition of quartz), harking back or *deferring authority* to past

heritage - while the discourse of permeability distracted attention from its 'original' material trappings.

At this point, I must return to Ballateare to support my argument. I would ask the reader to compare figures 9 and 10 again. As I argued at the end of chapter 5, Ballateare has a certain similarity to Cashtal yn ard or Ballaharra, down to the areas in which deposition of remains took place, and the stress on the importance of a facade and forecourt. Once again, the sea is behind the 'tail' of the site. Here, at the 'rear', a gap was left between the screens large enough for entry or exit; perhaps an exaggeration of the permeability of megalithic passages to partible persons. This site appears to have been the location of a renegotiation of past meanings of personhood. I will not offer any single reading of this process, but rather stress a number of possible political situations which its construction and use may have entailed.

One possibility is that, after a period of relaxation in the trope of divisible, joint or partible personhood, one interest group decided to reiterate past discourses by performing activities in a style which had been performed at megaliths. This could be described as an incomplete remembering of practices which I have argued characterised some of the megalithic sites on the island. In the process of this remembering, the agents would have used material metaphors which were persuasive to their peers, and which now carried the connotations of fluidity, relatedness and travel/immersion into the landscape once specifically associated with stone, but which had since lost connection with those metaphors.

Another possibility is that the tropes of divisible and/or joint personhood were decreasing in power (being *dematerialised*), losing their persuasiveness and so had become a subject for material contention. Under this interpretation, these tropes had resurfaced as a specific concern because they had fallen under the critical eye, with some people supporting them as a vital part of their way of life, and others questioning their importance, and perhaps experimenting with different ways of life. The range of depositional practices around the site may be testimony to the conflicting discourses which were practised by the different people or interest groups using the site.

A third possibility is that the people who used Ballateare (and possibly those who used Ronaldsway - see below) were mainly 'dissidents' of the divisible forms of personhood. Perhaps these people or groups were trying to express their objections to the prevalent schemes of personhood through a form of parody. To those heavily sedimented

within a discourse, a close - but still different - iteration of the discourse may be one among a few conceivable practices which stand against a particular trope, discourse or regime (cf. Butler 1993). Returning to practices which had not been part of daily life for several centuries<sup>16</sup> may have been a deliberate act of *reinterpreting the past, and the present*, through some form of parody or refutation of the dominant discourse. This form of 'revisionism' would have directly challenged the authority of discourse, by laying bare its roots in the past. The spell of deferral may have been in danger of breaking or being circumvented and laid open to criticism. If the power of authority is in deferral of authority to the past, then to visit that past may have been to call the bluff on that authority. Some of the parties involved in practices at Ballateare may have been doing just that. *Instead of accepting a particular interpretation of the past, the later Neolithic re-use of megalithic forecourts, and the construction of Ballateare may have included a movement which was re-assessing the role of their history. Perhaps time was not such a potent linear device for hiding the genealogies of discourse. Perhaps revisiting past practices, places and events was a metaphorical possibility.*

These interpretations are not mutually exclusive; nor are they exhaustive. They are starting points. Each takes account of personal relations within a discursive field including the social use of space, routine, and relations with the landscape or wider world. Personhood may have been only a marginal concern compared to other issues, although these issues would have had consequences for personal relations. None of these possibilities has any necessary implication for considering the 'ethnicity' of the people who used the Manx sites. As I have said, activities and substances may have been rooted in places, rather than belonged to particular groups of people. These activities may have been under contention during the terminal Neolithic, and people's daily lives on the island may have revolved around a variety of discursive schemes. On both mainlands (Ireland and the UK), similar concurrent discourses of divisible, joint, separate or integrated personhoods may have been under contention.

To recap my interpretation of Ballateare from both chapters 5 and 6, and above, the site displayed a continuity with earlier Neolithic practices, but a continuity which could have arisen from subversion. In comparison to the sites discussed in the earlier part of this

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<sup>16</sup> Although the use of chambers and passages may have ceased 400 years ago, the use of megalithic forecourts and possibly some passages or chambers did continue. There was no definitive break in these traditions of activity; I consider it likely that social memories which related to the use of these sites existed, regardless of the relation between those memories and early Neolithic events in terms of veracity.

chapter, Ballateare shows some concern with the integrity or wholeness of jars, scrapers, bone artefacts. It could be said to refer back to early and mid Neolithic practice. The use of wood may have been due to the now changing use of stone, with cists and stone circles emerging out of the terminal Neolithic. Screening may have referred to cutting off the reworking of experience from the wider landscape, but, more likely here, seems to have reiterated the partiality of personal experience, and cited the routes through the landscape which people, animals and things took *together*. Ballateare may have referenced complex and nested set of contradictions, which both seem to have fed on and commented on earlier traditions.

The question remains, how does Ballateare compare to Billown, Ballavarry or Ronaldsway? All of these sites were being used for breaking things into a variety of component parts. At Billown and Ballateare movement of a prescribed nature was also part of this process. Under my interpretation social parties were being made from divisible parts, sites were being departed, once the parts had been put into compartments, placed together. All of the other temporary camps discussed here have only been subjected to small scale and partial excavations, revealing a selective sample of points on the paths of these series of Neolithic activities. It would seem that, as has often been noted, the Neolithic is not best understood by examining sites, but landscapes (e.g. Bradley 1998, 1997, 1993, Barrett 1994, Darvill 1997b, Tilley 1994, Thomas 1993, Topping 1997, Whittle 1997). What were the places of smaller, temporary sites like Ballavarry in the wider landscape, in relation to older sites, which were perhaps 'historic' to people in the later Neolithic, sites like Mull Hill? If these later Neolithic sites were routes through the landscape which rooted people in that landscape, what kinds of landscapes and routes were being cited? Did they differ significantly from earlier Neolithic relations with the landscape?

Hirsch (1995) discusses the relationship between paths and landscapes, concluding that paths are not tunnels through wild space, but sedimentations of practice which build up space itself. I do not see paths through the Neolithic landscape on the Isle of Man as safe routes through an unknown, dark, feared wilderness, but a means of interacting with elements of the landscape. Various authors have tried to focus on these relations of landscape use, coining phrases like 'taskscape' (Ingold 1993), or adapting terms like 'dwelling' (Ingold 1993, 1995) in order to convey a lived landscape. There have been a variety of approaches to human-animal-environment relations throughout the history of

archaeology (e.g., Flannery 1973, Higgs 1975, Whittle 1997, Ingold 1995). While this debate is too broad to cover, it is important to note that recent approaches to these relations have emphasised the social and cultural symbiosis of humans and animals (cf. Ingold 1984, 1995). The presence of close relation between humans and animals is cited in the Neolithic material in a number of ways. The most notable of these is the deposition of animal bone alongside human bone at Ballaharra, or the deposition of animal longbones among the rich material culture at Ronaldsway. The pig-bone pin from Ballateare indicates a certain relation between animal bone, pottery and flint. Animals are also important in terms of mobility. Most of the faunal remains from the Manx Neolithic were from domesticated animals; sheep and cattle mostly. These herd animals require a certain amount of movement through the landscape, movement which could be repeated on a seasonal or yearly basis, forming paths. But the area not taken in by those paths need not have been 'wild' or unknown. Certain places on these routes were increasingly used to incorporate different social elements into each other, crushing up pottery of different styles (and perhaps of different ages) for example at Ballavarry and West Kimmeragh. Objects (including human bone), animals and persons which may have been in circulation for long periods of time were gradually disintegrated into each other at places which were perhaps visited regularly. The daily routes of travel were involved in rooting people in the landscape, were used to recite the relations which made up their wider world.

The social context of the Neolithic on the Isle of Man appears to me to be one which enveloped, imbued and formed a world which was not dissected into the components landscape, person, animal and object. I argued in chapter 5 that, because of its outwards-facing nature, its permeability and perforated style, I would see Mull Hill as an immersion into the wider landscape. In a similar way, I would argue that the activities of many of the sites discussed in this chapter are orientated within fields of reference which are not concerned with the identification of a specific monument, but with a wider group of activities. While the activities have changed, the discursive field has altered and the materiality produced was therefore different, the broadest discursive fields of reference and activity were still important in the later Neolithic.

Alongside the literature reviewed above on Neolithic houses, much has been written about Neolithic landscape, settlement and mobility (Topping 1997 being one recent collection of viewpoints). The picture of the Manx Neolithic which is emerging from my interpretations is one of a high level of mobility which was not centred around key places,

nor required the growth of a distinct ethnic identity or sedentism. Rather, certain places may have been emergent from networks of movement and practice which crossed the island. These places need not have been kept distinct from the rest of the world (i.e., sites should not be seen as bounded, liminal or otherwise separated from 'reality'). They do not display borders which exclude (but see below for Ronaldsway), but are composed of numerous entrances and paths. Most of the later Neolithic sites are located overlooking the current coastline on low hills or in valleys; but then, so are most of the earlier Neolithic sites. There does not seem to have been a significant shift in geographic regions used. The sea, and places across the sea appear to have been important in the Manx Neolithic, and I see no logical reason to suppose that people did not move around the Irish Sea and further afield as part of a repeated cycle. Arguments made for the insularity of the Isle of Man in the Neolithic do not convince me of anything other than that there is a relationship between places and appropriate activities or deposits.

The dual pattern which I would like to stress here is the passage through Neolithic sites, and the activities of mixing parts of things which took place along these routes. Returning to the language I introduced in the previous chapter, many of these sites show a concern with partibility, with providing places to depart from, and the mixing of parts into compartments. I would argue that these are not necessarily acts of deliberate and structured deposition, but the result of surface activities of mixing and substituting parts among other parts. Each of these parts may have carried associations which emerged from the surrounding landscape, and described the site as part of that landscape, as well as the activities of parting themselves. The resulting site was itself only part of a vibrant activity. This activity could have involved many aspects of the local - and not so local - world, but there is no evidence that this necessarily defined the site as a specific location, nor tied it into an overarching mythological structure as a microcosm of reality. I would rather point out the way each site emerges from the background world, a world which may have been a seething mass of people, animals, plants, places, and more esoteric aspects. In short, these sites can only be explained in terms of a landscape if landscape is defined along the lines of a living map of materiality (*qua* Whittle 1997). These sites encapsulate aspects of materialities, materialities which do not seem to have totalised, which were not uniform, and which displayed radical differences of being. Instead of viewing place as key to these acts of performance, I think we could also imagine people moving through the Isle of Man making no distinction between paths and places, other than those which grew out of

specific activities. As I have interpreted these activities, they were not site-specific, and did not create distinctions between the everyday world and the ritual, in terms of either time or space. In short, a kind of everyday immersion in a materiality which is at once fundamentally meaningful (reflected upon, spiritual, concerned with existence and ideological struggles, etc.) and also fundamentally habitual (unreflexive, absorbed in activity, repetitive) was expressed in a way which was not concerned with separating out strands of life. Wherever strands of distinction emerged, they were co-mingled with other aspects of reality.

Alongside camps which may be places where routes or persons rooted in the landscape met, there are a minority of sites which are enclosed. Screens, I have so far argued can be a guide to activity, or reiterate a path of movement. But they can also be used to separate place from landscape, to enclose. A current argument in Neolithic archaeology is that later Neolithic sites, especially henges and palisade enclosures, represent the closeted activities of the 'elites' (e.g. Bradley 1984, Barrett 1994a:29-32). Again, I am concerned at a certain interpretative flabbiness in such readings. Perhaps if, as I have argued for Mull Hill, early Neolithic sites were expressions of gathering together persons, things and events and referencing them back into the landscape, then screening off activity is a move to cancel or refute those connections. The status of persons who subvert, refute or challenge discursive norms is seldom described as 'elite' within our society. A variety of social subgroups perform alternative identities to the norm. Some of these can do so precisely because they are elite in some way; film stars, pop-stars and millionaires, or media groups, for example. However, it is largely people who subvert convention who perform out alternative social identities for themselves; New Age travellers, Punks (Hebdige 1979), 'tramps', gypsies. While the activities of these people are non-normative and could leave alternative archaeological signatures to what we may expect from the late 20th century, and while they flout convention, they would clearly not be called 'elites'. In the later Neolithic on the Isle of Man the people who wished to carry out activities in enclosed space, separated from the wider world may have been considered strange and marginal. Where the opening out of routes was a reaffirmation of immersion in the world, or integration with places or people outside of the here and now, closing off those routes may have been a very different act.

This brings me, full circle, back to interpretations of Ronaldsway. The large number of artefacts, some of which were damaged, but few broken, make the site

extremely unusual. Similar 'houses' have elsewhere been interpreted as 'cult houses', elite centres (e.g., Moffatt 1978). I have already argued that Ronaldsway shares some similarities with Neolithic sites elsewhere in the UK and Eire, but that none of those analogies were entirely satisfactory. Instead, I left the section with a description of Ronaldsway in which I implicated practices of breaking up and burning which it shared with other late Neolithic sites. As well as the presence of this trope, there is also a strong element of intact deposition. The site was screened off, perhaps, but in no clearly defined fashion<sup>17</sup>. Instead, the aspect which defines the limits of the site, as far as previous archaeologists as concerned, is the trench cut into the subsoil in which the site sat. This trench seems to have been rectangular or keyhole shaped. Where else on the island did such practices take place? A trench of similar proportions was cut into the subsoil at Ballaharra, into which the chamber was sunk. What other connections with 'megalithic' practices were there at Ronaldsway?

Grooved Ware was found at Ronaldsway, and in the beginning of the chapter I stressed that it was found in Neolithic activity centres misidentified as houses elsewhere in these islands. However, Grooved Ware is also associated with megalithic passages and with entrance areas at henge sites (Bradley 1984:49-53, 1997:112, 1998:95). As such, the designs on Grooved Ware (and decorated material in general), have been interpreted as a signifier for passage, liminal space, or if considered as entoptic phenomena, for entrance into trance (cf. Bradley 1997:112, Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1993). Ronaldsway also contained an incised schist plaque, cut in Grooved Ware style decorations, and a number of 'blanks'. It would seem that this site may reference certain aspects of passage or chamber sites to some degree. While I have argued that Ballateare feeds on earlier Neolithic discourses of travel, partibility and immersion through reiterating practices once associated with megaliths, Ronaldsway may reference different earlier Neolithic trends. The enclosure of the chamber and the association with trance or travel I have postulated for megaliths may have been referenced. But equally, the predominance of artefacts in a 'hoard' fashion, and the separation of the site from the outside world may be indications of secrecy and subversion. If there was a trope of division, joint personhood and above all the

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<sup>17</sup> It is debatable whether Ronaldsway was an enclosed structure or building (Darvill 1996b), or whether it was rather an open space intersected by screens and dug into the ground. Given a certain amount of land-surface truncation since the Neolithic, it is possible that the trench was quite substantial. While I am not convinced that Ronaldsway constituted an enclosed structure I have decided to accept this possibility in the current discussion. Even if it was not a structure, then the series of screens could still have been involved in a form of enclosure.

sharing of aspects of the material world during the later Neolithic, then this site may have been the location of a subversion of that trend. A clandestine refusal to share, to be absorbed on other people's terms? The axes, plaques and pots deposited were largely intact. While it is possible to see this as a practice of divisibility or partibility, if it was then it was one which may have cited relations which integrated far less than would have been expected. Whatever took place here, perhaps it was intended to be kept away from the wider paths of the Manx Neolithic.

## **Conclusion**

The trends which emerged in the later Neolithic on Man could be characterised as a set of related differences. That is, they stressed the ways that all parts of the world were related to each other, but there were different ways of expressing those relationships. Each site displayed a very different signature. In each, the discursive flux of the time was cited. Earlier Neolithic trends and activities were continually reconsidered. Some were being replaced, but the majority were perhaps only modified, manifesting themselves in different ways. Just as the personhood and personal relations in the earlier Neolithic were diverse, so they may have continued to be in the later Neolithic, and perhaps became more variable. Personal experience and personal practice seem to have been concerned with daily routines, but those routines were overtly differentiated. The types of personal connections with each other and other social aspects of the world were more concerned with immersion and absorption of the self among other selves. However, this greater level of immersion may also have inspired a reaction by some. While it may have become both an ordinary and unquestionable experience of reality, it may also have become a focus for contention towards the end of the Neolithic. In some sites it appears as though activities which took place were attempts to bring these structures and relations of personhood itself into question.

No single grand narrative, trope, or definitive interpretation can be offered for this material, but in the final chapter I draw together the strands of interpretation which connect this Neolithic archaeology with the theoretical conclusions of earlier chapters. How do these reinterpretations relate to the conventional accounts of the Manx Neolithic which I critiqued in chapter 2? Have I presented a partial account of some trends which have not been considered in depth before, or have I reiterated the structure of interpretation for the Manx Neolithic too closely?

## Chapter Eight: Conclusions: Personhood, materiality and the Manx Neolithic.

*The archaeological past is eternally a foreign country. This is its potential, not its loss.*  
(Bapty 1990:274)

### Introduction

Manx Neolithic relations were generated through material practice. These relationships sedimented themselves in bodies, persons, objects, animals and places alike. It would be simplistic to divide the Manx Neolithic into categorical aspects like individuals and landscapes, person and world, or ritual and domestic. Rather, the material deposits would seem to indicate that personhood was equated with a state of ontological immersion in the material world. The relationships between different - but related - social aspects may have been of paramount importance. Sometimes these relations *integrated* people into their world or their interactions with others, sometimes they *immersed* elements of personal experience or activity into the places and people where or with whom those experiences had taken place. Sometimes those relations *separated* people (or parts of people) from each other, from parts of their bodies, from elements of their selves. The connections which emerged from these relationships may have been strongly metaphorical in nature. These metaphors did not operate in a process of 'reading' or conscious thought. They were experienced. They were cited in the ways that material bodies were dismembered and then re-membered differently, used in creating new connections been different aspects of social life. A different metaphysical reality to any experienced today could have been generated by the relations of agency which produced persons in the Manx Neolithic.

Neolithic lives and worlds were, I have argued, very different from our own. Neolithic persons' relations with animals were closer, were part of everyday life, a substantial part of social and economic relations. Relations with animals may have been mediated through relations with other persons (and vice versa), but the connections between one person and another, one person and their domestic animals or prey may have been extremely important in the life<sup>1</sup> of that person. Their experience as a person may

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'identity' could easily be used here - but I must stress that there is no necessary universal link between repeated practice and identity. I would prefer to use the word 'entity', and have only resisted doing so for fear of lack of clarity (see chapters 4 and 5).

have been greatly shaped by the animals they bred and exchanged (sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, perhaps even dogs), hunted (birds?) or hunted with (dogs), allowed in their closest relationships. Plants and vegetation were no doubt also important, and close connections to particular foods, medicines and raw materials for making other objects may have been extremely strong. Likewise, items like axes or pots, things which may have been of the utmost importance to have to hand at a daily level could have been a key part of personal make-up. These items may not have been deposited with human remains as grave goods, as accompaniments for the dead, but because they were a key part of personal conduct and interaction; a part of the person. Human bones were only one part of a social equation which indicated and reiterated the relations which composed the person; animal bones or body parts, objects, and even minerals (quartz, slate) or vegetable matter (grain, wood, charcoal), perhaps even clothing and other material which has been lost may have been part of the person. Places like the sea, small islands (e.g. the Calf of Man), other Neolithic sites, hilltops, may all have been places of significance in personal memory and biography with which each act of deposition was tied. But crucially, 'the body' was never laid to rest. At least part of each body was burnt away, removed from the site, or socially circulated within the wider, ongoing daily routine.

This thesis can be broadly divided into three tasks. The first task was a critique of certain conventional assumptions and interpretative frameworks. These frameworks pervade Manx Neolithic archaeology through a wider discursive field. Archaeology as a discipline has its roots in colonial activity, a masculinist history, a structure of desire associated with knowing everything, going everywhere (see chapters 1-3). This discourse does not know how to fail. In its desperation to succeed it *will* find the true past, at the cost of other pasts and other presents. I critiqued this discourse both generally, and by locating its symptoms in accounts of Manx prehistory. This critique was accomplished largely by illustrating how certain metonyms structured archaeological interpretative thought.

The second task was to consider what kind of interpretative schemes provided the most useful contrast to or perspective on the material I was studying. A performative approach, one which dealt with activity and repetition, emerged as one which both completed the critiques I was advocating, and provided a basis for reinterpretation. This approach inspired me to attempt an archaeology which focused on practice, on cultural

material, on personhood and place simultaneously, without need for typology or category, without separating the elements of study from each other.

The final task lay in actually reinterpreting the Manx Neolithic material culture. I chose to do this by focusing on one particular element - personhood. This focus allowed me to study the formation of a specific materiality while maintaining a particular subject of study. The idea was to present a reading of a place and period through a partial perspective. The product was a narrative which is concerned with discourse and the production of relations and selves, experience and metaphysics, but deals with little else in any detail (e.g., economy, subsistence, environment, spiritual beliefs, social hierarchy or structure are only touched upon fleetingly). This involved moving between a variety of scales; the local and site-specific, the island as a network of related but different sites, and the discursive field which I interpreted and which linked Manx Neolithic activity to activity elsewhere in the Neolithic. As well as geographical scale, I found it necessary to shift temporal scale constantly; from the sequential development of a site, to relations between people over a period of 1000 years, to social relations over almost a 3000 year period. At times I found it incredibly difficult to reconcile these scales, because I did not want to write a synthesis or grand history of the Neolithic of the Isle of Man. Reminding myself that I was dealing with a period of actually only some 150 years (archaeological enquiry on the island from the 1860's to the 1990's), and a history of modern thought was a great help.

So how do my reinterpretations compare with the prevalent discourse which I critiqued in chapters 2 and 3? I identified three main metonymic components of the 'grand narrative' for the Neolithic on the Isle of Man; cultures, families and individuals. Later, in my reinterpretations I provided readings which did not rely on these metonyms. Displacing these metonyms was a crucial part of the project, a part which illustrated the short antiquity of so much archaeological interpretation compared to the possibilities for social and cultural difference in prehistory before the discourses of scientific enquiry developed. How were these 'displacements' effected?

### **Displacing 'Cultures'**

The Ronaldsway Culture was heavily entrenched in the accounts of the Isle of Man in the later Neolithic. The presence of 'Culture' groups in the accounts of the earlier neolithic was slightly more subtle; cultural groups were represented by their tombs, pottery

styles or the types of stone tools they produced. Sites were either described as domestic (almost unconscious) reflections of cultural group traits, or deliberate statements about group land ownership and identity ('tombs', 'ancestors', 'clans', etc). While there had been very little work in this area on the island, much of what existed in wider literature on the Neolithic was called into question.

I tried to disrupt these interpretations along a number of axes. Firstly, by focusing on the use of landscape. The understanding of landscape which I employed in chapters 5 and 7 does not divide land up into regions, each region being the property of a cultural group or field. Rather, I discussed landscape as a location of material experience, one which saw people as sedimented in that landscape. My reading of the use of landscape in the Neolithic was one which accentuated the mobility of people and animals, and the connections between different types of place. I tried not to separate places which showed different 'styles' or physical morphology from each other. I also approached the sites as elements of landscape, and argued that they were not distinct locations, but rather citations of daily experience of that wider landscape. Another way that I had attempted to displace cultural groups was by denying the link between material culture style and ethnicity often implied by distribution studies. It is not acceptable to consider that as 'Ronaldsway' pottery was only found on Man a Ronaldsway culture which must have been confined to the island was the sole producer of that pottery. There is no reason why the island itself should not have been the appropriate location for depositing these jars, a practice observed by many different people passing through the region. A related element which I found useful here was a re-evaluation of work which indicates that the island was a stopping off point along a series of routes throughout the west of Britain and the east of Ireland (e.g. Davies 1945, 1946, Fleure and Neely 1936:373). These arguments were originally proposed by cultural historians, but can actually support a more fluid idea of cultural interaction and mobility during the Neolithic than many cultural historians are famed for.

Above all, however, I found the most effective way to displace the cultural group was by discussing cultural *activity*, and particularly those activities related to bodies. By taking an approach which considered the role of deposits of human remains *among other forms of social and cultural material*, I believe I have managed to provide a different perspective on Neolithic cultural activity on the Isle of Man. This approach also allowed me to compare the deposition of bodies on the Isle of Man with those from other parts of

the UK and Eire, breaking down the boundaries of cultural groups which approaches based on monument analysis or pottery style tend to perpetuate.

### **Displacing the Familiar**

One of the more difficult parts of the project was critiquing the assumption of the nuclear family and domestic houses in prehistory. The difficulty was not in finding texts which referenced this concept, but in distinguishing between kinship, family and the nuclear family. In the end I found that a set of related concepts conspired to produce a feeling of the familiar in daily life for accounts of the later Neolithic. The house, the homestead, the family plot in the cemetery, the hearth at the centre of the home, the larder and cooking pots all discussed by Bruce *et al.* (1947) had lain not quite dormant in the literature for over 50 years. These concepts in themselves were fairly easy to displace (see chapter 7, part one). What was more difficult was the question of how my interpretation of personal relations compared to the concept of kinship. In the end this was one of the matters I did not pursue in any detail, although I did discuss the problems with interpretations based on forms of kin relations like ancestry or clans. Elements of the familiar on which I concentrated more fully were the division between domestic and ritual activities (chapter 7). Once again I found that focusing on the relation between activity, landscape and personal relations I could provide an alternative account, one which dealt with the same 'evidence' but did not rely on laws of uniformity or practices based on empathy and inference of familiarity. The basis of the project in studying personhood was again of value - focusing on relations between persons and elements of the social world did provide an alternative view of 'kinship'. Discussing what kind of *relations* had taken place (those which integrated, separated or immersed, for example), seemed far more useful than discussing categories of kin. One final aspect of the familiar which I had to subvert was the division between the early Neolithic and the Ronaldsway culture. While the early Neolithic was studied through monuments interpreted as to do with death, 'tombs', the later Neolithic was being characterised as a time of relative familiarity, a time when domesticity was emerging alongside families, houses and proper cemeteries. This division between the strange and primitive (evident in Fleure and Neely's (1936:394-5) speculation about early Neolithic sexual beliefs, perhaps?) and the increasingly rational, domestic and familiar seemed rather heavily entrenched. Yet there were early Neolithic sites which were not to do with death, but a variety of daily practices; the pits and ditches at Billown Quarry,

the facets of the megalithic sites which indicate they may have been used for gatherings, for activities of personal movement and deposition of social material rather than simply the burial of the dead. A reinterpretation of the later Neolithic activities and their relations to the earlier activities brought out elements of 'Ronaldsway' sites which were not necessarily 'domestic' or 'cemeteries' but places for pursuing activities with histories. A diachronic approach to genealogy and activity helped to support a critique of period totalisation, and form the backbone of the project. Experimentation with alternative narrative expression helped me to think about what kinds of activities were overlapping, and highlighted the connections between action and archaeological 'signature' (chapter 6).

### **Displacing the Individual**

Displacing the individual was perhaps the most important part of the project. A re-evaluation of the idea of the person, of personal relations and experiences, allowed me to consider both the specificity of Manx Neolithic relations of personhood and also how they compared to those of other social and cultural contexts. Illustrating that the existence of the individual was an assumption was one starting point. Another was the realisation that a great many Neolithic burials across northern Europe were of partial bodies, often intermixed with parts of other bodies (human and animal) and material culture. From this position I could begin to consider how personal 'identity' relates to activity in different contexts, and then how different relationships might be manifested in materiality. I would stress that my interpretations of these factors is subjective, is intended to address only the discourses which I consider existed in the Neolithic on the Isle of Man. Although heavily influenced by Judith Butler and Marilyn Strathern I do not hold either of their approaches to be universally applicable (neither would they), which is why I used their theories to supply not only comparison but contrast. For example, Butler's view that repeated activity produces identity is one I refute when confronted with (among other things) Joyce's revelation that ancient Mayan sex acts had no necessary effect on the 'identity' of the agent. Butler's approach to the reiteration and production of identity (in its very broadest sense) is convincing for certain modern contexts, but cannot be taken as a model for the Neolithic in northern Europe. Equally, it would have been a mistake to read Strathern's accounts of dividuality as definitive of a particular relationship rather than a description of one mechanism for enjoying non-individualising relations. While I did not develop my ideas about specific types of Neolithic relations (gendering, age sets, interest groups), I did

work in contrast to the Melanesian ethnography, as well as alongside it - mainly by focusing in each instance on a specific deposit, a specific site on the Isle of Man. Again, by changing scales I was able to discuss a discourse as a manifestation of social relations, and activities at particular places. I had critiqued the individual as being too totalising, as able to link the minute into the general, but I found that in discussing any type of personhood this is a potential problem. However, I provided an account of variable personhoods, changeable relations between people and their worlds.

It was never my intention to provide a definitive or complete interpretation, a 'grand narrative', of the Manx Neolithic. What I have offered is simply one partial reading, one which I hope encourages disagreement, questioning and critical response. The reinterpretations are connected to the interpretative scheme, but they are not the only way that a performative approach can be effected. The last portion of the thesis (particularly chapter 6) is far more speculative than the earlier sections. It is my personal reinterpretation, based on what I understand to be the material situation, on site reports, visits to sites and museums, conversations with local archaeologists or specialists. It is nothing more than a tentative example of how a performative approach to personhood *can* be implemented in a context where there are no depictions of the body, no intact burials, no individual signatures to follow. This is what makes it different to other archaeological studies of 'the body'. An attention to space, activity and partial deposits of human remains has led me to a somewhat constrained interpretation. I did not investigate subsistence, land-use patterns, climatic change or demography, for example. But in the end I have produced an account of personhood which reflects a specific set of material relations. This is an account of past bodies after all.

I have argued that we can make statements about prehistoric persons' lives, despite the fact that we are unable to empathise with them, to think how they thought. We can create imaginative archaeologies which recognise the role of language in archaeology, and use that knowledge to our advantage. Not to reinforce normative modern ideas about daily life, but to explore different sorts of metaphorical links. Metaphor and metonym are structures of comprehension which can be deconstructed. This deconstruction is the first step in a process of the erasure of dominant understandings to allow a space for alternative expression, by using metaphor creatively, seeing the links between different practices and the materialities those practices generate and are generated by. This has a dual effect; to

release the imagination of the author from the restraints of what we think is possible; and to provide a structure for reinterpretation. Dominant modern ideas about personhood and experience are not the only accounts of persons' lives open to us. Alternative accounts of personhood in the present must be referenced alongside the dominant ones, otherwise the past will remain dominated by a normative present. Beyond this, what is possible in present discourses was not always possible in the past. What was possible in the past is not always possible in the present.

### **Metonyms and convention**

Metonymic and metaphorical connections are essential to discourse. The present discourse of archaeology is structured by these relationships. There is no reason to suspect a short history for metaphorical association or for discourse as a phenomenon. Rather, if any phenomenon can be said to appear - in radically different ways - in all known human contexts, it must be interaction, discourse. Discursive connections require critical thought in order to be seen, particularly within a professional discourse like archaeology. Within this discourse the relations of meaning between things are made more clear, but they also compose the pre-understandings archaeologists take to their material. A piece of bone 'means' a person, a body, an individual. A piece of pot 'means' the presence of the Ronaldsway culture. A fire, a structure around that fire 'means' families. As archaeologists focus more on these relations of understanding, and less on constructing such understandings themselves, archaeology has relied less and less on such unsafe assumptions. But discourses are tenacious, insidious. They lie at the very foundations of our thought and our experience. We cannot separate ourselves from the past, and the past of archaeology seems especially cloying.

Changes in archaeological thought, 'paradigm shifts', operate by heading in new directions, by asking different questions, and above all by forming new metaphors, new connections. While my attitude towards ideology, structure or gender may seem like I am side-stepping the issues, it has allowed me to avoid getting bogged down in the quicksand of well-rehearsed arguments (at least in this thesis). In any case, I believe that the archaeology I offer here *is* an account of gender, ideology and social structure; one which shows how these concerns can be addressed from different perspectives. Through drawing out particular metaphors between related aspects of the archaeological material, I have produced an archaeology which is specific and partial (persons, their experience of each

other, social relations as self-mediating within the conditions of agency and discourse which in turn guide those relations) and from this stance views the holistic (all elements of the world are connected, without 'the individual' or 'the society' being of absolute importance).

Archaeological understandings of past selves need to focus on relationships, not on categories or templates like the individual. Recognising the social specificity of metonyms is essential if we are to study the specificity of past relations. Metonym and metaphor are crucial elements of critique and reinterpretation.

### **A performative approach**

'The body' is not a unified phenomenon. Bodies can also be seen as collections of differentially charged aspects, which take on meaning through practice. Agency is not free will, but operates along the lines of power which constrain its possibilities. Agents reiterate 'regulatory fictions' in their daily actions. They fail to produce those fictions, but the activities regulate their bodies, generate their selves. We do not know what past regulatory fictions were like. We do not understand the constraints which enabled past agency. We only have access to the material media of citation, of performativity. Through this media we can interpret past activity, not in terms of models, categories or ideals, but in terms of materiality. We gain access to the media through which people tried to pass as their regulatory fictions, so we can infer that process, but rarely the intended fiction. In looking at the later Neolithic I have tried to link the citation of regulatory fictions from that time to earlier activities. After all, if meaning is always deferred to an unrecoverable past, and practice refers to prior practice, what better place to look for those fictions? The metaphors upon which those fictions are based may be reiterated, or may be 'dematerialised', hidden, denied - but still equally important for that. This approach to Neolithic archaeology capitalises on studies of the importance of polysemy, repeated practice, deferral of meaning and the social generation of agency which have been made by other archaeologists.

### **Reinterpretation and imagination**

In the introduction I argued that any theoretical framework erases some part of the past. Later in the thesis I argued that imagination is socially situated. I said that we cannot escape 'the prison-house of language' (Tilley 1989:192). Then I went on to provide some

imaginative accounts of Manx Neolithic activity, both in archaeological and poetic narratives. How is it possible to write about past activity without categorising it? It seems to me that the key is to get an idea of a discourse by seeing it out of the corner of your eye, knowing you can never pin it down, but deciding what bit of it you draw to the foreground. At the end of this project I have a feel for what I think about Neolithic practices and people on the Isle of Man, but I do not know what happened, I cannot 'see' them. I tried to use some of these feelings in chapter 6, to discuss the role language and my imagination has on the accounts I write. A situated narrative (situated in a present aim - I know I was not at Ballaharra in the Neolithic) offers an account of something particular. My accounts do not necessarily deny any phenomena, or relations as being possible in the Manx Neolithic<sup>2</sup>. They merely accentuate the relations which I consider as most interesting, most specific to Manx Neolithic activity, and most different to dominant ideas about present lives. Archaeological deposits can be used to critique archaeological thought, to show where the one does not fit the other, where the thought must be changed. The same deposits can be used to show the inadequacy of some non-archaeological thought for understanding the present alongside the past.

## Conclusion

Bapty's (1990:274; see above) statement that the past is a place which we cannot know, which remains rich because of its inexhaustible potential is liberating. The real question we have to ask when we write archaeology is of how we want to use that potential. I argue that it is most effective when it remains as potential, as unknown, because this is a reflection on our relationship with that past. Aspects of the past will remain unknown, but can be recognised as precisely that. This recognition in turn inspires critique of modern categories which aspired to be universal, to provide bridges to the past.

Neolithic materialities may have been very different to our own. Neolithic persons may have lived very different lives, experienced their materialities in ways we can only imagine. Their discourses will have been specific to them, are unlikely to have been reproduced anywhere in the modern world. Yet archaeologists have largely brought present understandings of the self to their interpretations of the Neolithic. These selves are often abstractions of a straight, white, male, middle-class individual. In recent years a consensus has formed that these model selves are ineffectual and unrepresentative of the

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<sup>2</sup> But they do deny the possibility that the Neolithic was the same as modernity anywhere in the world.

majority of either past or present lives. Yet little has been done to address this problem in specific prehistoric contexts - particularly by men. Where the problem has been addressed 'non-western' selves have often been substituted for the abstracted 'white man'. Due to anthropologists' interest in relationships many of these studies acknowledge the importance of relationships over the role of individuated selves, intentions, desires. Understanding that people in the past were capable of relationships and experiences which we are not is one step towards accepting the differences of the past. The specific histories of practice which composed past lives and material relations are open to interpretations which have been denied by focusing on histories of cultures, units of analysis or categories of social structure. Differences in practice denote differences in experience, discourse, materiality. These differences can only emerge once we accept that the relationship between past and present is not fixed, not certain, not uniform. Critical examination of archaeological remains can illuminate the points at which those remains rupture our seamless narratives about the past. It is through such critical approaches that alternative and fragmented accounts can be written, accounts which attempt to relate to the differences between past and present materialities or discourses.

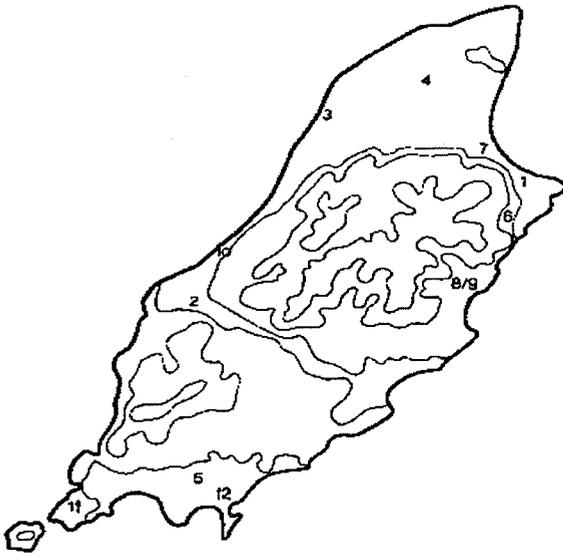
## Appendix: Neolithic Sites in the Isle of Man referred to in text.

### Contents

1. Ballafayle
2. Ballaharra
3. Ballateare
4. Ballavarry
5. Billown Quarry
6. Cashtal yn ard
7. Killeaba
8. King Orry's Grave North-East
9. King Orry's Grave South-West
10. Knocksharry
11. Mull Hill
12. Ronaldsway

The aim of this Appendix is to give a concise overview of each site, so that sites discussed in the main text can be easily identified and visualised. Full reinterpretation and

referencing of information is contained in the main text. All AMS dates are after Burrow and Darvill 1996.



Map 1: Map of the Isle of Man showing main sites discussed in text.

- |                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1: Ballafayle     | 7: Killeaba                    |
| 2: Ballaharra     | 8: King Orry's Grave northeast |
| 3: Ballateare     | 9: King Orry's Grave southwest |
| 4: Ballavarry     | 10: Knocksharry                |
| 5: Billown Quarry | 11: Mull Hill                  |
| 6: Cashtal yn ard | 12: Ronaldsway                 |

## Ballafayle

Grid Reference: SC478901

Excavator: P.M.C. Kermod, 1926.



View of forecourt and facade (right of picture) and retaining curb of side. (Photo facing south).

Significant finds: None (see description)

Radio-Carbon Dates: None

Periodic Associations: Middle Neolithic (structural similarities, material culture)

References: Kermod 1927, Henshall 1971, Kinnes 1992:45, 205, 85, Burrow 1997.

Description:  
 Ballafayle is a roughly trapezoid non-megalithic mound or cairn. The low facade includes some small orthostats. Orthostats forming the 'box'

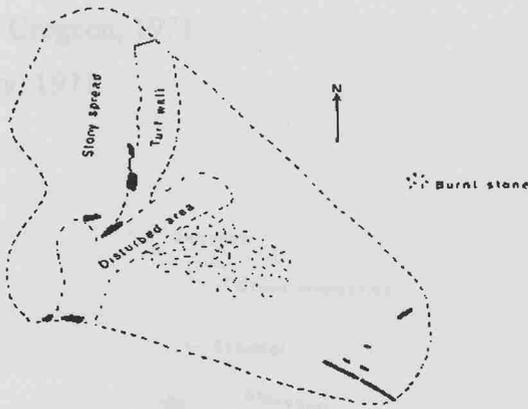


Figure 6 Ballafayle  
 0 4 15 m

structure at the rear indicate screening and other activity at the tail of the site. The excavated area revealed a mass of burnt stone, including layers of quartz and charcoal, and some human bone. Most of the latter was cremated, but one partial inhumation was contracted (?) into a 4' long area. The site is commonly interpreted as a 'crematorium' (Kinnes 1992, Burrow 1997). There is little chronological information.

Significant finds: None (see description).

## Ballaharra

Grid Reference: SC265823

Excavator: S. Cregeen, 1971.

Quarried away, 1971.

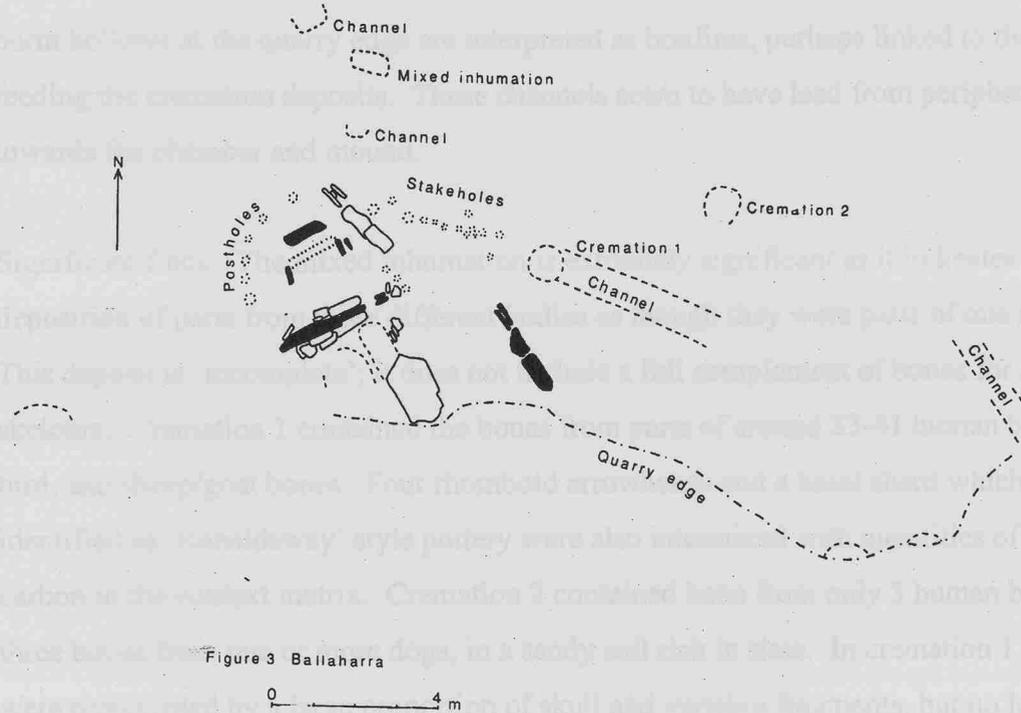


Figure 3 Ballaharra

Radiocarbon dates: BM-768 2275±67 bc 3027-2600 Cal BC (charcoal)

BM-769 2283±59 bc 3026-2616 Cal BC (charcoal)

Both from later Neolithic cremation deposit 1.

Periodic Association: Middle Neolithic, later Neolithic (structural affinity, ceramic style, radiocarbon dates)

References: Cregeen 1978, Cubbon 1978, Moffatt 1978, Burrow and Darvill 1996.

Description: Ballaharra appears to have been a middle Neolithic chambered cairn, the entrance of which was 'fenced' off (I interpret this as a later Neolithic event due to the associated placing of cremation deposit 1 and its channel, but it could easily be an earlier feature). During the later Neolithic the front of the site became a focus for cremation deposits. The larger post-holes and the inhumation deposit may be indications of pre-chamber activity, along with the pit or trench within which the chamber was set. The exact relationship between the inhumation and the rest of the site is difficult to discern. The burnt hollows at the quarry edge are interpreted as bonfires, perhaps linked to the channels feeding the cremation deposits. These channels seem to have lead from peripheral bonfires towards the chamber and mound.

Significant finds: The mixed inhumation is extremely significant as it indicates the deposition of parts from three different bodies as though they were parts of one skeleton. This deposit is 'incomplete'; it does not include a full complement of bones for a single skeleton. Cremation 1 contained the bones from parts of around 33-41 human bodies, dog, bird, and sheep/goat bones. Four rhomboid arrowheads and a basal sherd which was identified as 'Ronaldsway' style pottery were also intermixed with quantities of slate and carbon in the context matrix. Cremation 2 contained bone from only 3 human bodies, and three bones from one or more dogs, in a sandy soil rich in slate. In cremation 1 children were represented by a large proportion of skull and vertebra fragments, but no longbones. Cremation 2 is composed almost entirely of skull and longbone fragments (but very few vertebrae), none of which were from children (all from Henshall et. al., n.d.).

## Ballateare

Grid References: SC344970

Excavator: G. Bersu, 1946.

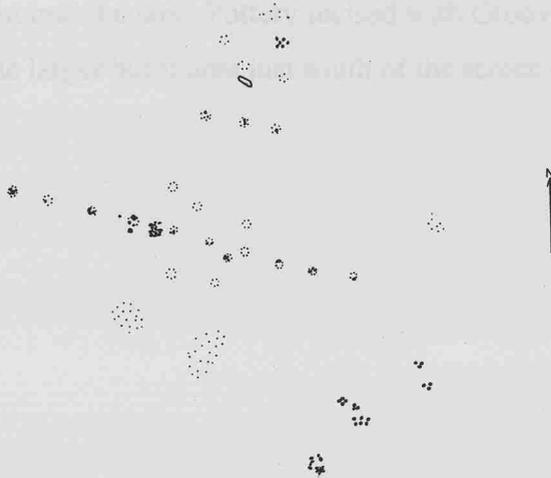


Figure 9 Ballateare

● Cremation  
● Burnt areas

0 3 6 m

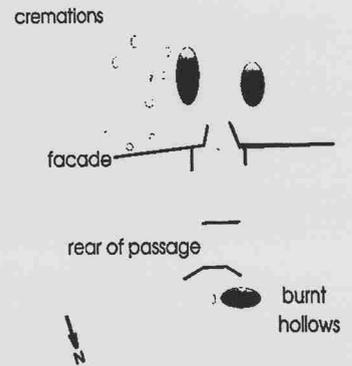


Figure 10: Schematic rendition of Ballateare.

Radio-carbon dates: OxA-5884      2005±70 bc    2900-2300 Cal BC (residue from pot)  
OxA-5885      2290±55 bc    3030-2620 Cal BC (residue from pot)

Periodic Allocation: Late Neolithic

References: Bersu 1947, Bruce et al 1947, Henshall 1971, Moffatt 1978, Darvill 1995, Burrow and Darvill 1996.

Description: Series of Later Neolithic cremation deposits, semi-buried 'Ronaldsway jars', carbonised material from surface burning and screens. The extensive burning and scattering of burnt material indicates that it may have been a location for bonfires and possibly pyres. I am interpreting the post-holes as Neolithic; they are later than some of the burning and deposition activity, but I consider that they were used to delineate the activity areas following those events.

Significant finds: Among the cremated bone within one of the jars, (CI) a miniature pot, itself containing cremated bone, a pig-bone pin, and a flint knife were found. At least 10 virtually intact jars were recovered. While it seems that jars were the foci of cremation deposition, some deposits do not include jars, and not all of the bone seems to have been put into the jars. Pottery incised with Grooved Ware style lines was also recovered from the larger burnt area just south of the screen entrance.

## Ballavarry

Grid reference: SC409681

Excavator: L. Garrad, 1983

(Insert scanned plan from Garrad 87)

Radiocarbon dates: OxA-5331	2085 $\pm$ 40 bc	2861-2467 Cal BC (residue from pot)
OxA-5332	2235 $\pm$ 55 bc	2914-2608 Cal BC (residue from pot)
OxA-5333	1880 $\pm$ 80 bc	2559-2040 Cal BC (residue from pot)

Periodic allocation: Late Neolithic

References: Garrad 1987a

Description: A group of three hollows or pits, with a pair of large stones along one edge. Burrow (1997:72) considers that “The importance of the site ranks alongside that of the Ronaldsway ‘House’ with which it can reasonably be compared.”, but despite both containing plaques and Grooved Ware style pottery, there seem to be few similarities.

Significant finds: Incised schist plaque, pottery assigned to a Ronaldsway style; some displaying unusual variation in styles (dots, cords, comb impressions). Pottery identified as mid-Neolithic (Burrow 1997:67), later Neolithic, and Grooved Ware in style.

## Billown Quarry

Grid Reference: SC268702

Excavator: T. Darvill, 1995-1999

Radiocarbon dates: Beta-110690    2030 $\pm$ 60 bc    2568-2409 Cal BC (Charcoal, from shaft F224)

                  Beta-110691    3960 $\pm$ 70 bc    4899-4719 Cal BC (wood from plank in second sequence of pits, F376)

                  Beta-89312    3700 $\pm$ 80 bc    4658-4369 Cal BC (charcoal from clay bowl in F47 (site H area))

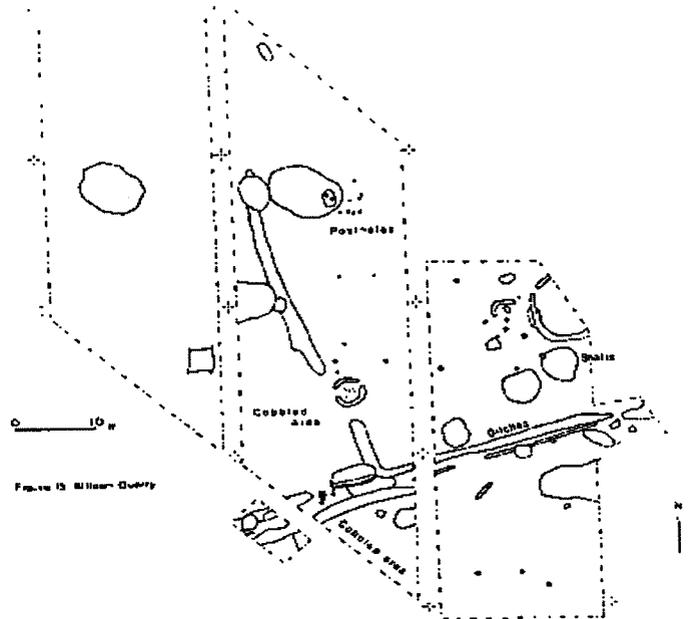
Periodic associations: Early, middle and late Neolithic (*inter alia*)

References: Darvill 1996a, 1997, 1998, Burrow and Darvill 1996.

Description: A large and highly complex site. During the early Neolithic three shallow oval ditches were cut - some earlier Neolithic pottery has been recovered. The subsequent phases appear to centre around the construction of a sequence of ditches. These were found to contain a large number of quartz pebbles and flint arrowheads. Another series of pits was cut in the mid Neolithic, some of which were then cut by deep shafts (e.g., shafts 282, 232). One of these pits (F376) contained a burnt area, three earlier Neolithic bowls, and burnt planks which also covered the 3m shaft below. In the later Neolithic the series of ditches were recut, and in the 'entrance' area in the SW of the site, a cobbled platform was put down over parts of the original ditches. Wooden posts delineating this entrance were replaced by standing stones. During the later Neolithic several Ronaldsway jars were deposited in the East of the site, accompanied by posts (e.g., F45, F42).

Significant finds:

- large numbers of arrowheads in the ditch bottoms
- large quantities of quartz both in situ and deposited in ditches
- use of ditches to restrict movement, recutting of ditches
- earlier and later Neolithic pottery
- radiocarbon dates which point to early Neolithic activity on the Isle of Man (c.4500 Cal BC), involving cutting pits, burying bowls
- shafts, burning areas and other signs of 'work' on the site



## Cashtal yn ard Flint and Neely 1934

Grid reference: SC462892 is generally identified as a Clyde-Castlingford counterfort cairn

Excavators: H.J. Fleure and G.J.H. Neely, between 1932 and 1935 and however, an



Cashtal yn ard: view from rear of tail



View from rear of passage

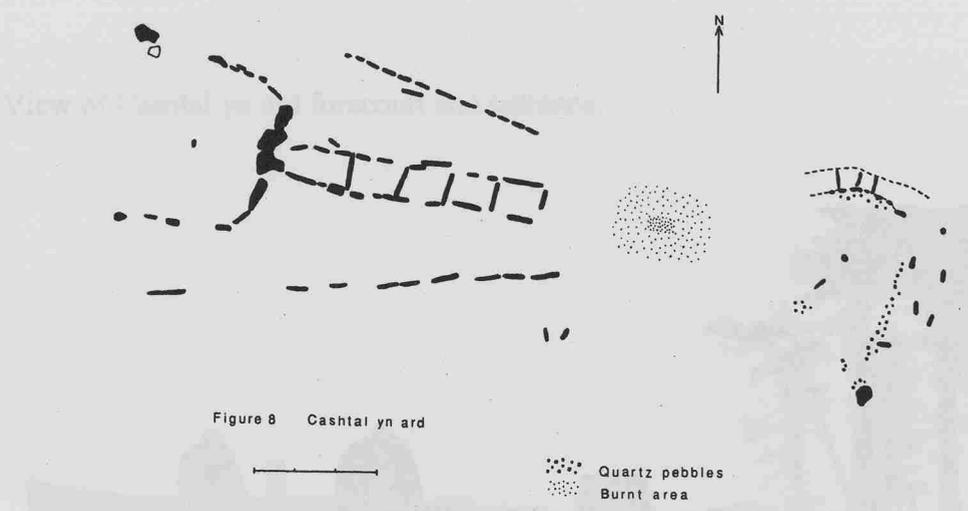
Stone walkway around rear of cairn (location of much of the quartz deposition)

Radiocarbon dates: None

Periodic associations: Middle Neolithic (structural associations, pottery styles)

References: Fleure and Neely 1936

Description: Cashtal yn ard is generally identified as a Clyde-Carlingford chambered tomb with a horseshoe forecourt. The site consists of a large semi-enclosed forecourt, an entrance marked by two touching stones in an archway, 5 'chambers' or a passage cut in five by a series of jambs, a burnt mound in the tail of the cairn and a walkway around the rear of the site marked by low standing stones and a large area of deposited quartz. The portal stones and one of the forecourt orthostats (the one with a jagged protrusion in the photographs) contain veins of quartz



Significant finds: Very little material culture was recovered from Cashtal yn ard. Scraps of burnt bone and early neolithic pottery were found in the chambers/passage. Quartz manuports were recovered from the walkway at the 'rear'.

Wiltshire

Grid Reference: M451217

Excavated: A.H. Cubbin, 1968-9

View of Cashtal yn ard forecourt and entrance.



Reference: Giffen 1975, Darrell 1995.

Description: A large natural mound in the landscape, dated to 'Neolithic' in the early Bronze Age. Part of the site appears to have been a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age pit, used for burning wood and stone at extremely high temperatures, possibly for iron-making, repeated over a long period of time. In the later Neolithic, two Bronze Age pits were dug at the edge of this pit, which is also near the summit of the natural mound.

Significance: Finds: Neolithic cropmarks and later Neolithic pottery, early bronze Age iron objects and then a Roman cremation.

## Killeaba

Grid References: SC451937

Excavator: A.M. Cubbon, 1968-9

Radiocarbon dates: BM-839 2431±58 bc 3309-2905 Cal BC Charcoal lining pit T1  
BM-840 2350±52 bc 3089-2905 Cal BC Charcoal lining pit T2

Periodic Allocation: Later Neolithic, early Bronze Age. Radiocarbon dates are from oak, which several Manx sources consider to be unreliable (Cubbon 1978:87-88). 'Bog oak' may have sat dormant in the Manx landscape for many years before use in burial or other contexts. All of the material culture at Killeaba is terminal Neolithic and early Bronze Age. Yet there is an even earlier radiocarbon date; late Mesolithic. It may be that the trend of repeated burning at high temperatures for many days was part of the 'identity' of this site which established it as significant in the earlier Neolithic. Traces of an early Neolithic activity may have been eradicated by the extensive excavations during the terminal Neolithic.

References: Cubbon 1978, Darvill 1995.

Description: A large natural mound in the landscape, used as a 'cemetery' in the early Bronze Age. Earliest use of the site appears to have been a late Mesolithic or early Neolithic pit, used for burning wood and slate at extremely high temperatures, possibly an activity repeated over a long period of time. In the later Neolithic two Ronaldsway jars were deposited at the edge of this pit, which is also near the summit of the natural mound.

Significant finds: Neolithic cremations and later Neolithic pottery, early bronze Age inhumation and then a return to cremation.

## King Orry's Grave North-East

Radioactive Date: 60-2690

250-0000 11-02-2001 Cal BL. Huml area. 1000

Grid Reference: SC438843

Excavator: B.R.S. Megaw, 1953



King Orry's Grave North-East; entrance and forecourt with strimmer.



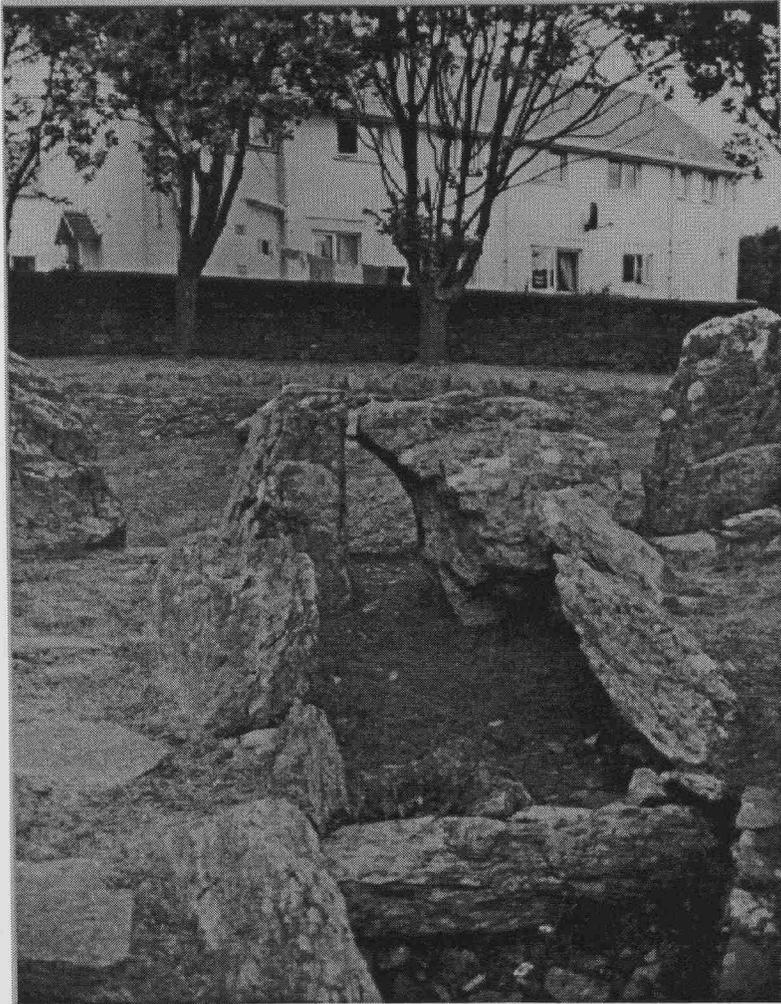
Entrance, forecourt with worker, external bank.



Kerb as seen from the road.

Radiocarbon dates: GU-2693 2520±80bc 3342-2938 Cal BC Burnt area in forecourt.

Periodic Association: Middle Neolithic



Description:

Megalithic cairn

with two and

probably more

chambers, each

placed one behind

the other.

Entranceway in an

'arch' as at Cashtal

yn ard, similar semi-

enclosed forecourt.

The court at King

Orry's North-East

was circumscribed

by a bank built up

over time during the

mid Neolithic, and a

fire had been lit in

the forecourt.

Seems to have stood 'back-to-back' with King Orry's Grave south-east, either linked by a long mound, or separated by 70 yards or so.

Significant finds: Very little material culture was recovered; some scraps of bone and earlier Neolithic pottery.

## King Orry's Grave South-West

Grid Reference: SC438843

Unexcavated. Surveyed by Megaw, 1953.



Cashtal yn ard. One very tall (7') orthostat remains.

Radiocarbon dates:

None

Periodic

Association: Middle  
Neolithic (structural  
affinities)

Description: The remains of two chambers of a megalithic cairn/passage. The second chamber is divided from the first by a very small archway. There appears to have been a forecourt facade, with a more gently enclosed court than at King Orry's North-East and

Significant finds: The site has never been excavated



View through the 'porthole' towards the entrance.

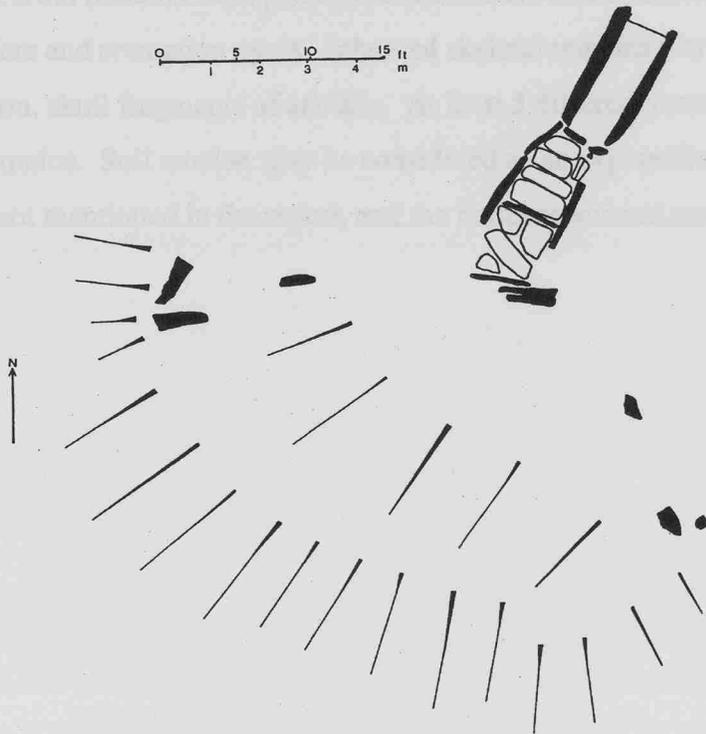


Figure 11 King Orry's Grave  
(Southwest)

## **Knocksharry**

Grid reference: 274858

Excavator: W. Cubbon, 1933.

Radiocarbon dates: None

Periodic Association: Late Neolithic, early Bronze Age (pottery styles; 'Ronaldsway jars' and urns).

References: Cubbon 1934, Bersu 1947, Cubbon 1978.

Description: Terminal Neolithic/ early Bronze Age 'burial mound'. Site report is particularly opaque and poorly illustrated.

Significant finds: Partial remains from persons both inhumed and cremated alongside Ronaldsway style jars and cremation pyres. Inhumed skeletal remains were partial: lower limbs of one skeleton, skull fragments of another. At least 5 different cremations sharing space with these remains. Soil erosion may be considered as an explanation for this partiality, but it is not mentioned in the report, and the bones recovered are not described as in any way fragile.

## Mull Hill (Meayll Hill)

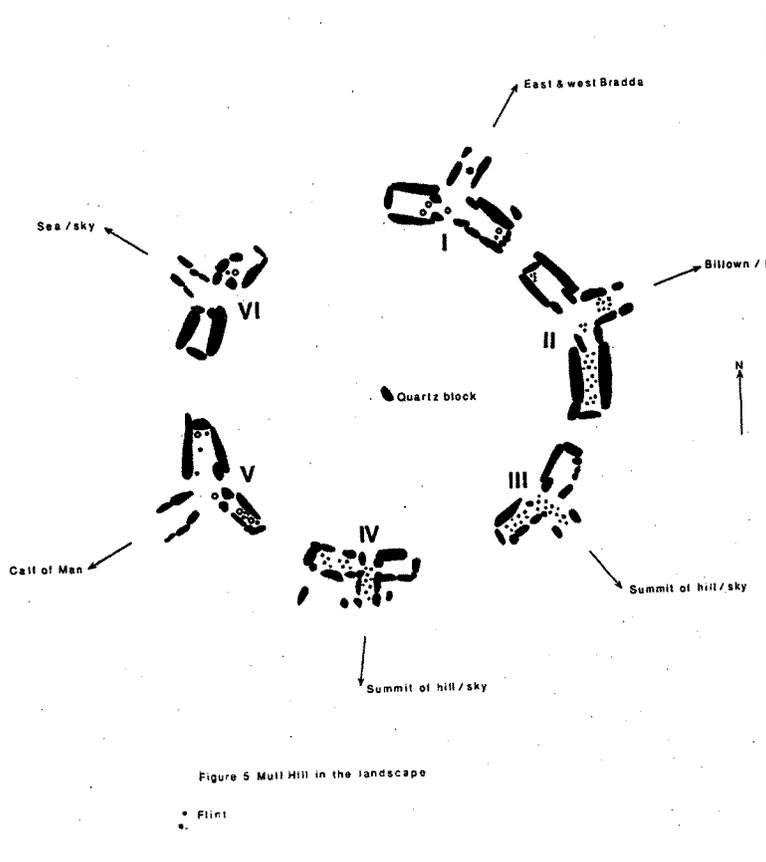
Grid Reference: SC189677

Excavators: Kermodie and Herdman 1893, Henshall 1911.



References: Kermodie and Herdman 1893, Piggott 1939, Henshall 1950, Henshall 1971, Davill 1977.

Description. Mull Hill stone circle is a circle of 6 groups of chambers and passages. Each group is set winged with two chambers bisected by a passage at right angle's, facing outwards across the landscape. The plan illustrates their alignments along with the material culture allocated to each chamber by Henshall from Kermodie's notebook. The chambers appear to have been the focus for deposits of pottery, quartz, bone, arrowheads and other flint objects during the earlier Neolithic, roughly contemporary with the earlier activities at Bilsdon Quarry.



Radiocarbon dates: None

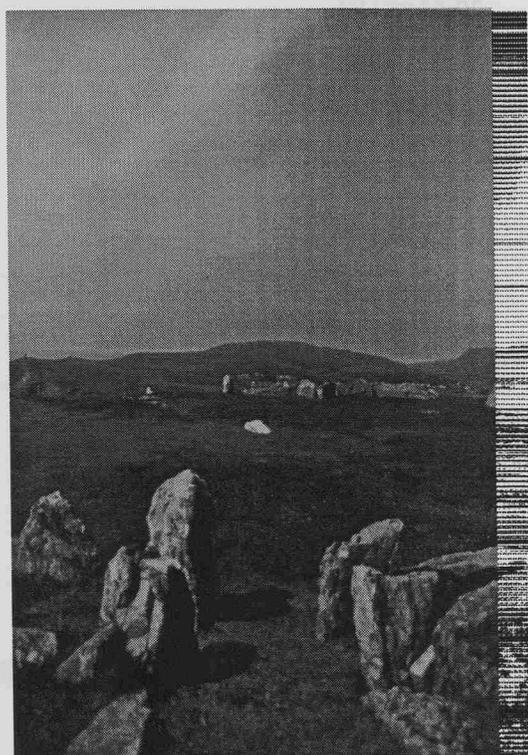
Periodic Allocation: Early/Middle Neolithic (pottery styles, structural affinity).

References: Kermodé and Herdman 1914, Piggott 1935, 1954, Clark 1945, Daniel 1950, Henshall 1971, Darvill 1997.

Description: Mull Hill stone circle is a circle of 6 groups of chambers and passages. Each group was arranged with two chambers bisected by a passage at right angles, facing outwards across the landscape. The plan illustrates these alignments along with the material culture allocated to each chamber by Henshall from Kermodé's notebook. The chambers appear to have been the focus for deposition of pottery, quartz, bone, arrowheads and other flint objects during the earlier Neolithic, roughly contemporary with the earlier activities at Billown Quarry.



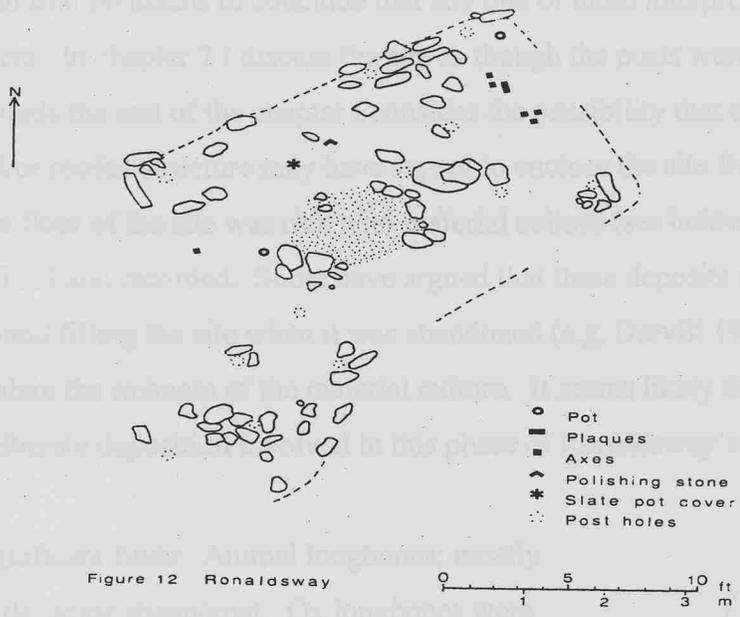
Significant finds: Early/Middle Neolithic pottery (carinated bowls), leaf-shaped arrowheads, bone, flint, quartz manuports. Flints were found underneath the 'pavements' which formed the base of at least half the chambers. The cremated bone was never recorded in detail or analysed for age, sex or even species.



**Ronaldsway**

Grid Reference: SC290685

Excavators: J.R. Bruce, E.M. Megaw, B.R.S. Megaw, 1943.



Radiocarbon dates: OxA-5328  
1975±35 bc  
2567-2327 Cal BC  
(residue from pot sherd: AMS dating)

OxA-5329  
2035±35 bc  
2650-2458 Cal BC

(residue from pot sherd: AMS dating)

OxA-5330 2060±55 bc 2697-2398 Cal BC (residue from pot sherd: AMS dating)

Periodic allocation: Later Neolithic

References: Bruce et al. 1947, Bersu 1947, Burrow and Darvill 1996, Darvill 1995, 1996a and b, Thomas 1996b.

Description: Ronaldsway's primary feature is a cut trench, the extent of which is not fully known: the southern edge of the site having been lost to mechanical equipment. The conventional plan of Ronaldsway prefers a rectangular site, but the edge of the trench

seems to take a curved shape in the south-east. Secondary features include a burnt area, and post-hole arrangements which have been used to argue for a habitational structure. There are several possible ways to interpret these post-holes

- as supports for a roof or platform
- as upright posts for screens
- as free-standing posts

I can find no means to conclude that any one of these interpretations is more likely than the others. In chapter 7 I discuss the site as though the posts were used to hold screens, and towards the end of the chapter I consider the possibility that these screens, or even a walled and/or roofed structure may have served to enclose the site from the outside world.

The floor of the site was rich with material culture (see below), but stratigraphy was poorly defined and recorded. Some have argued that these deposits represented a collapsed waste-mound filling the site when it was abandoned (e.g. Darvill 1996b), but this does not explain the richness of the material culture. It seems likely that there were aspects of deliberate deposition involved in this phase of Ronaldsway's use.

Significant finds: Animal longbones; mostly cattle, some sheep/goat. Ox longbones were deposited under a stone slab north of the burnt area. A human femur, cormorant bones and pig teeth and bones were also found. Large number of stone artefacts were recovered: 7 'roughened, truncated butt' axeheads, 4 other axes (flaked, hammered and ground), 'adzes', chisels, 2 polished flint knives, 3 arrowheads ('lozenge-shaped'), blades, serrated saws, scrapers, "numerous" flint cores (Bruce et al. 1947:150), indicating possible knapping on site, 5 schist plaques, 1 of which was incised (set inset drawing), stone hammers, 3 spherical stones, 2 grindstones, 1 polisher, 2 intact jars (see plan), sherds of Ronaldsway and Grooved Ware style pottery.

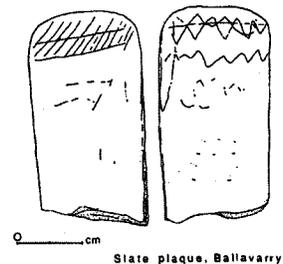
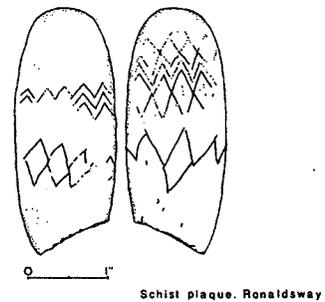


Figure 1 Incised plaques



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