AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF IMAGES

Iconology and cosmology in Iron Age and Roman Europe

Miranda Aldhouse Green

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FOR STEPHEN, WITH LOVE

It is somehow putting it the wrong way to say that images contain meanings. Images contain apparent ambiguities. Images are seeming contradictions. Images hold ideas apart so that they can be seen held together. 'Imaging' is reflecting. 'Imaging' is relating. 'Imaging' is re-cognizing. 'Imaging' is meaning. Images *are* meanings, which come out in the thinking.

<div align="right">(Duff 1975, 16; quoted in Marshall 2000, 227)</div>

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PREFACE

The wise traveller travels only in imagination. An old Frenchman once wrote a book called *Voyage autour de ma chambre*. I have not read it and I do not even know what it is about, but the title stimulates my fancy. In such a journey I could circumnavigate the globe. An eikon by the chimney-piece can take me to Russia with its great forests of birch and its white domed churches. The Volga is wide, and at the end of a straggling village, in the wine-shop, bearded men in rough sheepskin coats sit drinking … my eyes fall on a piece of porcelain and smell the acrid odours of China. I am borne in a chair along a narrow causeway between the padi fields, or else I skirt a tree-clad mountain.

(from *Honolulu*, by Somerset Maugham)

In April 2003, I was fortunate to witness an extraordinary Christian rite, imported from Andalucía, that takes place every Good Friday night at Tremp in Catalonia. The 'Processó de Divendras Sant' (its Catalán name) involves a procession of local groups who play the role of penitents ('Nazarenos') dressed in colourful hooded costumes, who process through the streets from the Basílica de la Mare de Déu de Valldeflors, carrying torches, accompanying elaborate floats depicting scenes from the Passion. Images from the church, including the crucified Christ, are carried through the streets on the floats, in silence except for single drum-beats, and then replaced. The effect is an intensely moving experience shared by the watching crowd and the participants, not least because of the visual contradiction presented by the movement of static images, which assume a curiously powerful life-force.

More than a decade ago, I published a book with 'image' in the title (Green 1989). This studied a broad sweep of Gallo-British iconography, and was packed with examples of figurines and monumental sculptures all of which I classified as sacred. The study was valuable in so far as it brought together a wide range of iconography from the western Roman Empire, while concentrating on material that seemed to me to exhibit indigenous traditions,

albeit depicted, for the most part, through a prism of Romanism. During recent years, my approach to iconology has shifted to a greater interest in theoretical perspectives associated with how images worked within the societies that produced and consumed them and how imagery could be used as an active and interactive tool not only to display ideologies and statements but to influence and change minds, affirm or challenge identities and negotiate relationships. In reflecting this interest in iconicity, it is both inevitable and appropriate to make reference to the way images worked and work within traditions, both past and present, far removed from later European prehistoric and Roman provincial repertoires.

The aim of this book is to explore some ideas about images and image-making in Iron Age and Roman Europe with which my current thinking is concerned. The central theme that pervades all aspects of my present approach is that images found on archaeological sites are artefacts, like pots or weapons, and that they should occupy a central, culturally and archaeologically grounded position rather than hover on the margins as special items, separate from their context, treated as *objets d'art* or even, necessarily, as religious objects. If images, whether figurines or monumental carvings, are artefacts, then we are able to use them as tools for interpreting past societies and, equally importantly, we can recognize that they were used as such by their makers and consumers. Images contain within them a host of multi-layered and multi-faceted meanings of which some must elude us, for they are dependent on both archaeological context and a more changeful, individualized, 'objectified' and cognitive context that is not static or passive but forms part of a dynamic, mutable discourse capable of both synchronous and diachronic shift, according to when and by whom they were used.

If we are to gain meaningful understandings of iconography within a given tradition, we need first to accept that our ability to interpret can only be partial, because meaning is context-dependent. 'Images cannot be explained in isolation … any more than a Renaissance painting of the Nativity can be understood in isolation from Christian beliefs, Church history, and the Bible' (Lewis-Williams 2001: 18). Secondly, attempts at establishing frameworks for reading imagery must depend on rigorous ontological analyses based equally upon socio-anthropological theory and upon intrinsic features, such as spatial context, somatic treatment (including realism or schematism, body-position, exaggeration/emphasis or reductionism), clothing (or its absence), repeated attributes, such as torcs or antler-headdresses, presentations of age and gender, and materiality. It is also necessary to challenge lazy thinking about linkage between images and religion. Iconography *may* and probably often is associated with the sacred, but such recognition must be based on specific reasoning rather than assumption. Perhaps most important of all is acknowledgement that images held mirrors up to ancient societies and reflects their concerns, attitudes and frameworks of cognition about themselves, the material world they inhabited and worlds beyond.

An issue of considerable interest to me is the physicality of images: this study has facilitated a fresh look at how bodies – human and animal – were treated by image-makers. For instance, it is important to look at figures in the round rather than just from the front: recent examination of the little statuette from Euffigneix (Haute-Marne), in the Musée des Antiquités Nationales at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, indicates that, whilst the face appears sketchy and unfinished, the back of the head is well crafted, with carefully delineated hair. The digitization of images can reveal hitherto unknown secrets: in drawing the Hochdorf dancers and the Aylesford bucket-horses, Anne Leaver drew my attention to the demarcation of the skeletal forms beneath the surface of the figures, whatever that may signify. So the revelation of new features in well-documented objects is intensely gratifying.

Finally, I should say something about the way this book works. Instead of discussing large numbers of images, as I have done in past publications, my intention is to focus on a relatively small but carefully chosen assemblage of pieces which, on the one hand, serve to exemplify particular characteristics and, on the other, may act as doors through which aspects of ancient society and action may be viewed and accessed. My inspiration for this approach is twofold: initially, I was taken with Michael Shanks's exposition (1996: 364–393; 1999) on aspects of Greek Archaic society, which focused on analysis of an *aryballos* or perfume-jar. But more influential still was the semi-autobiographical work by Penelope Lively, *A House Unlocked* (Lively 2001), a book that takes the reader on a journey through the various rooms of Golsoncott, the author's grandparents' house in Somerset, at which she spent much of her adolescence. The chapters of this delightful book wander through the house, alighting on objects or pieces of furniture that carry particular social or historical resonances. At the end of her own preface, Lively writes:'I thought that I would see if the private life of a house could be made to bear witness to the public traumas of a century' (Lively 2001: xi). I hope that, using a similar technique, though sadly with considerably less literary skill, I can employ iconography to develop our understanding of a particular period of the past, a time and a world which, though on the brink of history, none the less speaks of symbolism and ritual the more forcefully through the archaeology of images.

Miranda Aldhouse-Green
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1

INTRODUCTION

Images in action

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!
       (from *The Destruction of Sennacherib*, by Lord Byron)

The final verse of Byron's poem illustrates the active use of images in a sacred context, the Assyrians' temple to their father-god. The assumption (not necessarily correct) is that the 'idols' represented the deity himself. The human context of the act was Assyrian aggression towards Israel, the campaign fought between Sennacherib, king of Assyria (705–681 BC), and the forces of Judah in the early seventh century BC (Metzger & Coogan 1993: 686). Sennacherib's army – both warriors and their horses – was totally destroyed, wiped out by a plague visited upon them on the battlefield by the Israelite God Yahweh. The breakage of the temple-images appears to have been conducted as a mourning-ritual, in recognition of defeat and loss of life and as a sign that Baal's power had been vanquished through the intervention of a foreign God.

Introducing ancient images

It is difficult to find a word to describe the capacity of three-dimensional images to be drawn into the world of the living, to become not representations of something else but almost individuals in their own right.

       (Gombrich 1999: 139)

The notion that one purpose of ancient images was to be used, to be handled, engaged with and changed after production, strongly influences the manner in which iconography may be approached as a multi-faceted social and religious tool. The archaeological context, stylistic treatment and physical state of images may provide clues as to their function as social instruments, whether or not they were meant to represent supernatural beings. In a book

that explores the origins of art in western Europe, David Lewis-Williams (2002: 10) writes that 'image-making, religion and social discrimination were a "package deal"', an integrated assemblage of symbolic activity. He goes on to argue that when people first began to make images, during the Upper Palaeolithic, some thirty-two thousand years ago, they 'were not inventing images. They were merely touching *what was already there*' in their maps of cognition (op. cit.: 193). Such use of mental vision is indicated by the deliberate location of images in parietal cave-art where the form and contours of the rock-face suggested the shape of the motif to be drawn (op. cit.: 28). These observations are important for they serve to situate image-making in an essentially active and enabling arena. Like all material culture, images existed to be 'manipulated, used, bumped up against' (Phillips 2002: 125). We can approach image-function in two main ways, namely as cognitive function and physical function. Images contain conceptual messages that may be accepted, negotiated, challenged or denied. Their construction comes about because their producers are using 'conceptual patterns' to transmit ideas (Wedde 1992: 183). They also played an active role within their physical context: they were made, altered, emplaced, carried, handled, kissed, buried, drowned, burnt or broken. This idea is well illustrated by a tradition occurring within the hagiolatry of Burgundian Catholicism wherein communities used to include the immersion of saints' statues in water in times of drought (Saintyves 1934: 216). In his work on British Neolithic depositional practice, Josh Pollard (2001: 315–333) is right to draw attention to the aesthetic dimension, to the way material objects, including images, were positioned in physical space.

So a crucial element in any approach to ancient iconography is the notion that images were not passive things to be looked at and consumed as works of art, but should, instead, be approached as dynamic tools used by the communities who produced and consumed them. Part of such a perspective needs to engage with the idea of 'flexible intention', a term employed in the context of the watery deposition of metalwork during the later Bronze Age and Iron Age in northern and western Europe (Needham 2001: 275–298). By 'flexible intention' is meant the recognition that the results of symbolic action identified archaeologically may be indicative of polyvalent activity and purpose, of multifocal meanings. Accordingly, the placement of swords or spears in a river or marsh was not necessarily the final chapter in an object's biography and, even if it were, the act itself may have said different things to different individuals or to humans and spirits. The application of such a model to imagery offers exciting potential. We must acknowledge that body-imagery in Iron Age and Roman provincial Europe may be multi-layered and multi-functional and that its production and consumption were associated with both synchronous and diachronic patterns of use. An important issue relating to the British Iron Age, in particular, is the paucity of iconography, whether monumental or in the form of figurines. Jeremy Hill (2003)

(amongst others) has drawn attention to the archaeological evidence for considerable upheavals within Wessex in the first century BC, pointing to changes in burial rites and ritual activity. Such observation led me to consider whether the appearance of images, such as the Henley Wood female figure (Figure 1.4), when *romanitas* was first making itself felt, might have been prompted by notions of instability and the need to assert selfhood. It may be that image-production, within generally image-poor communities, might have been stimulated by social and political change.

We tend to approach images within lenses of assumptions that may be questioned and challenged: that they are primarily or wholly religious; that they represent particular beings (human or divine); that the image is a static end-product. Thus, we assume that a statue set up on a plinth in a temple (the very identification of which may be dependent on the presence of this image) possessed no other *raison d'être* than to be where it was found, no time before and no time after its residence in a space self-interpreted as sacred. It is thus regarded as timeless, with no past or future, no biography and, therefore, viewed as essentially passive, an object to be looked at, perhaps worshipped as 'ensouled' or as representative of the supernatural. What may, instead, be closer to how images worked in later European antiquity is that they were active, interactive and dynamic, highly evocative of both their cultural context and a more individualized and mutable 'objectified' context, perhaps associated with particular individuals or events. A good example within an early imperial Roman context is the Prima Porta statue of Augustus in Rome, set up by the young emperor some time after 20 BC, as a piece of visual propaganda, as blatant 'spin'. On the statue, Augustus wears a breastplate full of the imagery of foreign conquest, vision, firm rule, peace at home and the rebirth of a fresh world (Zanker 1988: 193–194; Freeman 1996: 366, pl. XVI). Neither the statue itself nor the motifs on the emperor's cuirass are, strictly speaking, religious images, but they made complete sense as conveyors of significant messages that included Augustus's self-projection as an upholder of the old religious values of the Roman State.

The multilingual character of images can be demonstrated with reference to two traditions, widely separated in space and time, undeniably evocations of totally divergent symbolism, but producing essentially similar images: a late Iron Age burial at Brough-on-Humber in north-east Britain and an agricultural symbol belonging to a Senufo community in Mali, West Africa. The British burial contained two bronze so-called 'sceptre-heads' (Figure 1.1) and an iron-bound wooden bucket; it was a double interment but all three objects were found with skeleton number 2. The 'sceptre-heads' each consist of a helmeted human male head with schematized features, and were once attached to long staffs; they and the bucket are presumed to suggest the high status of the deceased with whom they were placed: the body may even have been that of a priest or ritualist (Corder & Richmond 1938; Green 1978: 47), buried with the tools of his trade. The Senufo object, too, consists of a staff

Figure 1.1 Bronze sceptre-terminal from Brough-on-Humber, Yorkshire. © Hull City Museums.

surmounted by a helmeted human head but female, all carved in wood and decorated with cowrie shells. Staffs like this were emblems of Senufo farming skill and the physical stamina of young men hoeing the fields. They were traditionally looked after by the community's champion cultivator, displayed at hoeing contests and at the funerals of their carers (Smithsonian Institution 1997). Comparison of the British and Malian ceremonial objects provides several lessons for the interpreter of images: it testifies to the need for an 'objectified' context in order confidently to comprehend such material; it demonstrates how apparently similar images may belong to wholly discrepant symbolic contexts, the African example exhibiting a specific and not at all obvious link between warfare and agriculture; on a more positive note, the ceremonial nature of each appears to be a broadly correct assumption. The comparison also serves to flesh out the function of the Iron Age sceptreheads and to aid recognition that such objects probably played a highly visual and public role in celebrations, perhaps at special festivals, part of whose purpose was to re-energize and reassert the community's identity (Paden 1992: 35).

The presentation of imagery within a spectrum ranging from realism to extreme schematism or reductionism (Chapter 7) should likewise be seen as

charged with significant meaning for which we should at least try to offer open-ended, flexible frameworks for interpretation. In studying the iconography of the Bronze Age Aegean, Janice Crowley has presented a useful model to explain the processes the artist followed in producing an image (Crowley 1992: 24). She proposes three stages in production: the initial image, the essential image and the elaborated image. The first results from 'visual imprint on the artist's retina'; the second involves refinement to add the real-world experience of the subject; in the final stage the image-producer embellishes the figure 'with all the artistic tricks at the disposal of the trained artist'. If we apply the same model to the Romano-British relief-carving of the horned, armed and naked man from a Roman military installation at Maryport in Cumbria (Figure 1.2), as an example, the initial image is that of a warrior, the essential image comprises a warrior with the spear and shield of a British barbarian, together with the indigenous motifs of horns and ithyphallic nakedness, both perhaps loaded with all manner of meanings associated with power, aggression or other context-related symbolism. Bearing in mind the provenance of the Maryport sculpture, it is worth speculating on what is being represented and by whom, whether the figure is the product of a native craftsman depicting the power of his own gods or whether the image reflects the demonization of *romanitas*. The elaborated image would bring in the schematic shorthand artistic treatment with which the Maryport figure is carved (Green 1986: fig. 55), the deliberate repetition of penetrative, projectile forms contained in the depiction of horns, phallus, nose and spear and the exaggeratedly large head. According to Crowley's

Figure 1.2 Stone relief of a horned warrior from Maryport, Cumbria. © Anne Leaver.

model, the final image illustrates the sensitivity of the artist to his or her physical, cognitive and spiritual environment, combined with the sculptor's freedom to innovate, and to relate to the consumer and to achieve maximum dramatic and communicative effect.

The importance of context for the meaning of images includes the influence of self-identity on image-making. In studying ancient iconography, it is necessary to realize that the producer of a statue or figurine will inevitably project something of himself, herself or the community onto that representation. So, a craftsman coming from a Roman perspective will portray a divinity according to a certain orthodoxy or syntax at least partly contingent upon ideas of selfhood (Chapters 2 and 8). For more modern examples of such grammars of presentation, we may cite the manner in which images of the Virgin Mary are produced in different traditions, sometimes as 'Black Madonnas'. Our Lady of Guadaloupe is black, and in syncretistic Brazilian Catholicism, Christian images are sometimes depicted according to Afro-Hispanic models of physical appearance (Williams 1979). Additionally, images may evoke such concepts as co-operation or isolation (Whittle 2003): most European Iron Age iconography consists of single figures, but the presentation of groups, such as those from Paule in Brittany (Deyts 1999: 25) or Garton Slack in Yorkshire (Stead 1988) (Figures 1.5, 3.8), might relate to emphases on aggregation and mutual support.

Sacred or profane: interpreting images

> Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them.
>
> (*Deuteronomy* 5: 8–9)

Recent scholarship has focused on so-called 'figurine theory', an approach to iconography (albeit only non-monumental imagery) that attempts to investigate images as artefacts rather than merely as religious icons or *objets d'art*. Such study is valuable in serving to challenge woolly thinking about figural representation and its models may equally be applied to larger images. A paper entitled 'Can we interpret figurines?' (Hamilton *et al*. 1996: 281–307) addresses many problems associated with the meaning of prehistoric images, emphasizing the need to approach them within their archaeological and societal contexts rather than as isolated objects. The paper (1996: 281) argues that images 'illustrate self-awareness' and that they contain multiple meanings, sometimes encoding 'important cognitive elements in the modelling and representation of the human form'. For the lead author (Hamilton 1996: 282) one of the difficulties of interpreting images is that, because they

apparently *represent* something or someone, they are treated in a totally different manner from other artefacts, resulting in a frequent failure to apply rigorous archaeological criteria to their meaning. If we, more correctly, approach images as artefacts, as functional tools, then both archaeological and cognitive context rightly contribute significantly to their meaningful interpretation; this is shown by recent studies of central and southern European Neolithic sites in which figurines played a central role (Tringham & Conkey 1998: 22–45). Furthermore, images must undergo objective intrinsic analyses as to what is being represented. Thus, a given image should be understood in terms of features present, its realistic or schematic 'shorthand' treatment, exaggeration or minimalism, overt or hidden gender characteristics and materiality. Like all artefacts, an image needs to be approached against the backdrop of symbolisms associated with its production as well as its identity as a 'finished' product (Shanks 1996: 364–393; 1999: 35, fig. 1.4). In discussing southern African San rock-painting tradition, David Lewis-Williams stresses the linkage between symbolic and practical aspects of image-process: in preparing pigment, the San use fresh eland-blood as a mixing agent; the eland is the most symbolically important animal in San cosmology, and the freshness of the blood is crucial in achieving the correct level of fluidity in the paint (Lewis-Williams 2001: 29–32).

But in searching for meaning, it is necessary not only to identify an image's intrinsic features, but to seek understanding of underlying metonyms it may project, perhaps only to an arcane few. Recent approaches to Palaeolithic iconography may be usefully explored in terms of possible application to Iron Age and provincial Roman imagery. So-called 'Venus' figures from the Ligurian Grimaldi Caves have been subjected to recent systematic interrogation (Mussi *et al.* 2000: 110; White & Bisson 1998: 95–132). Far from being simple depictions of females with over-developed sexual features, they are now appreciated as subtle palaeomorphs: double figures and dual-gendered images apparently demonstrating intellectually sophisticated explorations of multiple levels of reality, being and becoming, perhaps even 'manifestations of single entities undergoing or having achieved a process of transformation'. Even the more overtly straightforward Upper Palaeolithic 'Venus' figurines are being recognized as highly complex artefacts, social metonyms acting as ciphers based on the whole package of relationships between mother and child, on the liminality of the foetus, the powerful single/dual paradox of the pregnant female (Haaland & Haaland 1996: 297–298) and the abrupt transition from one being to two at the moment of birth.

Female figurines played a prominent role in the artefact horizon of the Neolithic and early Bronze Age Aegean. Made of terracotta, stone or marble, they are frequent finds on Cretan and Cycladic sites and, until relatively recently, they have been interpreted as depicting a great mother-goddess. But study of their archaeological context reveals no strong evidence for their divine status (Goodison & Morris 1998: 113–132). The images appear on

domestic and sepulchral sites alongside 'practical' and 'ritual' objects and there seem no grounds for distinguishing them from other artefacts. What is more, there is a growing recognition that these statuettes are polyvalent: 'a single figurine can have multiple functions, according to its context of use' (Kokkinidou & Nikolaidou 1997: 105, after Talalay 1993: 40–44). Goodison and Morris rightly argue (1998) that 'as well as exploring what the figurines are *images of*, it is important to ask what they are *images for*' (op. cit.: 125). They examine freestanding figurines of women in relation to other contexts, including Minoan gold signet rings of the fifteenth century BC and decorated ceramics, making the point that a number of depictions show women dancing or with arms upraised as if in prayer or adoration, raising questions as to whether such figures should be seen as goddesses, worshippers or people undergoing visionary experiences. They draw attention to Peter Ucko's seminal work on anthropomorphic figurines of Neolithic Crete and pre-dynastic Egypt (Ucko 1968), in which he suggests that these images might be charms, dolls or spirit figures. The notion that many figurines depict people is supported by the range of physical characteristics sometimes shown: some figures are fat, some thin, some have disabilities (Ucko 1996: 300–304). Even if certain figurines do represent divine beings, there is certainly no reason to assume that they depict a single great goddess. The Aegean figures might have been used in a range of ways, in sacred or secular behaviour, in negotiations and discourse between people and the supernatural world or in social relationships within communities.

Such examples from earlier prehistory serve to remind us that image-making is and was a complex process. We must challenge the simplistic notion of images 'as reflection' (of past beliefs, for instance), acknowledging instead that they 'successfully outlive the spoken word and the passing event' (Bailey 1996: 291). Douglass Bailey is right (op. cit.: 292–293) in his emphasis on the importance of the connection between representation and reality. To quote his words, 'figurines are inclined to deceive'; 'creation of a figurine is an act of defamiliarization, an act of illusion and a creation of the counterfeit', involving transformation, manipulation and change, all associated with the control and curation of knowledge. Particularly in non-literate societies, images could act like words in a text, to control and shift ideas and to separate form from the reality of its subject (Nordbladh 1999: 17–22), but their effect is immediate, and – unlike texts – their ability to shape the world is not dependent on complex narrative components (Phillips 2002: 129–134). So, in a European Iron Age or Roman context, for instance, the artist might carve a boar with three horns (Figure 3.15), a horse with multiple phalluses (Figure 3.14) or a woman with antlers (Figure 3.12) (Green 1998b: 219–240; Aldhouse-Green 2001d: 203–232). Images enjoyed a powerful role in prehistoric societies in their ability to provide tools for exploring connections and dissociations between self and non-self, and between earth-world and other worlds. Images can change minds, reinforce ideas and identities; they can be

authoritative, acting as templates for understanding (Bailey 1996: 295) or, perhaps, for deliberate exclusion. The perceived capability of pagan images to influence and subvert in early Christian Europe is vividly illustrated by a decree emanating from the Council of Auxerre in AD 585, which prohibited the practice of depositing votive offerings in springs, of sculpting wooden feet or human figures (Rousselle 1990).

God in man's image?

> Numa forbade the Romans to represent the Deity in the form either of man or beast. Nor was there among them formerly any image or statue of the Divine Being: during the first hundred and seventy years they built temples, indeed, and other sacred domes, but placed in them no figure of any kind: persuaded that it was impious to represent things divine by what is perishable and that we can have no conception of God but by the understanding.
>
> (Plutarch, *Life of Numa*;
> trans. Langhorne & Langhorne n.d.: 49)

Numa was the second king of Rome who (if a historical rather than a legendary figure) reigned in the late eighth to early seventh century BC. To him is ascribed a range of reforms to the Roman religious system, including organization of the colleges of priests. The same theme is picked up by Varro in the first century BC (*Res Divinae* fr. 18; Feeney 1998: 76, 92) who, making allusion to a Greek intellectual approach, refers to an idealized golden age, what he called a 'pure' stage in Roman religion before its contamination by the practice of venerating images of divine beings, and arguing that 'true divinity has neither gender nor age nor distinct bodily limbs'. Denis Feeney (op. cit.: 93) draws attention to a satirical poem written by Caius Lucilius in the later second century BC in which the poet pokes fun at the superstitious naïvety of those who believed that divine spirits resided in lifeless images: 'As children before they can speak believe that all bronze statues are alive and are human beings, so those (deluded adults) think that all the moulded fakes are real, and believe that there is intelligence inside the bronze statues' (Lucilius fr. 484–9; trans. Marx; after Feeney 1998: 93).

The perceived status of sacred images as ensouled, as representative or as a focus for prayer and supplication, raises a number of interesting issues. Indeed none of these are exclusive of each other and a single image may be endowed with all of these functions.

In her study of village goddesses in eastern and southern India, Lynn Foulston (2002) has explored notions of possession, and the endowment of images with spiritual power. Within rural Hindu cosmologies, holy places, features in the landscape, images and ritual paraphernalia are all steeped in the essence of the divine. But what is all the more interesting is the manner in which sacred images may possess the spirit of the deity some but not all of the time. Foulston gives

an account of the way that Bana Durga, a goddess worshipped at Khurdapur in Orissa (eastern India), resides in her image and then leaves it. Her informer, the owner of a mango grove where the goddess lived, told her of a dream experienced by his great-great-grandfather (Foulston 2002: 65–66):

> During the night, a goddess came to him in a dream and asked that he should take a small statue back with him and worship her. This he did, and for some time he kept this statue in his house. Eventually the goddess came to him in a dream, requesting that he move her outside. Initially unsure where to place her, he went outside and saw a small mango tree that seemed an ideal place to put her statue. In due course, it was accepted that the soul or essence of the goddess now permeated the tree, and the statue was, therefore, redundant. No longer infused by the goddess, the statue needed to be disposed of. But even though the goddess had vacated her statue and was now resident in the tree, the statue retained a sacred residue, an aura of power that required safe dispersal.

It is necessary to make a distinction between holiness and possession. An image or piece of ritual regalia may have sanctity simply because it is associated with sacredness: clearly, once Bana Durga had left her statue, it still held spirit force because of its former use. But prior to her transference to the mango tree, the image housed the goddess herself and thus contained immense power. The perceived spiritual energy emanating from images and other sacred objects is testified in religious traditions all over the world. In San belief, certain images painted on the rocks acquired intrinsic energy for help or harm: if touched by a 'bad' person, they could cause his or her hand to stick to the rock-surface and the unfortunate individual would starve to death (Lewis-Williams 2001: 34). The Old Testament is unequivocal in its message that use of graven images was inimical to the worship of Yahweh; however, the Ark of the Covenant, the receptacle constructed to house the stones bearing the Ten Commandments, was so charged with sacred force that when Uzzah innocently put out his hand to steady the Ark as it swayed on its ox-drawn wagon, God killed him for presuming to lay hands on such a holy object (*2 Samuel* 6: 6–7). In describing rituals practised by Germanic tribes, Tacitus speaks of a particular ceremony associated with the agricultural goddess Nerthus, whose sacred cart, draped with a cloth, contained the essence of the deity and was so holy that, once her celebrations were over, the slaves who washed clean the goddess's regalia in a sacred lake were slaughtered because they had seen and handled such spiritually charged material and could not therefore be allowed to live (*Germania* XL).

Despite the scepticism of ancient authors like Lucilius and Varro, the endowment of sacred images and other holy objects with the essence of divinity is not in doubt. Images are different, though, because they also

appear to *represent* the being depicted. In the words of Sarah Scott (1993: 107), there is a perception of absolute synergy between signifier and signified, the form of an image and its symbolism. Such symbiosis can be illustrated with reference to a Siberian Khanty tradition: when a girl marries, her family's sacred grove provides a carved wooden figure for her from a living cedar, to act as a protector for her house and to avert illness; when she dies, the figure is left at the foot of the tree, to be re-absorbed into the wood whence it came (Jordan 2001: 96). The wooden funerary sculptures, known as *malanggan*, from New Ireland (New Guinea) are deemed to be temporarily inhabited by the spirits of the dead for the duration of festivals held in their honour. But they are perceived as so dangerous that they must be disposed of after the ceremony, along with the decomposition of the corpse and the destruction of the dead person's property. The sculptures themselves may depict half-human, half-animal figures (Küchler 1992: 94–112; 2002). One of the arguments against the truly spiritual status of images is the – to some – outrageously presumptuous notion that spirit-beings may appear and be perceived in animal or semi-animal form (Chapters 5 and 6). Such perceptions (that only fully anthropomorphic images can have sanctity) can be challenged, for they serve to prescribe, define and limit entities that, by virtue of their otherworldly nature, cannot and should not be confined to the human view of who they are and how they should be presented.

We may learn something of how images work, in terms of ensoulment and their ability to work miracles, by studying the iconography of the Christian Church, particularly Roman Catholicism, for images are important, not because they are the divine but because the holiness of the subject impacts upon the reverence with which an image is regarded. At their simplest level, images of Christ, the Virgin Mary or the saints in medieval tradition convey immediate messages concerning symbolism and piety. For instance, Mary is typically depicted in paradoxical attitude: she appears as an ordinary nursing mother but her power is displayed by her crown and throne. However, more complex iconography may only have been understood by those who could read and had access to texts within which to contextualize the imagery (Gray 2000: 1–3). But over and above the symbolic messages conveyed by Christian images, there is evidence that the images themselves were sometimes regarded as directly empowered

A Breton legend associated with a place called Bocennu at Keranna, near Vannes, tells of a vision of Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, that appeared to a certain Yves Nicolazic in the seventeenth century (Aubert 1993: 172–178). Saint Anne had been venerated in that part of Brittany as early as the sixth century but had fallen into neglect after the destruction of her only chapel in 699. When the saint appeared to Nicolazic, she instructed him to excavate an image of her and told him that he would know where to dig by the illuminated area of a particular field. He unearthed a disfigured wooden statue of a woman and it soon established itself as possessing

magical powers; clearly, Saint Anne was using her image in order to work miracles in the community. Another wooden image, this time that of the Virgin Mary, is associated with the holy pilgrim-site of Fatima in central Portugal, a hugely popular healing shrine established as late as 1917, when a vision of Mary appeared several times there to three shepherd children, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco. The Marian cult at Fatima was violently opposed by a powerful brotherhood of freemasons but, in defiance of the clique, a wooden statue of Mary was commissioned. What is interesting about the image is that it was carved 'according to precise instructions given by the visionaries' (Rędzioch 1996: 35). The Chapel of the Apparitions built to house the statue was constructed on the site where the visions occurred in accordance with Mary's directions. Secular opposition to the Fatima cult continued but the image was carefully protected by the faithful and served as the revered focus of Marian worship for some time. Today the cult of Mary at Fatima is celebrated by thousands of pilgrims who throng the huge square in front of the basilical church. The central focus of her particular ceremony, held on 13 May in commemoration of the first vision, is a large statue (not the original wooden image, which still remains in the Chapel of the Apparitions) of the Virgin, crowned and surrounded by flowers. Sick pilgrims purchase wax models of the organs or limbs afflicted by maladies and burn them in a fire that never goes out.

According to some Catholic traditions, statues themselves are imbued with a sacred energy that causes them to behave in curious, animate ways. For eight hundred years, the cult of Mary at Mellieha in Malta was focused on an underground spring-shrine dedicated to her and by which stood her image. About a hundred and fifty years ago, a large church was built for her worship on the hill above and the old statue was taken from her spring and 'moved to a more respectable place within the main church'. According to local legend, when night fell, the image of the Virgin bumped its way down the steps from the church back to its original position next to the spring and, however many times it was returned to its elevated new situation, it always found its way back during the hours of darkness, though no one ever saw it move (Badger 1838: 286–287; Green 1995: 190). The statue now resides in its old place, and the shrine is still venerated as a centre of miraculous healing by local people, who bring offerings in hope or thanksgiving for health. The walls of the rock-cut chapel are today densely hung with model eyes, hearts and limbs, together with more bizarre gifts, including plaster-casts from fractured limbs, framed sets of baby-clothes, crutches and even crash-helmets.

Through the looking-glass, or not?

The Saami 'let the gods choose their own shape'.
                    (Bradley 2000: 6; after Manker 1957: 306)

A striking feature of both Iron Age and western Roman provincial imagery is the coeval perspective of realism and surrealism. Despite the burgeoning of enlightened theoretical debate, it is sadly true that many Romanists still regard schematic or otherwise distorted images as evidence of 'bad art', childlike, naïve and incompetent attempts at naturalistic representation (most recently in Johns 2003). On the contrary, the iconographic traditions of many ancient (and modern) societies display internal synchroneity in production of 'real' and 'shorthand' images: it is certainly true of the Neolithic Aegean (Kokkinidou & Nikolaidou 1997: 90) and the southern Levant (Gopher & Orrelle 1996: 255–279), where schematism, realism, exaggeration of body-parts and gender-ambiguity all form part of the spectrum of image-making. In the areas just cited, the choice of what to emphasize or understate is clearly deliberate, the presentation of imagery having an inescapable relationship with its archaeological and cognitive context. The physical and temporal contiguity of naturalistic and schematic imagery is strikingly illustrated in ancient rock art, where realism and 'shorthand' images are juxtaposed and sometimes appear to be the work of the same artist. The coeval use of such discrepant styles is recorded on Indian rupestrine imagery: the Mesolithic rock art site of Bhimbetka in Central India displays an incredible range of artistic treatment on a single scene (Mathpal 1993: 15, fig. 1), and another composition, on a rock-surface at Badami in South India, displays at least six different stylistic ways of representing the human form (op. cit.: 17: fig. 3). George Chaloupka has identified similarly divergent images in the prehistoric rock drawings in Arnhem Land in northern Australia (Chaloupka 1993: 77–98).

There is every reason to apply such approaches to the study of later prehistoric imagery in western Europe because similar ways of representation are so apparent. Indeed, the reduction of form to essentials is sufficiently important to be allocated a dedicated section of this volume (Chapter 7). Alongside the realism that is the keystone of Classical anthropomorphic depictions are highly schematic figures, where detail is purposely damped down so that the spectator concentrates on the coded message within the image. So, in the case of the Iron Age stone-carving from Alesia (Figure 1.3), the eye is drawn to the head and the torc; there is nothing else to distract attention; the equally schematic reliefs of *Genii cucullati* from Roman Gloucestershire (Figure 7.11) appear to stress threeness, hoodedness and movement. Other deliberately 'non-normative' features of Iron Age and Roman provincial imagery include exaggeration of heads or hands – the statuettes from Bouray (Figure 7.8) (Green 1989: 91, fig. 37) and Pauvrelay (Figure 7.1) (Deyts 1999: 83) in France exemplify such distortions. Asymmetry, particularly in the treatment of the eyes, equally presents discordance and a veering from realism. We should recognize that such manipulation of the human form is deliberate, highly meaningful and probably a way of empowering either the image itself or a grammar of communication packaged within it. It may be that the source of such empowerment is the

Figure 1.3 Stone statue wearing torc and flat hat, from Alesia, Burgundy. © Anne
Leaver.

avoidance of naturalism and that denial of 'reality' is the common denominator
affecting all discrepancies from somatic mimesis.

If we can accept that denial of 'normative' form is evocative of differing
realities, we may develop such thinking further with reference to two spe-
cific and repetitive traditions occurrent in Iron Age and Roman Europe,
namely dual/ambiguous-gender (Chapter 3) and trans-species (Chapter 6)
imagery, both of which resonate strongly with earlier prehistoric representa-
tive art (Mussi *et al.* 2000: 110; Gopher & Orrelle 1996: 22–79; Bailey 1994:
321–331; 1996: 291–295; Yates 1993: 31–72). Both ways of distorting icono-
graphic realism are the subjects of later chapters in this volume, but it is
useful to introduce them here since, like exaggeration and schematism, the
habit of 'playing with' gender and species constitutes a way of bending earth-
world realities and engaging with issues beyond imagery itself. Gender-
ambiguity, ambivalence and denial are all persistently expressed in Iron Age and
Roman European contexts (Green 1997a: 898–911; Aldhouse-Green 2001e:
19–29). Complexities of gender-presentation in body-imagery suggest that
the skewing of somatic gender-realism presents what may have been power-
ful socio-ideological tools with which to negotiate issues of status, belonging,
exclusion, relationality and marginality which may or may not have been

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associated *per se* with sexual difference. The evocation of gender on a group of Iron Age chalk figurines from Yorkshire repays investigation (Stead 1988: 9–29): some are demonstrably male, with beards and erect phalli (Figure 3.8); others appear somatically asexual (Figure 1.5), though some bear short swords. It is quite possible that the two forms present not biological gender but perhaps metaphoric gender-difference or may simply act as a metonym for difference or opposition (Green 1997a: 898–911).

Similarly, images that transgress species boundaries may explore relationships between self and other and transition between one state of being or level of awareness and another (Aldhouse-Green 2001c: 80–93). Particularly prevalent are depictions of theriomorphs that exhibit human-stag characteristics (Figures 6.2, 6.14, 7.3): these appear in both later Iron Age and Roman contexts, the presence of antlers appearing to reflect a distinctly masculine mindset comparable to that identified by Shanks (1996: 364–393) in his discourse on Archaic Greek pottery designs. But a small group of Gallo-Roman figurines presents an even more convoluted paradox and contradiction in their depiction of females sprouting red-deer antlers (Figure 3.12) (Chapter 3); these images twist both gender and species realities, and meaning should be sought within the schema of the form itself and what it may convey about its producers and consumers. Approaches to interpretation may focus on symbolisms suggested by deer/stag-behaviour, antler-shedding and wilderness, on the dissonance of hybridization or gender-bending or a host of meanings that must elude us.

Images at work: use, biography and transformation

> They say that in this city [Autun] there was a statue of Berecynthia. … On one occasion, when they were carrying it in a wagon for the well-being of their fields and vineyards in the wretched way of paganism, the aforesaid Bishop Simplicius was there, looking on from nearby as they sang and danced in front of the statue.
>
> (Gregory of Tours, *On the Glory of the Confessors* 77; after Dowden 2000: 189)

Simplicius, Bishop of Autun, witnessed these Burgundian rituals in the late fourth century AD. Like Nerthus's cart (above), the carriage of Berecynthia's statue round the fields served to bless the land and its crops.

If it is proposed that images 'worked' as active ideological or social tools, then we must examine ways in which they may have been used. Archaeological context is the key to understanding function but, all too frequently, Iron Age and Roman-period images lack precise contexts and, even when information is available, too little attention is paid to it. The work of scholars on prehistoric Mediterranean imagery (above) testifies to the

significance of domestic as well as 'sacral' contexts for image-use. In her study of Meso-American statuettes belonging to the Zapotec peoples of ancient Oaxaca (who flourished in Mexico from *c.* 1150 BC until the Spanish colonizations of the early modern period), Joyce Marcus puts similar emphasis on the necessity to make contextual readings of figurines in evaluation of both social and religious behaviour (Marcus & Flannery 1994: 55–74; Marcus 1996: 285–291). Some Zapotec images were undoubtedly used in ritual: jade statuettes were repeatedly placed in shrines as offerings, sometimes covered in red ochre, presumably to symbolize the blood whose life-force was central to Zapotec religion. In one sanctuary lay the remains of a child, probably the victim of sacrificial ritual, the body and accompanying figurines covered in powdered ochre, as if they represented surrogate human sacrificial victims.

In a Romano-British context, the underground position of the Deal chalk figure (Figure 4.9) is surely significant, though whether it was in a 'shrine' is debatable (Parfitt & Green 1987: 295–298) I suggest in a later chapter that its subterranean position may be related to the material from which it was made, and that statements concerned with contrasts of light and dark were being made by its deposition deep in a shaft. It could have been used in rituals and ceremonies before it was put away in the darkness. Of particular interest is the little copper-alloy figurine from Henley Wood in Somerset (Figure 1.4) (Henig 1996, in Watts & Leach 1996: 131–133), found under the floor of the Romano-British temple and which, in the view of the excavators, involved 'deliberate concealment implying continued respect and veneration even when the temple was abandoned or destroyed' (Watts & Leach 1996: 131; Henig 1984: 225). To quote again from the report, 'such an object will probably have been venerated for many decades – perhaps centuries – at Henley Wood'. The first temple here was erected in the first or early second century AD; the statuette pre-dates the building and may well have been produced in the late Iron Age, along with other material (coins, pottery and jewellery).

The Henley Wood figurine has several features of intrinsic interest: she is naked, but for a twisted torc and a plaited *sprang* or headband, similar to that used to blindfold the young woman drowned as a sacrifice at Windeby in North Germany (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: fig. 50; van der Sanden 1996: 98, 112), but also closely resembling the headgear worn by the stone figures from Alesia (Figure 1.3) (Deyts 1976: no. 1) and Paule (Deyts 1999: 25–26), both of whom also wear torcs. This motif (see Chapter 2) is probably to be identified with status. Her pendulous breasts imply maturity and, perhaps, childbearing; her eyes, originally inlaid with glass, must once have been arresting. A socket between her feet suggests that the figure was mounted on a stand and so maybe carried in processions, but the use-wear on the body, and particularly on the face, is indicative of repeated handling, just as has been noted on some Palaeolithic figurines (Mussi *et al.* 2000: 110). The Henley Wood image is charged with multiple layers and facets of meaning: alongside intrinsic features such as femaleness, maturity, the wearing of

Figure 1.4 Bronze figurine of a woman, from Henley Wood temple, Somerset. From the collections of North Somerset Museum. © North Somerset Museum Service.

a torc and headband are elements associated with context and use: memory, longevity, handling, movement all feed into a complex resonance that may have changed according to time, place and consumer. Above all, the figurine shows signs of active use, being held, caressed, moved about and perhaps episodically re-deposited in a sacred place as a revered ancestral presence.

Scrutiny of other Iron Age figures shows us other meanings and functions: of the fifteen or so chalk figurines from Garton Slack in East Yorkshire, some were deliberately broken or damaged: decapitated or deeply scratched (Figure 1.5). It may be that objects were broken and discarded when they no longer 'worked' for the community for which they were produced, but the damage may be deliberate and highly ritualized. Ian Stead (1988: 9–29) made a tentative but persuasive analogy between such treatment and the deliberate post-ceremony destruction of figurines in Central American rituals, after the spirit was deemed to have departed from them (Stahl 1986: 134–150). Stahl's work on sacred figurines of the prehistoric Valdivia culture of Ecuador, from around 3500 BC onwards, has revealed a complex pattern of use at a site called Loma Alta, where over five hundred images have been found, involving production, use and mutilation, including the severing of

Figure 1.5 Decapitated chalk figurine from Garton Slack, Yorkshire. © Hull City Museums.

limbs and decapitation. He has made comparisons between Valdivian material culture and recent/present-day shamanistic traditions in parts of South America where figurines play a central role. Among the Taíno of Puerto Rico, wooden images known as *zemís* are used 'during ecstatic contact with hidden worlds … as a mundane repository for Otherworldly spirits' (Stahl 1986: 136). Certain Guyanese Arawak shamans are said to use small black figurines during trance-rituals for divination associated with healing ceremonies (Roth 1915: 331; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1961). In South American traditions, images may provide a temporary home for beneficent spirits while the rituals take place. In these contexts, they may act as ancestral protector spirits for the sick, for the very young and for novice ritualists, who may be in particular danger from malignant forces. Evil spirits may be frightened away by figurines, which are sometimes set up in rows to repel disease from a threatened settlement (Holmer & Wassén 1953).

The deliberate breakage of images is a recurrent feature of their use in European antiquity, and it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether such damage is part of their ritual biographies or acts of iconoclasm. Violence towards figurines is attested as early as the Gravettian, about twenty-seven thousand years ago, when someone repeatedly stabbed a female figurine

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before placing it near human remains (perhaps the victims of violent death) at Dolní Věstonice in the Czech Republic (Pettitt 2002: 13). The cut-marks on the gilded bronze cult-statue of Sulis Minerva at Bath and the hacking of the head from the body (Cunliffe & Fulford 1982: no. 26, pl. 7) were deliberate and inflicted in antiquity, though whether in a bizarre act of worship or by early Christian iconoclasts (Croxford 2003) is difficult to judge. In the same way, the damage done to some of the images from the sanctuary at *Fontes Sequanae* in Burgundy may have been done in acts of closure by pagans or by Christians (Rousselle 1990; Baudot 1847).

The persistent purposeful damage done to weapons and other artefacts in Iron Age Europe (Bradley 1990; Bourke 2001) provides a context for the breakage of images, in terms of ritual behaviour, which may be associated with interruption of an object's life-cycle, with closure, with rites of passage or the transference of offerings to the Otherworld. Creation, use, damage, repair (or its neglect) and discard may all be important stages in the life of a statue or figurine, in processes of remembrance and forgetting. In his study of Upper Palaeolithic cave-art, Lewis-Williams illustrates the essential dynamism of images, drawing attention to the attempted erasure of pictures by scraping the surface of the rock at Chauvet (Ardèche) and the crossing-out of hand-prints at the Cosquer cave near Marseille (Lewis-Williams 2002: 210). It is impossible even to hazard a guess as to the meaning of such action, but it may have been related to ideas of termination, riddance or the neutralization of power.

Cycladic figurines were often deliberately smashed or mutilated (Thimme 1977; Goodison & Morris 1998: 113–132). Images may also be accidentally broken through continuous use and, if this happened, they may be deliberately left in that state or mended: a tomb in the Cretan cemetery at Koumasa contained an early Bronze Age marble figurine of Cycladic type whose neck had been snapped and repaired before it was placed in the grave (Xanthoudides 1924: 588; Goodison & Morris 1998). Damage, destruction, transformation and change may have played a significant role in the symbolic function of Iron Age European images. In 1943, a carved male head, with extravagantly curling moustache and matching eyebrows, made of local rag-stone, was discovered by sand-miners outside a corner of a square enclosure at Mšecké Žehrovice in Bohemia (Megaw & Megaw 1998). The head (Figure 1.6) probably once surmounted a pillar-stone, like the one from Pfalzfeld in Germany (Megaw 1970: no. 75), and was broken off in antiquity; when found, the head itself was in several pieces, one fragment of which was never recovered. The damage could have occurred accidentally, when the head was removed from the pillar, or it could have been deliberately smashed in a penultimate act of ritual, followed by its burial in a pit with sherds of pottery and the burned bones of domestic animals. The deposition of this head may have been a sacrificial offering; it is nearly life-size and may represent a god or hero; if the latter, the destruction and interment of the head might have occurred after the man died, in a public act of ceremony, a rite of
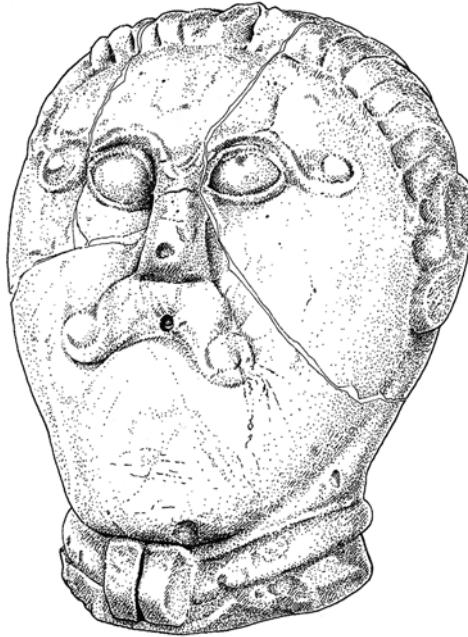
Figure 1.6 Stone head from Mšecké Žehrovice, Bohemia. © Anne Leaver.

transformation, sending on and forgetting. Shanks (1999: 99) reminds us that Greek heroes were perceived as other than human but special, liminal beings midway between men and gods. One other feature of the Mšecké Žehrovice head is interesting, in terms of a working image, that is the presence of a small hole in the position of a mouth, which could have been used for libations. Images could certainly be used in this way: the Minoans made ritual vessels, presumably for holding and pouring liquor, in the form of female figurines (Warren 1973: 137–147). The mouth-aperture in the Bohemian head may even have been associated with the image's life-use as an oracular device, for speaking a god's will to the community.

Classical texts make direct allusion to the purposeful destruction of images by fire, in deliberate and dramatic acts of ritual theatre, of public display in whose spectacle whole communities would share. The performance itself was invested with intensified value on account of the collective nature of the experience (Paden 1992: 34). Strabo (*Geography* IV, 4, 5) and Caesar (*de Bello Gallico* VI, 16) refer to the building of gigantic anthropomorphic wicker images, filled with living creatures, including people. These *colossi* were then burnt in a horrific holocaust in order to appease the gods. The sacrifice was, perhaps, regarded as particularly potent because of the human shape of the sacrificial vessel, which may have been perceived as an

enormous human offering or even as the temporary epiphany of a god. Pausanias (*Description of Greece* IX, 3–4) refers to an ancient local festival that used to take place at Plataia in Boeotia, which involved the burning of a wooden image, called a *daedala*. The ritual was centred on a particular area of woodland where huge oaks grew, in whose branches the celebrants hung great joints of boiled meat. They watched to see on which tree the crows first alighted to feed on the meat, cut it down and carved an image from the timber; then they put it on a wagon and it was drawn to the summit of Mount Cithaeron, a holy place, where they made an altar, piled it with brushwood and, in the presence of the magistrates and the town's population, sacrificed a cow to Hera and a bull to Zeus. The altar was heaped with kindling and the bodies of the slain cattle and the whole thing, including the image, set alight and totally destroyed (Jones trans. 1965: 183–185; Bradley 2000: 24).

The chalk figures from Garton Slack (above) are interesting, not only because of their evidence for breakage but also in that they constitute a group, perhaps even originally performing scenes, as occurred in Zapotec ritual (Marcus 1996: 290). Some of the dancing figurines from Minoan Crete may similarly have been designed as interacting groups: a clay table from Phaistos is decorated with a troupe of female dancers (Goodison & Morris 1998: fig. 54), and a group of clay figurines cavort gracefully together on a ceramic 'stage' found at Palaikastro (Marthari 1999: fig. 5). Mention of dancers brings to mind a group of male and female bronze figurines, some in a dancing pose (Figure 1.7), from Neuvy-en-Sullias (Loiret), a religious assemblage of material originally from a shrine and perhaps hidden away at about the time of the Roman conquest of that part of Gaul (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 35, 190). Opposed pairs of individuals, engaged in a sacred dance or ritual fight (Figure 1.8), decorated the back of the great bronze funerary couch on which lay the body of the Hallstatt chieftain interred in the tumulus at Hochdorf, near Stuttgart, in the sixth century BC (Megaw & Megaw 1989: 41), its dancing/combat ambiguity comparable to much earlier Egyptian ceramic imagery at pre-dynastic Abydos (Garfinkel 2001: 241–254).

Somatic position in general is an under-researched aspect of Iron Age images but is a feature recognized as significant in other areas of prehistoric iconography. Minoan Neopalatial bronze figures (Hitchcock 1997: 113–130) apparently conform to a formulaic series of 'gesture-forms' associated with how the arms and hands are positioned, interpreted as signatures of status and authority. The *pouces levés* noted on the Breton Iron Age statue from Lanneunoc (Figure 3.16) (Clément 1986: 143: see Chapters 3 and 7) presumably reflect some meaningful gesture. Arm-position may equally be read in terms of how other images were meant to be interrogated: the Henley Wood figure (Figure 1.4) stands with her arms folded across her stomach in almost precisely identical a manner to certain Cycladic female and male figurines of the early Bronze Age, from – for example – sites in Naxos and Amorgos (Marthari 1999: fig. 2; Jockenhövel 1999: figs. 1, 2). Similar gestures
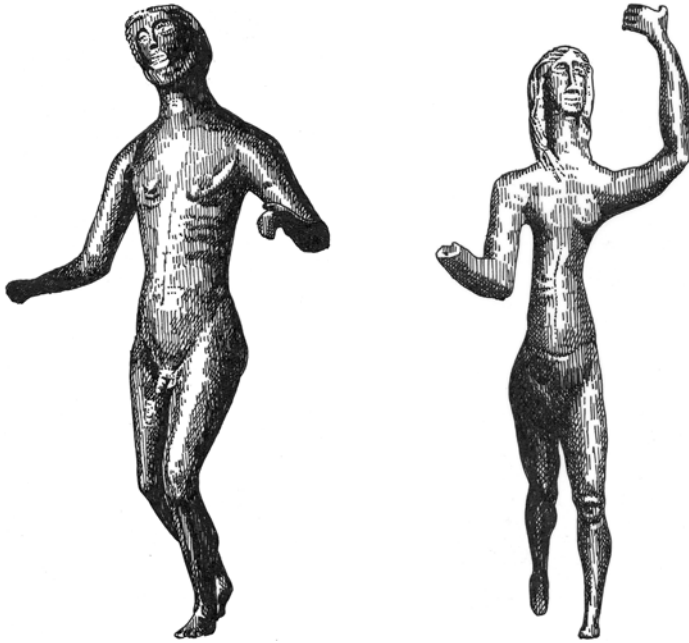
Figure 1.7 Bronze figurines of dancers from Neuvy-en-Sullias, Loiret. © Paul Jenkins.

may be identified on monumental, intensely masculine warrior-imagery from Iron Age Central European contexts. The Hallstatt period funerary statues from Glauberg (Figure 1.9) and Hirschlanden (Figure 3.7) in Germany (Frey 1996/97: 25–38; 1998: 1–14) are somatically very similar to each other: both men have the over-developed calf-muscles that appear to indicate physical power; each is armed. But both have their arms folded across their torsos in a distinctively non-aggressive way. We must be careful lest we attribute essentialist messages to all prehistoric images with similar arm-positions, but there is an intrinsic lack of engagement with the viewer, a remoteness and detachment about the gesture that may have significance in a range of contexts. It may be that this kind of gesture is purposely indicative of inaction, of latent authority, where the exhibition of force is unnecessary and inappropriate. Unlike hieratic or reaching-out gestures, the folded-arm position keeps the figure to itself, turns it in on itself in a narcissistic, introverted manner that shuts out the world and, perhaps, is evocative of a separate, heroic plane of being.

Most exciting in this regard is the persistently repeated 'lotus-position' of some Iron Age and Roman-period imagery (see Chapter 2), a phenomenon so widely occurrent as to be highly significant, even though it may not always carry identical meaning. In her study of Meso-American Zapotec tradition, Marcus (1996: 289, fig. 4) has identified figures seated cross-legged like this
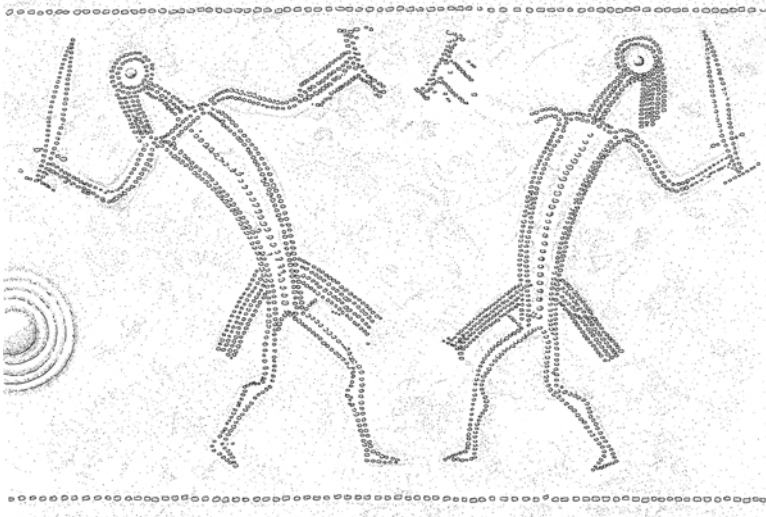
Figure 1.8 Pair of warriors engaged in ritualized combat dance, decorating the back of a bronze couch in the tomb of a Hallstatt chieftain at Hochdorf, Germany. © Anne Leaver.
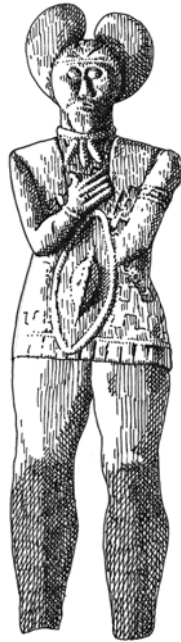
Figure 1.9 Stone statue of a warrior from a Hallstatt tomb at Glauberg, Germany. © Paul Jenkins.

as a signifier of power and authority. But the problematical nature of de-contextualized image-reading is demonstrated by the paradox of this seated position. Though some of the European 'lotus' figures are undeniably of elevated rank (the torcs worn by many appear to be indicative of high status), others, like the submissive little figure from an Iron Age sanctuary at Le Bauve (Seine-et-Marne) (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: fig. 53), seem to represent a humiliated, subjugated being. The small seated image of an armoured man decorating a wine-jug in one of the Glauberg graves (Figure 2.1) may also depict a defeated warrior: his position, set between two 'menacing sphinxes', perhaps indicates threat and conquest (Frey 1998: fig. 14).

Another issue to be addressed is that of materiality, the subject of Chapter 4: the choice of wood, stone or metal for image-making may be highly significant, in presentation of permanence, transformation and use. Wooden images, like flesh-bodies, are subject to change, burning and decay, but are preserved in water (Aldhouse-Green 2000; 2001d; 2002) into which they may be deliberately placed, for instance at the Gallo-Roman healing sanctuaries of *Fontes Sequanae* (Figure 4.7) (Deyts 1983) and Chamalières (Romeuf 2000). The ability to destroy wooden images in theatrical conflagrations, like those mentioned by Caesar and Pausanias (above), may have been an important factor in the choice of materials for the production of statues and figurines. The use of metal involves dramatic transformation by smiths, and wrought-iron images are 'one-offs' (Figure 4.11), produced through the power of fire, with all the attendant symbolism of heat, colour, sound and danger. Stone images encompass longevity and perhaps served to provide linkages with numinous places in the landscape from which the rock was quarried. Bradley (2000: 121) has drawn attention to the link between deposition of objects and the raw material from which they were made, citing the placement of Neolithic chalk objects in pits dug into chalk and the stone axes deposited in rock-fissures, suggesting a deliberate intention to replace human-made artefacts in their original birthplace. The Siberian Khanty tradition, of carving a wooden image from a living tree and putting it back next to the tree-trunk at the death of its owner (Jordan 2001), represents a similar perception of image-biography, in this case in synchrony with that of humans.

Images and ideologies

The final theme in this opening chapter introduces some more issues of image-manipulation in the projection of socio-political messages, explored further in Chapters 7 and 8. One model applicable to the interface of Roman and native Gallo-British tradition is to view body-imagery that veered from the Classical norms of human or animal realism through a prism of 'resistance' to *romanitas*, a means of presenting an alternative cosmology to that projected by Classical artistic and religious tradition, thus serving to reinforce and reassert identity. Accordingly, iconography could be used to protest ideological independence.

A good case-study with which to test such a hypothesis is the imagery of Mercury in Roman Britain. Alongside 'good' Classical portrayals of the god occur images that bend his 'reality' to produce something that represents a small artistic shift but an enormous ideological or cosmological one: the carving from Emberton (Green 1986: fig. 98: see Chapter 8) depicts a Mercury figure with winged hat (Figure 1.10), or does it represent a horned being instead? The image may be deliberately immersive or open-ended, depending, perhaps, on what the consumer demanded of it. The sanctuary at Uley in Gloucestershire appears, from its iconography and epigraphy, to have been dedicated to the god, but at least one little image (Figure 8.2) is horned rather than winged (Woodward & Leach 1993: 98, fig. 83). The Walsingham shrine (Bagnall Smith 1999) is similarly ascribed, but what of the jester-like triple-horned head (Figure 7.18) from the site (see Chapter 7), so similar, but for the third horn, to the bucket-heads from late Iron Age Baldock (Stead 1968: 306; 1971: 250–282; Stead & Rigby 1986: 51–61)? The three-horned motif is well known in both Iron Age and Gallo-Roman contexts (Green 1998b).

I want to end with one of the most evocative images from Roman Britain: the carving from Lemington, near Chedworth (Green 1997b: 132; 1998c: fig. 93), that arguably demonstrates many issues addressed in this chapter and

Figure 1.10 Stone relief of Mercury, from a well at Emberton, Bucks. From the Buckinghamshire County Museum collections.

Figure 1.11 Stone carving of a woman with spear and vat, from Lemington, Glos. © Anne Leaver.

elsewhere in the book. 'She' is highly schematic (Figure 1.11), with a heavy Gallic cloak and hair *en brosse*; an incised inscription dedicates the image 'to the queen goddess', a Gallo-British epithet associated with sovereignty (there is a possibility that the inscription was added later). But she carries a spear in her *left* hand, thus, at one and the same time, contradicting the human 'norm' of right-handedness and offending Roman gender sensibilities. I contend that this sculpture, from a prosperous Roman country house, has an important voice that resonates from both religious and wider perspectives. The image may encapsulate ideas of past, ancestral memory, belonging and a deliberate retro-ideology that served to empower and reassure her producers and her worshippers (Iron Age coins from Brittany depict female warriors with weapons in their left hands: see Figure 1.12). The Lemington figure by no means stands alone: to name but two more British images that may project similar messages within an apparently highly Roman context, we may cite the three women carved on a small schist plaque from Bath (Figure 7.20) (Green 1989: fig. 88) and the severed stone head from the grounds of a late Roman house at Caerwent (Figure 7.2) (Brewer 1986: pl. 20, no. 53). The Bath triad, to my mind, evokes the idea of an alternative Sulis, an indigenous challenge to the so very Classical gilded bronze image of Minerva. The Caerwent head, with its

Figure 1.12 Reverse of Iron Age gold coin, minted by the Redones of Brittany, depicting a naked horsewoman with a sword in her left hand, a spear in her right. © Paul Jenkins.

schematic features and asymmetrical eyes, may equally serve to contest ideologies or beliefs within the context of a Silurian household whose head may well have espoused the Christian faith but whose staff clung to the old ways.

The use of religion and sacred iconography to express resistance, protest and self-determination under colonialist domination is a well-known phenomenon. William Paden (1992: 42) discusses the use of religion as a vigorous response to social oppression, citing the development of the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica under white colonial rule, and its 'passionate mythology of a future return to Africa under the leadership of an African Messiah'. Piers Vitebsky (1995: 116–119, 136–137) explores the role of shamans as foci for political resistance, in the same way that the Druids acted as agitators against the Roman regimes in Gaul and Britain (Green 1997b: 52–53; Webster 1998, 1999; Van Andringa 2000: 50–51). It is becoming increasingly appreciated (Green 1998a; Aldhouse-Green 2003b; Webster 1997) that Gallo-British iconography may well have been used as a conscious means of denying *romanitas* and engaging with a free past (see Chapter 8). These dissonant, contrary images, like all the iconography cited in this book, reflected and manipulated human experiences, identities, ideologies, cosmologies, states of being and becoming; they present a powerful and empowering voice as rich as any written text.

2

IMAGE AND IDENTITY
Personhood, self and other

> The universal dress is the short cloak, fastened with a brooch or, failing that, a thorn. They pass whole days by the hearth fire wearing no garment but this. The richest are not distinguished, like the Persians and the Sarmatians, by a long flowing robe, but by a tight one that shows the shape of every limb. They also wear the pelts of wild animals, the tribes near the Rhine without regard to appearance, the more distant peoples with some refinement of taste, for there is no other finery that they can buy. These latter peoples make careful choice of animal, then strip off the pelt and mottle it with patches of the spotted skins of the beasts that live in the outer ocean and the unknown sea.
>
> (Tacitus, *Germania* XVII; trans. Mattingly 1948: 114–115)

This passage aptly illustrates some of the issues with which this chapter is concerned: dress-codes, status, display, belonging, and attitudes to the presentation of the body. The Roman author himself is caught up in the eccentricities of Teutonic costume and is particularly intrigued by the exotic use of seal-skins to ornament the clothes of those with 'refined tastes'. Tacitus, consciously or inadvertently, is presenting a vivid picture of flamboyant barbarism and of the huge gulf of difference between the pelt-wearing Germans and the sober dress of the well-born Roman. The text is thus loaded with different messages and sub-texts of which some seem merely descriptive but others of which act as emphatic and stereotypic statements about *romanitas* and its opposite. We can read similar messages into comments by other urbane Roman authors, such as Martial. Although born in Spain, his *Epigrams*, written towards the end of the first century AD, show a sneering disdain for the barbarian outsider. In one piece, he vents his spleen on a Gaul called Fidentinus whom he accused of plagiarism:

> So, when set among them, a Lingonian cowled cloak
> defiles with greasy wool the violet-purple robes of town.
>
> (Juvenal, *Epigrams* 1, 53, 5; trans. Ker 1968: 63)

Images can provide valuable information about the communities and individuals that produced them. They may display details of dress, hairstyles, weaponry, age, gender or status. But images may also be illusive, inclined to deceive, to contradict or to confuse; they can be employed not to reflect life-world realities but as inversions or subversions, depending upon their intended consumers. They may make statements about not being as well as being, about exclusion as well as belonging, and about the supernatural as well as the natural world. So students of iconography that belongs to past societies (and those of foreign present-day traditions also) need to be wary of pitfalls endemic to the interpretation of images, to be 'contextually aware' and to look behind the obvious for the subtle, hidden codes that may have carried significance.

Portraying contempt: iconographies of submission

> For the people were summoned as though for a fine spectacle, while the Guard stood in arms on the parade ground before their camp. Then there was a march past, with Caratacus' petty vassals, and the decorations and neck-chains and spoils of his foreign wars. Next were displayed his brothers, wife and daughter. Last came the king himself.
>
> (Tacitus, *Annals* XII, 33–35, trans. Grant 1956: 258)

The context of this text is the final defeat of the British freedom-fighter Caratacus, a Catuvellaunian nobleman from south-east Britain who, in the mid-first century AD, took the British war against Rome to the arena of the Welsh tribal wilderness and was finally handed over to the conquerors by the quisling Cartimandua, ruler of the northern hegemony of the Brigantes. Caratacus, his family and retinue ended up gracing the Triumph of the emperor Claudius in Rome (Aldhouse-Green 2004a).

A small but coherent body of iconography from barbarian Europe depicts individuals whose somatic treatment indicates their low, captive and humiliated status. The imagery is not only intrinsically significant, in terms of its provision of information on attitudes to 'lesser' people by the dominant, but also in its synergies with evidence from human remains. Two main signifiers may be identified in representation: somatic position and bondage; such treatment is equally identifiable on coeval human bodies, whose manner of deposition appears to reflect deliberate statements of degradation, presumably consonant with the life-experience of the deceased just prior to death (foreign captive, criminal, slave or sacrificial victim).

Subjugation and bondage: from Hessen to Cumbria

A rich tomb of the fifth century BC at Glauberg in Hessen, Germany, has produced important iconography, including two very disparate images: a monumental

Figure 2.1 Bronze seated figure of a warrior, from Glauberg, Germany. © Paul Jenkins.

stone-carving of a warrior with his shield, probably originally positioned standing on top of the grave-mound (Figure 1.9), and a tiny bronze image of a seated soldier (Figure 2.1) decorating a wine-flagon (Frey 1996/97: figs. 20, 17; Lontcho 2000: 4–8). The stone statue is part of a group of similar images, funerary figures that probably represent the deceased: he is bearded, wears a Greek-style cuirass and a neck-ring with three pendants. His oval shield is disproportionately small, and this may be a deliberate ploy to represent an armed man in non-combatant mode (the same phenomenon is identifiable on Iberian Iron Age stone warrior-figures: see below, Figure 2.6). Most distinctive are the lotus-flower carved on his forehead and his huge double-leaf head-dress; both motifs are paralleled on other images: the lotus and leaf-crown are present, for instance, on the very similar stone head from Heidelberg (Figure 2.2) and the four faces carved on the quadrangular stele from Pfalzfeld (Megaw & Megaw 1989: figs. 82, 83), and the same crown is per-sistently present on small metal objects, like the gold appliqué face from Schwarzenbach (op. cit.: fig. 74) (the last three in Germany) and the ring of disembodied heads adorning a harness-disc from Horovičky in Bohemia (op. cit.: fig. 75). All these images are broadly synchronous with the Glauberg grave. Barry Raftery (1990) and Franck Perrin (2000: 21–22) have suggested

Figure 2.2 Stone head with lotus-motif on forehead, from Heidelberg, Germany. © Paul Jenkins.

that the leaves forming the headdresses of the crowned images are those of mistletoe, perhaps reflecting the priestly status of the individuals represented. Mistletoe is described by Pliny (*Natural History* XVI: 95) as a plant sacred to the Gaulish Druids, and grains of mistletoe-pollen were identified in the gut of Lindow Man, a victim of human sacrifice in north-west Britain at about the time of the Roman conquest (Stead *et al.* 1986).

The little bronze figure from Glauberg is treated with marked differences from the monumental statue: whilst the standing stone figure is dominating, physically powerful, with huge leg-muscles (reminiscent not only of cognate sculptures but also of the 'big men' of southern Swedish Bronze Age rock art: Coles 1994: figs. 16a, 78; 2000: pl. 68) and armed, the small figure seated cross-legged on a flagon-rim presents a contrasting image; although it, too, wears body-armour, it has no weapon or shield, its head is thrust forward and downwards, with the hands resting on its knees: in short, it appears to depict a subjugated warrior. A very similar bronze figure, though less detailed, comes from pre-Roman levels at La Bauve (Seine-et-Marne), a site that later became a Gallo-Roman sanctuary (Guichard & Perrin 2000: no. 28); the image may date as early as the fourth century BC and the Iron Age shrine produced a number of deliberately damaged weapons, thus placing the site in the same group as other more spectacular *loca sancta*, such as Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme) and Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise). The huge assemblages of mutilated swords, shields and spears from these sanctuaries are generally interpreted as belonging to defeated enemies; I suggest that the La Bauve figurine, like the attachment from Glauberg, might also represent a captured and humiliated foreign warrior. The image from La Bauve does not sit but rather kneels, with its hands, palms downwards, on the ground in front of it as if in a posture of submission.

There is a striking resemblance between these two little figurines and a curious group of inhumation burials from later Iron Age Gallic ritual sites, notably Acy-Romance (Ardennes), Fesques (Seine-Maritime) and Geneva (Lambot 1998: 75–87; 2000: 30–36; Brunaux 2000a: 14–18), which have been interpreted as 'low status' dead, partly because they were interred with no grave-goods. Both Acy and Fesques may have been used as intermittent gathering-places for large numbers of people, similar to the court of assembly belonging to the Helvetian leader Orgetorix (Caesar, *de Bello Gallico* I, 4). The distinctive feature of the burials is the seated posture of the bodies, the head folded forward onto the knees, the arms bent beneath the body and the legs sharply flexed in a manner highly reminiscent of the stance shown in the bronze figurine from La Bauve. At Acy-Romance, in the early second century BC, about twenty bodies of young men were treated in this manner; the excavators consider that the bodies were first placed in boxes cramped up into a seated position, lowered into a deep pit to be dried out under controlled conditions, then – when the desiccation process was sufficiently complete – the corpses were removed from the pit and the chamber to be re-deposited in graves beneath the surface of a terrace in front of a large building, interpreted as a shrine. Three other young men were similarly treated but their remains were interred, again seated, on an alignment with the rising sun. The notion that these individuals were special persons is supported both by their idiosyncratic treatment, the absence of grave-goods and the fact that their burial-rite flouted the normal tradition of cremation, for which there is abundant evidence at the site. Some scholars (Lambot 1998, 2000; Brunaux 2000a; Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 130) believe that these may have been not only low-status interments but perhaps the remains of ritually polluted, enslaved foreign prisoners whose sacrificial killing was enacted in a symbolic cleansing-ceremony for the community.

Study of certain human remains found at Acy and Fesques provides circumstantial evidence that this kind of thing may have been happening. The skeleton of a young man dating to *c.* 100 BC was excavated at the former site; he was not a 'boxed-burial' and he died about a hundred years later than the seated people, but lay in an extended position, his hands bound behind his back, and the cause of his death was a savage axe-blow to the head (Lambot 2000: 32). The human bone assemblage at Fesques is equally provocative in so far as osteological study of foot-bones belonging to two individuals suggests that their bodies had been suspended, perhaps – as seems to have happened at Ribemont (du Lesley 2000: 13) – as battle-trophies for the gods of the victorious army.

The manner of their burial appears to indicate that the people interred seated at these pre-Roman Gallic sites were treated as low-status sacrificial or punitive victims. Despite the discrepancies in date, it may be possible to make linkages between the position of these burials and the little seated figures from La Bauve and Glauberg. We have to be careful in so far as not all

seated images can be so interpreted: there is quite contrary indication that some Iron Age Gallic cross-legged figures depicted high-ranking, heroic or divine beings (Lontcho 2000: 4–8); indeed, a prisoner-of-war may encapsulate the paradox of coeval high and low status. But the two figurines appear to adopt an attitude of submission that can be clearly identified in later iconographic narratives where defeated barbarians sit or kneel, often in chains or bound with ropes, in a stereotypic 'grammar' of humiliation. The somatic position is important for it puts subjugated persons at a disadvantage, enabling them to be looked down upon as smaller, inferior beings and denying possibilities of aggression (even if you are not under restraint, it is difficult to fight a standing opponent while seated or kneeling).

> Vercingetorix, the supreme leader of the whole war, put on his most beautiful armour, had his horse carefully groomed, and rode out through the gates [of Alesia]. Caesar was sitting down and Vercingetorix, after riding round him in a circle, leaped down from his horse, stripped off his armour, and sat at Caesar's feet silent and motionless until he was taken away under arrest, a prisoner reserved for his triumph.
>
> (Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*; trans. Warner 1958: 240–241)

Plutarch is presumably relying on and embellishing Caesar's own terse account of the final defeat of the Gauls under the leadership of the Arvernian chieftain, which simply says 'They surrendered Vercingetorix and laid down their arms' (*de Bello Gallico* VII: 89); the Greek author paints a vivid picture of the abrupt transition from the highest to the lowest rank of a defeated battle-commander. We know a little of the Gaulish freedom-fighter's subsequent career, which ended five years later with a ritualized execution in Rome after gracing Caesar's triumph in the city.

The image that, perhaps more than any other, evokes powerful messages of subjugation is the little Romano-British copper-alloy figure of a bound and seated person from Brough-under-Stainmore in Cumbria (Figure 2.3) (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 125, 145, col. pl. 20; Green 1978: 48, pl. 138). The prisoner has a thick rope around his neck, the bonds also encircling his hands; the face is schematized, as if to portray a British 'barbarian', with protruding circular eyes, a small nose and a large gaping mouth: the physiognomy appears to show distress and even, perhaps, exhibits signs of strangulation. The body has a vertical hole through it, presumably to enable it to be worn as an amulet, perhaps as some form of victory-badge. Enslaved prisoners are frequently depicted in Roman conquest-iconography (present, for instance, in the portrayal of Gallic captives on the triumphal arch at Carpentras (Vaucluse: Wiseman & Wiseman 1980: 197) with neck-ropes or chains and bound hand or foot, but the Brough figurine is curious in the joining of the neck and wrists with a single thong. It is a gruesome method of tying

Figure 2.3 Romano-British bronze amulet in the form of a bound prisoner, from Brough-under-Stainmore, Cumbria. © The British Museum.

someone up, for any attempted movement of the hands results in self-throttling; the starting eyes and screaming mouth may, indeed, indicate that this is happening. There is an uncanny resemblance between this image and the body of an adolescent boy, who died in the second to first century BC, and was preserved in a peat-bog at Kayhausen in Schleswig-Holstein (van der Sanden 1996: 93, 141, pl. 117; Aldhouse-Green 2001a: fig. 59): he was naked but woven woollen strips of what may have been his own clothes were used to bind his hands behind his back and encircle his throat, and his feet were tied with a cape; examination of the child's body revealed that he had a deformed hip, inhibiting his ability to walk properly. He was probably a sacrificial victim: his very disability may have marked him out for a sacred death; there is persistent evidence that people were habitually selected for ritual murder because there was something wrong with them, particularly mobility problems. We may point to the young girl from Yde in the Netherlands, strangled with her own belt (van der Sanden 1996: 138), who suffered from extreme curvature of the spine, and the three women, of differing ages but all probably related, with the same congenital (?) hip-deformity, interred – perhaps as attendant sacrifices – at the entrance of an enclosure surrounding a chieftain's cremation-burial in about AD 50 (Niblett 1999: 20), these being but two examples of many (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 157–160).

In a paper presented to a conference at Manchester in September 2002, Tim Taylor (2002b) suggested that putting people to death by hanging or strangulation had the symbolic effect of cutting off their dying breath, thereby denying the ability of the soul to free itself from the body. This is an interesting concept and might explain why certain methods were selected for the dispatch of particular victims: the demeanour of the Brough figure, with the wide-open mouth, resonates strongly with such a notion. This form of punishment could be meted out to someone excluded from the normal rights (and rites) of society: someone who broke the rules, a criminal, a sacrificial victim, a foreign prisoner-of-war or a hostage. Some of the hanged or strangled Iron Age bog-bodies – the Lindow man, the Yde girl, the Tollund man, the Elling woman and the Kayhausen boy, for instance – may equally have been so treated because, for some reason, it mattered that the soul could not leave the body and transfer on to the Otherworld. There are, perhaps, similarities between such treatment and Classical funerary traditions, in which the dead spirit could only depart and progress to Hades if proper rites had been enacted. Thus, in Euripides's drama *Antigone* (lines 26–35), Polynices is deliberately denied burial by his uncle Creon and his body lies 'unshriven'; Antigone's own tragedy unfolds as a consequence of her defiance of the tyrant and the sprinkling of earth over her brother's body. Similarly, Virgil's *Aeneid* (VI) describes Aeneas's encounter with the unfortunate souls to whom the appropriate rites were not or could not be accorded:

> All this crowd you see are the helpless ones, the unburied:
> That ferryman is Charon: the ones he conveys have had burial.
> None may be taken across from bank to awesome bank of
> That Harsh-voiced river until his bones are laid to rest.
> <div align="right">(Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 327–330; trans C. Day Lewis
from Chisholm & Ferguson 1981: 233).</div>

In seeking to unravel the possible meanings of the Brough depiction, we need to look both at and beyond the intrinsic physicalities explicated in the image. There is a clear intention to represent restraint and therefore to read humiliation and subjugation into the iconography is wholly justifiable. There are also possible sub-texts concerning loss of identity and risk: a captive prisoner loses 'self' and becomes an abject image of enslaved defeat, but his or her bound state reflects a power so dangerous that it needs to be tethered, to render it harmless and prevent it from escaping to do damage. However, the context of the piece is crucial to its understanding and so it is necessary to examine the contextual signifiers: it is Romano-British in date and it appears to depict not a Roman but a Briton. An important point, then, is whether the image is representative of self or other; in other words, is it meant to convey Roman messages about submissive barbarians (and, perhaps, the act of a Roman slave-hunter, or *fugitivarius*: Thompson 2003: 217–244) or is it,

instead, a statement of resistance associated with Britishness (see Chapter 8), and do these nuances matter? There is a further issue to be addressed in the possible religious subliminal message conveyed by the figure, in terms of self-subjugation in the presence of the divine (see below).

A coherent body of imagery relates to the triumph of *romanitas* over barbarism, of order over chaos and of empire over non-empire. It is possible to identify a range of standard iconographic grammars through which capture, foreignness, degradation and slavery are presented (Aldhouse-Green 2004a): persistent themes include the sitting or kneeling posture of the prisoner (as opposed to the normal standing or enthroned position of the conqueror), bound hands and/or feet, neck-ropes or chains, the nakedness of the vanquished and the grasping of his hair by his victorious enemy (a particular form of physical assault). Whilst the Brough figurine is alone, stone iconography often depicts a narrative, an explicit relationship between conqueror and conquered: the victorious warrior towers over the victim whose position renders him at an immediate visual disadvantage: he is smaller than his adversary, who looks down upon him, and his seated or kneeling position and his bonds show him as disempowered, as a passive victim. A group of stone images from north Britain represents the non-Roman barbarian in attitudes of abject submission, threatened by the victor's weapons, trampled beneath the hooves of a cavalryman's horse or otherwise humiliated. A distance-slab from Bridgeness (West Lothian) on the Antonine Wall (Figure 2.4) has a graphic portrayal of *romanitas* in action against the 'other': it depicts a galloping Roman horseman, in full armour, with cloak and crested helmet, apparently trampling four naked Britons whose weapons have been scattered in the onslaught (the face of one, lying prostrate, his knees bent under him and arms outstretched holding his shield to ward off attack, bears a close resemblance to the Brough prisoner, with similar treatment of hair and features). A second Briton kneels unarmed, cowering away from the horseman, with a spear buried in his back; a third sits in an attitude of despair, facing the viewer, perhaps awaiting the fate that befell the fourth captive, who sits beside him bound and decapitated (Keppie & Arnold 1984: no. 68, pl. 21). Ferris has suggested (1994: 26) that this act of beheading is particularly loaded with contempt, given the veneration accorded to the human head by Gallo-Britons, although such punishment of enemies is exhibited on Roman monuments outside western Europe, most dramatically on Trajan's Column, a piece of flamboyant iconographic propaganda-narrative celebrating the emperor's triumphal campaigns against the Dacians in the first century AD (Le Bohec 1994; Settis *et al.* 1988; Ferris 2003). Roman Scotland has produced other victory-iconography cognate with the Bridgness slab, in which bound barbarian captives are shown kneeling or seated on the ground (Ferris 1994: 26). The persistent images of vanquished Dacians from Trajan's Column also exhibit this 'grammar' of defeat, in terms of the position of the defeated and their depiction bound or shackled, often with elbow-restraints,

Figure 2.4 Sculpture of Roman soldiers and British prisoners, on a distance-slab from Bridgeness, on the Antonine Wall. © Anne Leaver.

and their hair is often grasped by Roman enemy soldiers, either as a gesture of contempt or preparatory to beheading. Like the Brough figurine and the Caledonian prisoners, the conquered Dacians are depicted according to a stereotyped model of wild 'otherness'; they are naked or semi-naked, wearing outlandish Phrygian caps or weird hairstyles: they are presented as opposite to the ordered control and uniform appearance of their civilized Roman adversaries.

We may explore perceptions and interrogations of prisonerhood further, in so far as the Brough image resonates not only with its own 'Roman' context but with traditions further afield in which iconographical *topoi* of defeat are presented, together with ideas of binary opposition and of the linkage between subjugation and sacrifice. The depiction of the conquered on Trajan's Column may be read not only as earthly Roman victory over barbarian outsiders but also as victory of civilization over chaos, and even as sacrifice of the untamed to the gods of order. On several scenes, the emperor is shown towering over the defeated, who are being 'offered' to him in the manner of sacrificial victims. Similar approaches may be identified elsewhere in antiquity: Egyptian victory-imagery of the New Kingdom (Filer 1997: 57; Shinnie 1996: 83, pl. 19b; Welsby 1996: fig. 20) persistently represents foreign

captives, often Nubians with exaggeratedly (and incorrect) negroid hair and physiognomy. Like the Brough amulet, these prisoners are frequently portrayed bound hand and neck, sometimes roped together in a chain-gang. Similar scenes can be identified on decorated ceramics from the Moche tradition of northern coastal Peru in the first millennium AD, where lines of sacrificial prisoner-victims, taken from conquered communities, are depicted joined by neck-ropes (Hill 2000: 317–326). Iron collars joined by chains, to harness five or six prisoners or slaves (Taylor 2001: 28), are known in late Iron Age Britain and Gaul (Figure 2.5a, b), and I have argued elsewhere (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 148–149) that such valuable objects may have been for the transport of sacrificial victims rather than merely functional objects for the restraint of criminals.

It has been useful to interrogate the little bronze image from Brough against the backdrop of cognate iconography both within and outside its own cultural context. Such comparative study raises issues of interpretation associated with secularity and sacrality: should we understand the amulet as simply depictive of a barbarian prisoner or might it be charged with ritual symbolism? Perhaps it is appropriate not to consider a necessary separation between the capture of prisoners and sacrificial offerings. There is a great deal of documentary evidence from the Classical world for the sacrifice of war-prisoners, from Homer's *Iliad* (for example XXIII lines 175–184) to Strabo on the Teutonic Cimbri (*Geography* VII: 2, 3). The Cumbrian figure is an amulet and therefore might be argued as possessing an intrinsic religious symbolism. It may represent a sacrificial victim, even though such practice had – at least officially – been abolished after the Roman occupation and, if so, it is interesting to speculate as to who wore the amulet, soldier or priest? But there is another possible convolution of meaning for the figure, in so far as it might represent not actual but symbolic subjugation, not to an earthly enemy but to a higher authority, namely the gods, and here we may aptly make reference to a passage in Tacitus, where he describes ritual action among the Germanic people known as the Semnones:

> At a set time all the peoples of this blood gather, in their embassies, in a wood hallowed by the auguries of their ancestors and the awe of ages. The sacrifice in public of a human victim marks the grisly opening of their savage ritual. In another way, too, reverence is paid to the grove. No one may enter it unless he is bound with a cord. By this he acknowledges his own inferiority and the power of the deity. Should he chance to fall, he must not get up on his feet again. He must roll out over the ground. All this complex of superstition reflects the belief that in that grove the nation had its birth and that there dwells the god who rules over all, while the rest of the world is subject to his sway.
>
> (Tacitus, *Germania* XXXIX; trans. Mattingly 1948: 132–133)

Figure 2.5 (a) Iron slave gang-chain from a later Iron Age hoard at Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey; (b) the chain in use. © National Museums & Galleries of Wales.

Tacitus's testimony is potentially significant in its description of a strong link between bondage and the supernatural world; even the allusion to falling and rolling over may make sense in terms of the Brough figure, with its bound neck and hands. So, whilst we may view the image through the lens of *romanitas*, as a depiction of an 'other', inferior and disempowered being, we may turn this around and look at it from the perspective of a religious statement concerning relationships between humans and the spirit world.

Dress-code and identity

Torcs of honour

> Very terrifying, too, were the appearance and gestures of the
> naked warriors in front, all in the prime of life and finely built
> men and all in the leading companies, richly adorned with gold
> torcs and armlets.
>
> (Polybius, *Histories* II, 29; trans. Paton 1922: 315)

> To the frankness and high-spiritedness of their temperament
> must be added the traits of childish boastfulness and love of
> decoration. They [the Gauls] wear ornaments of gold, torcs
> on their necks, and bracelets on their arms and wrists, while
> people of high rank wear dyed garments, besprinkled with
> gold. It is this vanity that makes them unbearable in victory.
>
> (Strabo, *Geography* IV, 4, 5; trans. Tierney 1959–60: 269)

When speaking of the Gauls, a range of Classical authors makes persistent
allusion to the torc, treating it as a signifier of barbarian 'otherness'. In the
Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisbon, stands the imposing silver-grey gran-
ite statue of a Lusitanian warrior from Lesenho in Portugal (Figure 2.6), one
of four from the site: his bearded, helmeted (?) head is small, his legs, broken
off below the knee, are massive; he wears a short leather skirt, leaving his
upper torso bare; he carries a short dagger in his right hand and a small cir-
cular shield in his left, guarding his abdomen; he wears armlets above his
elbows and a great penannular torc around his neck (Lenerz-de Wilde 1995:
548; figs. 28.12, 1). He is a 'guerrero gallaico' and is one of a group of about
twenty-five Iberian warrior-images from the 'Castro Culture Province' (the
hillfort region) of northern Iberia, an area densely populated by fortified
settlements defended with massive stone walls, whose inhabitants spoke
a Celtic dialect. The images appear to date from the second century BC to
the first century AD. All the accoutrements displayed by the Lesenho warrior
are attested archaeologically, particularly from grave-finds (op. cit.: 533–551).
The iconography is interesting in its presentation of apparent dissonance
between stark, mature masculinity and the somewhat flamboyant display of
ring-jewellery. Although armed, the image depicts a soldier not poised for
action but with his dagger sheathed at his belt and an undersized shield (like
that of the Glauberg warrior) and he is standing, not in an aggressive fight-
ing attitude; perhaps he and his brothers once guarded the defences of his
castro. An array of granite warriors, sparkling in the sunlight, would have
been an impressive spectacle to the visitor, whether friend or foe. But, inter-
estingly, certain of these figures carry Latin inscriptions on the tunic or shield
(Tranoy 1988: 219–228); they bear people's names and are not only local but
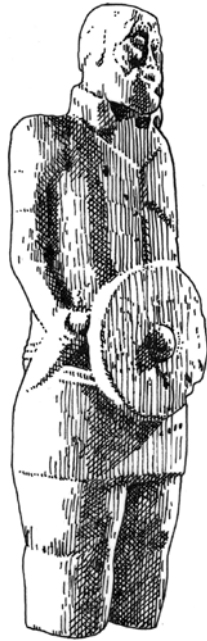
Figure 2.6 Granite statue of a warrior, from Lesenho, Portugal. © Paul Jenkins.

may include a Roman 'surname' – like that of Lucius Sestius Corocaurus on a warrior-stone from São Paio de Meixedo – suggesting that the inscribed statues date late in the sequence, when this part of Iberia had become absorbed into the empire. So it would appear that the symbolic currency of the 'guerrero gallaico' survived the *pax romana*.

In an article on Bronze Age masculinities, Paul Treherne (1995: 105–144) explores the symbolisms associated with maleness (see Chapter 3), warrior-hood and projections of self, arguing that the grave-furnishings of warrior-graves are indicative of a coherent life-style, shared experience and specific identities within Bronze Age and Iron Age Europe. He draws attention to objects buried with the dead that relate to the grooming and manipulation of the body, particularly the hair, proposing that such personal paraphernalia – razors, tweezers and combs – used for shaving, plucking and arranging hair could be symbolic of transformation, rites of passage and states of becoming. This emphasis on personal grooming and altering physical appearance has been identified in late Iron Age Britain and Gaul, when sets of toilet instruments are newly present in the archaeological funerary record (Jundi & Hill 1997; Hill 1997). The Lesenho warrior has short hair and a neat beard, not the long shaggy mane and flowing moustache so beloved of Classical

commentators on the 'Celts' (Lloyd-Morgan 1995: 98, fig. 7.3). One of the possible signifiers of honour, prowess and – perhaps – achieved status was the torc, the neck-ring made of gold, silver, copper-alloy, iron or even lead that is found all over temperate Europe in Iron Age contexts and adorns many representations of the human body, besides persistent allusion to it made by Classical commentators on their barbarian neighbours. The torc was apparently not gender-specific: women and men wore neck-rings, and some of the finest examples come from fourth-century BC women's tombs, like those at Waldalgesheim and Reinheim in Germany (Megaw 1970: nos. 79–83; 124–127). For the Lusitanian 'guerrero gallaico', it may have stood as an indicator of rank and battle-honours (equivalent to a row of medals proudly worn by a modern war-veteran), of wealth and, above all, perhaps, of belonging, of inclusion in a warrior-community, entry to which may have depended on factors such as age, rank and 'blooding'.

The association between torcs and high rank in Gaulish society is persistently demonstrated not just by the archaeology but by the testimony of a wide range of Classical writers. Several authors mention great heavy gold neck-rings; Quintilian *(Institutio Oratoria* VI: III, 79; trans. Butler 1960: 481) refers to a gift to Augustus by Gallic suppliants of 'a golden necklet weighing a hundred pounds'. Bearing in mind the ubiquity with which torcs are worn by images of divinities in Roman Gaul, references by Florus and Livy to campaigns in Cisalpine Gaul led by the Roman consul Marcellus are perhaps significant. Florus, born towards the end of the first century AD, alludes to an incident involving the Insubres:

> Soon afterwards, when Ariovistus was their leader, they [the Insubrian Gauls] vowed to dedicate to their war-god a torc made from the spoils of our soldiers. Jupiter intercepted this dedication; for Flaminius set up in honour of Jupiter a golden trophy made from their torcs.
> (Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, trans. Forster 1929: 91–93)

Livy similarly describes a battle against the Boii around Lake Como after which the victorious Roman army collected huge amounts of booty including a great gold torc, of enormous weight, which was set up as a gift to Jupiter on the Capitoline (*Ab Urbe Condita* XXXIII: xxxvi, 13).

Study of Gallo-Roman torc-wearing images reveals that the motif sometimes, though by no means always, acted in concert with other signifiers, most notable of which are the cross-legged seating position and the therianthropic mixture of human and stag features (detailed discussion of the latter is reserved for Chapter 6). The 'lotus' or 'Buddhic' pose, seen, for instance, on a late Iron Age bronze image from Bouray (Essonne) (Deyts 1992: 14) (Figure 7.8) and a headless stone figure from Aigueperse (Haute-Vienne) (op. cit.: 16–18) (Figure 2.7), is clearly highly meaningful; indeed we have met it before in this chapter in the context of captivity and passivity and in that
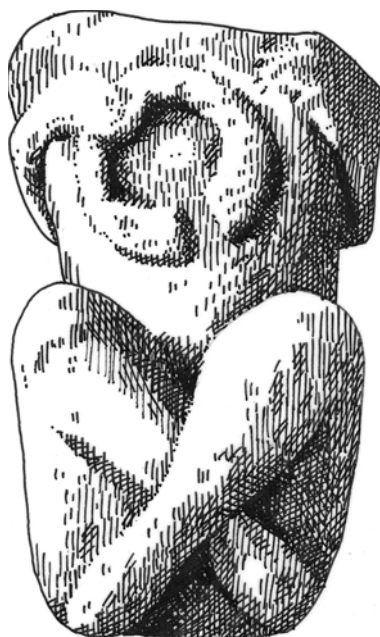
Figure 2.7 Stone seated figure with torc, from Aigueperse, Haute-Vienne, France.
© Paul Jenkins.

earlier discussion, the suggestion was made that it might reflect low status and disempowerment. I would argue that this cross-legged motif is a good example of flexible meaning: whilst the figurines from La Bauve and Glauberg (Figure 2.1) may be correctly read as evocative of humiliation or defeat, the seated images wearing torcs and (often) antlers may present a paradox of significance in so far as it seems clear that torcs are indicators of high rank. However, this apparent quandary may be resolved in a common factor, that of non-combat: defeated enemies are disarmed, stripped of their military accoutrements and may be rendered physically disengaged either by injury or restraint, but the conquerors, too, divest themselves of weapons once the battle is won, and I suggest that an omnipotent being – whether god or hero – may be powerfully manifest by iconography that shows him or her in relaxed attitude, no longer in a war-mode but seated enthroned, at peace and in control. Such an attitude is common on triumph-imagery: Caesar (above) receives the vanquished Gallic chieftain Vercingetorix sitting down; Trajan is depicted on his column seated on a throne whilst defeated Dacians are brought before him (Settis *et al*. 1988); in her study of Meso-American Zapotec iconography of the late second to early first millennium BC in Mexico, Joyce Marcus (1996, 289: fig. 4) has identified seated cross-legged images as presentations of power and authority.

On Gallo-Roman images, the torc is depicted in several positions associ-
ated with the body: most commonly, as on the stag-hooved Bouray figure
(Figure 7.8), it is worn round the neck, as it would normally be in life, whilst
the Aigueperse statue depicts a cross-legged being with a huge torc held
across its torso in its right hand, almost in the manner of a shield; similarly,
an Iron Age coin issued by the Remi portrays a running woman, a spear in
one hand and a great torc in the other (Figure 3.2), whilst a cognate coin-
image comprises an almost identical female figure, seated cross-legged
(Figure 2.8), with a torc in her right hand (Deyts 1992: 19). The same theme
is depicted on a stone image from the Iron Age *oppidum* of des Chatelliers
à Amboise (Indre-et-Loire) (op. cit.: 21) (Figure 2.9), where a woman sits
lotus-fashion, her neck decorated with a large torc and holding another in
her right hand, in a manner similar to the portrayal of the antlered beings on
the first-century BC silver cauldron from Gundestrup in Jutland (Figure 6.2),
the earlier Iron Age image carved on a rock at Val Camonica in northern Italy
(Figure 6.14) and a Gallo-Roman bronze figurine from Savigny, Autun (Saône-
et-Loire) (Kaul 1991: 21, fig. 15; Priuli 1988: 78–79; Deyts 1992: 45; Aldhouse-
Green 2001c: 80–93) (Figure 6.6). We can read this double-torc motif in
a number of ways: it may reflect an intensification of symbolism or it may
contain more subtle meanings associated, perhaps, with double states of
being or of transition between earth-world and the supernatural dimension.

Figure 2.8 Potin coin issued by the Remi, depicting female seated figure with torc.
© Paul Jenkins.

Figure 2.9 Stone image of torc-wearer, from Amboise (Indre-et-Loire), France. © Paul Jenkins.

The link between torcs, cross-legged position and victory-imagery is unequivocal on iconography from southern Gaulish shrines such as Glanum and Entremont (Lontcho 2000: 4–8; Benoit 1969; 1981: 87): here, great statues wearing torcs and breastplates rest their hands on severed human heads, presumably representations in stone of the real heads that adorned niches in Saluvian sanctuaries of the fourth to second centuries BC. Once again, the torc may act as a signature of transition, between life and death or between war and resulting power.

The iconography, then, presents torcs as complex, dual-gendered and multivocal, habitually associated with other motifs, such as 'Buddhic' seating position, antlers and victory in battle. It is of especial interest that, though the antlers worn by some torc-bearing images would seem to indicate an essentially masculine mindset, both male and female images are linked with the emblem, just as both genders are found with torcs in Iron Age burials. (We should not be surprised at this: after all, Dio Cassius tells us that Boudica of the British Iceni, leader of the cataclysmic revolt against Roman imperialism in AD 60, wore a great golden torc: *Roman History*, LXII: 2, 1–4.) In iconography at least, the neck-ring may be best understood as a signifier of enablement, empowerment and even transformation (hence, perhaps, its

persistent connection with antlered human images) and may have acted in different ways according to ritual or social context, and the richness of their symbolism would account for their use as status-markers, even outside a specifically sacralized milieu.

But torcs may have been not only signifiers of high status: certain evidence suggests that they contained a symbolic currency that conveyed other important social or religious messages about the wearer. An Iron Age settlement at Great Houghton in Northamptonshire excavated in 1996 (Chapman 2001: 1–42) produced a female inhumation burial dating to the early fourth century BC (Figure 2.10). The deceased was about thirty years old and her poor dental health and signs of hard physical labour on her bones suggest that she was not of high status. Furthermore, there is evidence that she died an untimely and punitive (or even sacrificial) death, for she lay face-down, her arms and legs bound, and – most significantly of all – she wore round her neck a lead torc placed back to front (Chapman 2001: pls. 2, 3). Examination of the woman's skeleton revealed a slight congenital abnormality to her wrist-bones, a rare condition but which has also been identified in an individual from the Saxon cemetery at the site. The torc is of especial interest, for the use of lead for jewellery is rare; in the Classical world, lead was deliberately chosen as a dark, heavy base metal for curse tablets, used to commune
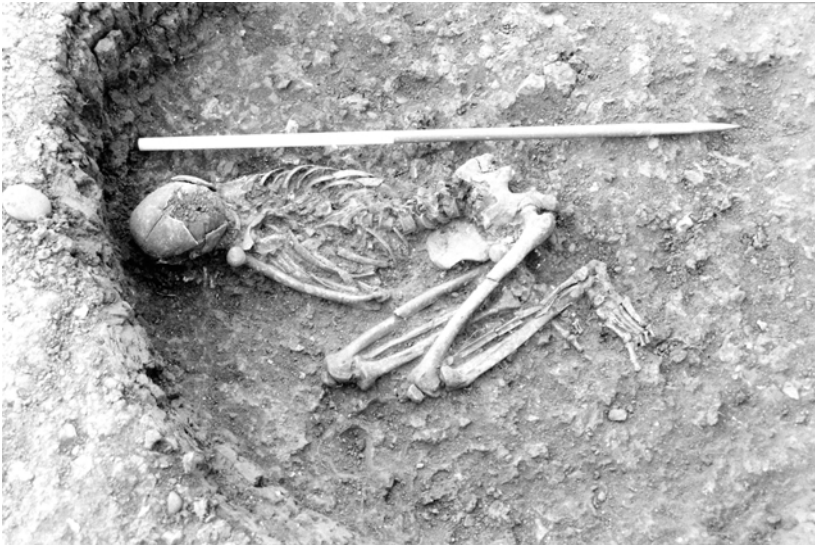
Figure 2.10 Iron Age inhumation of a woman wearing a lead torc back to front, from Great Houghton, Northants. By kind permission of Andy Chapman, © Northamptonshire County Council.

with the malign forces of the supernatural world (Tomlin 1988; Gager 1992); added to this idiosyncratic choice of metal is the deliberate reversal of the neck-ring so that its terminals are at the back of the neck. It is almost as though the ornament was used to make a deliberate statement of insult, disgrace and inversion of status, perhaps because the woman had transgressed some rule of her community or was otherwise regarded as excluded from it. In middle Iron Age Northamptonshire at least, the torc resonated with meaning that seems far removed from the dignity of the Lesenho warrior or the sacred mystery of the god from Bouray.

Pilgrims, hoods and travellers

> Distinctive clothing should ensure respect and assistance for
> the pilgrims but could also invite hostility and exploitation.
>
> (Gray 1999: 103)

The Gallo-Roman spring sanctuary dedicated to the healing goddess Sequana was situated close to the Sources de la Seine, on a plateau to the north-west of Dijon. It flourished during the first and second centuries AD. The shrine appears to have been a centre of pilgrimage, attracting devotees from far away, who sought remedies from a multitude of ailments – from trachoma to thyroid deficiency and from arthritis to asthma (Aldhouse-Green 1999). The site is rich in both wooden and lithic iconography and has produced a unique series of stone images apparently representing the pilgrims themselves. One group is distinctive in its depiction of young worshippers, between about nine and thirteen years of age (Figure 2.11), who wear idiosyncratic body-emblems and carry animals in their arms: I have chosen one of these (Aldhouse-Green 1999: fig. 5, pl. 3a) to explore issues of identity, exclusivity and religious status in Roman Gaul as reflected in physical appearance and accompanying symbolism.

The statue of the young pilgrim from *Fontes Sequanae* embodies a range of significant socio-religious themes which should be embedded within the context of the image, namely its function as an offering to a deity at a holy place (inscriptions mentioning the goddess Sequana identify the site unequivocally as a sanctuary). The image appears not to be gender-specific, a feature perhaps associated with the youth of its model, but its short, 'pageboy' haircut and clothing might indicate maleness. The figure is clad from head to foot in the heavy Gallic woollen outer garment mentioned by Strabo (*Geography* IV, 4, 3), known as the *sagum*, the sleeves falling away to expose the hands and forearms, and the neck is encircled by thick swathes of cloth, perhaps a folded hood; the feet are shod in soft slippers. The most distinctive feature of the child's garb is a curious device comprising a pair of flat discs, one on the chest and the other on the back, supported by wide straps that

Figure 2.11 Stone image of a child wearing 'pilgrim-harness', from *Fontes Sequanae*, Burgundy. © Paul Jenkins.

go over the shoulders and around the waist. A small, live animal, probably a dog, is cradled in the child's arms.

Contained within this image is a multi-layered spectrum of significance concerned with the depiction itself, with its immediate iconographic and site context and with wider perspectives associated with pilgrimage and offering rituals. The child's clothing may provide clues relating to personhood and self-determination: the coat is specifically Gaulish, a heavy-weather garment suitable for the rigours of a long winter journey (Roche-Bernard & Ferdière 1993: 23–30), and other pilgrim-images, from *Fontes Sequanae* and cognate shrines in Burgundy, wear similarly heavy outer clothes (Figure 4.7). There may be no significance in this other than practicality but it is possible that statements of being Gaulish rather than Roman are being made. Like jewellery, clothing might be an important signifier of personal presentation and identity (Green 1998a: 17–30; Jundi & Hill 1997). The depiction of people in travelling-clothes may even have been deliberate 'tropes' of strangerhood, exclusion and adherence to specific groups (Shaw & Stewart 1994: 19).

The soft slippers may also provide information concerning journeys and holy places. Other pilgrim-images from Sequana's sanctuary possess this style of footwear, notably that of a young devotee who carries a rabbit tucked

under one arm (Aldhouse-Green 1999: pl. 5). We could speculate as to whether these were special shoes, donned when entering the *locus sanctus,* or if they were worn for the duration of the journey, with all the symbolism of hardship and devotion this would entail. Some pilgrim-images are barefoot (op. cit.: pl. 3b), as if, again, indicative of ritual behaviour. The many votive carvings of legs and feet from the shrine, some shown with sponges pressed against the Achilles tendon, with splints, or bearing inscribed dedications (op. cit.: 83, figs. 43–45), suggest an emphasis on walking and long-distance travel (Gray 1999: 101–110). Pilgrim-shrines are often laid out with paths and processional ways so that the worshipper progresses in a controlled and ritualized manner to the focus of holiness (Jackson 1999: 72–83). Furthermore, wearing soft 'bootees' or going barefoot may have carried significance in terms of the need to make direct somatic contact with the divine presence and the recognition that feet are boundary-places linking the body with the numinous landscape (van-Driel Murray 1999: 131–140). Mark Jackson draws attention to the total experience of being a pilgrim, including touch, smell and sound; it may have been important, therefore, that pilgrims made no noise as they walked and this might itself account for the soft shoes and bare feet seen on many of the images. It is significant that Aelius Aristides, a regular patron of the Asklepeion at Pergamum in Asia Minor in the second century AD, refers to a vision he experienced, in which the god gave him the command 'to go forth unshod' (Aristides, *Hieroi Logoi* II: 7).

The swathes of cloth around the young pilgrim's neck suggest a folded hood or – maybe – a scarf that could pull over the head to protect him in bad weather or to use as a mark of respect to the goddess while making sacrifices to her. It is interesting that, though the back of the figure is executed in less detail than the front, these folds are delineated clearly, in the same way as is the strap-and-disc body-harness, as if both motifs were too important not to represent in the round. Many of the stone statues from the inner sanctum, both children and adult men, wear this neck-device and on all the hood is folded back to reveal the face. Bearing in mind comments made elsewhere in this volume (Chapter 4) concerning discrepant ritual and perceptions of being that may be embedded in the selection of wood and stone for images positioned respectively outside and inside the sanctuary, it may be significant that, whilst certain of the wooden pilgrim-images wear their hoods up (Deyts 1983: pls. 1, 4), the transition from wood to stone also seems to involve throwing back the hood and baring the head.

Hooded garments are well known in western provincial Roman contexts (Figure 2.12): worn normally by men, they take several forms, including the *paenula*, a long, closed over-garment without sleeves, the *bardocucullus*, which may be shorter, or a sleeved hooded coat seen on many Gallo-Roman sculptures (Roche-Bernard & Ferdière 1993: 25–29, fig. on p. 27). They were useful for travelling but, to my mind, less good for working because head-movements and sight are restricted [the kind of hat worn by the Gallic

Figure 2.12 Triad of hooded beings, from Pithiviers (Loiret). © Anne Leaver.

images from Paule (Côte d'Armor) and Pauvrelay (Indre) (Deyts 1999: 83) would be more suitable headgear for active outdoor use]. In terms of physi-cality, wearing hoods conveys a range of messages, including shelter, anonymity, disguise, concealment, surrender (or reaffirmation) of identity, exclusion of the outside world and the presentation of a closed – sometimes menacing – aspect to one's fellows; hoods also make the wearer appear taller and thus hooded images serve to bend realities and present deceptive illusions. A recent television interview with adolescent boy-gangs revealed that the hood is regarded as part of the 'package' of appearance adopted by youths as a form of bravado, to make them seem tougher and more off-putting ('not to be messed with'), on the one hand, and as badges of belonging, on the other (Channel 4, 12 April 2002).

Hooded men are persistent images in the religious imagery of the western Roman provinces: known as *genii cucullati* from dedications on two altars from Wabelsdorf in Carinthia, these figures often appear in threes, both in Britain and – more rarely – in Gaul (Davidson 1989a: 105–124; Deyts 1993: 98–102) (Figure 2.12). These inscriptions, together with the images them-selves, appear – above all – to emphasize hoodedness, and it may be that shrouding or concealment were integral elements in their personae. The role of the hood, as worn by the pilgrims to Sequana's sanctuary, may have acted

as signatures of changing states of being: before the goddess's supplicants crossed the threshold into hallowed space, while they were on the treacherous boggy edge at the foot of the cliff, they were depicted as hooded wooden images, in recognition of the instability of their existence prior to the enlightenment achieved once they were in the divine presence (Aldhouse-Green 2001b); their hoods may have symbolized their lack of identity, their confusion and their occluded vision, all of which were reversed once inside the sacred precinct and the pilgrim-visitors had progressed along the holy pathways towards the *locus sanctissimus*. Here, blessed and healed by the deity, their new state of being was, perhaps, reflected in permanent stone imagery, the hood thrown back to reveal their new enlightened status.

What of the strange disc-and-strap device worn by the child from *Fontes Sequanae*? Such motifs have been identified on several images of children at the site, including that of a youth similar in age to the subject of study and a baby (Aldhouse-Green 1999: pls. 4a, 10a). None of the adults are depicted wearing the device and not all the juveniles have it, so it is clearly a distinguishing badge that sets certain young supplicants apart, not simply on grounds of age but maybe of family, status or even recognition of belonging or of passing some ritual test. This last could not easily be applied to an infant but was perhaps conferred on it by parents or an older sibling. In his study of the pilgrim-clothes at *Fontes Sequanae*, John Peter Wild (1999: 61–63) suggests that the devices represent 'body-chains', a well-known type of metal jewellery, consisting of a medallion joined by linked chains worn by well-born females: clay figurines from Roman Egypt wear such ornaments, and a gold body-chain comes from an assemblage of late Roman jewellery found at Hoxne in Suffolk in 1992 (Bland & Johns 1993: fig. on p. 21; Johns 1996: 96–97, fig. 5.9). But the strap-and-disc devices worn by the young pilgrims at *Fontes Sequanae* are quite different: they appear to represent leather body-harness rather than precious gold chains and medallions; the latter seem to have been rare and only worn by the upper echelons of female society, whilst the Burgundian pilgrims are ordinary people, sometimes even slaves (Raybould 1999: 27), and probably represent boys. To my mind the devices worn at the sanctuary are indicative of dedication to the goddess (or control by her) and were bestowed on those whose relatives had undergone some kind of giving process involving a symbolic handing-over of sick children to the care and tutelage of the deity or her priests. Perhaps such 'badges of visitation' should be seen as analogous to the scallop-shell emblem borne by pilgrims to the famous shrine to Saint James of Compostela at Galicia in north-west Spain, or the emblem worn on the cap of Chaucer's Pardoner ('A vernicle hadde he sowed on his cappe': *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, line 685; Cunningham 1989: 142–143).

Other details of the young pilgrim-image at *Fontes Sequanae* make an important contribution to its meaning. It is assumed (though, perhaps, this may be challenged) that the statue depicts a visitor to the sanctuary,

a devotee who travelled – perhaps from some distance – to the holy place. The animal in the child's arms may represent a sacrificial victim, a gift to the goddess, or it may be that the animal itself was ill and thus either brought to the temple for its own blessing and cure or was present by proxy in the form of its image. Several figures of children are portrayed with animals: dogs, a cat, a rabbit, even a lamb (Aldhouse-Green 1999: figs. 5–9, pls. 3a–b, 4a, 5); all are held with tenderness, all appear to depict live pets, and it is interesting that most of the creatures are young, as if to reinforce the youth of their owners (a statue of a young pilgrim from the analogous site at Tremblois, in the same region, carries a piglet in his arms (Roche-Bernard & Ferdière 1993: 29)). The puppy carried by 'our' pilgrim has its nose pressed against the disc of his body-harness, and it may be that this signifies the potency of the device and its power (or that of the dog) to heal. The perceived symbolic power of animals, especially dogs, in the Classical world, to cure illness is well documented: the great healing shrine of Asklepios at Epidaurus kept live dogs whose saliva was believed to help cure wounds and other ailments, and several therapeutic spring-sanctuaries in Gaul and Britain are associated with dog-imagery, notably Hochscheid in the Mosel Valley near Trier and Lydney in western Britain (Jackson 1988: 142–143; Rouse 1902; van Straten 1981: 61–151; Jenkins 1957a: 60–76; Dehn 1941: 104–111; Wightman 1985: 184; Wheeler & Wheeler 1932).

Finally, we need to see the image of the young pilgrim at *Fontes Sequanae* in its physical context: it stood about 60 cm high and its basal plinth was clearly intended to support the figure standing upright in the sanctuary. The rear of the statuette has detail in so far as the strap-and-disc device is well carved, but there is far less attention paid to the folds of the coat at the back. This suggests that the image was meant to be seen from in front, though the body-harness was so symbolically necessary that the whole device was sculpted. Although the site had been badly disturbed by the collapse of the cliff terraces, the excavators were confident that the stone images formed clusters at various locations within the sacred precinct, particularly on the uppermost and second terraces, the highest and perhaps most holy part of the built sanctuary (Deyts 1983: 21; 1994). The group depicting children carrying animals, of which 'our' pilgrim is one, was found deposited on the upper terrace outside a range of rooms and close to stone-lined water-channels and a stone basin, which might have been for lustration purposes. So these images might bear witness to worshippers who had achieved enlightenment or theurgy through the deity whose cult-statue stood in a rectangular chamber nearby. Their position is in interesting contrast to another group of stone images at the site, those of adult men in long woollen cloaks, also wearing folded-back hoods or scarves, but carrying bags of money or single coins, whom I have dubbed 'benefactors' (Aldhouse-Green 1999: 6, fig. 4, pls. 4b, 8, 9).

Although the stone statues were found grouped on the two high terraces of Sequana's shrine, we should not necessarily assume that this was their

only location or purpose. It is necessary to think in terms of dynamic and changeful situations for them; indeed, Classical texts inform us that stone statues and other votive objects were regularly cleared from central sanctuary-spaces, such as the Asklepeion at Rhodes, by cult-officials who saw to it that the holy precinct did not become too cluttered and that sufficient room was set aside for new offerings (Deyts 1994: 5–16). This was clearly necessary in the busiest sanctuaries with famous reputations; it may or may not have been so at the remote shrine to Sequana. But this kind of testimony should alert us to the possibility that statues were sometimes moved around within holy places. Another important aspect of statuary is the dramatic impact it would have upon pilgrim-visitors, who would see the inner sanctum populous with stone images as well as live people; at night, perhaps when the shrine emptied of its worshippers, departing pilgrims might have glanced back along the sacred route to see the sculptures gleaming palely in the dusk. The visuality of such objects and the atmosphere their presence would create should not be underestimated in evaluation of the total experience of the visitor.

The child represented at *Fontes Sequanae* may well depict a real person who visited the sanctuary, perhaps with his parents, siblings and other relatives. It is worth noting that some of the stone figures apparently represent members of the same family, recognizable by the same shape of face and the size and set of ears (Aldhouse-Green 1999: figs. 2, 3). The sculptors, presumably resident craftspeople, appear to have depicted likenesses rather than archetypal or stereotypic children, young adults or elderly people, so it is likely that this statue was a realistic depiction of someone who worshipped at Sequana's shrine. The statue may have been erected so as to maintain the presence of the visitor once he had departed and thus, perhaps, to retain the efficacy of the pilgrimage. Later on, perhaps, the image would act as a focus of remembrance to his younger siblings or even to his children who made the journey after him and perhaps also donned the 'badge of visitation'. Who knows but that the young pilgrim depicted with his cloak, body-harness and pet dog was the same child mentioned on an inscription to Sequana found at the temple which reads 'to the goddess Sequana, Hilaricius, slave of Claudius Avitus set this up for his son, Hilarianus. He paid his vow willingly and deservedly' (Raybould 1999: 27; Deyts 1992: 74; 1994: 123–124), or Flavius Lunaris, grandson of a female dedicant, Flavia Flavilla (Raybould 1999: 27, 29; Deyts 1992: 74; 1994: 124, pl. 55.3).

3

IMAGING GENDER

Iconographies of difference

As they were there in the hostel, a woman appeared at the entrance, after sunset, and sought to be let in. As long as a weaver's beam, and as black, her two shins. She wore a very fleecy, striped mantle. Her beard reached her knees, and her mouth was on one side of her head.

(from the *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*;
trans. Gantz 1981: 76)

The story of Da Derga's Hostel occurs in the group of medieval Irish mythic tales surviving in the eleventh-century *Yellow Book of Lecan* but probably dating, in origin, at least two centuries earlier (Sjöblom 1996: 233). The focus of the tale is the relationship between king Conaire Mór and the supernatural world, and the inevitable doom that befalls him after he violates one of the *geissi* or sacred injunctions imposed on him by a holy man. The somewhat repellent bearded being he meets at the *bruiden* (an Otherworld festal hall) is the Badbh, a goddess of war and death, who is able to shape-shift between human and raven, youth and old age and between genders. It is worth noting that ravens are associated with gender-change in a number of Eurasian and North American traditions (Hollimon 2001: 127).

Conaire's encounter displays a fundamental point concerning gender, namely that it transcends biological sex and is a socially constructed, negotiable and permeable continuum, used in many past and present societies as a metaphor for expressing relationships, difference, opposition and balance (Shanks 1999: 73; Gero & Conkey 1991: 8; Wylie 1996: 445; Aldhouse-Green 2001e; Gosden 1994: 122; Arnold 1991: 366–374). An individual may be endowed with a gender not simply because of a biologically sexed body but may acquire it by virtue of age, role, status or life-experience, and the choice of how a person is presented in gender terms may be influenced more by issues of identity than sexuality (Gilchrist 1999: 75–76).

If gender is, to an extent, dissociated from sex, though always – to a degree – tied to its paradigms, then it can be freed from the constraints of two; societies may think in terms of three, four or more genders contingent upon difference and, sometimes, upon societal marginality. In many traditional systems, the ritualist or shaman takes on a separate gender: this is true, for

instance, in Chukchi communities of north-east Siberia (Hollimon 2001: 124–125), who are assigned their own, liminal gender. Age may be an important factor: pre-pubertal children may be presented as genderless or separately gendered, because their sexuality is less pronounced than at adulthood; similarly, post-menopausal women may acquire special, 'male' status because they are freed from the boundedness of childbearing womanhood: this tradition obtained in classic Hohokam (Arizona) and Maya communities (Joyce 1996: 167–195; Crown & Fish 1996: 803–817), and the same relationship between ageing and female power is observable, too, in the status of ancient Greek and of medieval Christian women (Gilchrist 1994; 1999: 88; Foxhall 1994: 133–146).

In terms of imagery, perceived juvenile 'genderlessness' may be witnessed in the way youth was sometimes depicted in Classical art: a frieze on the Parthenon represents a child as sexually ambiguous (Younger 1998: 182–190, fig. 2). Sterile people, impotent men, non-menstruating women may be endowed with other genders; old, non-combatant men and old women (who may become less visibly female with the loss of subcutaneous fat and the acquisition of facial hair: Green 1997a: 899) and those showing somatic ambiguity, may similarly be regarded as non-male and non-female but 'other'. The negotiative aspect of gender is important for the study of images since, though most are demonstrably female or male, some display ambiguity, ambivalence or even apparent gender-denial.

Worlds of difference

> And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of
> Phanuel, one of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age …
>
> (*Luke* 2: 36)

Anna was present with Simeon in the temple at Jerusalem, when Jesus's parents brought him there to be presented when he was six weeks old, according to Judaic law. Anna was a woman but her age and prophetic skills set her apart from the normal *habitus* of New Testament Jewish women and enabled her to transgress the normal boundaries of femininity. Prophetesses are known elsewhere in Biblical texts. The *Second Book of Kings* (22: 14–16) tells of one named Huldah, who lived in Jerusalem, to whom the priests referred in predicting the wrath of God. This is interesting, for Huldah is depicted as outside the official hierarchy of the priesthood, and is relegated to a dubious, marginal role, a religious person but 'in a minor key' (Kiernan 1994: 78). Much closer to our study area, Tacitus's description of the Batavian prophetess Veleda (*Histories* IV: 65) (Figure 3.1) suggests that she, too, was a marginal being: she was unmarried, kept immured in a high tower, addressed only by her relatives and regarded almost as a divinity. So she was separated

Figure 3.1 Statue of Veleda, sculpted by Etienne-Hippolyte Maindron in 1839, in the Luxembourg Gardens, Paris. © Paul Jenkins.

from a 'normal' gender-role and was kept physically secluded from her community.

Welcome to Soweto! Men, women and power

> Women's empowerment may take different forms. It may take the form of a counter-power.
>
> (Charles 1994: 44–45)

While on a train-journey from Faringdon to Brighton in May 1998, I encountered a powerful image of gender-subversion, printed in black on a vivid yellow tee-shirt worn by a fellow-traveller: the design showed two people, standing side by side, a grossly obese male chieftain(?) and a slimmer female holding a spear in her left hand. Underneath was printed the slogan 'Welcome to Soweto!' The picture can be read in a number of ways, but it projects ideas of pairing, balance, difference and defiant empowerment, within the context of an essentially disempowered South African township. The weapon held by the woman and her left-handness may be seen as

symbols of resistance, of protest and 'otherness' and, at the same time, the discrepancy between her active, doing role and his weighty inaction may convey messages concerning political inversion that may say more about power-struggles and the search for African identity than about gender-roles.

Power can be associated with gender-difference and with gender-acquisition: Young Zulu Zionist men cannot hold office until they marry (Kiernan 1994: 78), and so marriage itself may serve to engender men, to accord them inclusivity and full male status through female agency. In certain West African traditions, images of women are associated with expressions of power and control: in Nigeria, wooden figurines of women with babies are used to express metonyms of political relationships that may have nothing to do with maternity, by referring explicitly to the close and dependent relationship between mother and child (King 2000a: 16). Among the Bamana people of Bougouni in Mali, male ancestral power and land-management may be represented by images of women in male attitudes: on horseback or wearing war-helmets (Smithsonian Institution 1997). One way of reading the Soweto tee-shirt might refer to the mature rank of a male chief through partnership with his wife and, since she is the catalyst, her possession of a spear may contribute to that symbolism of empowerment.

The association between gender-presentation, its fluidity and its association with power is played out in European antiquity, both in terms of funerary rituals and imagery. In discussing the female high-status early Iron Age burial at Vix in Burgundy, Bettina Arnold (1995: 153–168) argues that the so-called 'male' tomb-accoutrements of drinking-vessels and torcs were not the possessions of honorary men but of special and unequivocally empowered women. Some Gallo-British imagery of the later Iron Age and Roman period appears to play out nuances of gender-relationships in which women are shown in possession of 'male' emblems, such as weapons, that may be less to do with warfare than with status and, perhaps, with denial of normative behaviour. In Chapter 8, the Romano-British image from Lemington (Figure 1.11) is discussed in the context of resistance to *romanitas*. Her apparent femaleness and her possession of a spear held in her left hand could be taken as symbols of subversion and disruption to the status quo. A possible analogy presents itself in the stereotypic attitudes to 'others' adopted by Greek vase-painters in the depiction of foreigners, like Etruscans, whose status as exotic, relatively barbaric and 'not us' was displayed by a set of iconographic conventions that marked them out as odd (Shapiro 2000: 315–337). So, contraventions to norms, including gender-norms, could be perpetrated by the others themselves or by the dominant powers who perceived them thus in relation to themselves.

A late Iron Age or early Gallo-Roman stone statuette from Bozouls (Aveyron) in southern France (Deyts 1992: 19) depicts a woman with a torc round her neck and a dagger in her right hand. In her possession of a torc and a weapon, her representation bears a striking resemblance to certain

cast 'potin' Gallic coin-issues minted by the Remi, which bear images of women, with their hair in very unclassical plaits: one of these shows a running woman in profile (Figure 3.2), a large torc, held like a shield, in her right hand and a spear in her left (op. cit.), like the Lemington image (Figure 1.11). The femininity, left-handedess, hairstyle, torc and weapon may all contribute to a contrary and dislocative discourse in which all norms and conventions are challenged, in a social or political arena, with gender appropriated as a metonym for 'other' identity, whether or not directly connected with countering *romanitas* or the expression of societal marginality and difference.

Pairing and relationalities: pronouncing difference

[in artistic representation] gender is always comprehensible only *in relation*. There is no woman without man, no visible femininity without a parallel masculinity.

(Kampen 1996a: 17–18)

Males and females are represented in relation to each other: each is defined with reference to its difference from the other. Opposition, separation, affinity and balance are all involved in perceptions of gender; the relationship has

Figure 3.2 Potin coin of the Remi depicting female warrior. © Paul Jenkins.

a binary element but, as already discussed, gender is far more complex than the male/female divide and permits the presence of genders in between. In Saami cosmology, the circular house (or *gamme*), traditionally built of turf and birch-branches and with an open roof-space, reflects cosmic order, with the worlds of life and death meeting at the neutral, liminal hearth-space, where male/female opposition is also resolved (Gulløv & Appelt 2001: 159; Nordlandsmuseet 2002). But the definition of gender in terms of oppositions is clearly demonstrated in traditional communities, like the Mende of Sierra Leone: both women and men belong to gendered secret societies known respectively as the Sande (female) and the Poro (male); each involves the exclusion of children and the opposite sex (Ferme 1994: 31–35), and this is interesting not only in terms of the male/female divide but in the clear perception of children as genderless or belonging to a separate gender-group. Among Yawing communities of the Ngaing people in New Guinea, men's circumcision rites are bound up with a perceived need to define manhood in opposition to women and, specifically, to sever the connection between mothers and sons. Males reject the female in the act of circumcision, by symbolically ridding themselves of the impure, black maternal blood that contaminated them before and after birth through the umbilical cord (Kempe 1994: 119–120). The social dimension to gender-division can be illustrated in modern western societies, too: in nineteenth-century urban America, the city was perceived as bifurcated according to the public/business world of men and the private/residential world of women (Wall 1994).

It is possible to trace the exploration of gender as differential relationalities in the study of images. In tomb-art of the Egyptian New Kingdom, relational conventions are played out by conventions of difference between male and female representations. The men are depicted as larger, darker-skinned, and engaged in vigorous public and outdoor activities, while the women are smaller, pale-skinned to symbolize their more private, indoor lives, and they are presented as inactive, their clothes sometimes appearing almost to hobble their feet. Lynn Meskell (1998: 175–181) interprets this syntax of difference not so much in terms of male dominance *per se* but of the desire for the male tomb-owner to project his superiority over everyone else. This is important, for it serves as a reminder that gender-presentation may carry deeper and context-dependent meanings than are apparent in the visualities of iconography.

The application of iconic gender-principles to Iron Age and Roman-period imagery can be achieved with reference to paired sets of anthropomorphic depictions. Iron Age examples come from Braak (K. Ostholstein) in Schleswig-Holstein (Figure 3.3) and Oldenburg in Lower Saxony (Figure 4.3), both made of wood and each from watery contexts. The Braak figures, larger than life-size (the height of the male is 275 cm), were found in a *kleine Kesselmoor*, a small enclosed bog, in 1948. They represent a male and female, both images made from carefully selected single bifurcating branches

Figure 3.3 Gendered pair of wooden images, from Braak in North Germany. © Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseum, Schloss Gottorf Archäologisches Landesmuseum, Schleswig.

forming the head, torso and legs, with slots at the shoulders for the insertion of small, separately carved arms (Schloss-Gottorf Museum 2002; van der Sanden & Capelle 2001: 16–17). The two figures are markedly dimorphic, the male standing a head and neck taller than the female (from her study of shoes in European antiquity, Carol van-Driel Murray (1995) argues that sexual dimorphism was more emphatic in ancient than modern populations). The woman has small but well-delineated breasts and both images have prominently carved genitalia (although Michael Gebühr (pers. comm.) is of the view that the sexual organs have been tampered with and over-emphasized in recent years). The female image has a top-knot of hair, whilst the male's hair is depicted in a short, fringed cut; the noses of the two faces are also deliberately different from each other, though both have widely gaping mouths, as if screaming or communicating with each other or with the community that produced them. Radiocarbon dates on the wood indicate their production in the third to second century BC. In their original context, the two figures would have stood guard in the middle of a remote patch of bog, a commanding presence in a flat landscape where they would have been

visible for miles. What is more, the figures were located where there is evidence for repeated fire-building (van der Sanden & Capelle 2001: 17), and perhaps presided over rituals associated with sacrifice or rituals of transformation. The differences in treatment between the two appear to indicate clear gender-distinction, and individuality is implicit in the facial differentials. But likenesses are also highly visible: the penis and vulva are similarly formed, though the woman's hips are broader; and the wide-open eyes and mouths are virtually identical.

The Oldenburg wooden images are examined in Chapter 4, in the context of materiality. Also marsh-finds, they were placed one on each side of a wooden trackway, over 3 km long, which linked the navigable river Hunte with dry land where a (probably contemporary) Iron Age settlement has been discovered. The images were deliberately positioned at a hazardous point where the path crossed a particularly wet place in the Wittemoor bog (Bergen *et al*. 2002: 97; Hayen 1987: 117–136), probably once pegged down by their projecting tangs into one of the track's boards. The trackway has been dendro-dated to *c.* 135 BC, so is broadly coeval with the production of the Braak figures. Like the Schleswig-Holstein pair, the Wittemoor statuettes exhibit marked dimorphism (the male figure measures 105 cm tall, the female 90 cm: van der Sanden & Capelle 2001: 50, fig. 52); more interesting is the encoded manner in which oppositional gender is rendered, for the images are flatly two-dimensional and all somatic features are shown in outline. The smaller figure has a round head, no neck, broad hips and a clear vulva-slot; above the hips is a pair of triangular projections in silhouette, perhaps representing breasts. The 'male' has a larger, sub-rectangular head, a long neck, a notched body, and at the bottom of the torso is a tang that may double as a phallus. The man's body is laterally discrepant in the presence of seven notches on the viewer's left and five on the right; this was clearly intentional, for the projections caused by the notches on the left are cut more finely and closer together than those on the right. We can only speculate as to the meaning of such notches: they may reflect an asymmetry that symbolized the risk associated with the crossing-place (see Chapter 4), or they could be associated with recording particular events, perhaps in acknowledgement of dynamics and the addition of extra notches as time passed.

The pairing of wooden bog-statues may contain significance in terms of surrogacy or substitution. I suggest in the following chapter that the pegging down of the Ballachulish wooden image (Figure 4.2) may deliberately replicate the treatment accorded real bog-bodies. Pairing is a recurrent feature of Iron Age ritual bog-killings: examples include the pair of young men consigned to the Bourtangermoor at Weerdinge in the Netherlands (van der Sanden 1996: 101–102; Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 165) and another pair, found in 1949 by peat-cutters in a bog near Hunteburg in North Germany (Bergen *et al.* 2002: 104–105). Gendered couples are also recorded, though not necessarily the result of synchronous deposition: such finds include bodies from

Windeby in Schleswig-Holstein (Gebühr 1979, 2002; Aldhouse-Green 2001a: figs. 50, 64, 65), Elling/Tollund in Denmark (Fischer 1999: 93–97) and Lindow Moss in north-west England (Turner 1995: 10–18; 1999: 227–233).

Unlike the paired images from Iron Age northern Europe, gendered couples depicted in Romano-British and Gallo-Roman iconography exhibit elements of equivalence and balance as well as difference (Aldhouse-Green 2003a). The provincial pairings share the same stone and so are intimately bound together in a single enframed space. Emblematic sharing and transference is displayed, for instance, in images of Mercury and Rosmerta, where god and goddess may each bear a caduceus, as at Bath (Cunliffe & Fulford 1982: no. 39) (Figure 3.4) and at Bierstadt near Wiesbaden (Espérandieu 1931: no. 655), or share Mercury's purse, as at Metz (Green 1989: 56), the Classical deity's other most diagnostic emblem. On other stones from Rhenish contexts, Rosmerta has appropriated Mercury's purse altogether (Espérandieu 1931: nos. 18, 428). Of perhaps even greater significance is the lack of gender dimorphism that is expected, if depictions reflect life-world observation (for human males are characteristically bigger than females, the ratio being 1.22: Johanson & Edgar 1996: 73). Indeed a conscious, intentional adoption of iconographic isomorphism is displayed on most Gallo-British gendered pairs.

Figure 3.4 Stone relief of Mercury and Rosmerta, from Bath. © Anne Leaver.

The cues of equivalence and difference exhibited by such couples can be explored with reference to two stone carvings from Roman Gaul: a representation of Mercury and a female companion (probably, though not certainly, to be identified as Rosmerta) from Glanum in the Lower Rhône Valley (Salviat 1979: 49; Green 1989: fig. 23) (Figure 3.5) and Pagny-la-Ville, near Beaune in Burgundy (Espérandieu 1910: no. 2066; Green 1989: fig. 20) (Figure 3.6). The stone from Glanum is more overtly influenced by Graeco-Roman inspiration, for the god appears in his usual *chlamys* and *petasos*, accompanied by his purse and caduceus, just like any Mercury-image from the Roman world, while the female is presented with a cornucopiae and with the rudder-and-globe more familiar to the ensemble of motifs attached to the imagery of Fortuna. But the two figures are the same size (indeed the female is marginally the taller), and the craftsperson has striven for visual harmony in the balance of attributes, the identical angle at which cornucopiae and caduceus are held in the crook of each god's left hand and the position of each right hand holding the purse and the steering-oar. The Burgundian carving displays two beings seated side by side, again portrayed according to an isomorphic pattern. The female figure again holds a gigantic cornucopiae against her left shoulder and in her right hand is a large offering-plate or *patera*. The male, mature and bearded, carries essentially local emblems owing nothing to a Roman template: a long-shafted mallet or

Figure 3.5 Relief of Mercury and Rosmerta from Glanum, Provence. © author.

Figure 3.6 'Divine couple' from Pagny-la-Ville, Beaune. © author.

hammer and a wine-cup which indicate his inclusion within a widely distri-
buted Gallic image-type that combines the hammer-symbol with drinking
equipment (Green 1989: 46–54; 75–86, figs. 18, 19, 30–32).

The 'divine couples' from Glanum and Pagny-la-Ville exhibit two charac-
teristics that contribute to an understanding of their relationship and serve
to relate them to a wider grammar of Gaulish paired representation. First,
it is possible to distinguish a marked age-differential, particularly in the
Burgundian image, where the man's face and full beard proclaim him as
mature, whilst the rounded cheeks of the woman make her appear much the
younger. This discrepancy may indicate that the man is older, wiser, more
experienced and more authoritative than his companion and may be a subtle
way of expressing difference that might otherwise be expressed by dimor-
phism. Second, the female is presented with attributes associated with
giving, sacrificing or expressing life's course, while the motifs carried by the
male are 'doing' things: using percussive implements and drinking.
The choice of gendered motifs may relate to agency, or who was involved in
image-making and patronage; this is something explored towards the end of
this chapter. Reference to ethnographic tradition suggests that agency may
be an important factor in presentation of paired individuals: among the Baule
people of the Côte d'Ivoire, gendered pairs of wooden figures may appear
contrarily dimorphic, with the female as the larger image, if they belong to
female diviners (Ravenhill 1994: 40, figs. 44–45).

The issue should be raised as to whether it is possible to make connections between the presentation of gender on these Gallo-Roman images and notions of *romanitas* and *gallitas*. Is there a metonymic symbolism, which may or may not itself be directly linked to sexual gender, in the equivalences and differences expressed in the iconography? Clues may be provided by epigraphy, for scrutiny of inscriptions relating to paired deities in Gaul clearly indicates a pattern wherein the female is more inclined towards *gallitas* than the male. The goddesses very frequently possess totally Gaulish names – Rosmerta, Sirona, Ancamna, Damona, for instance – while the god usually either has a wholly Roman name, like Mercury, or may have twinned names, one Roman, one local, like Apollo Moritasgus or Mars Smertrius (Aldhouse-Green 2003a), though sometimes each of the pair has an entirely Gaulish name, like Sucellus and Nantosuelta at Sarrebourg (Espérandieu 1915: no. 4566; Toussaint 1928: 169) or Ucuetis and Bergusia at Alesia (Le Gall 1985: 53–54). Notwithstanding the frequent lack of conjunction between inscriptions and iconography, if we apply this pattern to the images, interesting questions arise as to the interpretation of relationships between the pairs represented and how these might be projected on a broader arena of social, religious and political partnership. Taken together, the epigraphy and the imagery suggest on the surface a message of harmonious balance, equivalence and 'marriage' between Rome and Gaul, but the male/Roman and female/native divisions, the age-discrepancies and the choice of emblems may hint at a paternalistic attitude and even a message of conquering active male and subjugated, passive female. Nations are often represented as women (Hadfield 2002: 173): this is as true for Rome as for Britannia; but in Roman imperial art, conquered barbarian provinces were habitually represented as humiliated women, dominated by maleness, as expressed in the figure of the emperor: the representation of Claudius and Britannia from Aphrodisias in Turkey (Ferris 1994: 26–27) exemplifies this well. But such a view might be inverted by reference to the differing packages of symbols that accompany the partners: those of the males are more varied than the persistent 'giving' motifs carried by the women, and the latter may be seen as evocative of a preoccupation with homeland and earthly abundance, while the male accoutrements are more concerned with the activities of a hero. Although it is inappropriate to make direct linkages between the archaeology of Roman Gaul and the medieval mythic narratives of Ireland and Wales, none the less it may be helpful to refer to a persistent *topos* running through many of the Insular prose tales, namely the theme of sacral kingship and the legitimation of earthly rulers by their ritual marriage to the ancestral goddess who personified the land itself. The nexus of this union is the dependence on her sanction for his success and the prosperity of his realm; without her blessing, he and his territory were doomed (Aldhouse-Green 2001f, 2003a).

I suggest that the imagery of the divine couples in Roman Gaul and Britain was designed to be deliberately flexible in intention, interactive and immersive,

demanding participation and interrogation by its consumers. Gender may have been deliberately manipulated in order to present polyvocal, even contradictory messages to the viewer. *Romanitas*, conquest and subjugation may be reflected at one level by the way that males and females were presented but, on another, such images may have spoken to the spirit of *gallitas* in serving to reassert, reaffirm and resist whole-scale *romanitas* (Chapter 8). Isomorphism, the relative homogeneity of the female partner's emblems and her closer links with her home environment, as suggested by her name and her association with objects signifying plenty, serve to establish her as belonging, while the more heterogeneous, less stable persona of the male conveys a message of impermanence.

Remembering the men

> … the hair is so thickened by this treatment [lime-washing] that it differs in no way from a horse's mane. Some shave off the beard, while others cultivate a short beard; the nobles shave the cheeks but let the moustache grow freely so that it covers the mouth. And so when they are eating the moustache becomes entangled in the food, and when they are drinking the drink passes, as it were, through a sort of strainer.
>
> (Diodorus Siculus V, 28; trans. Tierney 1959–60: 249–250)

All too often studies of gender and archaeology fall into the 'hermeneutical circle' of feminist attitudes; they set out to explore issues concerning women, androcentrism and the 'invisible' genders (Gilchrist 1994, 1999; Moore & Scott 1997; Balme & Beck 1995), whilst presented in the guise of discourses on gender in general. Gender is not about women, it is about social constructions imposed upon the sexuality of maleness and femaleness, with connotations of genders in between or outside those parameters. Scholars who disguise treatises specifically about women as gender-studies weaken their case, for their own discrimination merely reinforces stereotypes of exclusion against which they rightly argue. The somatic and symbolic syntax within which men were presented in imagery is an important aspect of social and religious iconography and its meaning.

Diodorus's comment is revealing in its emphasis on hair and the manipulation of bodily appearance by its growth or removal, and men's treatment of their facial hair in signification of rank. His description resonates with certain male images from the Iron Age iconographic record, including the Bohemian stone head from Mšecké Žehrovice (Megaw & Megaw 1998: fig. 1) (Figure 1.6), which depicts a man, his hair standing up stiffly on his head and a long drooping moustache. Diodorus's remark about the mane-like appearance of male

head-hair is confirmed by images on Iron Age Gallic coins that depict riders with stiff hair (Duval 1987: 53) (Figure 6.8), sometimes treated identically to the manes of their mounts (Allen 1978, 53: no. 60; Kruta & Forman 1985: 106–107). What is more, the horses ridden by these coin-men often possess human faces, and call to mind the double maleness of Greek centaurs (Shanks 1999: 134).

Paul Treherne's paper (1995: 105–144), mentioned in the previous chapter in the context of identities, has addressed the issue of male presentation in the context of European Bronze Age masculine identity and projection, commenting on a distinctive grammar of maleness, associated with independence, selfhood, display, warfare, hunting and feasting, which manifested itself particularly in tomb-furnishings and grave-goods. He singles out hair as important in terms of puberty, adulthood and transformation, arguing that hair is intrinsically meaningful for its age-signals: the appearance of body-hair and facial hair symbolize the rite of passage from childhood to manhood; greying hair is associated with ageing, and full beards are redolent of maturity. So the implements associated with hair – razors and tweezers – that are found in graves may well act as signifiers of status and authority but, in addition, symbolize the ability to manipulate and transform the male body and, thus, the capacity to control and change the way it is. What is more, hair itself is an emotive symbol, for it belongs to the body, yet has externality and cutting it is painless; yet its continued growth after death gives hair a kind of immortality, and cutting it at death (as happened to some North European bog-bodies: M. Williams 2003: 97) perhaps symbolized dislocation between states of being.

A preoccupation with the male body is evident at the period of interface between Romans and native Britons in south-east England, when toilet-sets – tweezers, nail-cleaners, ear-scoops (often found as groups of instruments hanging from a chatelaine and worn on the body – became a prominent and highly visible element in personal effects (Hill 1997; Carr 2001: 112–124), signalling a new interest in body-decoration that may have had something to do with resistance against Rome. Gilly Carr (op. cit.: 120–121) seeks to explain the presence of so-called 'cosmetic grinders' on late Iron Age/early Roman sites in terms both of deliberate assertions of *britannitas* and of virility. She argues that these grinders were used not for conventional make-up but for the preparation of woad or indigo for the purpose of tattooing, a non-Roman method of body-transformation (see Chapter 8). Furthermore, she suggests that grinders themselves had 'male' and 'female' components and that the to-and-fro motion of the upper and lower parts acted as a metaphor for male sexual potency, and contributed to a similar grammar of masculinity to that noted by Treherne as occurrent in Bronze Age Europe.

Male bodies and big men: Hirschlanden and Withernsea

> After his first military action against the Romans, Civilis had
> sworn an oath, like the primitive savage he was, to dye his hair
> red and let it grow until such time as he had annihilated the
> legions. Now that the vow was fulfilled, he shaved off his long
> beard.
>
> (Tacitus, *Histories* IV, 61; trans Wellesley 1964: 247)

The massive sandstone statue from Hirschlanden (Figure 3.7) in Baden-
Württemberg (Megaw 1970: no. 12; Bonenfant & Guillaumet 1998: 56, fig. 29)
once adorned the barrow of a high-ranking individual who died at the turn
of the sixth and fifth centuries BC. The image measures about the same as 'the
calculated average height of the contemporary male population' (Megaw
1970: 47); it depicts an emphatically ithyphallic male, naked but for a conical
cap, a torc and a belt from which hangs a dagger, with huge trunk-like legs
and bulging calf-muscles, powerful shoulders, with relatively puny arms held
across his chest and abdomen and well-defined hands. Every aspect of the
image is intensely masculine, from his moustached and bearded face to his
erect phallus and great leg-muscles. The eye is drawn to the hands, highly
visible on the front of the body, perhaps indicative of the individual's active
power, though they hold nothing and seem to act as protection for the man's

Figure 3.7 Stone statue of a Hallstatt
warrior, from Hirschlanden,
Germany. © Paul Jenkins.

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torso. But hands can represent many things (see Chapter 7); in the conventions of Benin iconography in the Lower Niger, the hand is symbolic of masculine aggression, warfare, hunting and general success (Dean 1983: 33–40). The emphatic calf-muscles are also evocative of empowerment, and it is interesting to note that the same combination of hugely curved lower legs and large, erect phalluses occurs on Bronze Age Scandinavian rock art images of 'big men' (Coles 2000: 53). The penis, the dagger and the morphology of the headgear all appear to repeat the phallic motif. It is tempting to interpret the Hirschlanden figure as the image of the deceased man, remaining as part of the physical landscape and the landscape of memory as a potent ancestral hero.

The second image selected to illustrate masculinity is very different from the first figure. The German statue is life-size, a massive stone man carved to mark a tomb and celebrate the life of its occupant, but the chalk figure from Withernsea in north-east England (Figure 3.8) is small, only about 12 cm high. It is an outlier of a group depicting both men and apparently genderless beings, whose distribution is concentrated at Garton Slack in East Yorkshire (Stead 1988: 9–29), depicting somatically male figures, with beards and phalluses, others whose masculinity is usually taken as implicit in their possession of swords, and others with no discernible gender-attributes (Green 1997a: 901). The Withernsea figure (Stead 1988: fig. 1) is special, quite different from the schematic minimalism with which its fellows are represented. Like the Hirschlanden statue, its maleness is emphasized: he has long
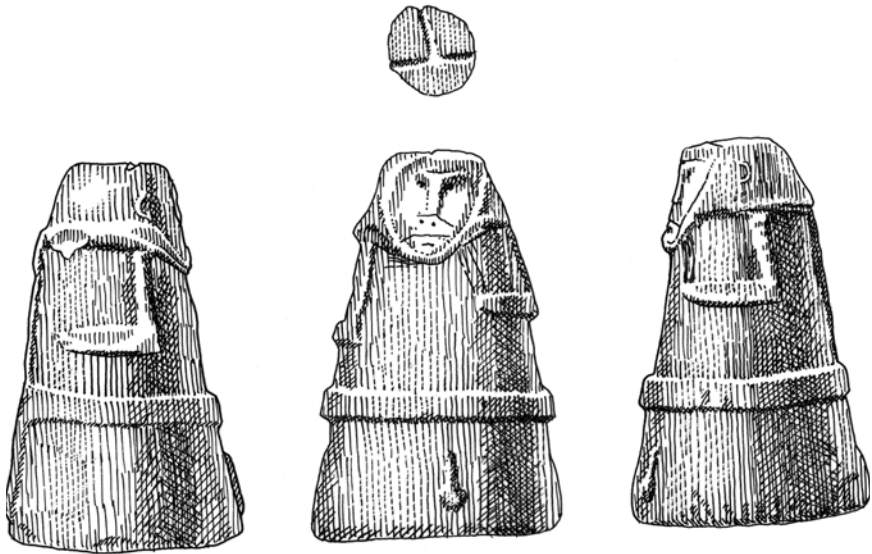
Figure 3.8 Chalk figure of a warrior, from Withernsea (outlier of the Garton Slack group), Yorkshire. © Paul Jenkins.

hair, a luxuriant moustache and a beard; a long sword hangs at his back and, though he wears a thick, all-enveloping cloak, his scrotum and erect penis are clearly visible on the outside of his clothing. He presents an image of mature manhood; his massive cloak gives him an air of stability and, despite his sword, he displays no aggression but rather a demeanour of authority. His genitals are, perhaps deliberately, depicted off-centre and this asymmetry, also evident in the reversed right arm, may be significant in stressing his 'otherness', perhaps as a chieftain or even as a religious leader.

The images from Mšecké Žehrovice, Hirschlanden and Withernsea all, perhaps, represent what Lynn Foxhall has termed 'hegemonic masculinity' (Foxhall 1994: 133–146; Gilchrist 1999: 88), 'big men' at the height of their physically active power, authoritative figures – like Civilis – whose emphatic maleness was intimately bound up with status and control. All wear moustaches, and – given the preponderance of hairy upper lips in a great deal of Iron Age art, together with comments of Diodorus and Tacitus – it is worth considering whether moustaches (and male hair generally) possessed particular significance. For Melanesian people on Wala Island, moustache-imagery is closely linked with authority: central to their livelihood and cosmology is the canoe, carved from the *rav* tree; the boats are their connection with the mainland and they act, too, as repositories for the newly dead. The canoe is a gendered symbol: it is carved with a tassel at the stern that represents a penis-sheath, and another at the prow, which depicts a moustache, perceived as the 'ears' of the 'big man' who listens to his subjects. But, though the canoes are thus symbolically 'male', there is a subtle inclusion of the female in its metaphoric structure, since the best wood for carving the boats is that of the female *rav* tree (Tilley 1999: 118–127). It may be that, in some instances, authority is associated with completeness and gender-inclusion. If we apply such a notion to our Iron Age images, it could be that the long, bell-like cloak on the Withernsea image represents a feminine perspective, while the position of the hands on the upper body of the Hirschlanden image could be read as the kind of gesture more often seen in images of women seeking to hide (and draw attention to) their breasts.

The distaff side: imaging femininity

> But any personal approach to Veleda or speech with her was forbidden. This refusal to permit the envoys to see her was intended to enhance the aura of veneration that surrounded the prophetess. She remained immured in a high tower, one of her relatives being deputed to transmit questions and answers as if he were mediating between a god and his worshippers.
>
> (Tacitus, *The Histories* IV, 65;
> trans Wellesley 1964: 250)

So Tacitus described a Batavian prophetess at the time of the Gallo-German rebellion led by Civilis in AD 69. Veleda is interesting (Figure 3.1), for Tacitus's narrative presents a contradiction in her power and autonomy. On the one hand, we are told that she was treated like a goddess, on the other, that her activities were strictly controlled by her male relatives. The reference to her incarceration is significant, for, earlier in the passage, we are informed that Veleda was an unmarried woman; so this may be taken both literally and as a metaphor for protection and impregnability. Such a *leitmotif* is applied to medieval perceptions of the Virgin Mary: in the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman poem *Château d'amour*, its author Robert Grosseteste likens Mary to a protective fortress and, in so doing, de-feminized, neutralized or even masculinized her persona. Whitehead (2000: 123) argues that 'virginity confers immunity from corruptive matter; it spiritualizes the body out of existence', thus enabling the manipulation, transformation or denial of Mary's female gender. Like Mary, Veleda's virginity both robbed her of female identity and endowed her with spiritual empowerment, even though – unlike single women in medieval and later European societies (Davison 2000: 186–209) – the Batavian maiden's physical freedom was curtailed.

The imaging of women in Gallo-British iconography both denies and affirms their sexually gendered femininity. Where women are depicted naked, as on bronze statuettes, such as the dancer from Neuvy-en-Sullias (Loiret) (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 35, 190) and the mature woman from Henley Wood (Somerset) (see Chapter 1) (Figure 1.4), their sexuality is not flaunted, but the appearance of wild, naked horsewomen on Iron Age coins (Aldhouse-Green 2004b; Duval 1987: 60, 63) does seem to be designed as a mark of defiant freedom. The two images selected for scrutiny in this section are very different from each other: one is a depiction of a woman on a sacrificial tableau from a Hallstatt Iron Age tomb in Austria; the other is a carving of three women from a Gallo-Roman healing-spa sanctuary in Burgundy.

The 'big woman' of Strettweg

In about 600 BC, a man of high rank was buried in a funerary chamber beneath a barrow at Strettweg in Styria, Austria. Among his grave-goods is a unique and remarkable object, a bronze cult-wagon, consisting of a four-wheeled platform bearing the images of humans and animals apparently enacting a ritual scene (Bonenfant & Guillaumet 1998: 59–64; figs. 32–36), involving stag-sacrifice (Figure 5.7). The figures are grouped in two sets, back to back, consisting of horsemen, animal-attendants and other beings; towering above them, and in the central position, is an enormous female figure, who bears a great cauldron in her upraised hands (Figure 3.9). She is firmly gendered, with breasts and an emphatic vulva, and she wears hooped earrings; the smaller figures are divided into male, female and 'ungendered' personnel. The central woman's nuclear position, her size and her cauldron
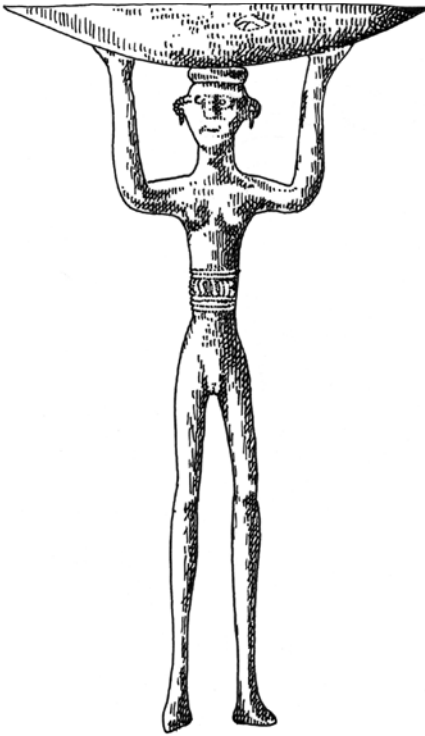
Figure 3.9 The 'big woman' of Strettweg, from a cult-wagon found in a tomb of the seventh century BC at Strettweg near Graz, Austria. © Paul Jenkins.

mark her as special; her face suggests she was not a young woman, and she is the only female in the group to wear a waistband: it is impossible to make a positive identification as to whether she is a goddess, a priest or a female hero, but it is tempting to interpret her as a 'big woman', someone who – perhaps – combined the roles of political and religious leader. We know from contemporary burial evidence (Arnold 1995) that high-ranking women were present in Hallstatt society. It is possible that the fifty-year-old female bog-body from Haraldskaer in Jutland, ritually strangled and deposited in her watery tomb in the fifth century BC (Hvass 1998; Aldhouse-Green 2001a: fig. 49), was such a 'big woman', for she was clearly special, and her outstanding fitness and relative longevity suggest that she was carefully looked after and not subject to the normal work and childbearing health-hazards of her time.

The presence of the 'cult-wagon' in the Strettweg chieftain's tomb might have commemorative meaning, for the scene resembles a funerary procession; the stag-figures perhaps represented the victims of a successful stag-hunt, sacrificed – maybe – at the death of a great hunter or war-leader, presided over by a female cult-specialist. The notion of there being 'big women', or women of substance, in Iron Age European society is borne out not simply by burials but, in the later Iron Age, also by depictions of women with male

emblems, such as spears and daggers (Figures 1.11, 3.2) or astride horses (see above and Chapter 8). Such imagery has its parallels in many prehistoric or traditional societies, from the female warriors marching alongside the male soldiers in Qin Shibuangdi's Chinese terracotta army (Milledge Nelson 1997: 139) to the women with spears, shields or boomerangs represented on Australian aboriginal rock art (Drew 1995: 105–113) and the 'Queen Mothers' tableaux of sixteenth-century Benin culture (Ben-Amos 1983: 80–81). Indeed, the Nigerian imagery resonates strongly with the Strettweg group, for the brass tableaux from Africa consist of a large central female surrounded by smaller attendants, all standing on a platform. The Strettweg woman is presented as though in charge of sacrificial ritual: her cauldron may be a container for the blood of the stags, offered in thanks for the hunt, or a vessel to hold trance-inducing liquor, a necessary accompaniment to 'shamanistic' ritual practice. Bettina Arnold (1999, 2001) reminds us of the importance of drinking in Iron Age ceremonies, and alcohol, as a mind-altering substance, is important in many traditional cultic systems. In her study of Nepalese shamans, Charlotte Hardman (2002: 88–89) comments on the significance of beer-production and consumption in healing rituals: in Lohorung tradition, 'it is only the women who know how to make beer and only they who brew, store and serve it, including for medicinal purposes' (op. cit.: 89).

Laying bare the female: the three women of Vertault

> There is no denying that Roman society recognized women not
> as individuals but as members of a biological class.
> (Bartman 1999: 26)

Worried about the decline both in morals and in the upper-class birth-rate, the emperor Augustus introduced to Roman society a 'back to basics' campaign in which dress-conduct and sexual behaviour were subject to strict codes, and married women were encouraged to adopt the domestic feminine virtues of good Roman matrons (Kleiner 1996: 28–41; Kampen 1996a: 17–18). This ideal of womanhood closely resembles attitudes to women in Classical Greece, in which 'the distaff became a literary symbol for the dedicated housewife' (Williams 1983: 92–106, fig. 73), evocative of industry, commitment to the inner space of the *oikos* and docile fidelity. Greek iconography shows its ambivalence towards women: this is graphically illustrated by the statue known as Aphrodite of Knidos, whose hand both hides and points to her genitals, thus at the same time denying and drawing attention to her sexuality (Salomon 1997: fig. 44).

The Gallo-Roman curative sanctuary-settlement of Vertault (Côte d'Or) (Figure 3.10) has produced several stone sculptures of triple goddesses. The one featured here depicts three women, seated on a bench, each with her

Figure 3.10 Triad of nursing women, from Vertault near Châtillon-sur-Seine, Burgundy. Photo Christian Labeaune, © Musée Archéologique, Châtillon-sur-Seine.

right breast bared; one holds a baby wrapped tightly in swathing-bands, the middle one holds a napkin and the third a sponge and bowl (Deyts 1992: 64–65; Green 1989: 191–192, fig. 84; Espérandieu 1911: no. 3377). All three are portrayed as middle-aged, with sagging facial muscles and deeply grooved necks (all arguably too old for childbearing), while the infant is probably younger than two months old: according to the ancient writer Soranus of Ephesus, Graeco-Roman babies were taken out of swaddling clothes forty-sixty days after their birth (*Gynaecology* II, 42; Wild 1999: 64). Although each of the Vertault 'mothers' is represented at slight variance from her sisters, there is a strong physiognomic resemblance between them, as if they represent sisterhood or other close relationalities. Their symbolism is interesting for its ambiguity: the baby's face is that of an adult, with a lined forehead and gaunt cheeks, and the 'napkin' held by the central figure looks more like a *volumen* or scroll than a towel (Deyts 1992: 64). Referring to other cognate images from the region, Emile Thevenot (1968: 173–176) has put forward a persuasive argument that the Burgundian 'mother-goddesses' represent a nuanced reference to human destiny and the one-way journey through life.

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Indeed, some iconography actually shows the women carrying balance-beams or spindles. The sponge and bowl could equally be interpreted not simply as bathing-equipment for a child but also as part of the cleansing ritual associated with the laying-out of a corpse. Seen from this perspective, the Vertault sculpture may convey a double layer of meaning: on the one hand, simple domesticity and child-rearing, on the other, the more sombre message of inevitable mortality.

The bared breasts of the Vertault women may also be charged with ambivalent meaning. The depiction of breasts typically embodies ideas of femaleness, even if the genitalia are not shown. Chalcolithic 'statue-menhirs' of Alpine Europe, like the stone from Arco Trentino in Italy, dated to the third millennium BC, show womanhood by the *leitmotifs* of small but developed breasts and long necklaces, though facial details are commonly omitted, thereby denying individuality to the images (de Marinis 1999: 145–152). In Roman Gaul and Britain, small pipe-clay figurines of nursing mothers, with a single baby or twins at the breast, are not uncommon site-finds (Jenkins 1957b: 38–46). But baring the breast has multivocal meaning in Graeco-Roman art: it could refer to a 'positive erotic encounter', to the disarray resulting from sexual eagerness or rape, or to the essence of nurture. In the *Iliad* (XXII.90), Hecuba makes the symbolic gesture of baring her breast to her son Hector in order to shame him into forsaking his combat with Achilles. But the single naked breast also depicted scenes of violence against women; a carving on the temple of Zeus at Olympia depicts a maiden being raped by a centaur; and the bared breast was also a *topos* of aggression against foreigners, as allegorized by women: thus only when Amazons are in defeat at the hands of the Greeks are they shown with bared breasts (Cohen 1997: 66–92). Similarly, the image of the Roman emperor subduing foreign nations, represented by women with the right breast bared (Ferris 1994: 26; 1997), presents a theme of violent conquest.

Whilst images of nursing mothers are uncommon in Greek art, the *Nutrix* is a frequent theme on Italic and Etruscan imagery. What is interesting, in this context, is that breast-milk contains powerful and contradictory messages associated with nourishment and magic, just as the partial nudity of the nursing mother presents ambiguities between child-care and eroticism (Bonfante 1997: 176–196). Like menstrual blood, milk represents the unbounded female body and, in traditional societies, women may be regarded with awe and fear because of these bodily emissions (Freedman 2002: 142). It is possible to read the Vertault image as an evocation of empowered womanhood, as part of 'the visual language of female power' (Bartman 1999: xxi), and with a deeper significance than that of nursing motherhood, though that is an important part of the symbolic package. But study of Greek art gives images like these another possible dimension, that of subjugation. It may be that the Vertault sculptor was inspired not only by positive *topoi* of nourishment, the magical

properties of breast-milk and the passage of life, but also by negative and essentially colonial images of submission, as conveyed by Graeco-Roman conquering iconography (Chapter 8).

Challenging the canon

> For spirits when they please
> Can either Sex assume, or both: so soft
> And uncompounded is their Essence pure,
> Not ti'd or manacled with joynt or limb,
> Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
> Like cumbrous flesh; but in what shape they choose
> Dilated and condens't, bright or obscure,
> Can execute their aerie purposes,
> And works of love or enmity fulfil.
>
> (John Milton, *Paradise Lost I*: Visiak 1969: 89)

Gender lies at the very roots of identity: it is almost inconceivable to think of people other than as gendered selves. Yet, in terms of social construction, as we have seen, many societies regard gender as relational, permeable, mutable and part of a continuum that both confirms and denies opposition. In metaphoric terms, gender may be used to make statements about belonging and exclusion, about the relationships between 'me', 'you', 'us' and 'them', about self and non-self, and about kinship and strangeness (Aldhouse-Green 2001e: 20, 24; 2003a). The synergy between gender and identity allows for marginal individuals within communities – shamans, for instance – to be ascribed new genders, whether or not such gender-allocation refers to biological sexuality. Maleness might be reserved for able, adult males who hunt and fight, femaleness for reproductively capable women. Women might be assigned symbolic maleness if they take on 'male' roles of leadership, combat or business. Female rulers of the Kushite kingdom (beginning in the ninth century BC) were named *sons* of Amun (Welsby 1996: 79), and in Rome, the Vestal Virgins were granted the right to conduct business as autonomous persons, a right normally reserved for men (Ferguson 1980: 57–58; Plutarch, *Life of Numa* 9–10). Children, the elderly or other 'non-mainstream' persons might be excluded from sexual gendering but be either assigned no gender or different ones.

   If gender is negotiable and unstable, it follows that its meaning will alter according to societal context (Derevenski 1997: 857–897; Heldke 1997: 174–182) and possibly also according to the life-stage and life-experience of an individual. Among the Khumbo people of Nepal, the ascription of male and female gender is dependent upon social position in the kinship network (Diemberger 1993: 100, 118); for some Saami communities, gender is associated with the right (or not) to herd reindeer (Amft 1998: 22–23). The purpose of

this final section is to discover whether the playing-out of negotiated gender-perceptions is visibly present in the imagery of Iron Age and Roman western Europe. Marie-Louise Sørensen (1991) has argued for the ability to construct gender through appearance, and images are essentially concerned with visualities of presentation.

Double gender, double spirit?

> In the territory of the Naharvali one is shown a grove, hallowed from ancient times. The presiding priest dresses like a woman …
>
> (Tacitus, *Germania* XLIII, transl. Mattingly 1948: 136)

The Gallo-Roman healing temple of Bolards, at Nuits-Saint-Georges (Côte d'Or), produced a curious carved stone triad (Figure 7.15), consisting of a woman, a three-faced antlered man and, in the centre, a hermaphroditic figure (Figure 3.11), with long hair, developed breasts and male genitalia that are deliberately revealed by drapery folded below the figure's loins

Figure 3.11 The hermaphrodite of Roman Bolards, Nuits-Saint-Georges, Burgundy. © Anne Leaver.

(Pommeret 2001: inv. no. 82, figs. 8–9; Deyts 2001: 129–142). The placement of this dual-sexed individual flanked by a gendered pair serves to endorse its 'in-between' identity. The Bolards hermaphrodite appears to be a version of the *anasyromenos* or 'revealing type', derived ultimately from Hellenistic tradition of the fourth century BC, where 'female' images are shown lifting up their clothes to reveal a penis and scrotum in a manner that is designed as a jolting, visual shock (Green 1997a: 903, fig. 3; Ajootian 1997: figs. 48–49).

Hermaphroditic images are rare in north-west European antiquity, but they are recorded as early as the Upper Palaeolithic in Europe and the Neolithic and Bronze Age in Britain and Ireland. One of the Upper Palaeolithic figurines from the Balzi Rossi cave-system on the Italian/French border is hermaphroditic (Mussi *et al.* 2000: 105–124). John and Bryony Coles (J. Coles 1968: 275–277; B. Coles 1990: 315–333) have recorded a Neolithic wooden image from excavations at Westhay in the Somerset Levels, with well-defined breasts and erect phallus. More interesting is the large late Bronze Age Irish wooden figure from Ralaghan (Co. Cavan), which has a genital orifice, containing a deposit of white quartz, that might represent either a female vulva or a hole for a detachable penis, or both/either, the deposit perhaps symbolizing semen (B. Coles 1990: 315–333; Green 1997a: fig. 1). One of the most striking animal-images from Roman Gaul is a triple-horned boar from Cahors in southern France (Figure 3.15), with tusks and male genitalia, but with a row of swollen teats along its belly (Dayet 1954: 334–335; Green 1997a: fig. 5). Not only does this creature exhibit dual gender, but its possession of horns, and three at that, serves as a repeated theme of contradiction and contravention of 'norm'. It may be that the Cahors boar/sow represents a spirit-helper, a go-between liaising between human and supernatural worlds, its 'dual nationality' represented by its double-gendered form.

The interpretation of double-gendered imagery is necessarily context-contingent, but it is interesting to compare the hermaphroditic iconography of European antiquity with those of some other, traditional systems, for similar subtleties of gender-manipulation and dualism can be identified. A group of prehistoric stone artefacts from the coast of British Columbia exhibit intricate and self-contradictory gender-messages in visual sexual punning: this is illustrated by a maul in the Ketchikan Museum, Alaska, which represents a vulva and penis, or a penis inside a vulva, at the same time, and by a figurine of a seated man/woman, its lap occupied by what might be a child and/or an erect phallus (Marshall 2000: 222–235). In the funerary art of New Ireland Province, New Guinea, hermaphroditic figures made for *malanggan* mortuary rites represent generic ancestors (Küchler 1992, 2002): they possess male genitalia but wear white female caps, and beneath them are images of rock-cod, a fish that changes its sex during its life-cycle (King 2000a: 88).

Dual-sexed images may be charged with meaning in terms of 'other' genders and, perhaps, of liminality, 'in-betweenness' that may reflect the position of certain beings within their communities. Several anthropologists have

noted the manipulation of gender in order to present 'two-spirit' persons, shamans or other 'technicians of the sacred' (Stoddart 2002) whose ability to straddle the material and spirit-worlds is reflected in their dual-genderedness (Roscoe 1996, 1998; Jacobs *et al.* 1997; Vitebsky 1995: 91). In this connection, the role of transvestism in ritual behaviour should be considered, for cross-dressing visibly alters gender whilst, at the same time, exhibiting clear duality. (The deliberate gender-tensions associated with cross-dressing are manifest, for example, in Classical, Elizabethan and Restoration drama and, of course, in pantomime: Quilligan 1993: 223; Kahn 1981; Todd 1993: 25.)

A strange bronze figurine (one of two) from unprovenanced locations within Roman Gaul might exhibit transvestism, for the image is that of a middle-aged woman, clad in female costume and with well-defined breasts, carrying a cornucopiae in the crook of her left arm and an offering-plate in her right (Boucher 1976: no. 317; Aldhouse-Green 2001c: 85, 87, fig. 7.10), but sprouting a large pair of red-deer antlers (Figure 3.12). While the image may depict a 'genuinely' monstrous hybrid creature (see Chapter 6), it may alternatively be read as a cross-dressing female, wearing the motif of a male animal and thereby displaying visual ambiguity and dubiety. The presentation of gender-contradiction and ambivalence by transvestism is recorded both

Figure 3.12 Bronze figurine of an antlered woman, unprovenanced, Gaul. © Anne Leaver.

in ancient literature and archaeology. Tacitus (above) refers to a Germanic cross-dressing priest; similarly, Plutarch (*Quaestiones Graecae* 58) refers to the wearing of female attire by a priest of Herakles, on the island of Kos. This is interesting, for in Classical myth Herakles himself swaps genders with the Lydian queen Omphale, dresses in women's clothes and spins with her slaves (Kampen 1996b: 243). Athenian vase-paintings of the late sixth to early fifth centuries BC depict male Anakreontic dancers (named after the lyric poet Anacreon), dressed up in female clothes and false beards, in enactment of otherness, parody and contradictive irony (Ajootian 1997: 220–242). Gender-boundaries are not simply crossed, they are demolished.

Burials, too, may provide evidence for gender-ambiguity, as played out in dress or other material culture. The body in an Iron Age grave, found by a farmer at Bryher in the Scillies in 2000 (Mellor 2000: 1–2), has yet to be anatomically sexed, but the accompanying grave-goods – a sword (probably made between 250 and 125 BC) and a mirror – raise gender-issues, for traditionally swords are placed with male burials and mirrors with women. The Roman cemetery at Poundbury in Dorset contained six graves with bone hairpins (usually considered as feminine accessories), yet two belonged to biological males (Carr 2001: 112–124), and Gilly Carr has suggested that they may have been cross-dressers and perhaps belonged to a separate gender. Peter Wilson (2002: 41–42; 467) has put forward a hypothesis that the skeleton of a young man who died in the fourth century AD just outside the Roman town of Catterick (Grave 951, Bainesse cemetery) was a transvestite, maybe even a eunuch-priest, for he was buried with a great deal of jet, shale and bronze jewellery, a pattern of ornament-rich grave-goods associated with female patterns of tomb-furnishing. This individual may even have been a biological hermaphrodite, a member of a rare but well-documented group of individuals exhibiting both male and female genitalia, the subject of a powerful novel entitled *Middlesex* (Eugenides 2002).

Cross-dressing is strongly evident in traditional religious systems. The Indian *Hijra* are a sexually ambiguous group who occupy a special, liminal position in society, are accorded a separate gender and wear female clothing; they are regarded by others with a mixture of awe and repugnance (Gilchrist 1999: 59–60). Siberian Chukchi male shamans not only dress as women, but they adopt female language and life-styles, in recognition of their two-spirit status (Vitebsky 1995: 91). Siberian shamans wear ceremonial masks that suggest hermaphroditic identity, and they – like the *Hijra* – belong to a separate gender-group (Hollimon 2001: 124–128). Navajo 'two-spirit' shamans cross-dress, and are known as *Nadle* (the 'Weaver' or 'Being Transformed'), in remembrance of origin myths peopled by hermaphroditic beings of that name (O'Flaherty 1980: 285–289). Female Sande initiation ceremonies among the Mende people of Sierra Leone involve transvestism, whose purpose is to subvert male power by mocking it (Ferme 1994: 27–44); and in

Venezuelan Carib festivals, men cross-dress in exaggerated parody of women, with grossly over-emphasized breasts (Guss 1994: 148). Rituals, ceremonies and festivals are all liminal times, when space and time are suspended, when social values and norms are inverted and the strange is accepted in acknowledgement of supernatural encroachment into the material world (Bourke 2001: 134).

Androgynes and ambiguities

Androgynes are both, eunuchs are neither. But there is an interesting tension here in so far as hermaphrodites are sterile but the androgynous beings of traditional symbolic systems may be fertile: in the Vedic texts, the male deity Prajāpati develops breasts, a womb and becomes pregnant (O'Flaherty 1980: 28). In the Melanesian symbolism of Wala Island (Tilley 1999: 118–129), the 'male' canoes, with their moustaches and penis-sheaths, none the less have a female aspect in the deliberate selection of female trees for their production. Such androgyny is followed through in the imagery of drums, used in men's dancing rituals, decorated with both phallus and womb. The Greek god Dionysus is androgynous, and so is his father, Zeus, who gave birth to him from his thigh. In Euripides's drama *The Bacchae*, Dionysus is described as looking like a young girl, with long tresses and feminine contours (Aldhouse-Green 2003a); he is able to change gender and species. The Classical divine twins Apollo and Artemis/Diana exhibit the permeability of genders, for Apollo is traditionally represented as a beardless and rather effeminate youth, while Diana is depicted as a very masculine woman, virgin and with her tunic girt for the hunt.

The androgynous nature of both Dionysus/Bacchus and Apollo is displayed in the way they are depicted in imagery throughout the Roman world: in Britain, the mosaic pavement from the Thruxton Roman villa in Hampshire shows a very feminine-looking Bacchus in a central roundel (Henig 1995: pl. XIV) (Figure 3.13); such treatment is matched by in-the-round representations, such as the marble sculpture from Spoonley Wood in Gloucestershire (Henig 1993: fig. 1). Gallo-Roman images of Apollo exhibit similar androgyny: good examples are the paired figures of Apollo and Sirona from Mâlain (Côte d'Or) and Hochscheid in the Moselle Valley (Green 1989: 62, fig. 24; Aldhouse-Green 2001e, fig. 7; Schindler 1977: 33, Abb. 92), both depicting the god in a feminized form. What is interesting about these two divinities is that each is concerned with transformation: Dionysus, as a god of the vine, is associated with altered states of consciousness, of transgression between planes of being, whilst Apollo's roles as god of hunting, music, healing and prophecy also marked him as a deity whose responsibilities involved transition and relationships between different cosmological levels. So it may be possible to make connections between gender-presentation and its use to express change, duality and between-states.

Figure 3.13 Dionysus on a mosaic from the Thruxton Roman villa, Hampshire. © Paul Jenkins.

An Iron Age silver coin from Bratislava in Slovakia (Zachar 1987: pl. 201; Green 1997a: fig. 2; Aldhouse-Green 2001e: fig. 6) (Figure 3.14) exhibits a subtle but powerful statement of true gender-ambiguity, for its reverse depicts a stallion/mare with three projections beneath its belly that may be interpreted as phalli or teats. So the imagery contains references to 'both' and 'either' in a single gendered motif, in a visually economical display of contra-diction or completeness. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, horse-iconography on Iron Age coins and cognate imagery was arguably associated with power, and – perhaps – spiritual journeys between worlds. We can propose a reading of the Bratislava coin that allows for authority and cosmological transference through a prism of gender-exploration in which riddle, punning and inver-sion served to represent the totality of empowerment and of consonant socio-political control. The boar/sow figurine from Cahors (Figure 3.15) should, perhaps, be read in the same way.

Eunuchs and asexuals

The apparent absence of gender-determinism in images may be associated with deliberate denial, a perceived absence of need to depict male or female, or expression of a different gender altogether. This may be to do with the ontological status of socially marginalized individuals (ritualists, foreigners or
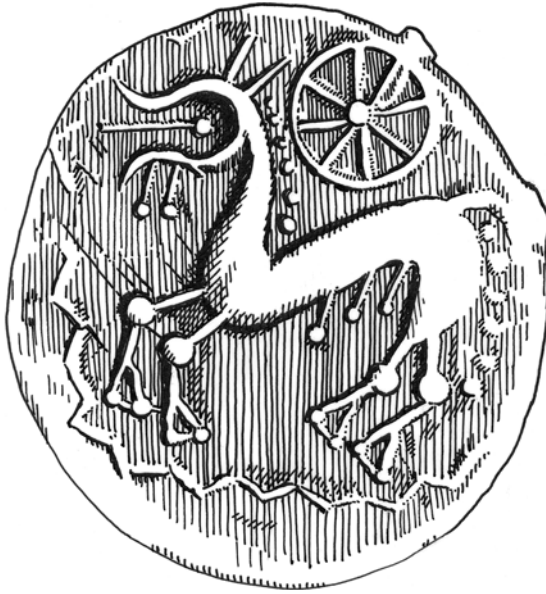
Figure 3.14 Triple-teated (or triple-phallused) horse on a silver Iron Age coin from Bratislava, Slovakia. © Paul Jenkins.
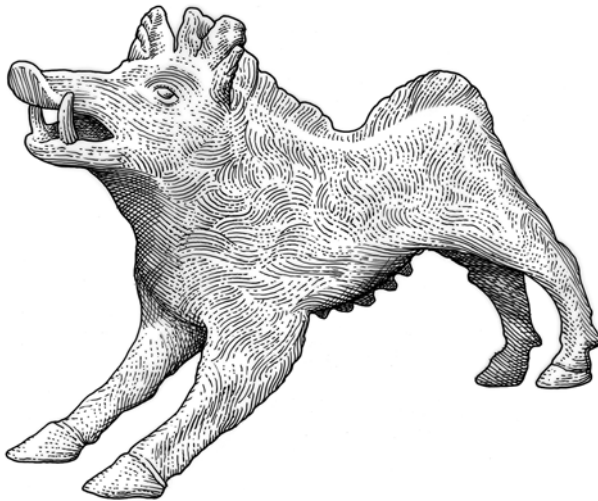

Figure 3.15 Gallo-Roman bronze figurine of a boar/sow from Cahors, France. © Nick Griffiths.

the unfree, perhaps) or the depiction of persons whose physical sexuality was undeveloped (pre-adolescent children, for instance), blurred (as in the case of some elderly people) or denied because of their non-combatant, inactive or non-reproductive status. Thus post-menopausal women, impotent, sterile, castrated, disabled or enfeebled persons might be perceived as 'ungendered'. But it may be that, in some instances (as expressed in Milton's *Paradise Lost* above), divinity was considered to be above the constraints of earthly gender.

Whatever the particular reasons behind asexual imagery, the habit of producing sexually unemphatic human iconography is identifiable in a whole range of ancient and modern traditions. Many Upper Palaeolithic figurines are sexually neutral (Conroy 1993: 153–160); the same is true for Neolithic and early Bronze Age images in the Balkans (Saranas 1998: 154–164; Bailey 1994: 321–331) and the Aegean (Marthari 1999: 159–163; Kokkinidou & Nikolaidou 1997: 88–112), and for Bronze Age rock-carvings in Scandinavia (Yates 1993: 31–72) and northern Italy (Anati 1965). In our study-area, Iron Age and Roman-period anthropomorphic images are frequently genderless in appearance, with neither breasts nor genitalia. The group of small chalk figures from Garton and Wetwang Slack in East Yorkshire (Stead 1988: 9–29) are of special interest, for asexuals are depicted alongside emphatically male images, with beards and scrota, as if there was deliberate intention to represent males and 'others'.

A human image, made of granite and probably produced towards the end of the Iron Age, comes from Lanneunoc, Plounévez-Lochrist, near Penmarch in southern Brittany (Clément 1986: 143) (Figure 3.16). The now headless image is remarkable for the absence of gender or other somatic features, but for the arms, which lie folded across the body, to meet in extraordinary hands with large, upward-pointing thumbs. What precise signification is presented by such a gesture has to remain an enigma, but it is worth commenting that it is repeated on other Armorican late Iron Age imagery, on coins bearing depictions of charioteers. Although the Lanneunoc figure is portrayed as asexual, the coin-representations display gender-ambiguity, in so far as the charioteer appears to be female but is acting the male and, on one issue at least, seems to be in possession of feminine breasts and beard (Duval 1987: 42–44). What is clear from the Breton stone is that gender was not absent because of lack of attention to detail, for the hands are well carved and the thumbs are carefully delineated.

Agency and attitude

William Paden (1992: 116) refers to the 'hermeneutical circle'; how we interpret an object is 'already interwoven with our questions and assumptions'. This is important, for gender-matters as well as other issues of meaning; the manner of interrogation inevitably determines the nature of the answers.

Figure 3.16 Asexual granite figure from Lanneunoc, Brittany. © author.

Two related issues concerning the perspectives from which we study iconographic gender are those of agency (who was making the images) and attitudes (how scholars perceive the gender of images and other artefacts). To take the issue of agency first, should we make the assumption that artists were 'routinely male'? (Nunn 1995: 4). Is it possible that female practitioners were making images and, if so, could it be that they might sometimes be subverting male power, and creating broader strategies for protest, by subverting and contradicting gender-norms? In mid-nineteenth-century England, Victorian society was disturbed by what was termed 'the woman question', the breaching by women of traditional male bastions, including those of literature and art. Female artists were permitted to paint 'safe and cosy' subjects, such as domestic scenes and vases of flowers, but attempts to take political or social subjects were frowned upon and resisted by the establishment (Nunn 1995: 49–50, 99). In the British modernist movement between the two world wars, female artists exhibited their empathy with other socially marginalized groups, such as homosexuals and black immigrants (Griffin 1994: 11; Woods 1994: 31). It is at least possible that 'invisible' female craftspeople were making their subtle mark in western Europe during the first millennium BC and after.

The issue of agency must include androcentrism, if we can safely assume that many, if not most, artists and patrons of antiquity were male. In his analysis of the *peplos* frieze on the Parthenon, John Younger (1998: 182–190) examines its presentation of contradictive gender: Aphrodite, goddess of love, is depicted fully and severely clad, whilst the virgin huntress Artemis is deliberately sexualized, with seductively revealing clothes. Younger explains this in terms of the ambivalence of men towards their 'citizen wives and their maturing daughters'. Aphrodite is a matron, Artemis an example of disturbing new womanhood, and it is possible that the contradiction in gender-presentation reflected tensions in male attitudes towards control of their female family members. The depiction of women, in Greek vase-paintings, in attitudes of domestic bliss (Williams 1983), while men were portrayed busily subduing lions, monsters and Amazons, is likewise explicable in terms of men reaffirming the divisions between the public citizen life of the free Greek male and the secluded female domain of the *oikos*.

Finally, current and former scholarly attitudes to the issue of gender should be scrutinized for these include challengeable assumptions. Lindsay Allason-Jones (1995: 22–32) warns of the need for caution in ascribing gender to the wearers of personal items, like brooches and pins found in ancient graves, simply because they are presumed to have been female gear, when we know from Classical writers that men and women wore jewellery. Images, too, must be interrogated more rigorously and nowhere can this need be illustrated more vividly than in the study of Upper Palaeolithic and Neolithic figurines, where there have been deeply entrenched assumptions concerning their gender, including a tendency to classify most of them as female. Certainly many of these images do represent the female body, but some are male or hermaphroditic and a significant proportion appear sexually neutral: it is these last figures that have been accorded female status simply because they do not possess male genitalia, and it is surely specious to define femininity simply in terms of penis-absence (Conroy 1993: 153–160; Saranas 1998: 154–164). The same is true of imagery in many other traditions: Aboriginal rock art has also arguably been interpreted according to an androcentric prism, in the interpretation of figures with weapons as male and those without as female (Drew 1995: 105–113), without allowing for 'masculine women' and 'female men'. The study of Iron Age and Roman-period iconography also needs to shed its bias: should we regard all bovid imagery as depictions of bulls rather than cows (Aldhouse-Green 2001e: 21)? Should we necessarily regard anthropomorphic images without overtly female characteristics as male, or vice versa? The challenge to long-held assumptions on gender, coupled with the acknowledgement that gender-boundaries may be fluid and permeable, means that material culture and, specifically, imagery is open to exciting new avenues of meaning associated with opposition, relationships, belonging and exclusion and the use of somatic gender-presentation to express complex social, ideological and cosmological perceptions.

4

MATERIALITY AND MEANING

About twenty-five thousand years ago, people living in and around the caves of the magnificent Balzi Rossi cliffs at Grimaldi, on the French/Italian border, were producing and using figurines of naked people, mostly representing women (often apparently pregnant, or, at least, with exaggerated sexual features) but including sexually ambiguous and dual-gendered (hermaphroditic) images (Mussi *et al.* 2000: 105–124; White & Bisson 1998: 95–132) that seem to act as powerful and intellectually sophisticated metaphors of transformation and as explorations of multiple layers of reality, including the abrupt transition from one being (the pregnant mother) to two (mother and newborn) (Haaland & Haaland 1996: 297–298). This group of images is of considerable significance on many counts, not least because they form part of a Gravettian (Upper Palaeolithic) tradition spanning a huge region from Russia to France, a distribution that argues convincingly for a shared artistic and – perhaps – a shared cosmological perception.

But one of their greatest features of interest lies in the materials used for their production, for it is clear that these were carefully selected for their appearance, rarity or symbolic significance. Certain of the figurines – and some were very small indeed – were made of a striking deep-green steatite, carved from rare finds of this material among the local beach pebbles; others, though, were fashioned from mammoth ivory. There were no mammoths anywhere near the Balzi Rossi region in the Gravettian, and it is thought that the ivory used for the 'Venus' figurines may have come from as far away as central Europe. Furthermore, ivory-working is a highly specialized technique that involves soaking and sawing across the grain before carving, so it may even be that technological knowledge would be exported as well as the ivory itself. It was clearly important to the communities living at Grimaldi that they used materials for their image-making which were themselves highly charged with meaning that emanated from the properties of the materials as well as from the representational value of the figures, whatever that may have been.

The Gravettian communities of the French/Italian Riviera were a long physical, temporal and cultural distance from the Iron Age and Roman periods in Britain and north-western Europe. But the case of the Balzi Rossi

figurines serves to illuminate the issue of materiality and meaning. In their concentration on issues of representational symbolism, students of iconography all too frequently ignore materials used in image-production; yet I would argue that materiality is a fundamental part of the iconographic 'package' and that, throughout European antiquity, the choice of stone, wood, bronze and iron from which to produce depictive figures may have depended not only on availability of materials or on pragmatic criteria such as size, cost and skill, but also on the meanings with which raw materials may have been invested. This chapter is concerned with such choices, the possible synergies between the materials selected and the intrinsic and metaphorical symbolism with which images may have been endowed.

Although tools and images might appear to have completely separate functions (such apparent disjunction itself an issue that needs unravelling), it is worth glancing at particular instances where materiality appears to have considerable significance in terms of how artefacts worked in socioideological contexts within European prehistory. Such choice is well illustrated by British Neolithic axe-makers working rocks in the difficult territory of the Cumbrian Fells. 'At Great Langdale there was evidence that, particularly in the later part of the Neolithic, axe rock was being deliberately quarried from some of the most dangerous parts of the mountain, which may have increased the magical qualities of the axes' (Peterson & Pollard 2004; Bradley & Edmonds 1993: 132–134). Similarly, John Creighton (2000: 37–40) has put forward a persuasive argument that some high-denomination Iron Age British coins were carefully and deliberately manufactured so as to produce objects of a particularly intense yellow-gold, in order to enhance their empowerment in politico-religious terms. These are just two of numerous archaeological testaments to the power of materials. Anthropological exemplars are equally numerous and are explored in the pages that follow in the context of specific materials chosen for image-making. In these introductory words, it is worth mentioning the differing symbolic powers respectively accorded wood and stone among Malagasy communities, which are intimately associated with the properties of these materials (Parker Pearson & Ramilisonina 1998: 308–326; Bloch 1995: 212–215; Bloch 1998: 42–43). For the Kongo people of Cabinda, Angola, images are made of materials that are themselves empowering agents: wood, iron, cloth and pigments (Herreman 2000: 46, no. 28).

Touching wood

A grove there was, untouched by men's hands from ancient times, whose interlacing boughs enclosed a space of darkness and cold shade, and banished the sunlight far above. No rural Pan dwelt there, no Silvanus, ruler of the woods, no Nymphs; but gods were worshipped there with savage rites, the altars were heaped with hideous offerings, and every tree was sprinkled

with human gore. On those boughs … birds feared to perch; in those coverts wild beasts would not lie down; no wind ever bore down upon that wood, nor thunderbolt hurled from black clouds; the trees, even when they spread their leaves to no breeze, rustled of themselves. Water, also, fell there in abundance from dark springs. The images of the gods, grim and rude, were uncouth blocks formed of felled tree trunks. Their mere antiquity and the ghastly hue of their rotten timber struck terror; men feel less awe of deities worshipped under familiar forms; so much does it increase their sense of fear not to know the gods whom they dread. … Legend also told that often the subterranean hollows quaked and bellowed, that yew-trees fell down and rose again, that the glare of conflagration came from trees that were not on fire, and that serpents twined and glided around the stems. The people never resorted there to worship at close quarters, but left the place to the gods. For, when the sun is in mid-heaven or dark night fills the sky, the priest himself dreads their approach and fears to surprise the lord of the grove.

(Lucan, *Pharsalia* III: 399–453; trans. Duff 1977: 142–147)

Thus the poet Lucan (in his epic poem narrating the progress of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, at the end of the Roman Republic) describes the encounter between Caesar's army and a Gaulish sacred grove outside Marseille in 48 BC. The powerful Gallo-Greek city in Provence, founded by the Phocaeans in 600 BC, had the misfortune (or bad judgement) to back Pompey's losing side in the war and was attacked by Caesar who, finding the holy forest in the way of his siegeworks, razed it to the ground, though its numinosity so affected even his legionaries that they hung back from destroying it (Aldhouse-Green 2000: 5). The passage contains several comments of interest for the association between images and materiality, including references to stylistic treatment (albeit described through the prism of Classical prejudice against non-realism), age, decay, transformation and anonymity (Figure 4.1). Lucan arguably intends his readers to infer that the older they were the greater the potency with which the Massiliote images were invested.

The significance of relationships between longevity and the symbolic potency of images is important in many religions: it is well illustrated in the sacred space of living Hindu communities, the focus of which may be an image a thousand years old (Chakrabarti 2001: 53). They may have represented ancestral deities, whose longevity served to define and reinforce the identity of both the living and the dead. Furthermore, their nameless obscurity contributed to their danger and the fleshlike degeneration of their wood to a sense of horror, mortality and impurity; indeed the smell of the rotting timber could be perceived as akin to that of a decaying corpse which, though undoubtedly finished as an active living thing, is still (in many traditions)

Figure 4.1 Reconstruction of a sacred grove containing wooden images. With permission of the National Museum of Wales. Illustration by Tony Daly.

regarded as still retaining part of the original life-force (Davies 2002: 6), perhaps seen as reflected in the very movement of matter and the leaching of fluids that decomposition involves. The Siberian Khanty tradition, wherein the production, use and deposition of a wooden figure closely tracks the biography of its female owner (Jordan 2001: 96, and see Chapter 1), demonstrates the perceived synergy between flesh and wood. Indeed, it is possible to interpret the reference to human sacrifice in Lucan's passage as specifically associated with offering to the grove-images themselves. If the Roman poet's narrative is to be given credence, rather than dismissed as mere poetic rhetoric designed to stress the barbarism of the southern Gauls, it is not difficult to understand the reluctance of Caesar's legionaries to commit sacrilege against this hallowed place: Romans were used to familiar gods to whom they could give a name; Italians, as well as Gauls and Britons, had sacred groves (Cicero, *de Legibus* II: 8); we should remember, too, that Caesar's army contained Gallic recruits, notably from Burgundian tribes such as the Aedui, for whom *luci consecrati* would speak with emphatic resonance.

The Ballachulish woman and her fellows

The coward, the shirker and the disreputable of body are drowned in miry swamps under a cover of wattled hurdles.
(Tacitus, *Germania* XII; trans. Mattingly 1948: 110–111)

At the beginning of the British Iron Age (728–524 calibrated radiocarbon years BC), a religious ceremony was enacted in western Scotland, at Ballachulish

in Argyll, its apparent culmination involving the deliberate deposition of a large wooden figurine in a bog-pool, weighted down with hurdles (Figure 4.2). The image is of a naked female, her eyes made of inlaid quartz pebbles, with exaggerated genitals and small breasts, carved of alder (Coles 1998: 163–173). When found, certain features, now indistinct, were visible: she carried a wand-like object in her left hand and wore some kind of band or strap across her chest from her right shoulder (van der Sanden & Capelle 2001: caption to fig. 91). Her interest lies partly in her affiliation to a small but significant and well-dated group of wooden statuettes from the British and north European Iron Age that have survived in watery contexts, such as marshes, pools, rivers and intertidal zones (B. Coles 1990: 315–333; van der Sanden & Capelle 2001). Some figures are specifically associated with trackways across swampy ground: a track across the central Irish boglands at Corlea in Co. Longford had a curious – half-human, half-animal – statuette made from ash incorporated into its sub-structure (Raftery 1996: figs. 382–4, pl. 44). More significant still are two large schematic oak figurines (Figure 4.3), respectively identified as 'male' and 'female', each terminating in a tapering tenon and erected in the Wittemoor bog at Oldenburg, North Germany (see Chapter 3), in the third century BC, one each side of a wooden trackway

Figure 4.2 The woman carved from alder, found as a watery deposit at Ballachulish, Argyll. © Paul Jenkins.
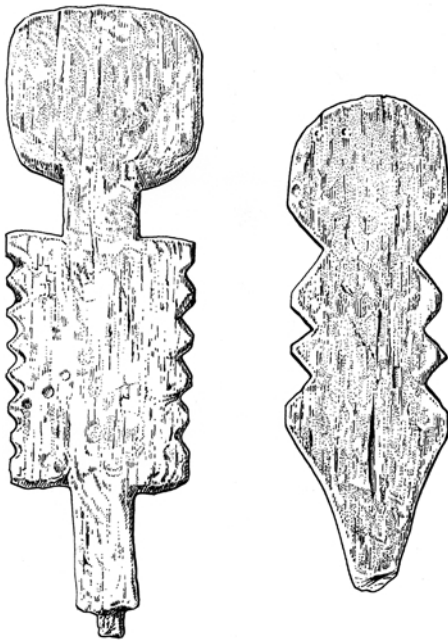
91

Figure 4.3 Two wooden figures, male and female, from either side of a trackway at Oldenburg, Germany. © Anne Leaver.

across the marsh, at the exact point where it crossed a watercourse fed by the river Hunte, the most hazardous part of the path (Hayen 1987: 117–136). The pair of figures perhaps represented spirits warning and protecting people against the danger. But that was not the final event in the biographies of the Oldenburg figures: later on, someone deliberately destroyed the crossing-place, pulling down the images from their tenon-supports and laying them flat on the ground before covering them with a layer of peat: the incident may have been perpetrated by the users of the track, perhaps in response to a disaster befalling one of their number, by enemies of the road-builders seeking to slight both the path and its guardian spirits, or for some other reason. Gendered pairs of wooden figures, associated with special watery places, are known elsewhere in North Germany: on a tiny islet at Braak-Parret in Schleswig-Holstein two tall thin images, very explicitly male and female (see Chapter 3: Figure 3.3), were set up at a spot used for repeated fire-building between 400 and 200 BC (van der Sanden & Capelle 2001: 17).

Elements in the artistic treatment of the image from Ballachulish indicate deliberate intention to manipulate and alter human 'realities', a feature found in many wooden figurines (see below). But more importantly still, her archaeological context (Megaw & Simpson 1979: 477) suggests that she was used

as a 'surrogate' for a human sacrificial victim, for the pinning down of the image replicates exactly the treatment accorded a number of northern European Iron Age 'bog-bodies', some – at any rate – of whom are best understood as victims of ritualized murder (Aldhouse-Green 2001a). Several 'hurdled' Iron Age figures, many of them female, have been identified in marshy contexts in north-west Europe, including the fit, well-nourished woman ('Gunhild') from the Haraldskaer bog in central Jutland, strangled in *c.* 490 BC, when she was fifty years old, her body weighted down with heavy branches, one driven with considerable force through her knee-joint (Hvass 1998). Both men and women from boggy contexts at Windeby in Schleswig-Holstein were similarly treated (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: figs. 50, 64, 65; Glob 1969: 114–116; van der Sanden 1996: 98, 112; Gebühr 2002), but the treatment of one Windeby victim, a young adolescent girl, killed in the early first millennium AD, bears an even greater resemblance to that of the Ballachulish wooden figure, in so far as she also holds some kind of ceremonial (?) staff or wand. The idea of figurines as surrogate humans is, perhaps, very old indeed: a Gravettian female stone figurine, about 27,000 years old, from Dolni Vestoniče in the Czech Republic, was stabbed over and over again before being placed near a male burial (Pettitt 2002: 13).

Tacitus's testimony (above) warns against the dogmatic identification of hurdled bog-bodies as undeniable sacrificial victims. But there seems little doubt that such killings were both deliberate and highly ritualized, whatever the primary motive may have been. Some victims – notably the men from Tollund and Grauballe in Jutland – had consumed hallucinogenic substances such as ergot, and Fischer (1999: 93–97; n.d.: 7) notes that the Tollund man's body was composed, as if for peaceful sleep, after he was hanged and placed in the marsh, as though to conclude a sacred act. Many human bog-bodies were naked when they were cast into the swamp; indeed, the Haraldskaer woman's clothes were found near the body, clearly having been consigned to the marsh when she herself was interred (Hvass 1998); the Ballachulish wooden image was likewise depicted naked. Nakedness may be charged with profound symbolism associated, perhaps, with denial of individual identity, liminality (the bog and human skin both perceived as boundaries) and sacrifice (Hill 2000: 317–326; Tilley 1999: 257; Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 146). It may have been important that persons offered to the spirits had direct somatic contact with the holy place in which they were placed. Indeed, the significance of linkage between body and location may explain why some were pinned down in a specific part of the marshland.

The Windeby girl was blindfolded with a woven *sprang* or headband; this might have been either to reduce her fear when led out to be drowned or, more likely, as part of a ceremonial act: in many religious traditions, physical or symbolic blindness marks out the holy person as a seer, someone with the ability to see into other worlds (Vitebsky 1995: 19, 146). The face of another north European female bog-body, from Borremose in Denmark, was apparently

mutilated, probably post mortem. It is therefore interesting that the eyes of many Iron Age wooden figurines, including the Ballachulish woman, are singled out for idiosyncratic presentation: Bryony Coles (1990) has drawn attention to the slighting of the left side of faces, notable, for instance, on the figures from the estuarine site at Roos Carr in north-east England (Figure 4.4). The face of the Ballachulish image exhibits similar sinistral damage and the left eye is much smaller than its fellow. The purpose of such 'disfigurement', whether of a human body or of an image, must elude us, but – like nakedness – such treatment may signify the erasure of individual identity or, in the case of iconography at least, it may serve to display deliberate 'surrealism' (see Chapter 7), the manipulation of representation in seeking to appropriate an offering to another state of being, to a different cosmological spectrum. The facial asymmetry (see also Figure 7.2) may even have been to endow the image with perceived potency because of physical blemish: evidence from the Classical world bears witness to the ambivalence with which deformity and disability were regarded in Mediterranean antiquity (Garland 1995), and scrutiny of many north European Iron Age victims of ritual murder (Aldhouse-Green 2001a) reveals repeated instances of disability.

Figure 4.4 Human image made of yew, from an estuarine context at Roos Carr, Yorkshire. © City of Hull Museums.

The similarities in treatment between wooden images, like the Ballachulish woman, and bodies that may have been victims of ritual murder lead inevitably to implications of surrogacy or substitution, a phenomenon enjoying wide currency in religious traditions of both past and present. Indeed, it is often argued that animal-sacrifice is fundamentally human-sacrifice substitution (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 47–48; Girard 1977: 10) and, in the context of human sacrifice itself, there is abundant evidence for the substitution of 'lesser' beings for others. Diodorus Siculus recounts a situation where substitution resoundingly failed for the Carthaginians in the third century BC (XX: 14.6): they blamed the siege of their city by the Syracusans on their practice of substituting low-born children for those of noble families in their habitual child-sacrifices to Kronos (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 153). Scape-goat sacrifice is a good illustration of how surrogacy worked within the framework of purification and the destruction of the one to save the many (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 144–145), whether an animal or human slave, foreigner, captive or child was selected to bear off the impurities and disease of the community (Hughes 1991: 139–165). Perhaps the best-known example of specific human/animal substitution is contained in *Genesis* (22: 10–13), in which Abraham was saved, at the last minute, from killing his son as a sacrifice to Yahweh and made a burnt offering of a ram instead.

As a vivid example of inanimate substitution, reference may usefully be made to an annual Roman ceremony in which thirty wooden puppets were thrown into the Tiber from a bridge in the city. The images were called *Argei*, for the origin of the ritual involved the sacrificial killing of Greek prisoners from Argos early in the history of Rome (Ovid, *Fasti* V: 621–634; Varro, *de Lingua Latina* VII: 44; Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities* I: 38; Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae* 272B). The Ballachulish figure, deposited in a watery place and pinned down with wooden stakes, like a real human sacrifice, is likely to have suffered a substitute 'death', which may or may not have been perceived to be as efficacious as a genuine killing. What may have been an essentially similar practice has been identified elsewhere in Iron Age Scotland: the boar's head terminal of a *carnyx* or war-trumpet from a watery deposit at Deskford (Moray) has long been known (Green 1996: fig. 64), but recent re-analysis of the piece (Hunter 2001: 77–108) indicates that the trumpet-mouth was deliberately 'decapitated' from its shaft, as if in imitation of a killing before it was ritually deposited as a votive offering in a wood-girt swamp.

Living images

Lucan (above) reminds us of the transient, mutable nature of wooden images; in dry contexts they will change colour, dry out and decay, like the flesh-bodies they represent. This leads to discussion of why wood may have been chosen to make Iron Age figurines and to a realization that it is unlikely to have been used merely because people had no access to stone, or lacked the skill

to carve it. The essentially ephemeral properties of wood may have been important factors in iconographic choice, together with the acknowledgement that, when steeped in water, a wooden figure, like a human body, will be preserved rather than degrade, and its surface, like skin, is porous and permeable by liquid. In an exhibition opening at Tate Britain in September 2002, entitled *Rotting Art*, the artist Anya Gallacio showed work made out of transient organic materials, such as sugar, fruit and wood, purposely chosen to enable her exploration of change, time and physicalities (Lawson 2002). Other cognate exhibitions have displayed household refuse, again to exhibit and engage with instability and the dynamics of decay. Another factor relating to the transience of wood is that, whilst stone might be associated with permanence and remembrance, the instability of a wooden figure might conversely be bound up with forgetting, with the cancellation of memory (Küchler 1992, 1997, 2002; Forty & Küchler 2001). Indeed, the consignment of a human body or wooden image in a watery place, out of sight, might be related to rituals associated with deliberate acts of closure (Williams 2001: 20–23; M. Williams 2003). We should remember, too, that destruction could play a significance part in ritual: the great circular wooden edifice built at Navan in Co. Armagh in 95 BC was apparently deliberately set on fire as soon as it was finished (Lynn 1992: 40); and, according to Caesar (*de Bello Gallico* VI: 16) and Strabo (*Geography* IV: 4, 5), great wicker images, filled with sacrificial victims, were erected in Gaul and burnt in a spectacular holocaust.

Wood may have a much wider symbolism associated with transformation from tree to carved figure, with methods of production and with perceived properties of individual wood-species. Wooden images are special, in so far as they are produced from living trees, highly visible entities in the landscape, that were noted as changing with the seasons and as resonating with the birth, growth, florescence, decline and death of animate beings. Trees live a long time, some – such as yews and oaks – a very long time, and it would be a natural cognitive perception to associate these living monuments with the ancestors, with linkages between past, present and future, upper, middle (earthly) and underworlds. Lucan describes this kind of thinking in his vivid account of the sacred grove at Marseille:

> Legends also told that often the subterranean hollows quaked and bellowed, that yew-trees fell down and rose again. … Ash trees were felled, gnarled holm-oaks overthrown; Dodona's oak, the alder that suits the sea, the cypress that bears witness to a monarch's grief, all lost their leaves for the first time …
>
> (Lucan, *Pharsalia III*: lines 399–453; trans. Duff 1977: 146)

The poet paints a picture of a truly awesome, terrifying place, a gateway to the Otherworld, in which the trees reflect its numinosity by behaving in unearthly ways. In view of his list of trees, it is interesting that Iron Age

wooden figurines made of yew (the group from Roos Carr: Figure 4.4), alder (Ballachulish: Figure 4.2) and oak (for example at Kingsteignton in southern England and Yverdon-les-Bains, Vaud, in Switzerland) are recorded (Coles 1998: 164; Paunier & Weidmann 1992: 6, fig. 1).

The status of trees as living things is undoubtedly important in the investment of wooden images with symbolic meaning; in many traditional societies, the life within trees is transferred to the objects made from them. Indeed, the stages of transformation – the tree-felling, preparation of wood, carving and polishing – all may endow the finished product with potent symbolism in which the death of the tree and its rebirth as a boat, house or figurine in the alchemy of transformation may all serve to imbue wooden objects with sanctity and power, with a second life-force. This perception has broad resonance within pre-industrial communities: in the Trobriand Islands, the act of producing canoes from cut logs imbues them with a new and vigorous state of being; and similar attitudes to wooden objects have been identified among foresters in Japan (Rival 1998: 1–36).

Anthropological illustrations of the meaning with which wooden images may be invested have a degree of relevance to their symbolism and function in the European Iron Age: Lucan's emphasis on the fearsome appearance of decaying effigies in Provence resonates with Susanne Küchler's description of attitudes to the decomposition of wooden images among the Mamika communities of New Guinea, for whom the very process of dissolution is perceived to release the energy of their life-force (Küchler 1997: 39–60; 2002). Communities in New Ireland (New Guinea) invest considerable amounts of skill and labour in creating the wooden funerary images known as *malanggan* (Figure 4.5). The carving process, known as 'making skin', causes the image to assume the life-force of the deceased, released at death: the image is displayed for a brief period during the ceremony to honour the dead and then it has to be destroyed, with the body and its possessions (Küchler 1992: 94–112; 2002). Richard Bradley (2000: 6–7) has noted the accordance of a similarly dynamic significance to sacred wooden figurines among the Saami of northern Scandinavia in the medieval and early modern periods (again, the modern exhibitions of Gallacio and her peers are called to mind). The freeing of life-energy by cutting into wood to make images is exemplified clearly among Amerindian Taíno groups living in the Caribbean, for whom the production of a wooden carving (a *zemí*), in human or animal shape (Figure 4.6), rendered it numinous and spiritually powerful (Saunders & Gray 1996: 801–812). This sacred force resulted from the choice of tree-species (the silkwood, as the tallest tree in the forest, was particularly powerful), the manner in which the images were made, their finished form and their mode of use. Processes of production were deemed to be specially significant: the invasive techniques of cutting, excision, shaping and final polishing all served both to release and reveal the 'spirit-essence' within the living wood. The death of the tree, and the manufacture of the Taíno image,
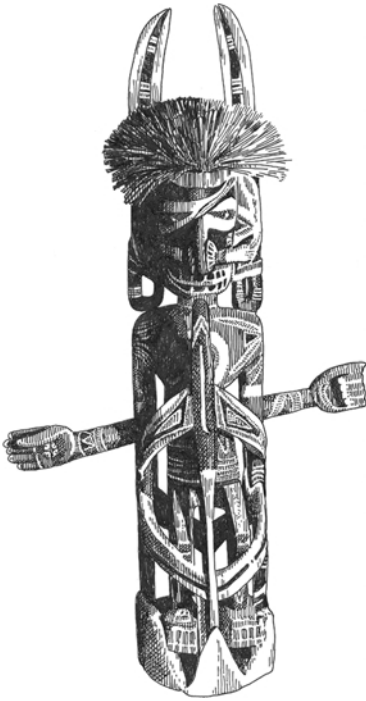
Figure 4.5 Malanggan wooden image from New Guinea. © Paul Jenkins.

activated the forces lying dormant in the wood, in a manner broadly analogous with perceptions obtaining among some Australian aboriginal communities for whom the penetration of rock-surfaces by rubbing, pecking or engraving thereby releases the life-force of the stone believed to reside in the rock-dust thereby produced (Flood 1997: 147–148).

Wood, stone and changing states of being

The perception of wood as special, as possessing spiritual power because of its transformational properties, may be explored not only in terms of internal, intrinsic meanings but also in terms of relationships and contrasts with other materials, notably stone. Indeed, within a symbolic context, it may be possible to view wood and stone as belonging to a continuum of being, a construct aptly demonstrated by work currently in progress on British Neolithic and early Bronze Age structures, which proposes that the differential choice of wood and stone for ceremonial monuments might be dictated by their respective properties of transience and permanence, and by cosmologies associated with the living and the ancestral dead (Pollard & Gillings 1998: 159; Parker Pearson & Ramilisonina 1998: 308–326; Parker Pearson 2002: 19). The search for understanding has led to analogies with the cosmological

Figure 4.6 Taíno *zemí* from Aboukir, Jamaica.
© Paul Jenkins.

framework of certain traditional communities in Madagascar for whom stone and wood are used respectively for the dead and the living: stone is employed exclusively for tombs and memorial slabs; wood is always the building-material for houses. For the Zafimaniry people of eastern Madagascar, the timber dwelling-house is a metaphor for the fragile but increasingly strong, maturing human body and its eventual enfeeblement and decay. The new house becomes increasingly stable and permanent through the consolidation of marriage and family-life; it is perceived to undergo physical changes and to acquire 'bones', through the investment of care and time given to it by those who live in it. Furthermore, the durability and empowerment of the house-timbers are enhanced by the carvings made in them, which imbue the wood, the house and its inhabitants with honour and increased status (Bloch 1995: 212–215). So within Malagasy cosmologies, a strong link obtains between grammars of symbolism and materialities, predicated upon the differential physical properties of wood and stone: wood represents the transience and dynamism of earthly existence; stone is for the ancestors, for the permanent past that acts as foundation for the less stable present.

Symbolic dichotomies between transience and permanence/wood and stone are found in other traditional communities. Recent studies of religious Hindu praxis and belief in the Kerala district of southern India indicate symbolic

tension associated with rural shrines, between the constructed temples at the centre of villages and the sacred groves or *kaavus* on their margins. The built temple is regarded as evocative of permanence, order, managed space and high-caste patronage; the *kaavu* is seen as dangerous, liminal territory, the abode of an unstable, chaotic spirit-force beyond human control (Uchiyamada 1998: 177–196), associated with worshippers from the lowest social groups, the Pulaya, and often located in *punja*: fertile, untamed wetland, deemed as powerful but capricious, situated at the margin between the known realm of the village and the uncertainties of the outer world. The dissonance between temple-space and *kaavu*-space is founded upon the association of contested physical location (central/marginal), caste (high/low) and materiality (constructed, permanent, stone temples/natural, dynamic groves). The relationship between constructed temple and *kaavu* is subject to change: a temple may be built on space cleared of *kaavu*, and a disused temple may revert to *kaavu*.

The divisions of sacred space in Kerala tradition with their contingence upon polarizations between natural *kaavu* and built temple provide a possible prism through which to approach discrete distributions of wooden and stone images at the early Gallo-Roman sanctuary of *Fontes Sequanae*, near Dijon in central Burgundy (Deyts 1983; Romeuf 1986, 2000; Aldhouse-Green 1999, 2001b). Until recently, it was thought that the differential selection of raw materials was based on chrono-cultural factors: that the wooden carvings represented the earliest phases of indigenous occupation whilst the adoption of stone reflected the choice of a later, more fully Romanized community, but the two materials are now considered to have been synchronous. Epigraphy tells us that the shrine was dedicated to the Gaulish healer-goddess Sequana, goddess of the source of the Seine, and the site is rich in human pilgrim-imagery, consisting of whole figures or of parts of the body that required a cure. The built temple was constructed on a low terraced cliff-face; at the bottom of the slope is a wooded swampy area with a pool and it was here that a large, well-preserved group of wooden images (mainly of oak heartwood) (Figure 4.7) was found in 1963; the distribution of the figures implies that they were originally set up around the pool or had been deliberately cast into the water. By contrast, the stone imagery (Figure 2.11) was located only within the internal bounded space of the sanctuary, notably clustering on the uppermost and second terraces (Aldhouse-Green 1999: 4).

Whilst it would not be surprising not to find objects of perishable wood in the comparatively dry environment of the terraces, it may be significant that no stone figures have been found in the swampy ground at the foot of the cliff, where all the wooden images were deposited. What is more, there is a marked difference in the symbolism of the two types: the vast majority of the wooden sculptures appear to represent sick pilgrims, supplicants asking the divine presence for help, but although these are also represented in the repertoire of the stone-carvers, there are two striking categories of image

Figure 4.7 Wooden figure from *Fontes Sequanae.* © Paul Jenkins.

that are confined to stone. These comprise depictions of adult 'temple-benefactors': mature men (some bearing considerable family resemblances one to the other), carrying purses of money or individual coins (op. cit.: fig. 4, pls. 8–9), and children (between about eight and thirteen years old) who wear a distinctive 'harness' device (Figure. 2.11; see Chapter 2). Such discrepant distribution may have little cult-significance but, alternatively, the representations in wood and stone may be significant, perhaps reflective of the pilgrims' altered state of being and even the attainment of some form of enlightenment or union with the spirit-ancestors (Aldhouse-Green 2001b). The concept of pilgrimage is closely linked with the physical and spiritual journey towards the divine (Coleman & Elsner 1995; Eade & Sallnow 1991; Alonso & Ribeiro 1989; Gray 1999: 101–110) and it could be that the progression of Sequana's worshippers from the holy marsh just outside the built sanctuary through the boundary into the constructed *locus consecratus* was mirrored in their depictive transformation from the instability of wood to the assured permanence of stone. The notion that devotees change their states of being as they progress through from outside to inside holy space resonates strongly with practices studied in the Hindu Indian village shrines of Khurdapur (Orissa) and Cholavandan (Tamilnadu), where the external rituals reflect transformation and possession of pilgrims from a profane to a holy

state, changes that can take place only in the empowered chaos of outside, an outside which – interestingly for this discussion – is associated with a sacred water-tank that acts as the medium of transformation. Internal temple rituals include purification, decoration of cult-images and the giving of offerings to the goddess (Foulston 2002: 162–171).

We seem to have come a long way from the Ballachulish figure, deposited in a Scottish peat-bog in the earliest phase of the Iron Age. But reference to comparative cult-practice may serve to provide a broad framework within which to approach possible interpretations of the figure, and relationships between her materiality, form and archaeological context. It is perhaps not merely a coincidence of preservation that causes Iron Age wooden figures to occur in aquatic contexts; indeed, the majority come not just from watery places but specifically from locations identifiable as liminal, marginal places between land and water: intertidal zones, estuaries and marshes. The Ballachulish image comes from a swamp that was not far from the ancient seashore. If the hypothesis that she represents a surrogate sacrificial victim has validity, then, on analogy with other ritual practice noted here, we can begin to construct a picture of the circumstances that led to her deposition and pegging down in a remote marsh in Argyll. Her woodenness may have been vital to the biography of the image: the paradox of organic dissolution and water-preservation perhaps empowered the image, gave it a life-force and an energy that endowed it with an effective voice in its community's desire to contact the spirit-world.

Prayers to broken stone

… Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert … Near them, on the sand,
Half-sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
(From *Ozymandias*, by Shelley)

If the choice of wood for making images was, at least in part, dictated by the intrinsic properties of wood (including decay), or symbolisms related to wood-species, then similar approaches may be applied to more durable inorganic materials, such as stone, metal or clay. Stone is different from other inert media for it involves less in the way of change from raw material to finished product. Although it weathers out of doors, stone has a permanency and stability that may charge stone images with specific meaning (Figure 2.6). Different lithic materials possess different properties related to appearance (smoothness, colour, brilliance, inclusions), scales of hardness, ease or difficulty of working, quarry-context, and even the sound of the stone itself may

have carried symbolic significance (Watson 2001: 179–192); indeed different techniques of fashioning stone images may have been invested with meaning: hammering and pecking are noisy, while painting is silent. In regions where good stone is scarce, the effort required to obtain and transport it may carry significance that is transferred to the object from which it is made. Techniques of image-production also vary considerably, and may include pecking, incision or excision, hammering and polishing, with the use of both crude and refined tools. The choice of quarry may be significant: we have seen this already in the brief allusion (above) to Neolithic stone-axe production. Choices pertaining to local or distant quarry-sites, the use of stray stones or boulders, ease or difficulty of access and the attraction of particularly numinous places in the landscape may all feed into a grammar of meaning with which an image may be imbued. Additionally, there may have been perceptions about the situation of an image within a block of stone: for instance, it might be thought that, by his or her actions, the stonemason was releasing an image already residing within the rock. Having recently watched a sculptor at work, it is easy for me to appreciate the sense of magic that might accompany the almost miraculous transformation of a lump of stone to the image of a god.

Colour and context: white images in dark places

Most stone images from Iron Age and Roman Britain and Europe are made from limestone, sandstone or, more rarely, from granite; an interesting, though under-researched minority are of chalk, and it is possible that this medium was deliberately selected for its relative softness and, more importantly, for its colour which, when fresh, would be a brilliant white. The influence of colour-properties in stone-selection has been noted in earlier prehistoric contexts: David Trevarthen (2000: 295–315) has studied the colour-contrasts of the megalithic funerary monuments at Balnuaran of Clava in north-east Scotland, suggesting that black, red and white rocks were deliberately selected and situated in the cairns for their symbolic properties and their association with solar orientation. Frances Lynch (1998: 62–68; 2002) draws attention to the issue of colour-coding in Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments, citing, for instance, the retaining wall at Newgrange, carefully built of white quartz and black granodiorite to achieve a dramatic, speckled effect. Tim Darvill (2002: 73–92), too, comments on the symbolic effects of using quartz in Neolithic monuments. In his discussions of Bronze Age Scandinavian rock art, John Coles (2000: 46, pl. 55) notes the apparent significance for the artist of quartz veins, which appear to attract particular attention; and according to Chris Scarre (2001: 18), the luminescence of quartz seems to have been a persistently important expression of shamanistic power. In discussing prehistoric monuments built of chalk, such as barrows and linear earthworks, Lynch (op. cit.) comments that, when new, these

shimmering banks and mounds would form dramatic foci within the green landscape. Similarly vivid colour contrasts may have been intended in certain Iron Age burials too: the body of the girl ritually deposited in a peat-bog at Windeby in Schleswig-Holstein (Gebühr 1979, 2002), lying on a carpet of flowers, had been covered with birch-branches, which would have gleamed white in the sombre darkness of the bogscape for a while after the event.

Iron Age and Romano-British chalk figurines are interesting both in terms of chosen medium and for their archaeological context. The Battersea find (Figure 4.8), made in 1993, comprises a miniature head, found on the inter-tidal Thames foreshore, though the antiquity of its provenance is called into question by the distinct possibility that it may have been brought in during comparatively recent dredging operations from further downstream (Cotton 1996: 85, 94). The image from Deal (Figure 4.9) is a figurine from an under-ground pit-chamber (Parfitt & Green 1987: 295). The Battersea head is dis-tinctive in its small size (64 mm high) and seems to have resulted from the exploitation of one of the water-rolled chalk pebbles local to the river there. It is a *tête coupée*, complete in itself rather than broken from a statuette, and 'the carving has been confidently and boldly executed in low relief by scor-ing into a carefully prepared flat surface of the nodule with a sharp, pre-sumably metal, blade. This has left traces of cut marks – particularly around the eyes, below the nose and on the profile of the left cheek' (Cotton 1996: 85, fig. 10.2). The artist has fully utilized the relative softness of the chalk to

Figure 4.8 Chalk head from Battersea, London. © Museum of London.

Figure 4.9 Chalk figurine from Deal, Kent © Nick Griffiths.

produce schematic but deeply incised, definite features, the drilled eyes serving to hold the viewer's attention and the modelling of the cheeks and chin careful and assured. The face bears a striking resemblance to other British images of Iron Age or Roman date, notably the relief-carved stone head from Carmarthen (Green 1986: fig. 12) and that of a stone statue found at Redruth in Cornwall (Green 1976: pl. XXXd).

In the early 1980s, the Dover Archaeological Group excavated a series of ditches, postholes and pits at Upper Deal in East Kent, presumed to reflect the presence of a native Cantiacan farmstead, not far from the Mill Hill site that produced later Iron Age burials, including the rich grave of a young man interred with his intricately decorated sword and shield in the second century BC, wearing a ceremonial headband (Parfitt 1995). One of the Upper Deal pits contained what the excavators describe as a rock-cut shaft, 2.50 m deep, giving onto a small subterranean chamber whose fill contained Roman pottery of late first to early second century AD date and, 0.40 m from the chamber-floor, a small chalk figurine 188 mm high (Figure 4.9). Its base is not flat but sloping and apparently corresponds to the floor of a small niche let into the chamber-wall near its roof, as if designed to stand there. The figure takes reductionism to an extreme: only the face has any detail and, like the Battersea head, is carved with deep, sure strokes to produce powerful linear features and deep-set eyes;

the sculptor dished out the cheeks in order to give three-dimensionality to the nose; the face is outlined as if to give the appearance of a hood. The Deal figurine is one of a small but distinctive group of chalk figures from eastern Britain found in underground contexts, including deposition in pits at Great Thurlow in Suffolk (Fox 1911: 279–321) and Kelvedon, Essex (Parfitt & Green 1987: 298; Eddy *in litt.* 1981), the latter providing a close parallel with the Deal figure in so far as it is of similarly stylized form, and comes from a well, filled in during the second century AD, where it apparently stood in a niche.

The most important assemblage of chalk figurines from Britain is a group, probably dating to the middle Iron Age, from East Yorkshire (Figure 4.10), the largest cluster coming from Garton Slack (Stead 1988: 9–29; Brewster 1975: 104–116; 1980). Their stylistic treatment bears a striking resemblance to that of the Deal figure, particularly in the delineations of the face, begging questions – perhaps – about the latter's date (perhaps the Deal image was already of some antiquity when it was finally deposited in the shaft). Although many of the Yorkshire figures have no archaeological context, the deposition of some may be significant: they were found in ditches and house-floors and one turned up as a residual piece in a Roman well. Brewster (1975) and Stead (1988) took particular note of the apparently deliberate damage done to certain of the figures: some were decapitated, others marked with deep and
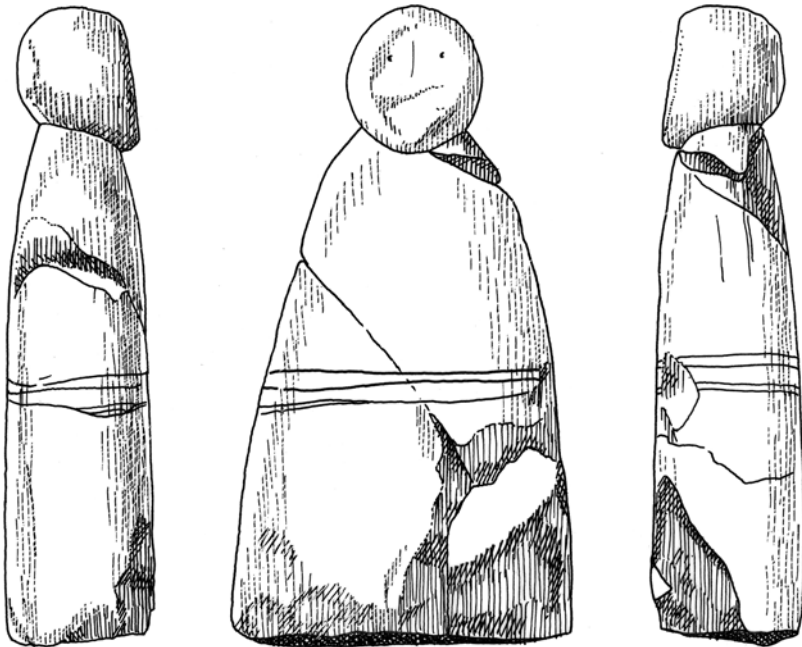

Figure 4.10 Chalk figurine from Garton Slack, Yorkshire. © Paul Jenkins.

repeated scratches, such disfigurement being relatively easy to achieve in chalk. It is almost as though, like the Ballachulish wooden statuette, these chalk images were subjected to violent treatment, like many human sacrificial victims (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 50–56). It may be that the cut-marks are intended to show that the clothing was itself being deliberately rent: there are analogies in the repeated votive bog-deposition of material over the first half of the first millennium AD at Thorsberg in northern Schleswig-Holstein, where the garments of high-status individuals exhibit signs of hacking, interpreted as deliberate destruction of the clothes just before they were placed in the marsh (Hägg 2001: 28–29).

The context, the softness of material and the colour of chalk figures may all relate to their symbolism. The exact provenance of the Battersea head is uncertain but it may well have been deposited in a riverine or shore-line context, possibly even thrown into the river; the subterranean location of others is significant. It is likely that the people using the figures were making a deliberate contrast between the white colour of the chalk images and the darkness of their location, and this may constitute a quite deliberate paradox and play on colour, just as has been noted at megalithic sites like Newgrange and Balnuaran of Clava. The impact of colour on meaning has been long recognized by artists (witness the use of colour by the sculptor Anish Kapoor for his huge 'Marsyas' piece, exhibited in Tate Modern in 2002, and his comment that colour is as vivid a language as sound: BBC 2002a) and anthropologists (Turner 1966: 47–84; Portmann *et al.* 1977) as well as (more recently) by archaeologists (Jones & MacGregor 2002; Pettitt 2002; Trevarthen 2000: 295–315; Gage *et al.* 1999: 109–126), as having a bearing on past symbolic behaviours. Ancient image-making may even have involved synaesthesia, trans-sensory perception, in which two or more physical senses may have been interlocked (Saunders 2002: 218–219). At least some Iron Age chalk figurines, made to be deposited underground or in water, may have been deliberately fashioned from a gleaming white material to convey meanings, perhaps concerning light in dark places, rebirth and journeys to other worlds. They may even have signified the contrast between the whiteness of the corpse, particularly the skeleton, and the darkness of the tomb. The link between whiteness and decay is graphically described by Lucan, who refers to the Massiliote wooden images as 'rotted to whiteness' and the resultant horror of their appearance.

Transformation through fire: semiologies of iron

and there he saw a strange thing for discerning truth and falsehood, namely some iron was hallowed by the druids, and then cast into a fire until it became red, and then it was placed on the palm of the accused. Now if guilt were with him, the iron used to burn him. But it did him no harm unless he were guilty.

(Stokes 1891: 185–229; Scott 1990: 186)

It was not easy to produce figural images of iron in Iron Age and Roman Europe. The metal had to be wrought, not cast, and each object had to be forged: hammered into shape with hard tools and fire. So, unlike a copper-alloy tool or image, each iron spear, sword, knife or (rare) image was an individually crafted 'one-off'. The intricacies of detail required in the production of imagery would have stretched the blacksmith's skill to the limits and the choice of such an intractable medium for iconographic representation leads to consideration of whether specific factors may have been brought into play, perhaps associated with the particular meaning of such objects. It is possible that medium and method of manufacture contributed to the symbolic investment with which the image was endowed, and in endeavouring to understand how this may have worked, it is useful to explore questions of linkage between metal, production and meaning, with reference to a unique and visually powerful artefact, the decorative iron fire-dog from Capel Garmon in North Wales (Savory 1976: 43, pl. VIa) (Figure 4.11).

Iron fire-dogs, sometimes in pairs, are recorded in late pre-Roman British and Gaulish contexts. Most are comparatively 'simple' (iconographically speaking) items of hearth-furniture, like those from funerary contexts at Welwyn and

Figure 4.11 Iron fire-dog from a watery deposit at Capel Garmon, North Wales. © National Museum of Wales.

Baldock in Hertfordshire (Stead 1996: 52–53, fig. 54), consisting of horizontal bars joining two uprights terminating in schematic horned cattle-heads. But the Capel Garmon fire-dog is different, for its animal heads are executed with consummate craftsmanship, displaying total mastery of iron and fire, particularly in the production of the highly ornate animal heads, with their slender horns and knobbed horse-manes, and the delicate curlicues below the necks. The individual nature of wrought-iron production is evident in the asymmetrical treatment of the two heads; this was not due to carelessness or incompetence but rather to a desire to use the properties of wrought metal, when handled by a master-craftsman, to show that two distinct animals are represented: one head has a protruding lower jaw, the other does not and one has a longer neck. The metalsmith clearly had a schema in his mind as he worked but employed deliberate asymmetry to 'tweak' the template of the two heads and superimpose an identity on each. He or she had to hammer the metal into intricate shapes, involving highly controlled bending techniques, welding and fine work using a punch, marks of which are visible on the faces.

In 1990, the National Museum of Wales put on an exhibition entitled *The Celts in Wales*, the centre-piece of which was a reconstructed Iron Age roundhouse and a replica of the Capel Garmon fire-dog, made by a Welsh blacksmith, David Peterson. Taking into account the tools and technologies available to the Iron Age craftsman, the management and deployment of resources required and the high level of skill clearly present in its manufacture, Peterson estimated that the piece could have taken as long as three years of an individual's working life to produce it (pers. comm.). If this is right, the fire-dog must have been invested with outstanding value and surely belonged to someone of the highest rank in his or her community. But this striking hearth-piece was deliberately taken out of circulation and 'killed' by being placed carefully on its side in a peat-bog and pinned down by a large stone at each end, though its own weight would have been sufficient to sink it below the surface of the marsh-pool. In considering the symbolic currency of the object and its images, three issues need to be addressed: its production, its intrinsic symbolism and its 'biography'.

Playing with fire: iron, cognition and cosmology

> Smiths and shamans were nurtured in the same nest, but the smith was the shaman's elder brother. He had no fear of spirits and the shaman, being the smith's junior, could not cause his death because the smith's soul was protected by fire.
>
> (Vitebsky 1995: 84)

This extract from Piers Vitebsky's *The Shaman* illustrates the veneration with which blacksmiths were regarded up until quite recently in certain

Siberian communities. A considerable body of anthropological evidence supports the notion that smithing was special, grounded in ritual and rules of conduct and highly charged with meaning and metaphor in a wide range of societies, past and present. Pre-industrial traditions within certain communities in west, central and eastern Africa serve to show how iron-production has given rise to 'webs of significance' that are to do not simply with the mastery of raw material, fire and technique but also with metonymic symbolisms, with multiple voices associated with fertility, gender and transformation. For the Benin blacksmiths of Nigeria, the physical and spiritual strength of iron empowers the ritual iron implements they produce (Rebora 1983: 27–32). Many scholars (Hingley 1997: 9–18; Buleli 1993: 468–477; Herbert 1993; Haaland *et al.* 2002: 35–54; Schmidt 1997: 209–230; Aldhouse-Green 2002: 8–19) have observed metaphoric linkages between iron-production and giving birth, with perceptions that the relationship between smith and furnace is analogous to that of union between male and female: the furnace represents the womb, the tuyère the penis, the bloom the offspring and the slag the afterbirth. Like childbirth, the extraction of iron from its ore is critical and subject to difficulties; each process has to be protected with complex rituals, and the finished iron products, especially weapons, are sometimes perceived to be closely associated with the sexual act and procreation. Among the Fur of the western Sudan, for instance (Haaland *et al.* 2002: 40), women wanting children 'are said to perform rituals at night involving smearing of butter in the slit in the stones where [iron] knives are sharpened' by men. For the Kivu of the Democratic Republic to Congo (Buleli 1993: 469), the processes of smelting and smithing are accompanied by ritual observances and rules of conduct including strict celibacy. Iron, like corn and animate beings, is perceived to have a life-cycle, the various stages in its biography being subject to ceremonies and rites of passage.

Apart from metonymic issues of life and fertility, iron production raises other important symbolic issues. Like stone-working, the smelting of iron (or any metal) ore is made possible only by removing the raw material from the landscape, by dislocating it from its context (Haaland *et al*. 2002: 36) whilst, at the same time, there continues to be a relationship between the ore and its source. Good ore-sources, like quarry-sites, may be utilized over many generations and thus connections between past and present, between ancestral memory and living community, are made and reinforced over time; iron objects, therefore, may remain rooted in their landscapes. Another notable symbolic aspect of iron-production lies in smithing praxis itself. In an important study of traditional ironworking practices among indigenous North American communities, Charles and Janet Keller (1996) explore cognitive processes associated with blacksmithing, which serve to invest their products with 'webs of significance'. In their discussion of wrought-iron, they identify a series of conceptual principles involved in the various stages of manufacture, all of which resonate with symbolic consciousness: these principles

consist of transformation, 'thinking hot' and working freehand (Keller & Keller 1996: 52–55), the entire activity involving a 'constellation' of ideas, tool-kits and raw materials. The dominant factor in all smithing processes is fire, a creative and destructive force, a quasi-living, capricious and unstable tool that must be fed, nurtured, controlled, watched, listened to and carefully monitored, if the craftsman is to be successful. The smith makes constant reference to the tried and tested methods of his or her forebears, yet operates within a context of urgency, having to respond to subtle changes in temperature and colour of both fire and metal. The smith must be highly sensitive to colour, sound and touch and be capable of immediate action in his or her 'discourse' with the furnace and its product.

In his study of colour-symbolism and metallurgy in the Americas, Nicholas Saunders (2002: 218–219) explores the perception of metals as 'sensorial stimulants'. Working in wrought-iron, the smith has to combine experience, both his or her own and that of forebears, and both visual and kinaesthetic skill, with imaginative creativity. There is a rhythm, a choreography in the smith's work within the forge, involving episodic, dialectic actions: heating, hammering, re-heating, quenching, re-hammering, etc. There are additional elements to smithing that may contribute to the wrought-iron products' investment with symbolic value, that of risk: the smith's job is dangerous, it literally involves 'playing with fire', and there is the added risk that a freehand object may 'turn out wrong', thereby negating several weeks of work. Perhaps most important of all the networks of meaning is that of transformation, the alchemic and miraculous alteration of material by the partnership of fire and human agency. No wonder that, in many traditions, smiths themselves were set apart from their communities, frequently solitary and regarded with a mixture of awe and fear, as a powerful, liminal individual, often endowed with healing skills and with closeness to the spirits (Gillies 1981: 70–85; Scott 1990). Such separation may even be attested archaeologically in Iron Age Britain, where forges have been identified on the edges of settlements (Crew 1986: 91–100).

This brief excursion into traditional forging processes provides a setting for an evaluation of the meaning with which a large, impressive artefact like the Capel Garmon fire-dog must have been imbued. Apart from issues of its production, the intrinsic features of the object and its biography both contribute to specific facets of its symbolism. The North Welsh find belongs to a group of cattle-headed fire-dogs but these heads are uniquely ornate and sophisticated examples of the type, apparently displaying hybrid creatures with bull-horns but horses' manes, perhaps in acknowledgement that the beasts possessed supernatural qualities (the great Otherworld bull that forms the centre-piece of the early historical Irish epic poem, the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, is described as having a magnificent mane: Kinsella 1969: 49–50). If composite bull-horses are depicted on the Capel Garmon piece, then the intention was perhaps to represent two animals of crucial importance in the

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late Iron Age economy and thus of symbolic value as well. But the fire-dog is also an item of hearth-furniture and, as such, carries with it the complex of meaning associated with fire, food, communal feasting and centrality within the home. Deborah Lupton (1996: 32) argues for a strong connection between collective meals (or commensality), memory – perhaps associated with the accompanying story-telling – and what she terms the 'emotional dimension of food', with all the connotations of the settlement's management of its resources, its state of war or peace and issues of ranking within the feasting context (Bott 1987: 182–204; Meigs 1995: 17–30; Arnold 1999: 71–93). What is more, the association (represented by the fire-dog) between cattle and the domestic environment is no coincidence (Parker Pearson 1999a: 53). For many Iron Age communities, the well-being of cattle would be of paramount concern, and thus clearly dominant in their symbolic thinking.

Finally, it is time to return to the context in which the Capel Garmon fire-dog was discovered: deliberately sunk in a watery place. It is possible that, like the Ballachulish wooden figure discussed earlier in this chapter, the fire-dog was treated almost like a surrogate human sacrifice, for – like bog-bodies such as the Windeby girl and pit-burials at Danebury (Cunliffe 1992: 69–83; Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 130) – the great iron hearth-piece was weighted down with stones. It is possible that such action symbolized the need for the 'sacrificed' object to remain in the sacred location in which it was placed; it could even relate to a paradox identified in the treatment of human sacrificial victims, where the deposited 'body' had to be ritually dishonoured or subject to symbolic violence (Girard 1977; Taylor 2002a: 258). Mike Parker Pearson (1999a: 53) draws attention to two Iron Age cattle-burials at Garton Slack in 'human-style graves', suggestive of 'treatment as metaphorical humans and not as funerary accompaniments', as if they, like the iron images of the bulls from Capel Garmon, were regarded as surrogates for people. The fire-dog's watery grave may carry other symbolism, too. It has been suggested to me (Stephen Foulston, pers. comm.) that the act of placement may have acted as a metaphor for the final quenching by a blacksmith. In this way, perhaps, the object itself, its production, appearance, intrinsic symbolism and its sacrificial end all blended in a powerful composition of ritual and offering. It may be that, like the late Iron Age Battersea Shield (Stead 1985: 47) and the great fourth-century AD wooden boat from Nydam in Denmark (Gebühr 2001), the Capel Garmon fire-dog was never used but was made especially for its sacrifice in a lonely marsh at the edge of the known world.

5

THINKING WITH BEASTS

> And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said. These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.
>
> (*Exodus* 32: 3-4)

The golden calves of the Old Testament are ambiguous creatures. It is clear that Aaron's 'graven image' was a symbol of Yahweh (Metzger & Coogan 1993: 257), not the representation of an animal-god, a denial of the One God, despite Yahweh's command to Moses that he should descend Mount Sinai and return to his people because they had corrupted themselves by worshipping 'a molten calf' (*Exodus* 32: 7). Aaron was the first of Israel's high priests, and his choice of image is interesting, for the Israelites were sojourning in the wilderness, far away from domestic herds, and it may be that the making of the golden calf was designed to settle the unease of the travellers, to divert and comfort them and provide a symbolic focus for their feasting. The use of the people's personal ornaments to make the image is also telling: by offering their earrings, they were engaging with the ritual, taking collective responsibility for the image's production, contributing to the sacred act initiated by their temporary spiritual leader while Moses was communing with God.

Animals and humans: synergies and separation

> Animal practices are extraordinarily powerful as a basis for creating difference and hence racialization. This is because they serve as defining moments in the social construction of the human–animal divide. While universally understood in literal terms, the divide is a shifting metaphorical line built up on the basis of human-animal interaction patterns, ideas about hierarchies of living things (both human and non–human), and the symbolic roles played by specific animals in society.
>
> (Elder *et al*. 1998: 73)

Animals are like humans but with a twist of difference that separates them unequivocally. In the words of Michael Shanks, 'animals *in themselves* are strange' (Shanks 1999: 122–123). This paradox of similarity and strangeness engenders ambiguities of attitude that cause people to treat animals in contradictory ways, with admiration and contempt, with feelings of dependency yet superiority. The ironies of farming and hunting express such ambivalence very aptly: great care is taken of domestic animals, as an economic resource; in hunter-gatherer societies, there is a persistent tradition of ritual activity involving compensation, reciprocity and acknowledgement that the spirits of wild herds must be propitiated and appeased. So, for instance, in many circumpolar reindeer-hunting communities, the paradox of hunting/herding, predation/curation in the relationship between prey and predator imposes on the latter the need for rituals to make redress (Loring 1997: 185–220; Aronsson 1991: 5). In many traditional hunter-gatherer societies – among Plains Indians, for instance – animals are perceived as useful shamanic helpers (Vitebsky 1995: 66–67) because they combine animacy with the possession of qualities – such as enhanced sight, smell, speed or precognitive powers – that are blunted or absent in humans. Based on evidence for the linked treatment of animal and human remains in Anglo-Saxon burial-rites, Howard Williams (2001: 206) argues that, in this context, beasts may have acted as metaphors for dead ancestors.

A persistent theme in many ancient religions is the concept of surrogacy, a notion based upon the common fleshly nature shared by humans and beasts but also upon recognition of difference, wherein animals were, in some instances, regarded as substitute human sacrificial victims (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 47–49). The anthropomorphizing of animals is clearly exhibited in Greek sacrificial rituals, in which the animal selected for sacral slaughter had to be seen to 'consent' to its death, by lowering its head to drink from a bowl of water offered to it just prior to its dispatch, or by shaking its head when sprinkled with liquid (Detienne 1989: 9). Only sacrificial meat was available for consumption in ancient Greece, and ritual scenes in Greek vase-painting suggest that cattle were the main victims. The flesh of animal-sacrifices was habitually boiled in cauldrons and consumed communally, often in the context of ceremonies and festivals (Green 1998d: 63–84). In her exploration of symbolisms associated with food, Deborah Lupton discusses the importance of collective consumption rituals 'as an integrative mechanism for the whole community' (Lupton 1996: 17). The meaty broth or stew produced by cooking in cauldrons may have possessed not only nourishment but also symbolism associated with warmth, well-being, comfort and reassurance (Durack 1994: 10–13). The archaeological evidence from certain sanctuaries in pre-Roman Iron Age Gaul, notably at sites like Gournay-sur-Aronde (Oise), suggests that ox-sacrifices, like those of Greece, were habitually undertaken, though there the feast-food consisted not of cattle but of young pigs and lambs (Brunaux 1988: 123; Meniel 1987: 101–143; 1992).

The centrality of animals for pre-technological societies – whether primarily hunters or farmers – is reflected in their habitual presence in iconography. For many African peoples, animal imagery is to 'educate, entertain, symbolize social status and demonstrate human dependence on animals for survival' (Smithsonian Institution 1997).

From Pamplona to Gundestrup

In July each year, the population of Pamplona, the ancient capital of Navarre, in the Spanish Pyrenees, is doubled by the throng of visitors who come to celebrate the *Sanfermines*, the festival of San Fermin (Winston 2002). The highlight of the week is the *encierro*, the bull-run, which takes place early in the morning, when the bulls chosen for the evening bullfights are freed to charge through the town on a controlled route 800 metres long to the bull-ring, accompanied by young men dressed up in white and red costumes. The aim for each human bull-runner is to get as close as possible to the great beasts, the whole point of the exercise being the element of high personal risk run by the participants from the hooves and horns of the hurtling bulls.

The significance of the Pamplona *encierro* lies in the deliberately danger-ous intimacy between the bulls and the youths who run with them. For the duration of the run, there is complete synergy between male animals and humans, both at the peak of fitness and condition and each at risk from the other: the boys are vulnerable to the massive creatures as they dash through the town, but the bulls will (usually) be conquered in the evening bullfight. In the *encierro*, the beasts take centre-stage; they provide the thrill, the the-atre and the adrenalin-rush to participants and spectators alike. Later, in the bullring, it is the glittering matador who holds the crowd's attention; it is his skill, his performance that is the focus for the display, and his ability to draw the bull's blood and overcome the awesome strength of his adversary, in a confrontation that appears to present an equality between the protagonists. Both bulls and bullfighters are fêted heroes, set apart from the everyday world, pampered and sent out to sacrifice or be sacrificed for the delectation of the masses.

The 'verracos' of Iron Age Iberia

The Pamplona festival and the whole Hispanic bull-fighting tradition are hinged on the ambiguous status of the bull and the intrusion of wildness into the safely ordered world of humans: cattle are domestic animals but uncas-trated male cattle are dangerous and exhibit all the traits of wild, hunted beasts such as bears, wild boars and wolves. The perception of bulls (and boars) as liminal creatures in Iron Age Iberia may be indicated by the context of some monumental zoomorphic images (Figure 5.1) found in the Meseta region, known as *verracos* (Alvárez-Sanchis 1994: 402–416; 1999). Made of

Figure 5.1 Stone *verraco* from Ávila, Spain. © author.

granite and nearly life-size, these animal-sculptures, produced from the fourth century BC until early in the Roman period, were 'visual points of reference in the landscape' (Alvárez-Sanchis 1999: 342). The carvings occur in groups: more than forty are recorded from around Ávila alone, and they were clearly intended to be highly visible from long distances. Their spatial distribution is significant, for they appear to be associated with territorial boundaries and land-divisions and as deliberate indicators of border regions between wild and cultivable land, as markers for specific resources, like the presence of water and good pasture. Although the *verracos* were first produced and used by Iron Age communities, it is significant that the tradition continued seam-lessly into the Roman period; indeed, it has been suggested (Alvárez-Sanchis 1994: 403) that the continuity of production specifically reflected retrospec-tive ideologies and symbolized linkages with pre-Roman indigenous tradition in a manner that served to reinforce and reassert local identities and social organization. The presence of Latin inscriptions on some of the carved an-imals indicates that they acted as funerary monuments (op. cit.: 406), perhaps as a secondary mode of use. The *verracos* probably signified an intricate web of economic, social, ideological and religious tradition. They functioned as visible messages in the landscape, communicating with communities and making statements about belonging, exclusion and marginalities of land-use. The images served to make statements about polarities, opposites and bound-aries, and it is possible that such discourse was intimately associated with the

representations themselves, for both bulls and boars/pigs are liminal crea-
tures, straddling the ordered world of farming and the chaos of wilderness.

Sacrificial images: the wild bulls of Gundestrup

> You are a bull I see leading me forward now; A pair of horns
> seems to have grown upon your head. Were you a beast before?
> You have become a bull.
>
> (Euripides, *The Bacchae*; trans. Vellacott 1973: 225)

The great silver-gilt cauldron found in 1891 in a Jutland peat-bog at
Gundestrup is one of the best-known, yet most controversial, pieces of
European Iron Age ritual regalia (Figure 5.2). Before its deposition, it had
been dismantled into its thirteen constituent plates and it was then carefully
placed on a dry islet surrounded by marsh (Kaul 1991). The uniqueness of
the vessel lies in its rich iconography, the work of at least five silversmiths:
the five inner and seven outer plates plus the base-plate are covered with fig-
ural images that probably once told a complicated mythic narrative. The caul-
dron was undoubtedly manufactured in south-east Europe, probably in
Thrace during the second or first century BC. Its toreutic imagery contains
influences from both western European traditions and motifs that had their
genesis on or east of the Black Sea littoral (Taylor 1992: 66–71). How the
piece came to be buried in a Danish swamp will never be fully understood,
but it may have been commissioned by a ruler or priestly guild in central

Figure 5.2 The Gundestrup cauldron. © Paul Jenkins.

Europe or even Gaul and was then, perhaps, looted by Cimbrian raiders from the north.

Two plates on the cauldron depict images of bulls: the base-plate (Figure 5.3) and one of the inner panels (Figure 5.4). The former had a life before its inclusion as part of the cult-vessel, for it consists of a re-used *phalera* (a decorative harness-disc), a good example of the manner in which objects can change function and context through time. The central figure is a great bull (or, more likely, a wild aurochs), apparently in its death-throes. Attacking it are a small anthropomorphic being, whose clearly demarcated breasts suggest it as female, and who wields a knife or sword, and a hunting-dog or wolf; beneath the bull are two other canids, one – like the woman and beast above – in relief, the second a more shadowy engraved outline of a dog lying on its back under the bull's rear hooves, as if trampled by them (the 'ghostly' image may indicate death or, perhaps, a referral to a previous episode in the narrative). The bull or aurochs itself is in high relief and the head rears out in a dramatically three-dimensional manner; it has holes for a pair of detachable horns. The beast has a raised dorsal crest and a curious leaf-like pattern engraved on its neck and shoulders; its body is surrounded by the leaves of a climbing, convolvulus-like plant (Kaul 1991: 26, fig. 20). The aggressive masculinity of the bull is indicated by its prominent testicles and the horn-sockets, yet its limp death-stance is at dramatic variance with its active attackers. The relative sizes of the victim and his antagonists are also significant,

Figure 5.3 Base-plate of the Gundestrup cauldron, depicting a dying aurochs.
© Paul Jenkins.

Figure 5.4 The triple bull plate from the Gundestrup cauldron. © Paul Jenkins.

for – like other scenes on the cauldron – the dimorphism of images appears to relate to a syntax of importance and possibly even of deliberate discrepancies between earth-world and the Otherworld. The disablement of the animal may be depicted by its passivity, the removal of its horns, the flaring nostrils and raised dorsal crest, often indicative of death-trauma (dead or spirit-animals in southern African sacred rock art, particularly eland or giraffe, are habitually drawn with crests erect to signify transition from life to spirit: Blackmore 1996). It is particularly significant that the Gundestrup creature has a zig-zag line leading from beneath its chin (Kaul 1991: fig. 21); this might simply represent a fold of skin but it may instead depict a trickle of blood or spittle. Such emission of bodily fluid may be interpreted as evidence of throat-slitting but, within certain shamanistic traditions, a flow of blood from the mouth or nose may also signify transference from mortal to spirit in shamanic trance: this phenomenon is represented in San rock art (Lewis-Williams 1981: fig. 20; 2002, 158, fig. 40). The identification of the animal as belonging to the supernatural dimension may also be suggested by the trailing plant surrounding him, a motif picked up on the other inner 'narrative' plates, albeit not so persistently. This plant-theme might be highly significant in the interpretation of the 'bull-slaying' scene, for the seeds from certain types of convolvulus have hallucinogenic properties (Paddy Coker, pers. comm.). A curious item of ritual regalia from the *oppidum* at Manching in Bavaria, dating to *c*. the third century BC, comprises a 'cult-tree', a wooden rod hung with gilded bronze leaves (Perrin 2000: 22) that closely resemble those depicted on the Gundestrup cauldron-base.

The second bull-scene on the Danish cult-vessel occurs on one of the inner plates, on which are three virtually identical beasts set in profile, one behind the other (Figure 5.4). Like the aurochs on the base-plate, the three bulls (Kaul 1991: fig. 18) are shown confronted by human and canine attackers and,

once more, the bovine victims are depicted much larger than the other figures on the plate. Three small beings in human form, wearing breeches (and possibly therefore male), each point a weapon at a bull's throat, while a hound snaps at each one's heels. Above each bull's back is a spotted, leaping quadruped of indeterminate species but perhaps a hyena (Green & Walker 1991: 26, fig. 19). In the spaces between the figures are groups of three leaves of a climbing convolvulus-like plant. It is impossible to achieve a close reading of the narrative on this or any other plate on the cauldron, but a few observations may serve to situate the panel's iconography within a broad interpretative framework. The similarities between the bull-triad plate and the imagery of the dying aurochs on the base are surely no coincidence; it may even be that a sequential relationship between the two scenes is depicted and that the basal narrative relates to a later episode than that shown in the side-panel. This notion is supported by the way that the attackers' weapons are pointed at the bulls' throats but do not touch or penetrate them. In considering the repeated bull-imagery, we should take notice of the way in which each set of creatures – human and animal – is carefully made different one from the other: the humans each have a different face and hair; the hounds, the 'hyenas' and the bulls themselves exhibit subtle differences. These figural divergences suggest either that separate groups of characters are involved or the enactment of changes through time. If it is correct to interpret the scene as that of a bull-sacrifice, then the different registers of the plate may reflect transformations rendered by the sacrificial act; it may even be that the basal hounds transmogrify into spirit-beasts by means of the bull's ritual slaughter.

One way of interpreting the narrative scenes on the Gundestrup cauldron is that the entire vessel relates the out-of-body visionary experience of a shaman under the influence of trance, wherein the entranced ritualist undergoes soul-journeys into the spirit-world (Aldhouse-Green & Aldhouse-Green 2004). The vessel may display a mythic narrative based upon a shaman's dream-experiences, similar to those recorded in traditional shamanistic societies like those of the Amazon, who habitually use tobacco as an agent in alteration of consciousness (Vitebsky 1995: 59, 75; Freedman 2002: 136–160). The animals depicted here may even be seen as shamanic helpers or maleficent demons, the henchmen of harmful spirits (one way of interpreting the creatures attacking the bulls on the cauldron is to see them as depictions of inimical spirits). An important consideration of the Gundestrup imagery is its physical context, its presence on the inside of a cauldron, a vessel in which meat was cooked for communal feasting, or for the containment of sacrificial blood: Strabo mentions the use of cauldrons for catching the blood of ritually slain prisoners-of-war by Cimbrian priestesses (*Geography* VII: 2, 3). Such a vessel might, instead, have been used for brewing psychotropic plants for use in trance: an illustration in Vitebsky's book (1995: 8–9) shows a group of Peruvian Amazon shamans sitting cross-legged around

a cauldron in which a hallucinogenic plant has been boiled and from which they drink in order to reach the spirit-world. If the Gundestrup bowl was used to cook meat, then that may relate to the bull-slaying scenes on its inner plates and the boiling of the sacrificial animal's flesh. In the mythic tradition of early Ireland, a divinatory ritual event associated with the druidic prediction of the next rightful king was known as the *tarbhfhess* (bull-sleep), in which a bull was sacrificed (Mac Cana 1983: 114–121; Watson 1981: 165–180). For early historical Irish communities, cattle were the chief signifier and measure of wealth, so the *tarbhfhess* has particular resonance in linking royal inauguration with economic status. The linkage between earthly prosperity and divinity is well illustrated by Sudanese Dinka tradition, wherein cattle are regarded as gifts from the divine forces (Lienhardt 1961; Whittle 2000: 252). Whatever the Gundestrup cauldron was used for, it must have been a potent piece of ritual paraphernalia, presumably an object jealously guarded by its clergy and, when brought out for sacrifices and festivals, its gilded surfaces would have shone brightly in sunlight or firelight, its images reflected in the liquid contained within it, making the cauldron a dramatic visual statement of authority, mythic memory and religious awe. We should remember, too, the detachable horns on the base-plate bull which, when slotted in, may have jutted up through the vessel's contents, heightening the theatricality of its appearance and making it look as though a beast resided inside.

Horns: a many-sided conversation

In West African Batammaliba village-communities, each house has a pair of horns at its entrance. Their symbolism is multi-faceted and context-dependent:

> In cosmological contexts, the horns are associated with ordered movement of the sun back and forth across the sky each day and year. On other occasions, the horns are identified as altars to Kuiye, the deity whose daily and yearly passage they mark. From the perspective of human anatomy, they suggest testicles, the source of the fertilizing sperm that, like Kuiye, is necessary for new life. In the context of the family, the horns serve as metaphors for the husband and wife and for the succession of generations. As a major designator of gender differences in game, the horns reinforce the division between house men and women. In the context of house security, the horns recall the protection and power associated with the hunted game. They are accordingly an important referent to house autonomy. In funerary contexts, in turn, the horns serve as important metaphors of death and the associated transition of the deceased elder's soul.
>
> (Paden 1992: 119, after Blier 1987: 220)

121

The passage is illuminating and serves as a warning about dogmatism in the interpretation of symbols. It also exemplifies the need to approach the ontology of symbolic motifs with flexibility: to the Batammaliba, horns are multi-lingual, although there are linkages between all the meanings set out in Blier's text. Horns, usually bull-horns, are clearly significant in western Europe, particularly in Britain and Gaul, in the later Iron Age and Roman periods. Not only do they occur – naturally – on images of cattle and goats, but the motif migrates to other, 'inappropriate' hosts, especially people, and the persistent importance of horns as referents of meaning is illustrated by their appearance in threes as well as pairs, and the presence of triple horns on anthropomorphic images, on boars and even on horses (Green 1998b) (see Chapter 6).

Although bull-horned 'human' images may be tracked all over 'barbarian' Europe, there appears to be a distinct cluster in northern Britain, roughly coinciding with the huge federated polity of the Brigantes, during the later Iron Age and Roman period. One of the most dramatic examples is the small relief plaque from the Roman fort at Maryport on the Cumberland coast (Figure 1.2), whose brief acquaintance was made in Chapter 1 (Green 1986: 114, fig. 55; Aldhouse-Green 2001d: 218, fig. 13). Made of local red sandstone, the carving is of a warrior, depicted in highly schematic form, arms outstretched, holding a spear in his right hand, a rectangular shield in his left. He is naked and ithyphallic, with diminutive legs and torso but with an enormous head topped with a pair of stumpy horns. In terms of physicality, there appears to be a repeated emphasis on phallicism: apart from the penis itself, the horns, the nose and the spear adopt virtually the same rounded phallic shape.

Simple though the Maryport figure seems at first perusal, it contains a whole package of meanings that can at least be explored, if not fully understood. There is deliberate tension in the twist of the body so that, though the posture of the legs and feet evince movement, the torso and face are turned fully to meet the gaze of the viewer, as if the figure is standing still, and in a manner that seems to challenge or confront the outside world. The warrior's eyes meet and engage with the spectator in a manner that affirms affinity and separation between them (Shanks 1999: 99). Similarly, the full frontal stance shows the phallus, perhaps again serving as a defiant, aggressive shout of masculine power. In discussing Korinthian figural vase-art, Shanks argues that the nakedness of Greek heroes may be depicted 'because war and violence are a function of the *body* of these men' (op. cit.: 117). The naked sexuality of the erect phallus may also reflect the complex blend of intimacy and excitement of close combat and analogies between the violence of war and the sexual act (particularly the rape that so often happens in the context of battle). In his study of polar bear symbolism among Inuit communities of the Canadian Arctic, Bernard d'Anglure draws attention to the paradox of the phallus in his observation that 'like most masculine tools and weapons', the penis oscillates between 'tension and relaxation, aggression and play', expansion

and shrinkage. He argues, therefore, that for the Inuit, penile symbolism provides metaphors for explorations of social negotiations, relationships and, above all, the complexities of being male (d'Anglure 1994: 187).

So where do the horns fit in to all this? A partial answer may lie in the physical appearance of horns themselves: they are long projections from the body, intruding into the external environment, like the phallus; they are paired, and may therefore suggest mirror-images or oppositions; they grow from the head and they naturally belong to animals, most often male animals. In Minoan iconography, horns represented 'a clear symbol of territorial power emanating from the centre' (d'Agata 1992: 247–255). The adoption of horns on a warrior figure may induce a family of dialogue with the consumer, giving rise to an integrated but segmented set of meanings, not least of which is the dissonance of unreality and the dimension of transformation. Aggression, violence, anarchy, sexuality, difference, paired opposition (the horns and hand-to-hand combat) and supernatural transference may all be present in this single image. Furthermore, the context of the Maryport sculpture is important, for its provenance is a Roman fort, yet its symbolism belongs to a Gallo-British tradition that perhaps consciously set itself up to contest *romanitas* by flaunting its discrepant paradigms and seeking to acknowledge separation and resistance (see Chapter 8). The horns on the warrior, along with its nakedness, its over-large head and its idiosyncratic schematism, may all have fed into this grammar of difference, of otherness that challenged Roman values and *mores* from within a Roman military installation, unless it was a mocking parody of barbarism by a Roman artist.

Imaging the wilderness

> Chetris [of central Nepal] consider wild animals – particularly those that inhabit the forest and mountains – to be pure.
>
> (Walter 2001: 111)

Many traditions perceive tension and opposition between wild and domestic animals and use such perceptions to present notions of difference: chaos and order; danger and safety; predation and curation; hunting and herding; distance and closeness. The Athenian dramatist Euripides, born in 484 BC, wrote *The Bacchae* during the last months of his life in exile in Macedonia. His native city had been at civil war with Sparta for over twenty-five years, and the atmosphere there was infused with war and the prospect of defeat. Euripides's play reflects the tensions of living in a war-zone, for it explores the bestial nature of humankind under extreme stress, when civilization is peeled back to reveal a savagery at least equal to the most dangerous of wild beasts. The drama hinges on the confrontation between nature and culture, wild and tamed, rural and urban, order and disorder, male and female, as

depicted in the clash between Dionysus, god of life, wine and the natural world, and Pentheus, king of Thebes, the champion of law and of civilized urban order. The tragedy occurs when the two worlds of *nomos* and *physis* confront each other, all norms are inverted and all meanings are contradicted and become their opposite. Euripides is using the theme of subverting realities to explore the madness to which people succumb in the situation of civil war (Ferguson 1972: 465–484; Aldhouse-Green 2003a).

The Bacchae describes the inevitable subjugation of ordered, human-made culture by nature and its leader, the epiphanized Dionysus, and a world where wilderness always triumphs over the urban environment. The nuances of relationships between *nomos* and *physis*, the paradox of mutual separation and affinity create a powerful drama where challenges, negotiations and polarized tensions are played out. The model of Euripides's powerful play provides a useful prism of antiphonal perspective through which we may view the imaging of wilderness in iconography.

Dances with wolves

> Then shall happen what seems great tidings: the wolf shall swallow the sun: and this shall seem to men a great harm. Then the other wolf shall seize the moon, and he shall also work great ruin; the stars shall vanish from the heavens … and the earth will tremble.
>
> (from *Vafþruðnismál*; Campbell 1976: 281)

So the end of the world is predicted in an early medieval Norse mythic poem compiled by Ragnorok (Davidson 1988: 190–191), perhaps a response to the catastrophes resulting from Mount Hekla's eruptions, which occur about every thirty-five years.

A gold coin issue from Cotentin in the tribal territory of the Unelli depicts, on the reverse, a curious scene in which a wolf appears to devour the sun (Duval 1987: 22–23) (Figure 5.5). The animal's head is turned back on itself, the muzzle is wide-open, both jaws touching a disc with an internal cruciform motif juxtaposed with a crescent moon; beneath the wolf's belly are an eagle and a serpent. The creature has raised hackles on its neck and back and a long tail, also with upstanding hair, curled over its back; its front left foot is raised, as if in aggression. The whole image appears to be that of rampant wildness, in which the very order of the universe is threatened. Other Gallic coins bear lupine imagery, apparently set in opposition to symbols of human-made civilization: one issue of the Petrucorii (around Périgord) (Duval 1987: 26–27) depicts a ravening wolf, crouched to spring, its jaws thrust out like those of a crocodile, its tongue extended and the ears laid back. The image is set against the backdrop of a forest scene, emphasizing the wild environment

Figure 5.5 Iron Age Breton coin with wolf and sun motif. © Paul Jenkins.

of the wolf; beneath its belly is the head of a bull or ox, perhaps a balancing signifier of cleared woodland and the imposition of agricultural order on the wilderness. A third coin-image presents another opposed theme: a large, emaciated horse gallops across the stage; beneath its belly whirls a large triskele and, perched on the horse's back, is a seated wolf, an immensely long tongue protruding from a gaping muzzle. The treatment of the horse may be significant, for its body shows a high degree of human management, with a mane dressed as if for a parade and a heavy collar indicating harness, yet its thinness gives it a look of exhaustion, as if it is literally being ridden to death. Duval (1987: 29) interprets this scene as an episode in a lost Gaulish myth, with the triskele present to symbolize movement, good luck and victory. It is unclear (as Duval himself admits) as to the relationship between the horse and the wolf and whether the latter is present in an antagonistic or protective capacity. But the attitude of the horse and its riders is highly reminiscent of other Gallic coin-pictures that display tensions between the ridden beast and those who control it: the Unelli issue depicting a horse ridden by a great bird of prey (Duval 1987: 20–21), and the persistent theme of a beast whose rider is a frenzied naked woman (op. cit.: 51–53) both, like the lupine motifs, appear to represent deliberate polarities between nature and culture, or between free Gaul and Roman imperialist colonialism. The wolf-and-bull and wolf-and-sun compositions may each be read in terms of lawlessness and chaos versus order and discipline. But opposition is dependent upon relationalities: in order for the symbolism to work, there is no necessary enmity

between the horse and its wild riders, and it may be possible to read into these complex images balance and equivalence. This kind of polarized relationship is discernible in Mycenaean imagery, where aggressive beasts, like lions and boars, were used to express different ideologies from more passive creatures (Laffineur 1992: 105–111).

The choice of wolf-motifs on Gallic coins is interesting, for wolf-imagery is otherwise not common in the European Iron Age and, when it does occur, it may be difficult to distinguish wolves from dogs: this is true of the depiction of a canid bringing down a deer on a pot of third to second century BC date from Lábatlan, Komáron, in Hungary (Green 1992: 50, fig. 3.5; Megaw & Megaw 1989: 144–145). But a stone carving of a fearsome wolf-like monster comes from Noves, near Avignon in southern Gaul: it was probably made in the third century BC, and the creature is shown in cataclysmic confrontation with humans, its great front paws clutching two severed human heads and devouring a human arm (Green 1992: 150–151, fig. 6.20; Megaw 1970: no. 76). Although wolves must regularly have been hunted, wolf-bones are comparatively seldom identified in the faunal record from Iron Age sites, though there is some evidence that wolf-teeth were sometimes used to decorate the bodies of the dead and that wolf-carcases were very occasionally ritually deposited in Gaulish sanctuaries, such as Digeon (Somme) (Meniel 1987: 101–143). The virtual absence of wolves as sacrificial deposits mirrors the marked Gallo-British preference for domestic animals as sacred offerings: very few wild animals seem to have been selected to take part in ceremonies in shrines or cemeteries, even though many animals that were chosen were not eaten but were either burnt or buried entire (Meniel 1992). The avoidance of wolves and other wild species must itself have carried significance, in terms of relationships between humans and the gods. But the imaging of wolves may have been important. 'The wolf occupies a special place in the history of human and nature relations for a number of reasons, including its skill as a predator, its social behaviour within the pack, its resemblance to "man's best friend", and its physical tenacity' (Emel 1998: 93). Observation of the corporate, disciplined and hierarchical behaviour of wolves and the manner in which the pack reinforces bonding before a hunt (Attenborough 2002: 131–135) might serve to convey vivid power-ideologies within societies who used wolf-imagery on their coins, and it is possible to see a metonymic dimension to wolf-representation, in which their qualities were explored and presented in symbolic form.

Hunting and reciprocity: motifs of masculinity

High in the Vosges mountains a Gallo-Roman sanctuary was dedicated to Mercury and to Vosegus, the eponymous spirit of the high place of sanctity (Duval 1976: 52; Linckenheld 1947) at Le Donon (Bas-Rhin). The shrine was located – probably deliberately – at the intersection of three tribal

territories: the Triboci, the Leuci and the Mediomatrici. One of the relief sculptures from Le Donon (Figure 5.6) depicts the essence of the wild land-scape, a spirit of the forest, an image of a bearded man naked except for a short wolfskin cape, the head of the animal and the coarse hair of its neck clearly visible beneath his chin (Green 1989: 102, fig. 43; Hatt 1964: 65–67, pl. 150) (highly reminiscent of the ghastly fashion accessories of fox-furs, complete with head and paws, worn round the necks of fashionable women in earlier twentieth-century western Europe). The Le Donon forester is armed with a long hunting-knife, hanging at his side, his left hand grasps some kind of hammer or chopper and a spear stands, blade upwards, at the right edge of the stone. His backdrop of foliage indicates his woodland situation, as does the open knapsack, full of nuts, pine cones and acorns, slung under his left arm. The animal-imagery of the sculpture is intense: besides his
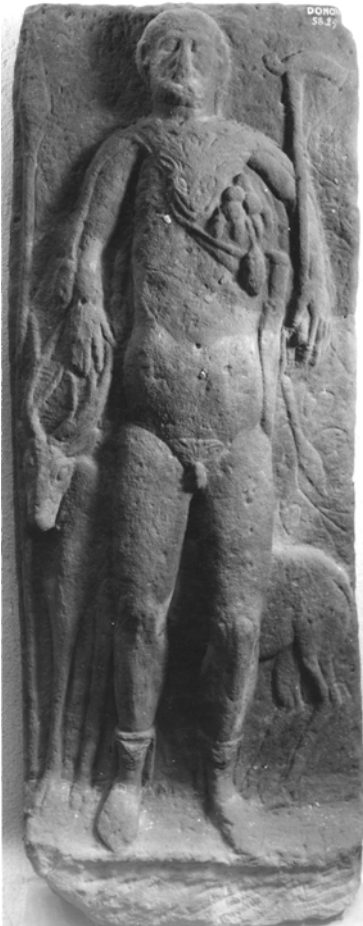
Figure 5.6 Sculpture of a hunter and stag, from the Gallo-Roman temple at Le Donon, Vosges. © Musée Archéologique de Strasbourg. Photo Musées de Strasbourg.

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wolf-cape, he wears boots decorated with the heads of small woodland creatures and, standing behind him, is a finely sculpted stag, with splendid antlers whose form and small stature suggest he is a roe deer (Cornwall 1956: 67–68, fig. 10d). There is a marked and unreal dimorphism between man and animal, even taking into account the relatively small size of roe deer: the human figure is by far the larger.

The Le Donon image (one of two similar carvings, the second extremely worn) is redolent of wild nature and, moreover, may be deliberately intended to depict seasonality and the ripe bounty of late summer. The most interesting aspect of the scene is the relationship between stag and man: the latter's status as a hunter is apparently presented by the weapons he carries, but he stands gazing at the viewer in an attitude of remote serenity, and he places his hand on the stag's antlers as if in blessing or affection. Indeed, careful scrutiny of the piece indicates that, apart from the wolf-cape and animal-adorned boots, there is no reason to identify the human figure as that of a hunter; his knife, chopper and spear may, instead, be there to protect him or his cervid companion from predating animals or maleficent spirits and to control rampant undergrowth. This notion of guardianship may be supported by a detail ignored until now, namely the presence of what appears to depict a second, broken spear emerging below the man's left hand, perhaps an indication of a battle fought and won; the shallow carving of this weapon may indicate that it belongs to an earlier episode in a mythic narrative. It may even be that the sculpture is intended to depict the paradox of predation and curation that surrounds the symbolism of deer in many traditional hunter-gatherer societies (Aronsson 1991; Jones 1998: 301–324; Loring 1997: 185–220).

Finally, it might be worth approaching the Le Donon figure in terms of shamanic representation: both his paradoxical attitude as protector and predator and his wolfskin cape might fit within such a model. In understanding how this could work, useful reference may be made to shamanic ritual and depiction among certain Amerindian communities, who – in a tradition pre-dating European colonialism – have an intense physical and symbolic relationship with the jaguar, their only significant hunting competitor. For these people, the jaguar is not dreaded because it is a wild animal but because it is a super-predatory creature: jaguars and humans are perceived as equivalent, in terms of power and skill, and killing the jaguar presents genuine risk and challenge. Amerindian shamans carry or wear jaguar-hides, and they are thereby both dangerously powerful and protective (Saunders 1994: 159–177). It is possible to make comparisons between Gallic wolves and Amerindian jaguars and to propose that the creature, together with other wild predators, such as the wild boar, possessed analogous relationships with people.

The Le Donon sculpture comes from a temple-context and, as such, is best interpreted as a sacred image, perhaps the local god of the mountain wilderness, Vosegus. His size relative to his stag implies that he is divine or at least of semi-divine, perhaps shamanic, status; his stag may also belong to the

supernatural world and may even be a spirit-helper, guiding the shaman or ritualist across the boundary between states of being. Animal helpers are well-known companions of shamans in many circumpolar (and other) cosmological traditions (Vitesbky 1995; Anisimov 1963: 84–123). The intense masculinity of the imagery is important: both 'human' and animal are very clearly male; the stag's antlers show him to be an alpha-male, in the peak of condition and ready to compete with other stags for females and the lordship of the forest. In red deer, the antlers achieve their maximum number of tines when the stag is about seven years old (Clutton-Brock & McIntyre 1999: 9). Other stag-images conform to this ideal of physical elitism: many of the male red deer depicted on the Iron Age and Roman-period rock art of Val Camonica, near Brescia in northern Italy, bear fourteen-branched antlers (Priuli 1988: 84–85), the epitome of virile fitness and the ability to rout other stags during the spring rut. The same flamboyance is depicted in the enormous antlers of two stags depicted on the Hallstatt-period bronze model 'cult-wagon' from a chieftain's tomb at Strettweg in Austria (Figure 5.7)
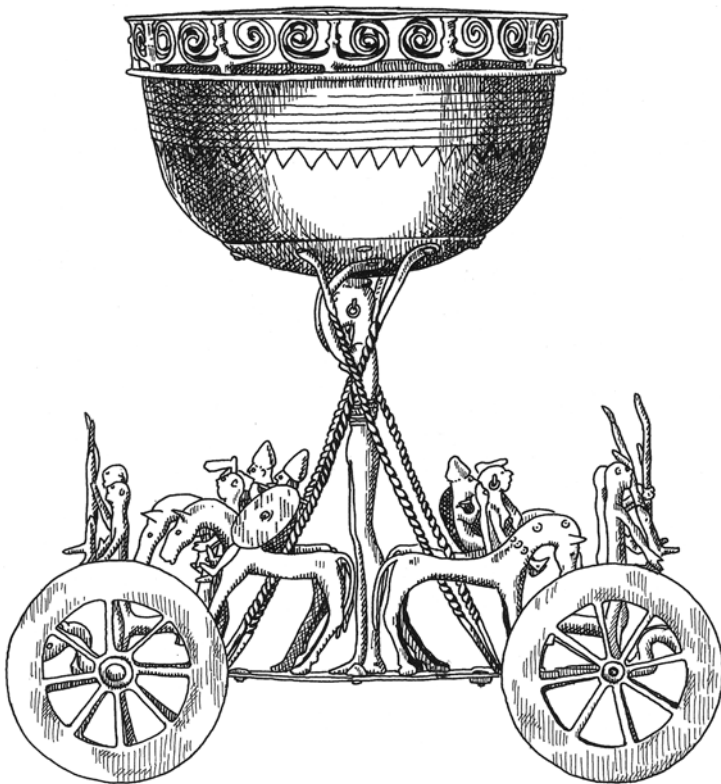
Figure 5.7 The cult-wagon from Strettweg, Austria. © Paul Jenkins.

(see also Chapter 3). These animals, each held by two people and in the company of footsoldiers and horsemen, may be sacrificial victims; the central female figure, huge in relation to the other images, may be a goddess or priestess, for she holds a great cauldron above her head (Green 1989: 137, fig. 56; Mohen *et al.* 1987: no. 27; Bonenfant & Guillaumet 1998: fig. 36). But, by contrast, a magnificent copper-alloy figurine from a conquest-period hoard of religious images found at Neuvy-en-Sullias (Loiret) depicts a young (red deer) stag, with only six branches to his antlers, and these are apparently in velvet, perhaps in itself an indicator of youth or seasonality (Pobé & Roubier 1961: no. 54; Green 1989: 136, fig. 55): red-deer antlers are shed in early spring and fully grown again by late summer, when the velvet shrinks and is cast. Antlers may act as referents in other ways, too, for their form mimics that of the great deciduous trees of their woodland habitat.

The Le Donon imagery resonates with notions of power, wilderness, hunting, curation, seasonality and masculinity. The 'human' and animal motifs show their close affinity in Gallic cosmology that develops yet further in images which present a merging of the two forms (see Chapter 6). But it is also useful to look at the Vosges symbolism in terms of other metonyms, not least that of liminality, for there is evidence that deer occupied a curious and ambiguous position in the environment, 'hovering between wild and domestic worlds and on the fringes of each' (Aldhouse-Green 2001c: 88). Agriculturists may cull deer in attempts to protect crops from grazing animals; hunters predate on deer-herds but, in traditional societies, such as those of circumpolar peoples who are dependent on reindeer or caribou, the spirits of the herds must be propitiated and respected for they possess the power to regenerate or disappear (Ingold 1986: 247). Niall Sharples (2000) has suggested that one reason why red deer attracted symbolism associated with marginality could relate to observation that the animals behave differently according to their environment: in open country they congregate more readily in socially interactive groups, while in woodland they tend to be solitary beasts. There is evidence from Iron Age Britain (and this is true also of the Neolithic) that red deer were regarded as special, perhaps because of their paradoxical relationship with people: in prehistoric Orkney and the Western Isles, they were apparently tolerated close to settlements, even though such propinquity would threaten crop-production; whilst faunal assemblages do not indicate habitual butchery and consumption of red deer on Orcadian settlements, antlers were carefully harvested, curated and ritually deposited (Sharples 2000; Parker Pearson & Sharples 1999: 21; Parker Pearson *et al*. 1999: 149–152), as if in recognition of a particular metaphoric relationship. In his work on assemblages from settlements in Iron Age Wessex, Jeremy Hill has identified differences between combs made of red-deer antler and bone: only those made of antler are decorated (Hill 1995: 102–104), again perhaps signifying specialness.

The close relationship between human and wild animal witnessed in the imagery at the Gallo-Roman sanctuary of Le Donon seems also to be true of

wild boars. The conquest-period hoard of bronze figurines from Neuvy-en-Sullias (Loiret), near Orléans, contains images of boars (Figure 5.8), a horse, a young male red deer and a range of human figures, including naked dancers of both sexes (Figure 1.7) (Benoit 1969: pls. 197, 287, 310, 311). If this assemblage is not simply a heterogeneous collection of cult-figures representing offerings at a shrine but consists rather of a cohesive, meaningfully related group, then the cache may present some kind of mythic event or ceremony in which all the creatures play an integrated and interconnected role. The great (almost life-size) boar from Neuvy, with its aggressive stance, raised dorsal ridge and curled lip, is evocative of dangerous power, and a very similar treatment is accorded other fine figurines, albeit much smaller, from Joeuvre, near Roanne (Figure 5.9), with its stylized dorsal ridge (Musée de Roanne), and Bordeaux (Figure 5.10), with its massive crest, pugnaciously outthrust muzzle, lip-curl and tusks (Chris Rudd, pers. comm.). Intimate affinity between wild boars and humans is witnessed in a range of Iron Age images from Gaul and further east, perhaps – at least in part – because of the ambiguous wild/domesticated nature of boars/pigs. Indeed, Strabo (*Geography* IV: 4, 3) gives an account of large, aggressive pigs that roamed wild, were fierce if approached and were only marginally domesticated.

But there is, in reality, a marked divergence in size and robustness between adult wild boars and domestic pigs, and it is interesting that, despite a wealth of boar- and boar-hunting imagery in Iron Age and Roman Gaul (Green 1992: 46), there is little evidence, from faunal assemblages on archaeological sites, that boars were regularly hunted for food. Classical writers repeatedly refer to wild boar hunts as sporting activity, designed to test the relative skill and
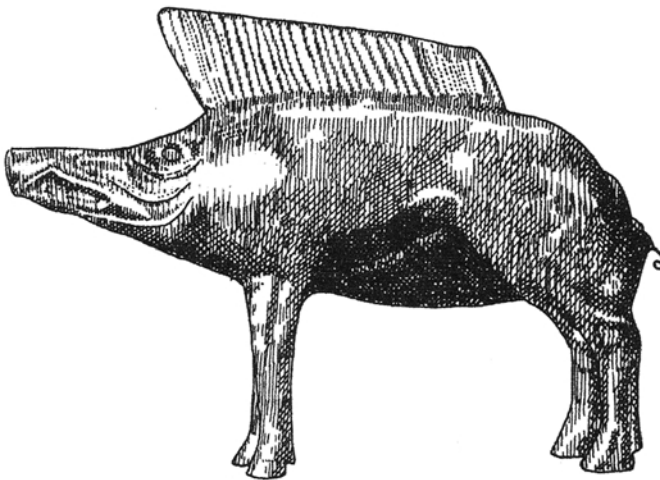
Figure 5.8 Nearly life-size bronze boar from Neuvy-en-Sullias (Loiret). © Paul Jenkins.

Figure 5.9 Bronze boar from the Iron Age *oppidum at* Joeuvre. Photo Claude Thériez, © Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie Joseph Déchelette, Roanne.

aggression of male humans and animals (Arrian, *Cynegetica* XXIII). It may be that the popularity of the boar as a symbol of war, on helmet-crests, weapons and carnyxes, may be associated with its perceived equivalence to human warriors. The almost inevitably erect, and at times highly exaggerated, dorsal bristles on European Iron Age boar-images may be linked to physical attributes

Figure 5.10 Bronze boar from Bordeaux. © Chris Rudd.

activated when the animal is in fighting mode. But scholars working on 'shamanic' imagery, in past and present traditions (Lewis-Williams 2002; Blackmore 1996; Sieveking 1993: 27–36; Dowson 1992; Creighton 2000: 44), have identified similar detail in the depiction of rock art or cave-art animals. In their work on San and Namibian rock-images, Lewis-Williams and Blackmore, respectively, are working in areas where it is possible to relate traditions to living memory: in the shamanic traditions of these communities, the habit of depicting raised dorsal ridges signifies that a dead or spirit-animal is being portrayed; this may be because of observations of the way an animal's body reacts to stress and death-trauma.

The silver coin from Esztergom, Komáron, in Hungary minted in the first century BC (Green 1992: 158, fig. 6.23; Megaw & Megaw 1989: 161, fig. 246) (Figure 5.11) may express a symbolic transformatory relationship between human and animal: the reverse depicts a human head in profile, a boar perched on top of it and a severed hand, its thumb almost touching the man's forehead (this combination of human and boar is a common theme in Iron Age coin-iconography). The head on the Esztergom coin has a large protruding eye, an open mouth and the suggestion of a band around the forehead; the stylized hair forms a mane of distinct snake-like curves and the chin shows traces of a beard; around the throat is what appears to be a thong or collar. The boar has hugely exaggerated back-bristles, longer than the thickness of the animal's body, and a great jutting snout; again its one visible eye

Figure 5.11 Coin with human head and boar motif, from Esztergom, Hungary. © Paul Jenkins.

is enormous, occupying the entire facial space. The relationship between boar and head is interesting, for the animal connects directly with the human, and is not a helmet-crest, like the little boar from Hounslow near London (Green 1992: fig. 5.12; Foster 1977: 11, fig. 5) or as depicted worn by a cavalryman in the army-scene on the Gundestrup cauldron (Kaul 1991: 23, fig. 17). John Creighton (2000: 48, fig. 2.7) has put forward a persuasive case for approaching some of the human/animal imagery on Iron Age coins in terms of altered states of consciousness and the trance-induced dream-experiences of shamans, who may enter a transgressive state and 'become' animals in their journeys to the spirit-world. In approaching interpretations to the Esztergom coin-iconography, such a view gains credibility not simply because of the raised dorsal crest of the boar or of the relationship between animal and human, but also on account of the way the human imagery is treated: the hair stands on end, like the boar's bristles; the head is shown as severed from the body; and a severed limb is depicted. There is a wide range of ethnographical data relating to the initiation rites that a novice shaman has to undergo before being admitted to the full status of a 'two-spirit' being, which may involve the experience of bodily dissolution and dismemberment before re-incorporation takes place and the ritualist is reborn (Vitebsky 1995: 60).

Transformation is perhaps also presented on the second boar/human image to be discussed, the small stone carving from Euffigneix (Haute-Marne) (Figure 5.12), dating to the second or first century BC (Green 1989: 106, fig. 46; Espérandieu 1938: no. 7702; Joffroy 1979: no. 77). As on the Esztergom coin, the iconography shows direct physical contact between beast and human: a large boar, great dorsal ridge erect, strides along the torso of an anthropomorphic figure, who wears a massive torc round his neck and has huge eyes carved along his sides; there is deliberate artistic synergy between the boar's raised bristles and the eyelashes of these great lateral eyes. Like the bronze boar-figurine from Bordeaux (above), the Euffigneix animal has marked shoulder-muscles, like those observed, for instance, on Pictish animal-symbols of the seventh century AD (Jackson 1994: fig. 8.3), endorsing the sense of power and strength suggested by the lean torso, the thrusting snout and curved tusk. The superposition of the boar on a human torso implies a particular relationship between wild beast and human, per-haps between wildness and culture; in terms of physicalities, the boar is the inferior being; the natural dimorphism between the two is not followed and the animal is diminutive, not much longer than the diameter of the torc which, like the over-large human head itself, dominates the entire sculpture. But the human face appears sketchy or unfinished (although the hair at the back is well presented), while the animal-carving is carefully and skilfully exe-cuted, as if of primary significance for the figure's overall symbolism, and the boar shows animation, as a living, moving creature, while the human image appears static, frozen and inanimate, the eyes staring unseeingly ahead. The motifs on the Euffigneix statue have much in common with those on the

Figure 5.12 The 'boar-man' from Euffigneix, Haute-Marne. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux.

Hungarian coin: the head and eyes are emphasized on each; the boars are similarly treated; the intimacy and tensions of relationship between human and animal are maintained. It may even be that the Euffigneix carving, too, reflects the trance-vision of a mind-altered state, and that the still position of the human bears witness to its transcendent mode of being. According to such a scenario, the boar might represent the animal-persona and transgressive, liminal state of a ritualist who has crossed to the spirit-world. In southern African San rock art, trance-imagery frequently takes the form of 'stacked' motifs (Lewis-Williams 2002: 158), and the superimposition of the boar on the man's body at Euffigneix bears broad comparison with such imagery, at least in terms of visual referencing.

Negotiated relationships: dogs and horses

Hell-hounds and healing guardians: from Cerberus to Nehalennia

> … yet do they [the New England Algonquians] hold the immortality of the never- ending soul, that it shall pass to the South-west Elysium … at the portal whereof they say, lies a great Dogge,

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whose churlish snarlings deny a Pax intratibus, to unworthy
intruders …

(William Wood, *New England's Prospect* 1977;
quoted in Schwartz 1997: 93)

These are the realms huge Cerberus makes ring
With his three-throated baying – a monstrous bulk
Stretched in the cave's mouth fronting them.

(Virgil, *The Aeneid* VI: lines 415–418;
trans. Rhoades 1957: 137)

The first passage is a transcription from a document dating to 1634 con-
cerning beliefs about the underworld among indigenous North American
peoples of New England; the second comes from Virgil's great epic poem,
written in praise of Rome and Augustus towards the end of the first century
BC. Both texts refer to the dog as a keeper of the Otherworld, a death-beast
guarding the threshold between the living and the dead. The symbolic associ-
ation between dogs and death is a persistent and widespread theme in the
traditional belief-systems of a huge range of past and present societies – from
the Classical world to Egypt and the ancient Near East (Brewer *et al.* 2001)
to the Eurasian steppes of Kazakhstan (Olsen 2000) and from medieval Wales
(Jones & Jones 1976: 3) and Scandinavia (Davidson 1988: 57) to indigenous
North America (Schwartz 1997: 93–124) – perhaps on account of its dual role
as hunter and scavenger. But the diversity of the dog as symbolic signifier
reflects its widely varying life-roles in the pre-industrial world: hunter, war-
rior, guardian, farming partner, healer and pariah. Observance of both its ter-
ritoriality and its social behaviour (as a loner, as part of a pack or as
companion to humans) may also have contributed to its use as 'language'
through which people could engage with issues of relationships between
individuals or communities and between sacred and profane dimensions.

Two iconographical forms on carved stones from Roman provincial
Europe serve to explore the image of the dog in relation to the human world
and the ways in which the dog's earth-world behaviour may have fed into its
symbolic syntax. In one group of altars, from the Rhône Valley, a dog is the
habitual (though not invariable) companion of a male deity, widely distributed
in Gaul, whose main attribute is a mallet or hammer set on a long, spear-like
shaft (Figure 5.13). This being is generally identified as Sucellus, a Gaulish
term meaning 'beneficent striker', a name inscribed, together with a female epi-
thet Nantosuelta, on a stone sculpture of a man and woman from Sarrebourg,
near Metz in eastern Gaul (Espérandieu 1915: no. 4566). The second group com-
prises images of a female, invariably accompanied by a hound, from two shrines
on the North Sea coast of the Netherlands, at Domburg and Colijnsplaat, dedi-
cated to a goddess named Nehalennia (Hondius-Crone 1955; van Aartsen 1971).

Figure 5.13 Relief of hammer-god with dog, Nîmes. © author.

In the Rhône Valley sculptures, the hammer-god's animal-companion varies in type from a largish hound to a small terrier-like dog (Green 1989: figs. 30–31). The 'Sucellus' figure consistently takes the form of a full-bearded mature male, grasping the shaft of his hammer in his left hand while in his right he holds a small drinking-cup; sometimes he is associated with wine-jars or barrels, and he may have a female companion by his side (op. cit.: figs. 19, 20), though – significantly perhaps – in these paired sculptures, the dog is absent. In the man-dog group, the hammer-bearer is dressed in distinctively native Gallic costume: breeches, heavy woollen tunic and cloak. No aspect of his persona is aggressive or confrontational: the hammer is not a weapon but appears far more like a badge of authority or sceptre, and its carriage in the left hand may also denote its peaceful function; the dog by his side has an intimate relationship with him, turning its head to gaze up at his face and sometimes touching him. The anthropomorphic figure stands frontally to the viewer, arms outstretched, in an open attitude of apparent benediction, and his wine-cup reflects the bounty of the Rhône vineyards and, perhaps, the ability of liquor to act as a transformatory agent. The dog appears equally at peace but, interestingly, it is sometimes three-headed (Green 1989: fig. 30), like Cerberus, canine monster-guardian of Hades, and it is possible that the

Classical motif was adopted here in Gaul to reflect an underworld aspect to the Sucellus persona. The persistent tradition of burying dogs as ritual deposits in Iron Age and Roman Gaul and Britain (Green 1992: 111–112; Grant 1991; Cunliffe 1986a: 46) may be linked to perceptions of its chthonic status. It is worth drawing attention to the function of hammers as symbols of the Otherworld and resurrection in other traditions: in Norse mythology, the hammer was used by Thor as a means of restoring his goats to life after they had been slaughtered and eaten (Davidson 1988: 46); among the Altai people of Central Asia, shamans traditionally broke the ice with hatchets at the start of winter, in order to access the spirit-world (Rozwadowski 2001: 75). The symbolism of the Gaulish hammer-god seems to evoke notions of protection, abundance and rebirth; the dog may serve to project, enhance and empower these qualities, just as in life the dog may act as a close working partner to humans. One of the functions of Thor's hammer was as a boundary-marker (Davidson 1988: 204); a feature of dog-behaviour is territoriality (Brewer 2001: 28): in ancient Mesopotamia, during the first millennium BC, dog-images were placed on boundary-stones (*kudurru*) (Clark 2001: 61). Marking and guarding territorial boundaries would have been an important aspect of land-management and agricultural prosperity. The dog's presence on the Rhône images may also have been associated with the demarcation of wild from cultivated regions.

In the second and third centuries AD, two temples were erected close to the North Sea coast of the south-west Netherlands to a local goddess, Nehalennia. One was at Domburg, on the Island of Walcheren, the other at the ancient site of Ganuenta (Colijnsplaat). Both were in estuarine situations, on land 'intersected by tidal river-channels' (Hondius-Crone 1955: 11), and the Domburg shrine may have stood in a sacred wood. Both temples were destroyed by the incursions of the sea, but a remarkable archive survives, in the hundred or so sculptured and inscribed stones that once stood in the sanctuaries. The iconography (Figure 5.14) includes a range of symbols but two are constant: the image of a seated woman, dressed in a local costume of long robe, short cape and soft hat, and a large hound (nearly always present) by her side, turning its head towards her (Green 1989: figs. 2, 3). There is sufficient uniformity in the imagery to suspect the presence of resident sculptors at each site, though care is taken to express a measure of individuality, particularly in the treatment of the dog. Dedications to Nehalennia inform us that she was venerated principally as a divine protectress of travellers making the hazardous journey across the North Sea; the iconography reveals that, overtly at least, she was a marine deity (she is often depicted with a boat or steering-oar) and a goddess of prosperity, for she always has at least one basket or bowl of fruit and sometimes two, and a cornucopiae is frequently present. Nehalennia's dog may act as a multi-dimensional signature of the many distinct yet interconnected themes associated with the goddess's persona and symbolism. The animal's presence here may serve to evoke her

Figure 5.14 Nehalennia, from Colijnsplaat, the Netherlands. © Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden.

multi-functionality: it has the mien of a benevolent guardian but it may also be associated with death and the ability to cross cosmological boundaries, just as Nehalennia's holy places were situated in marginal space, on sea-encroached land. The goddess's marine symbolism is, at one level, associated with her physical location and her worshippers, but her boat may also serve to ferry the souls of the dead across to the next world, just as Charon's barge carried souls across the Styx; accordingly, the hound may represent a spirit-animal, perhaps the access-point enabling human worshippers to encounter the goddess.

The imagery of Sucellus and Nehalennia is visually linked by the presence of the dog. The inanimate symbolism of both deities suggests a concern with well-being, plenty and transference to a life after death. The dog may present a further, related theme, that of healing, a quality widely accepted as associated with this animal: in some Nigerian traditions, dogs are symbolically linked with the care, health and cleansing of small children, for they consume their excreta and lick their anuses clean (Ojoade 1994: 215). Live dogs were kept in the grounds of the great Asklepeion at Epidaurus, for it was believed that their saliva could heal the sick pilgrims who came to pray for a cure

(Jackson 1988: 140–143; van Straten 1981: 61–151; Rouse 1902: 199–201; Jenkins 1957a: 60–76). The important late Roman temple to the British god Nodens has been identified as a healing-sanctuary largely on account of the numerous images of dogs found there (Wheeler & Wheeler 1932: 41); dog-figurines are habitual offerings at many Gallo-Roman curative thermal sanctuaries, such as Hochscheid in the Moselle Valley (Jenkins 1957a; Wightman 1970: 217, 223), and dog-sacrifices were apparently made in a healing-shrine at Vertault in Burgundy (Meniel *et al.* 1991: 268–275). Healing, like death, is a liminal state, involving transformation of being from illness to health: both involve risk both to the victim and others, through infection, contamination and pollution (Lindsay 2000: 152–173). Because of their ambivalent links with dirt and cleansing, dogs may have been associated with curative cults as a metaphor for transference, whether in the context of health, death or other forms of becoming. The animal's boundary-imagery may even contribute to its connection with Sucellus as a vintner-god, able to transform grapes into wine (and the sober to drunkenness), and with Nehalennia and the desire for safe transference across the ocean, whether in life or after death.

Riders and rodeos: horses as symbols of power, conquest and boundary

> To prevent Incitatus, his favourite horse, from growing restive Caligula always picketed the neighbourhood with troops on the day before the races, ordering them to enforce absolute silence. Incitatus owned a marble stable, an ivory stall, purple blankets, and a jewelled collar; also a house, furniture, and slaves – to provide suitable entertainment for guests whom Caligula invited in his name. It is said that he even planned to award Incitatus a consulship.
>
> (Suetonius, *Caesars*: *Caligula* 55; trans. Graves 1962: 157)

Caligula was a mad emperor and Suetonius Tranquillus a tabloid journalist, yet the relationship between Incitatus and his owner described in this passage illustrates – albeit to a lunatic extreme – the close links forged between humans and horses. In Iron Age and Roman antiquity these animals were used in hunting, warfare, transport and traction (Hyland 1990). Furthermore, maintaining a horse 'proper' (not including donkeys and mules) is an expensive business and this factor, together with their physical strength, swiftness and beauty, meant that horses were frequently regarded as symbolic motifs for statements of both earthly and cosmological power; such notions have been explored in John Creighton's study of Iron Age coins (2000: 54), where he notes the persistent link between the bright gold chosen for some issues and their imagery of horses accompanied by celestial motifs. In many Indo-European symbolic systems, the horse is especially associated with the sun

and its conveyance across the sky during the day: the superb Bronze Age model horse and solar cart carrying a great sun-disc, gilded on its 'daytime' surface, from Trundholm in Denmark, illustrates this function (Green 1991a: 65, 110–120, fig. 45). What is more, the horse's reputation for precognitive acuity has, in some societies, endowed it with the ability to see into the future (MacInnes 1989: 14), and in certain shamanistic traditions the horse enjoys a particularly high status for the speed with which it can convey the shaman between earth and spirit worlds (Rozwadowski 2001: 73). Such a vision may be presented in ancient Indian rock art: depicted on the wall of a painted cave, recently discovered deep in the jungle outside Shankargarh in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, is a scene, perhaps the work of an artist working 30,000 years ago, in which a warrior-horseman mounted on a stallion provides the centre-piece for a tableau in which numerous people on foot gather round him (Philp 2002: 18). On analogy with the portrayal of animals in southern African rock art (Blackmore 1996), the horse's bristling mane and tail may refer to the creature's identity as a spirit-helper conveying the shaman between worlds.

In the second century BC, certain men of special status were cremated and placed in cemeteries, at the great *oppidum* of Numancia in northern Spain, their calcined remains interred with curious bronze-headed 'sceptres' (Figure 5.15), eight of them in all (Martínez 1999: 7; Aldhouse-Green 2001a: col. pl. 14). The terminals of these 'ritual wands' are in the form of double horses, set back to back, with a single human rider seated in the middle of the animals' conjoined backs. Beneath each horse's front legs is a minute human severed head and larger, janiform heads support each beast's chest and join their bodies to the Y-shaped upper part of the terminal above the ferrule. The imagery of these idiosyncratic items bears a close resemblance to a series of horseman brooches from Numancia and other Celtiberian late Iron Age sites (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: fig. 39; Lorrio 1997: pls. 3, 4). It is difficult to avoid the interpretation of this imagery as connected with power, sovereignty, war and conquest. The tiny human heads trampled underfoot are highly reminiscent of power-imagery depicted in nineteenth-century Solomon Islands head-hunting iconography, which shows warriors with the minute severed heads of defeated enemies beneath their feet (King 2000a: 70). The horses on the Numancia sceptres are large and dominating, whilst the rider is diminished in comparison; the association between severed heads and horses resonates with other imagery, particularly in southern Gaul, where sanctuaries and *oppida* were embellished with images of both, and with the real skulls of young male battle-victims (Benoit 1969). The cliff-top shrine of Roquepertuse, near Marseille, was decorated with a stone frieze of horse-heads (Figure 5.16) and the uprights of the portico were inset with niches for human heads; the *oppidum* of Entremont nearby produced a carving of a horseman, a severed head suspended from his saddle (Benoit 1969: pl. XXXIII, left); and on a shrine lintel in another fortified Provençal settlement

Figure 5.15 Bronze sceptre-terminal in the form of a double horseman, with severed human heads, from Numancia, Spain. © and with kind permission of Professor Alfredo Jimeno Martínez.

at Nages was a stone frieze of alternating severed heads and galloping horses (Green 1992: 73, fig. 4.6), with riders conspicuously absent. The custom of taking heads as battle-trophies is well documented by Classical authors, particularly when chronicling the war-habits of late Iron Age Gaul (for example, Livy X: 26; Diodorus Siculus V: 29.4; Strabo IV: 4.5). Such action constitutes a consummate insult, for heads encapsulate identity and despoiling corpses in this way served to deny the victims proper burial and incorporation in the next world.

The Numancia sceptre-heads help us to explore some of the more and less obvious aspects of horses, their affinity with people and the possible application of their symbolism to wider metaphoric meaning, particularly to perceptions associated with thresholds, boundaries and polarities between wild and tamed. In the western United States, contested and negotiative relationships between men and beasts are played out in rodeo, defined as 'an integral part of traditional life for many people in the Great Plains' (Lawrence 1994: 222).

Figure 5.16 The horse-frieze from the Iron Age cliff-top shrine at Roquepertuse (Bouches-du-Rhône). © author.

In rodeo, wild horses ('broncs') are pitted against human will in a rite of combat, where culture and nature battle it out for victory; the risks of injury to the participants are considerable (Berger & Trinkaus 1995: 842). When the animal submits, the rodeo rider reaches down and bites the animal's ear, in a symbolic action of conquest, subjugation and ownership. Rodeo is a good metaphor for the oscillation of being between wild and tamed, for the process of taming is not always a one-way passage; broken horses can revert to wild and there is therefore an inherent instability of relationship that can never totally be taken for granted (Lawrence 1994).

In discussing horses at the Iron Age hillfort of Danebury in Hampshire, Barry Cunliffe and Annie Grant proposed a model according to which the horses used there were broken at need and otherwise allowed to roam free, rather in the manner of Dartmoor ponies (Cunliffe 1993: 84; Grant 1984: 102–119). Such a pattern of horse-management would lend itself to perceptions in which the horse could stand for boundaries between states. In his analysis of evidence from pit-deposits in Iron Age Wessex, Jeremy Hill (1995: 104) argued that the way horse-remains were treated suggests their presentation of oscillation between culture and nature. The symbolic use of horse-images to explore the nature of thresholds and borders and the nature of relationships between animals and people in Iron Age Europe is exemplified, perhaps, by the hybrid human/horse depictions found on coins, where centaur-like creatures, with horse-bodies and human heads, are ridden by naked women (see Chapter 6). It is worth drawing attention to a much more modern, south Welsh, folk-tradition of the Mari Lwyd (the Grey Mare), a winter festival involving a person dressed up as a horse and a poetic interchange,

the purpose of which is to gain admittance over house-thresholds. Grey is mid-way between black and white; the ceremony takes place on Twelfth Night, and undoubtedly relates to the liminal time at the turn of the year (Wood 1997: 162–182).

The notion of horses as boundary-symbols can be applied to the Numancia sceptres, particularly in their presentation of pairs and doubles; pairings may reflect perceptions of balance, opposition (Shanks 1999: 131) or double worlds. There are two horses pulling in different directions and therefore introducing iconic tension, two pairs of severed heads, one of which is janiform. The horseman is at war, itself a liminal state, involving opposition between two combatants or armies, together with the paradoxes of extreme energy and killing. The decapitated heads reflect sudden transition from life to death, an abrupt change of being. Underlying all may be the perception of horses themselves as separate from and yet inextricably bound up with humans, belonging to themselves, to nature and their own social networks in the wild and to the controlling force of culture when broken and tamed. We should not lose sight of the function of the Numancia sceptres; they were clearly meant as badges of office, for display and probably for public, processional use. We can only speculate, but their symbolism could identify them as the possessions of 'two-spirit' people, ritualists, with a foot in two worlds.

Flights of the soul

Vultures and heroes

> The Vaccaei … insult the corpses of such as die from disease as having died a cowardly and effeminate death, and dispose of them by burning; whereas those who laid down their lives in war they regard as noble, heroic and full of valour, and them they cast to the vultures, believing this bird to be sacred.
>
> (Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* X: 22; trans. Scholfield 1959: 315)

The Vaccaei were an Iron Age tribe occupying an area of north-west Iberia (Curchin 1991: map 2). Both Aelian, writing in the early third century AD, and Silius Italicus (*d.* AD 101: *Punica* III: 342–348; trans. Duff 1949: 139) refer to the custom of exposing the corpses of the heroic dead for consumption by vultures, emissaries of the sky-spirits, so that their souls would rise to heaven. The birds, then, were perceived as supernatural go-betweens, enablers of transference between worlds. To this day, vultures are a common feature of the Iberian skies, silhouetted against the bright sunlight and riding high on thermal currents. The choice of these carrion-eaters as agents for spiritual transformation seems curious, but by feeding on dead flesh, vultures are

cleansers and unwittingly protect against disease; their consumption of the noble dead may have been seen as a purer way of disposing of a corpse than allowing it to rot and as a way of transferring a human body directly to the spirit-world, without the need for its consumption by fire.

Given these literary references to vultures and dead warriors, an idiosyncratic form of Iberian imagery springs into sharp focus, namely a series of polychrome-decorated pots from Celtiberian sites such as Numancia and Tiermes, near Soria. Such ceramics are generally accepted as belonging to the second to first centuries BC, but this chronology has recently been challenged, and the latest thinking is that they may belong to the Augustan period of the first century AD (Silvia Alfayé, pers. comm.). The pots contain a range of human and animal imagery, but one particular motif is the figure of an armed man, lying on the ground, with a huge bird perched on his body (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: col. pl. 3; Martínez 1999: fig. on p. 13). It is highly tempting to link the iconography on these vessels with the allusions to heroic excarnation and the devouring of honoured dead by vultures, as described in the texts of Silius and Aelian. The precise function of these decorated pots is unclear, but they are perhaps best interpreted as functioning within the context of funerary rituals and perhaps contained offerings of wine, oil or aromatic substances with which to accompany the dead soul to the afterlife.

Birds and oracles

'If now that golden branch upon the tree
Might to our eyes in this vast grove appear!
Since all too truly spake the prophetess
Of thee, alas! Misenus.' Scarce had he
Uttered the word, when as it happed, twin doves
Under his very eyes from heaven came flying,
And light on the green sod. The mighty chief,
His mother's birds discerning, prays with joy:
'Oh! Be my guides, if any path there be,
And steer your airy course into the grove,
Where the rich bough o'ershades the fertile ground.
And our perplexity forsake not thou,
O goddess-mother.' So saying, he stops to mark
What signs they bring, their course bend whitherward.
(Virgil, *Aeneid* VI; trans. Rhoades 1957: 131)

The power of flight removes birds from the groundedness of earth, humans and other animals and gives them a special significance in terms of otherworldly symbolism. For the Greeks, the magical properties of birds, demonstrated by flight and song, included their perceived ability to metamorphose human into spirit. In Homer's epic poems, 'the epiphanies of gods occur not

as animals, but exclusively as birds' (Shanks 1999: 95). In many traditional belief-systems, shamans will undergo 'soul-flight' during trance, when they 'visit' the spirit-world, perhaps in pursuit of someone's soul, stolen by evil forces (Vitebsky 1995: 38–39, 73). Siberian Evenk shamans use wooden images of birds to protect their souls from maleficent spirits and to enable transference to the Otherworld. Some shamans dress in bird-costume or wear fringes on their coats to simulate feathers (Devlet 2001: 44): Irish medieval mythic literature alludes to 'bird-men', ritualists with prognosticatory powers, like the druid Mog Ruith, who dressed in a feather-cloak for divinatory rites (Sjöblom 1996: 233–251; Aldhouse-Green 2001d: fig. 16). In Classical and other ancient traditions, birds may be endowed with divinatory powers, helping humans to see into the future and engage with the supernatural dimension. Aeneas (above) invokes the aid of two doves belonging to his mother, the goddess Venus, in his search for the golden branch that, so the Sibyl told him, he must acquire in order to gain entrance to the world of the dead. Perhaps because of their 'voices', doves, like ravens, had a reputation for oracular powers.

A small Gallo-Roman stone relief from Moux, near Dijon (Deyts 1992: 50), depicts the figure of a mature, bearded man, clad in tunic, cloak and breeches, with a machete-like implement (for clearing undergrowth) in his left hand, a knotted staff in his right (Figure 5.17a). Beneath his left arm, he carries an open bag containing three round fruits, perhaps oak-apples (Figure 5.17b), and at his right leg sits a large dog. Perched on the man's shoulders is a pair of long-beaked birds, their large size and heavy beaks reminiscent of ravens but the length of the bill giving them a look of woodpeckers (like the pair of *pici* decorating a late Roman gold ring from the hoard dedicated to Faunus at Thetford, Norfolk, an Italian pastoral deity, associated with the protection of woods and fields, whose father was named Picus: Johns & Potter 1983: 49–51, pl. 14); the birds on the Moux image turn their heads towards the man's ears, as though speaking to him. This imagery is repeated elsewhere in Burgundy, notably at Alesia (Deyts 1992: 49; Le Gall 1963: 161), where one sculptured group shows the bird-man against a backdrop of acorn-bearing oaks and accompanied by a three-headed dog (a motif already discussed in this chapter, in the context of Otherworld symbolism). Like the Le Donon figure (above: Figure 5.6), the bird-man from Moux appears to represent wilderness, the forest and its bounty, though the Burgundian image has no hunting attributes.

If the birds are ravens, they may indeed be present here to symbolize predictory powers and the ability to tap into the spirit-world. But the birds may also carry a death-symbolism, like the battle-ravens of the early Irish mythic prose tale *The Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Kinsella 1969), and the three-headed canine companion of the Moux bird-man supports the notion of a chthonic dimension to the image's meaning. The presence of ravens as virtually the only common wild species deposited in the grain-storage pits of British sites,

Figure 5.17 (a) The bird-man from Moux, Burgundy. © author. (b) An oak-gall (oak-apple). © Catherine Price.

such as Danebury and Winklebury (Grant 1984: 102–119), suggests that they were regarded as possessing a special niche in the cosmological symbolism of Iron Age Wessex. The multi-layered meaning perhaps attributed to birds in general, and ravens in particular, is indicated by the link between these great black carrion-eaters and healing-cults. The Gallo-Roman thermal spring shrine at Mavilly (Côte d'Or) housed a sculptural group depicting a person with a raven perched on his shoulder and, behind, another person whom I have identified as a sick or blind pilgrim, for he presses his hands over his

eyes (Thevenot 1968: 68; Green 1989: fig. 25). The bird-man at Moux, with his ravens, triple-headed 'Cerberus' dog and fruits of the forest, may represent several aspects of the human condition and associated cosmologies: both dog and raven may represent healing and death; the birds may be linked with divination, peering into the future to gain knowledge from the spirits; the evocations of wilderness and the oak-apples, a precise phenomenon of late spring-time, provide another layer of meaning, in terms of seasonalities, abundance and – maybe – rebirth in a new, healed body or in a new other dimension beyond earth-world, and if this interpretation has validity, the comparison with Faunus's woodpeckers may not be entirely awry.

6

DREAMING MONSTERS AND SHAMANIC SHAPE-SHIFTERS

> Besides, many varieties of monsters can be found
> Stabled here at the doors – Centaurs and freakish Scyllas,
> Briareus with his hundred hands, the Lernaean Hydra
> That hisses terribly and the flame-throwing Chimaera,
> Gorgons and Harpies, the ghost of three-bodied Geryon.
> Now did Aeneas shake with a spasm of fear, and drawing
> His sword, offered its edge against the creatures' onset:
> Had not his learned guide assured him they were but incorporeal
> Existences floating there, forms with no substance behind them
> He'd have attacked them, and wildly winnowed with steel mere
>   shadows.
>
> (Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 285–290;
> trans Day Lewis, in Chisholm & Ferguson 1981: 232)

Monsters and hybrids belong to the mindscape, to the fluid world of the imagination, so they can be manipulated to explore and present powerful metaphors for human life-experience and beyond. Hybrids are boundary-crossers and are therefore well equipped to act as guardians of entrances and thresholds: in his mission to penetrate Hades to find his dead father Anchises, the living Aeneas had to pass through the portals of an underworld heavily guarded by the three-headed Cerberus and other horrors. In Egyptian and Classical thought and myth, monsters, like the Sphynx, Chimaera and Centaur, were associated with risk, peril and the unknown. Thus, explorers and traders venturing to the edges of the known world regularly encountered weird, unnatural beings (McCall 1995: 104–137; King 1995: 138–167). In studying the monsters of ancient Greek myth presented on Korinthian painted ceramics, Michael Shanks (1999: 99, 102) has suggested that the incongruous mixing of different species of animal or of animal and human served not only to cross boundaries but also to deny order and difference and to present chaotic equivalence, engendering ideas of instability and violence, since each part of the hybrid strove for domination over the other(s). In this connection, it is interesting that sphinxes are often associated with

danger (McCall 1995) and that centaurs in mythic narratives generally behaved in a wild and immoderate manner (Dubois 1982: 29; Green 1997a: 906; Homer, *Iliad* I: 263; *Odyssey* XXI: 303).

The presentation of hybrid monstrosity in imagery may relate to a variety of separable but interrelated themes, and it is necessary to be careful not to apply unicellular attributions of meaning to what perhaps represent highly complex lattices of connected thought. Monstrous depictions may be 'genuine' hybrids, that is to say, they represent beings that transgress boundaries and thus explore both the nature of borders and what happens when they are crossed. This is the type of monster presented in Greek mythology. Alternative meanings, or other facets of meaning, for trans-species imagery can be sought, first in the depiction of skin-turners, divine beings or other creatures who shape-shift (voluntarily or through involuntary enchantment), and secondly in the iconography of ritualists who adopt animal costumes in order to 'become' a particular beast and thus enable contact with the spirit-world. In the Siberian shaman's 'ensouled world', putting on animal-costume was an essential element in ceremonies (Price 2001: 3), serving both to transport the shaman to the spirit-world and to show the audience that this transcendence was in process. In Aztec tradition, shamans would carry or wear a jaguar-skin to enable them to enter the body and soul of a jaguar, an animal respected as having equivalence with humans in supreme hunting prowess (Saunders 1994: 159–177). Like the jaguar itself, the animal-costumes adopted by many traditional ritualists were speckled, brindled or piebald, the juxtaposition of two colours serving as a metaphor for belonging to both earthly and spirit-worlds. Transformation between earth-world and spirit-world is sometimes represented iconographically by the depiction of an animal emerging from a human figure: such images have been recorded, for instance, in Palaeo-Eskimo tradition (Sutherland 2001: 138). The late Iron Age stone figure of a man with a boar marching along his torso, from Euffigneix (Haute-Marne) (Figure 5.12), and cognate images on Gallic coinage (Allen 1976: 265–282), may make sense within a broadly analogous context (see Chapter 5).

Hybridity, shape-shifting and dressing-up may contain strong mutual resonances, and it is often difficult to tell from an image whether a transgressive being is a 'true' monster, or is in the process of skin-turning, or has donned pelts, feathers, masks or antlers in the context of shamanic performance (Jolly 2002: 85–103). What is more, the notion of flexible intention, introduced in Chapter 1, should be invoked as a prism through which to view trans-species depictions, for the meanings associated with shape-shifters, imaginary monsters and dressed-up shamans may all be elements within a spectrum of being that denies reality and seeks to transcend the margins between worlds and states of being. Donning an animal-skin or a mask serves to hide, to deceive and to change persona; by doing this, a person becomes a two-spirit entity, a riddle and a paradox: the power of transition lies not simply in the change but in the clear visibility of both the animal and the human,

so that the spectator is fully aware of what is going on. Hybrids may be viewed in terms of change, contradiction and oscillation 'between', and may therefore be useful as metonyms for exploring notions of time, of past, present and future and of the fluid edges between being and becoming.

The depiction of therianthropes raises important issues concerning belonging and the human/animal relationship. Lewis-Williams (1995: 3–23, fig. 8) draws attention to the choice of beast in the trans-species images of San rock art, pointing to the persistent representation of hybrid antelopes/humans in southern African rupestrine motifs and arguing that such selection deliberately situates the art within a familiar local and economic context in which antelopes figure most prominently as food-animals. It is clear from a survey of human/animal hybrid iconography in later prehistoric and Roman provincial Europe that equally familiar animals were chosen. Interestingly, the animal-element in the European therianthropes usually consist of beasts, such as horses, that enjoy a close affinity with people, or deer, particularly stags, creatures that may be hunted or herded. Other wild species, such as wolves or boars, were not used as therianthropic motifs. It may therefore be that, as for San communities, the immediate human environment was an important factor in transgressional imagery. But first we examine images of monsters that exhibit boundary-crossing between different species of animal rather than between humans and beasts.

Holy disorders: sacred visions or demonic nightmares?

> And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings … After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon it four wings of a fowl; the beast also had four heads …
>
> (from *Daniel* 7: 3–6)

The Book of Daniel describes the prophet as a devout young Israelite, deported to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC. After suffering terrible risks and privations (including incarceration in a den of lions), he developed great wisdom and became renowned as a seer (Metzger & Coogan 1993: 149). As a despised and abused foreigner, endowed with the gift (or burden) of prophecy, Daniel himself presents a powerfully discrepant image. The dream-vision of bestial monsters that so disturbed him is interpreted in the text as an allegory of wayward kingship, ultimately conquered by the might of God.

Horned horses

> There is a relationship between Good Time and Bad Time. There are interpenetrations. Some cross the bridge into the

Bad Time, into the Underworld, and return to tell the tale. Some
go deliberately. Some step into Bad Time suddenly. It may be
waiting, there, in the next room.

(from *The Gates of Ivory* by Margaret Drabble, 1992: 4)

The Iron Age *oppidum* at Mouriès is situated in the Alpilles of southern Gaul.
In the fifth to fourth century BC, a stone sanctuary was constructed here and
sculptors adorned the walls with incised images that convey insistent semi-
otic messages of warfare and horsemanship (Green 1998b: 226; Benoit 1969:
pls. VIII–XI). At least three of the engraved horses are equipped with horns
(Figure 6.1) and, what is more, they possess three horns each, thus placing
the animals doubly beyond the real. These fantastic creatures are not isolated
in their triple-horned form, for bulls, boars and humans (Figures 3.15, 7.17)
are also so depicted in late Iron Age and Gallo-Roman Europe (Green 1998b).
The whole issue of triplism is explored later (Chapter 7); here it is sufficient
to acknowledge the transferent nature of the motif and its consonant ability
to act as a signifier on a range of image-forms. The alternative view (John
Barrett, pers. comm.) is for all types of head on which the three horns appear
(horses, bulls, boars and people) to feed into an interrelated semiotic schema
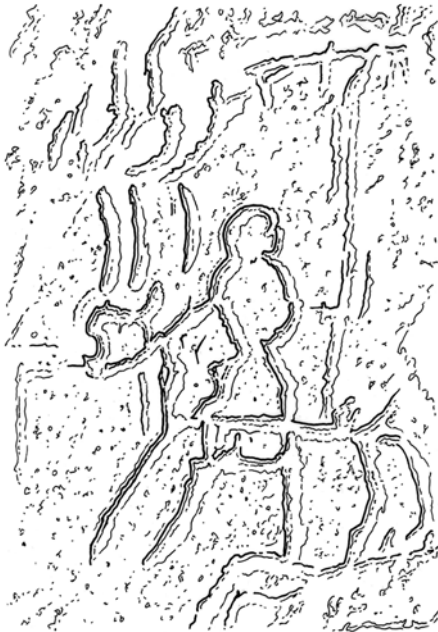
Figure 6.1 Incised image of a triple-horned horse with rider from the *oppidum*
of Mouriès in Provence. © Nick Griffiths.

in which common elements of meaning are expressed by means of a shared motif, the three horns.

The triple-horned horses at Mouriès belong to an iconographic and archaeological context in which confrontation, competition, display and the 'masculine' pursuits of warfare and hunting are promoted. During the last centuries BC, the region of southern Gaul in which Mouriès was situated had a history of almost continual conflict, both with Greek colonizers, centred at Massilia, and then with the Romans during the Punic Wars and afterwards, until the area was brought under Roman rule in the late second century BC (Rivet 1988: 13–35). Many other local *oppida* and stone-built sanctuaries in the region bear equally combative imagery. The pre-Roman sites of Entremont, Roquepertuse and Nages each contain sculptures of warriors, horses and human heads, and huge stone images of seated, armour-clad men grasped severed heads in their hands (Benoit 1969, 1981). The Mouriès sculptures are the work of artists obsessed by horses and horsemen, some stones portraying large numbers of animals packed closely together, as if about to go into battle (Benoit 1969: pl. X, 1), while others depict cavalry-men brandishing their weapons at the enemy (op. cit.: pls. X, XI). The sacred context in which the sculptures at Mouriès and its sister-sites were situated is important, for it raises issues concerned with the nature and intention of the imagery and gives it a cosmological dimension. The iconography may simply celebrate victories, but the weirdly unreal form of the triple-horned horses begs questions as to whether we are witnessing the expression of a spirit-army, journeying to the Otherworld, with the three-horned beasts acting as soul-guides, as go-betweens and threshold-crossers, just as their physical form transgresses both species-barriers and the bonds of earth-world realities.

Ram-headed serpents

Like the triple-horned horses of Mouriès, the phenomenon of the ram-headed serpent provides a vivid example of the fantastic imagery with which the sacred could be expressed (Aldhouse-Green 2004c). This idiosyncratic creature has a widespread distribution in later Iron Age and Roman Europe, occurring in areas as far apart as Denmark, Burgundy, Britain and northern Italy. Its role as some kind of enabler or mediator is suggested by its usual juxtaposition with a range of other images, showing that its presence as a motif was not dependent upon its inclusion in any one specific iconographic 'package' and that its role is that of a companion. A significant element in the imagery of the snake is that it often appears in pairs. The range and com-plexity of the snake's symbolic associates lends credence, too, to the notion that the images refer to a lost mythic narrative. Pierre Lambrechts (1942: 45–63) was the first scholar to bring together all the known images of ram-horned serpents, collecting about thirty examples from north-west Europe.

He rightly identified the persistent connection between this image and a type depicting an antlered anthropomorphic being; its other affinity appears to lie with warrior-imagery.

Four iconographic pieces serve to explore the nature, symbolism and metaphoric meaning of this monstrous image: the Gundestrup cauldron (Figures 6.2–6.4), a sculpture from Mavilly (Figure 6.5) and a figurine from Autun (Figure 6.6) (both in Burgundy), and a small figurine from Southbroom in Wiltshire. The image-rich Gundestrup cauldron was discussed in Chapter 5, in connection with bull-motifs. On three of its inner (narrative) plates the ram-headed snake appears, each within a different iconographic context. Best known is its association with a squatting antlered being (Figure 6.2), by whom it is grasped round the neck (Kaul 1991: 21, pl. 15). Accompanying him are other beasts, some real, others fantastic. The large size of the serpent (it is twice as long as the stag) suggests its importance to the scene; on the other two plates it is much less dominant. On the 'wheel-bearer' plate (Kaul 1991: 22, pl. 16) (Figure 6.3) it floats upside down, flanked by dancing gryphons, beneath a kneeling human figure in a horned helmet, that appears to be offering a broken cart-wheel to a bearded male being at the centre of the scene. On a third composition, known as the *krigerpladen* (or warrior-plate) (Kaul 1991: 23, pl. 17), a diminutive ram-headed serpent glides at the head of a procession of cavalrymen (Figure 6.4), while, in a lower register
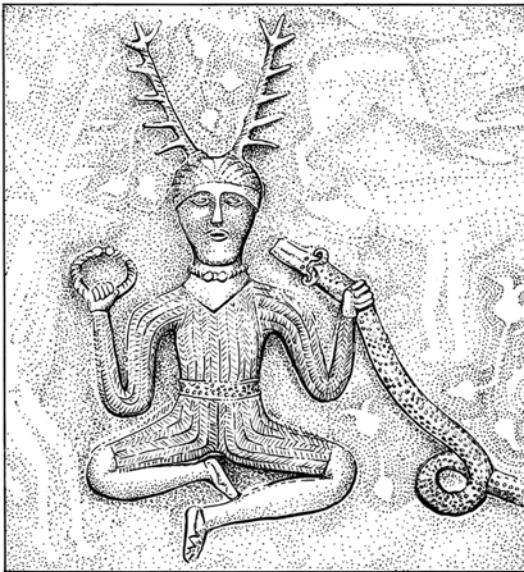
Figure 6.2 The antlered man with two ram-headed snakes, from the Gundestrup cauldron. © Anne Leaver.

Figure 6.3 The wheel-bearer plate on the Gundestrup cauldron, with ram-headed snake. © Paul Jenkins.

and facing the other way, is a line of footsoldiers, with three carnyx-players bringing up the rear, immediately below the snake. The lead infantryman comes face to face with a leaping hound, whilst an enormous human figure casts one of the warriors head first into a vat. The two registers of the scene are divided one from the other by a tree.

It is pointless to attempt a detailed interpretation of the episodes played out in the cauldron-images, for they almost certainly relate to a mythic narrative whose context and meaning are beyond us. The iconography may even belong to a trance-induced shamanistic dreamscape, wherein monsters
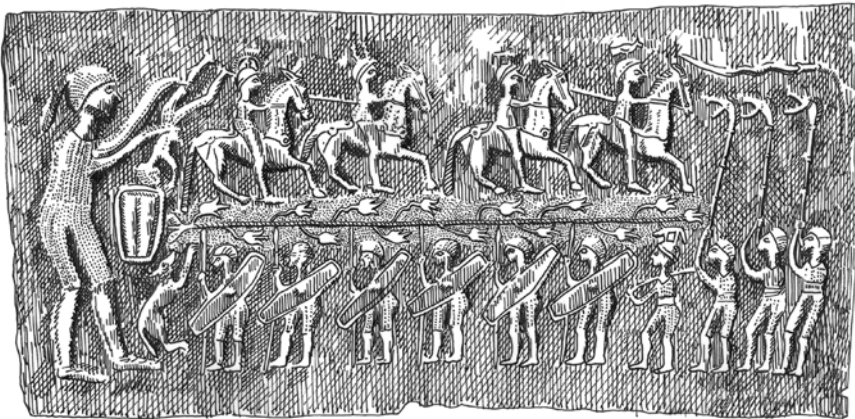
Figure 6.4 The vat-scene on the Gundestrup cauldron. © Paul Jenkins.

Figure 6.5 Ram-headed snake accompanying a couple at Mavilly, Burgundy. ©
Paul Jenkins.

abound and humans interact with the divine world. It is significant that many
motifs visible on the cauldron resonate with imagery found elsewhere in
Iron Age and Roman Europe: the antlered figure (see below) and the wheel-
bearer (Green 1984a, 1991a) are familiar in Gallo-Roman iconography; the
weapons and armour of the army depicted on the *krigerpladen* accord with
contemporary material culture, and the boar-headed carnyxes belong equally
to the repertoire of Gallic troops (Hunter 2001: 77–108). In each of the three
plates, the ram-headed serpent is one of many images, but its associations
with antlered beings, wheel-bearers and warfare all recur in Gallo-British
iconography. The positioning of the snake may be meaningful: it leads an
army; it accompanies the antlered being; and its upside-down presentation
may refer to its Otherworld status: it is worth noting that, in the conventions
of San rock art, dead elands are depicted upside-down (Lewis-Williams 2001:
30, fig. 2.7).

    The stone sculpture from Mavilly (Côte d'Or) (Figure 6.5) has features
belonging to the very end of the pre-Roman Iron Age, for the armed figure
depicted here has a La Tène III shield (Deyts 1976: no. 284; Green 1989:
65, fig. 26); he is clad in a chain-mail corselet, another indicator of immediate

Figure 6.6 Bronze figurine of a ram-headed 'snake-man' from Savigny, Autun. ©
Paul Jenkins.

pre-conquest chronology, he wears a torc and holds a lance. A woman stands
at his left side, slightly behind his left shoulder, her hand placed on the shield
with his; on his right is a large, semi-coiled snake, with its great ram-horned
head rearing up towards his elbow. The Mavilly sculpture, part of a larger
pillar-stone, comes from the site of a Gallo-Roman healing-sanctuary, and the
probability is that the stone belongs to this period, its imagery perhaps pre-
senting a deliberate and nostalgic anachronism in a conscious statement of
self-determinism and indigenous identity (see Chapter 8) that is reinforced
by both the torc and the serpent. Another scene on the pillar depicts a seated
figure, a raven on his shoulder and, standing behind, is a second individual,
covering its eyes with its hands, as if in pain. The central figure on this relief
holds what may be pan-pipes in his hands, perhaps part of the healing-
rite: pan-pipes figure on sculptures from other Burgundian healing-shrines,
such as *Fontes Sequanae* (Aldhouse-Green 1999: 22, fig. 11) and Beire-le-
Châtel (Deyts 1976: 9).

The presence of a 'Mars' figure at a curative shrine is less curious than it
seems, for there is a great deal of evidence that the 'Mars' type was appro-
priated in Roman Gaul and re-invented as a tribal guardian and fighter against
disease and famine: this is seen very clearly at the Moselle sanctuaries to
Mars Lenus at Trier and elsewhere among the Treveri (Green 1989: 64;
Wightman 1970: 208–226; Thevenot 1955; 1968: 46–72). The armed figure

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on the Mavilly stone is clearly the dominant motif: he is literally centre-stage and his female companion is turned towards him, in semi-profile to the viewer and half-hidden by his body. The snake's position by the warrior's leg seems a submissive one but there is tension and ambiguity here, for its coils indicate that it is much bigger than it seems, with plenty of latent power. It is difficult to avoid comparing the iconographic context of the serpent in this piece with its situation on the warrior-plate of the Gundestrup cauldron.

The two remaining images to be examined here are both small bronze figurines, each accompanied by a pair of ram-headed snakes; the first, a Romano-British find from Southbroom in Wiltshire, resembles the Mavilly piece in so far as it depicts a 'Mars'-like being wearing a bird-crested helmet; in each hand it grasps a snake with bulbous curling ram's horns, the reptiles twining themselves around his legs (British Museum 1964: 54; Green 1976: pl. XVII h). The statuette was found with several others, deposited in a pot during the third century AD, the cache probably originally from a shrine. The provenance of the second figurine is Savigny (Saône-et-Loire) in Roman Gaul (Deyts 1992: 44–45), probably originally from Autun (Figure 6.6): it depicts a bearded man, seated cross-legged on a dais, a torc around his neck and a second posed above a bowl of mash or corn on his lap; two ram-headed snakes, with rather fishy tails, curl themselves round his body and eat from the bowl, while the man's hands curve protectively round their necks. In his head are two holes, perhaps for the insertion of antlers; two small subsidiary lateral heads are visible. On both figurines doubling takes place: there are two snakes on each, and the Gaulish piece takes pairing further in the double torc (also present in association with the snake on the Gundestrup image) and the two + one heads. In both figures, there is intimate somatic engagement between the snakes and the humans who hold them, entwined around their legs or waist; this is repeated on other images from Gaul, and on a Romano-British relief from Cirencester (Glos), a pair of ram-headed serpents actually form the legs of their human companion (Green 1989: fig. 39).

The hybrid nature of the ram-headed snake, its associated motifs and its affinity with human companions raise interesting generic interpretative issues. David Hunt (2004) discusses analogies between the overlapping scales of snakes and chain-mail, in traditions among communities of the Caucasus Mountains, for whom the snake's 'armour' has metaphoric connotations with impenetrability and consonant immortality. This is interesting in the context of the Mavilly imagery (Figure 6.5), for here the snake's companion is a man wearing chain-mail. According to Caucasian cosmologies, oppositional pairing has a voice in terms of horizons, thresholds and boundaries. The frequent pairing of ram-headed snakes, together with the marginality embedded in their hybrid form, may contribute to such a structuralist approach. Hunt argues that horizons can take many forms and may be associated with space, time or physicalities. The movement of the snake

from muscles within its body rather than external limbs might lend itself to meanings related to inside-out and the ability to 'see' the creature's internal working parts. But the snake's literal groundedness is displayed by the manner in which its entire body is in contact with the earth, rather than just two or four feet; such a total physical relationship with the earth may have contributed to a chthonic dimension to the serpent, ram-headed or not.

The ram-headed snake's function as a boundary-symbol is stated most overtly by its physical duality as half serpent, half mammal, as well as by its frequent pairing. What is more, the monster combines wilderness and farm-domesticity, though both ram and snake present ideas of risk. The maleness of rams may be supported by the phallic symbolism of the snake, thus displaying a doubling of masculine force, sexuality and energy. Moreover, in terms of physicality, there is linkage between the form of serpent and ram-horns: both are coiled and each thereby contains elements of tension and oscillation between straightness and curvature. The snake habitually appears with specifically male images; its most common associate, the antlered man, is itself, of course, a hybrid boundary-image. In antler-shedding and skin-sloughing, the stag and snake respectively exhibit symbolisms of change, transition and repetitive rebirth. The monstrosity of the ram-headed snake appears to contain powerful imagery of transformative enablement, and this overarching concern enables its association with widely variable motifs to be the more readily understood. For instance, its linkage with warfare and healing makes sense in that both are connected with transitional states – life to death and sickness to health. If there is validity in seeing the imagery of the Gundestrup cauldron as the product of trance-induced shamanic visions, the snake's presence may be seen as a unifying symbol of transgression between world-boundaries and, perhaps, of the need for humans to use monsters in order to facilitate their soul-journeys between states of being. Two of the cauldron-plates on which the ram-headed snake appears contain other boundary-images: the antlered being (Figure 6.2) and the wheel-carrier with his bull-horned helmet (Figure 6.3). The third, the army-scene (Figure 6.4), contains what may be a transformative scene, the two elements of transition depicted by the upper and lower registers, in which footsoldiers, dipped into a cauldron of immortality, are reborn as horsemen, led into the spirit-world by the ram-headed serpent. Although it is dangerous to make close analogies between the iconography of a cauldron deposited in a Danish peat-bog in the first century BC and a Welsh medieval mythic tale, it is worth bearing in mind the episode in the Second Branch of the *Mabinogi*, in which a dead army is resurrected by being cooked overnight in a cauldron of regeneration (Jones & Jones 1976: 37). The reborn warriors can fight as well as, if not better than before, but their continued sojourn in the underworld is demonstrated by their inability to speak. The snake may act as a reminder that the warriors belong to the spirit-world, though they may function as zombie killing-machines in the earthly dimension.

The motif of the ram-headed serpent is both idiosyncratic and obscure. That being so, it is interesting to note its presence as a symbol in rural Bulgarian tradition from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (MacDermott 1997), where it occurs as a motif on the carved wooden heads of shepherds' crooks. Here, the dual representation is viewed as a powerfully protective symbol, since it links the image of the ram, as leader, impregnator and guardian of the flock, with that of the snake – a common inhabitant of the Bulgarian countryside, which carries meaning in terms of energy, seduction (a Biblical reference to Eden) and the danger of venom and the wild. The combination of the two motifs serves to form a potent image of protection and promotion of fertility among livestock. I would be guilty of gross essentialism were I to attempt to use this folk-tradition as a way of seeing directly into the European Iron Age past, but it is none the less valid to observe that in each context, the creature's potency as an image depends upon its duality and mutual dissonance.

Human-faced horses: apocalyptic visions?

The previous chapter examined the close but ambivalent relationship between people and horses in Iron Age Europe and discussed its use to symbolize notions of wildness and control and the tensions between them. The metaphor of horse/human is perhaps taken further by imagery that seeks to blend the two species and thus to explore at close quarters the notions of dominance or equivalence and the wider issues of order, disorder, and the disjunctive states of war and death. This melding of horse and human takes the form of human-headed beasts, a motif exhibited most clearly on Iron Age coins, though, as we shall see shortly, it is not wholly confined to numismatic iconography. Although the motif may have been inspired by the imagery and mythology of Greek centaurs (King 1995: 141–142), the two forms are subtly different from each other. Helen King says of centaurs, 'The earliest Greek images consist of a male human body with a horse's body and rear legs tacked on behind, rather than a male human torso on a horse's body'. In the former case, there may even be two sets of genitalia – human in front, horse at the rear – thus further emphasizing the creature's male sexuality. Both types, those with human and those with equine forelegs, coexist in Greek art. Even in the centaur-images exhibiting the greater horse-element, a man's torso, as well as his head, is present, while on the coin, and other images from the late western European Iron Age, only the head is human.

Sometime in the fourth century BC, the body of a woman was interred in a tomb at Reinheim in Germany, with sumptuous grave-goods, including gold ring-jewellery for her neck and arms, and drinking-equipment. The lid of a bronze wine-flagon is surmounted by a fantastic creature, displaying a complex blend of human and animal elements: it has a bearded human face, but with the rounded ears of a lion or leopard, a horse's body with three

Figure 6.7 Human-headed horse on a flagon-lid found in the tomb of a woman buried in the mid-fourth century BC at Reinheim, Germany. © Anne Leaver.

hooves, the right foreleg, instead, appearing to end in toes (Megaw 1970: no. 73; Aldhouse-Green 2001d: 207, fig. 1) (Figure 6.7). The face has a serene, remote expression, and the creature stands motionless on its base, gazing into the far distance. The immediate context of the piece is a wine-vessel, so it may be appropriate to read a connection between the contents of the jug and the lid that covered it. The broader context is sepulchral; the flagon was placed in a tomb with a female body. What is more, the imagery of the ring-jewellery may serve to add cognitive context, for repeated on the torc and an armlet is the motif of a woman, lying supine, hands folded on her stomach, like a corpse on a bier. Her eyes are bulging wide open, but unfocused, and above her head perches a great bird of prey.

The juxtaposed position of the bird and the woman may symbolize some kind of transformatory experience after death, the flight of the deceased's soul and her apotheosis to spirit. The undoubted death-imagery of the jewellery may be the key to understanding the presence of the horse/human on the flagon-lid, if it can be argued that this motif, too, presents an image of transference. The violence and abrupt disjunctiveness of death may be reflected in the hybrid monstrosity of the flagon-animal, and the propinquity between this image and the wine contained within the vessel itself, for liquor

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is itself a mind-bending agent that changes personalities, alters perspectives and – perhaps – facilitates contact with other worlds. Brigitte Fischer (2004) discusses the significance of wine for Gaulish religious celebrations, in achieving collective out-of-body experiences and sharing glimpses of a spiritual dimension. The image of the 'soul bird' hovering above the woman's head on the ring-jewellery contains resonances in other Iron Age iconography, notably that of the Celtiberian polychrome pots from places like Numancia and Tiermes (see Chapter 5), which depict carrion-birds pecking at the corpses of slain warriors, scenes that may find explanation in Classical texts describing the excarnation and consumption by vultures of the noble dead.

The motif of the human-headed horse occurs repeatedly in the first-century BC coin-issues of several Gallic tribal regions, their reverses depicting frantic scenes in which a galloping horse, human mouth agape, is ridden or driven by a horsewoman or female charioteer, who is often naked and may appear in an attitude of frenzy. On coins minted by the Breton Redones, the warrior-women are shown wildly brandishing weapons, torcs or branches. The horse itself may wear a torc-like neck-ring (Duval 1987: 46, 5B), and in one issue (Aldhouse-Green 2004b), the horse and female rider exhibit synergy in the identical treatment of her hair and its mane. Sometimes the human-headed horse is itself identifiably female: a curious image on the reverse of an unprovenanced (but probably Armorican) gold coin depicts a galloping mare, its human hair *en brosse*; seven teats project from the underside and crouching beneath her is a sleeping foal (Duval 1987: 38–39, 4B) (Figure 6.8). The rider is absent but, instead, the mare has great wings sprouting from her shoulders and folded along her back, bringing to mind another gold coin from Cotentin in north-west Gaul, minted by the Breton Unelli, that displays a horse ridden by a great bird of prey (Duval 1987: 20–21).

The coin-images exhibit boundary-crossing on a number of levels, both in terms of the hybrid horses and their human controllers. The overt symbolism is that of warfare, but the rider/charioteer is an ecstatic naked female and, on the last coin described, the animal is both winged and nursing young, thus – perhaps – lifting the symbolism out of a purely military context and suggesting a broader, metonymic exploration of issues associated with disjunction, change, threat and chaos. The whole image appears to be designed to shock, to provide a jolt from the norm and to proclaim exclusion, denial of belonging and altered states of being. The wings on the Armorican coin-mare suggest that she is a spirit-horse, leaving earth-world, perhaps leading away the souls of the dead; her swollen teats and the young foal beneath her may act as metaphors for change, and the abrupt transition from one to more than one when birth occurs. The affinity between the horse and its rider noted above may be developed in the mare-and-foal type, in so far as the close links between mother and child may be explored here as a means of indicating close socio-political relationships or even military alliances. We should remember that the Breton coins were minted at about the time of Caesar's

Figure 6.8 Armorican coin (unprovenanced) depicting a winged horse/human
hybrid. © Paul Jenkins.

campaigns against the Veneti and other Armorican tribes, in the mid-fifties BC,
when people in these regions were under serious threat and perhaps used
their coins as a means of communicating and dealing with risk. The naked
female image may constitute a deliberately contra-normative message,
designed to challenge the androcentism of *romanitas*, breaking the bound-
aries of the male battlefield and the proprieties of female modesty (see
Chapter 8). Her sometimes frenzied mood may be triumphant or it may sig-
nify trance-induced ecstasy; her human-headed mount may be a spirit-helper,
easing the passage between worlds, and may even represent the apotheosis
of its rider. The winged form of one type enhances its likelihood of the
horse's Otherworld status, for in many traditional societies, flight is the
mechanism by which the shaman or ritualist reaches the spirit-world.

Reference to a 'modern' folkloric tradition may help in understanding pos-
sible frameworks of meaning for the human-headed horse. The Scottish
water-horse, or 'kelpie' (Le Borgne 2004), is a transformative image: it can
change its shape from a horse to a handsome young man or aged hag, and is
thus capable of oscillation between species, ages and genders. It is an un-
stable, capricious creature, both helper and harmer. Aude Le Borgne relates
the tradition to the endemic horse-centred economy of recent centuries in
Scotland and Ireland, and points to the kelpie as an allegory of good (or bad)

horse-management and the relationship between horses and humans. Its water-symbolism associates it with the Otherworld and with capabilities of good or evil, like water itself. Crucial to its attitude of benevolence or malevolence towards humans is its treatment by them and, in this way, the kelpie images society and the relationships between humans and animals/nature, and between individuals and communities, a 'do-as-you-would-be-done-by' message of cause and effect. Whilst not intending to draw close analogies between kelpies and late Iron Age coin-imagery, it is possible to make broader comparisons, based on the exploration of opposites, relationships, affinities and consequences. The Breton (and other) Gallic coinages were produced within an atmosphere of social and political change, upheaval and threat. It is at these crisis points that cosmologies are spotlit, re-examined and negotiated, and notions of identity are altered or re-affirmed.

Shamans and shape-shifters

> But the old man's skill and cunning had not deserted him. He began by turning into a bearded lion and then into a snake, and after that a panther and a giant boar. He changed into running water too and a great tree in leaf.
>
> (Homer, *Odyssey* IV: lines 456–458; trans. Rieu 1946: 75)

Proteus of Egypt, the Old Man of the Sea, was the archetypal shape-shifter, divine being, and described as 'that immortal seer' by his daughter Eidothee to Menelaus (Rieu 1946: 73). According to Shanks (1999: 122–123), this encounter brings the Argive king in direct contact with the world beyond, the Otherworld of the spirits, and the imagery of shape-changing epitomizes that otherness. Proteus is not only a divine being but he is able to penetrate the realm of the future, and this ability to go between is also presented in his facility for appearance as animal, water or tree.

The evidence for half-creatures in ancient European imagery is itself ambiguous, for it is often difficult to decide whether such beings represent genuine monsters or people dressed up in animal costume. Indeed, such ambivalence may be quite deliberate: on analogy with shamanistic traditions in hunter-gatherer cosmologies, the dressed-up shaman becomes at one and the same time both the animal whose persona is adopted and a spirit being. This kind of transformation is expressed very aptly by Dale Idiens (2000: 110), who describes the ritual dance performances of the Kwakiutl people of Vancouver Island and the transformative power of the bird costume that represents the mythic thunderbird: 'It is called a four-way Transformation, because by pulling strings the dancer can separate the beak and head of the Thunderbird into four sections to reveal a human face, re-enacting the original transformation of Thunderbird into the human being of the legend.'

Masks and pantomimes

Use of the mask and song has the effect of saying a prayer.
(King 2000b: 112)

The context for this quotation is a description of shamanism among the Inuit and Yup'ik communities of the Arctic. King illustrates a Yup'ik mask made in Alaska in the 1930s which represents spirits that are half-human, half-animal. According to Yup'ik tradition, the shamanic dance serves to repel disease, physically pushing it away from the community. The bird-mask and costume serve to represent the myth of the thunderbird and to trigger and reinforce memory, but the disguise also contributes to the theatricality of the shaman's performance and helps his audience to engage with and participate in the ceremony. Animal costumes are a crucial element in shamanic ceremonies in the ensouled world of Siberian, indigenous American and central Asian cosmologies (Price 2001: 3; Devlet 2001: 50; Saunders 1994) because animals are perceived to possess qualities both similar to and different from those of humans (Dowson & Porr 2001: 173) and act as 'spirit-helpers', enabling contact with the Otherworld. Among communities of the Nepalese Himalayas dressing up as birds or animals has another kind of meaning, in terms of the need for shamans to set themselves apart, to marginalize themselves from their 'normal social persona' (Walter 2001: 117), as well as to provide theatre for their audience, and dressing-up is accompanied by the sound of drums and bells, adding the contribution of sound to that of vision (Vitebsky 1995: 52). Ceremonies and rituals are opportunities to behave in abnormal ways, to let off steam and immerse oneself in the 'other'. In the words of William Paden (1992: 36), 'in the rite, one can put all one's feathers on but also take them all off'.

Images of people wearing pelts on rock art from the Tamgaly Valley in south-east Kazakhstan, dating to the second millennium BC, have been identified as shamans (Rozwadowski 2001: 70–71); and I similarly interpret the hirsute human figures on Bronze Age and Iron Age rock-carvings at Val Camonica in North Italy (Anati 1965: 184–185; Aldhouse-Green & Aldhouse-Green 2004). Identifying images of people dressed as animals in the archaeological record is a difficult task; therianthropic motifs pose the dilemma as to whether monsters, fantastic animals or humans in animal guise are intended. But the occasional image lends itself to the latter interpretation. On a repoussé-decorated sheet-bronze-covered wooden bucket from a rich cremation-grave at Aylesford in Kent (Evans 1890; Stead 1971, 1976; Fitzpatrick 2000; Green 1996: 41, fig. 24) is a motif of two bizarre 'horses' facing each other, but with their faces turned backwards (Figure 6.9). Strange plumes billow from their heads and they have hugely exaggerated and pushed-out lips that look like travesties of human mouths. Odder still are their legs, for they end in shod human feet and the knees of the hindquarters bend the wrong
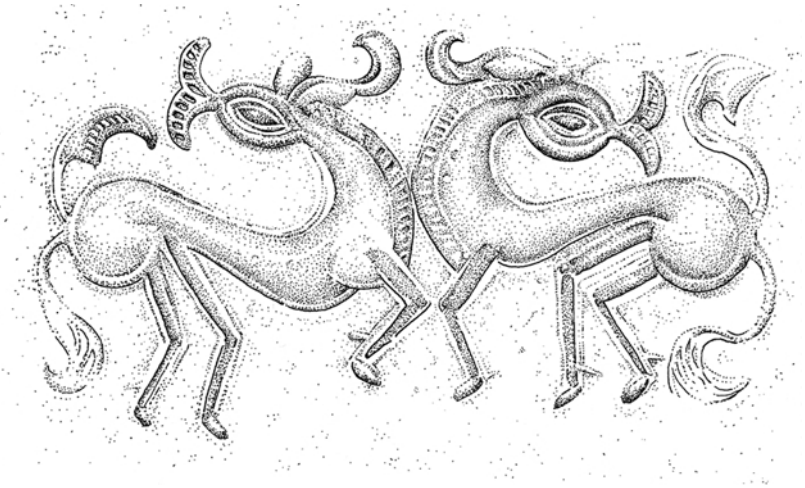
Figure 6.9 Pantomime horses with protruding 'human' lips on the late Iron Age bucket from a cremation-grave at Aylesford, Kent. © Anne Leaver.

way for horses but the correct way for humans. All in all, the two creatures are highly reminiscent of pantomime animals or 'hobby-horses', presentations of humorous (though sometimes sinister) irony, parody and *double entendre*, with both elements highly visible and easily identifiable for what they are. People looking at the Aylesford bucket would be fully aware that what they were seeing was a pair of humans dressed up as horses. A final twist to these creatures is the revelation of the bones beneath the flesh of the limbs: these are 'X-ray' figures; the skin is transparent, permeable and the viewer can look right through the images.

The Aylesford bucket accompanied the cremated remains of someone who died in the late first century BC or early first century AD, but the vessel was an heirloom, antique when it was interred. This is interesting, for it perhaps assumes a special value in terms of past, memory and linkages with dead ancestors, who inhabited the Otherworld and could be 'tapped' as spiritual intercessors by the living. Probably manufactured some decades before the end of its 'life', the bucket may have been used on ceremonial occasions for some time. It was produced to hold liquor, wine, mead, beer or fermented berry-juice (Arnold 1999: 71–93; 2001: 14–19), and may have been involved in collective hallucinogenic trance-experience, just as has been suggested for the enormous quantities of wine-amphorae from late Iron Age central Gaulish *oppida* (Fischer 2004; Poux *et al.* 2002: 57–110; Py *et al.* 2001: 29–43). If so, then it may be valid to suggest that the pantomime horses on the Aylesford bucket might represent ritual dancers in animal costume. This interpretative model gains credence from the imagery on an eastern

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Rhenish silver coin-type dated to the mid-fifties BC (Rudd 2002: 10, no. 10; Gruel 1989: 92, 101), the reverse of which bears an image of a backward-looking horse (Figure 6.10a), whose pouting, 'human' lips and protruding rump closely resemble the Aylesford horses, though on the coin the beast's hind legs are more equine. The obverse bears an equally idiosyncratic motif, that of a 'dancing man', a human figure with wildly splayed-out legs, one arm flung out clutching a torc, the other holding a long, tube-like object that may be a musical instrument, curved towards his open mouth; a second torc hangs at his waist (Figure 6.10b). The profile head has a great staring eye and he has spiky hair, the stiff strands mirroring the reverse horse's mane. It is tempting to see connections between the imagery on each surface of the coin and to interpret the two motifs as different episodes in a ceremony in which, during trance-experience, the dancing shaman dons horse-costume and thereby 'becomes' a horse before embarking on his soul-journey to the spirit-world, though the shape-change is manifest by the still-human lips of the animal. The torcs may be present as a symbol of status, but the doubling of the motif is a common feature on many antlered human images (see Chapters 2 and 7), and it could be that, in this context, it acts as a metaphor for belonging to two worlds. But the figures on both surfaces of the coin seem to jerk like marionettes, and it is possible that puppets are represented both here and, perhaps, in the depiction of the Aylesford 'horses'. This idea raises interesting issues, for there is possible evidence from European antiquity that marionettes were used in ritualistic, shamanic performances, as early as the Upper Palaeolithic, when a composite male figure with movable body-parts, made of mammoth-ivory, was placed, with other items interpreted as part of a shaman's tool-kit, in the grave of a man suffering
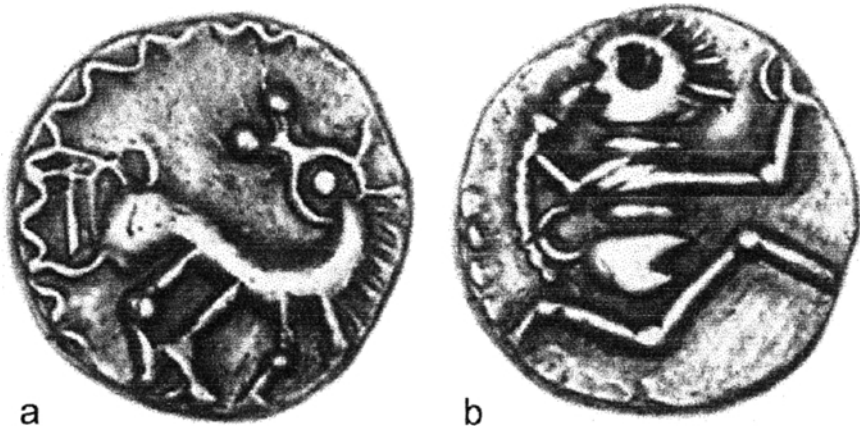
Figure 6.10a, b Rhenish silver coin with 'Aylesford-type' lipped horse on the reverse (a) and a 'puppet' on the obverse (b). © Chris Rudd.

from bone-disease at Brno in the Czech Republic (Oliva 2000: 148, fig. 5; Rigaud & Geneste 1993: 151; S. Aldhouse-Green 2000: 237).

Putting on another skin is a significant act of switching identity, but the transgression of boundaries may be witnessed in other ways, too. Skin is itself a barrier, between inside and outside, a somatic container. But lips also constitute fringe parts of the body; they lead directly to the internal body-space and their form presents an inversion, a place where the inner surface of the face turns outward, exhibiting changes in colour and texture that go with inside rather than outside. The exaggeratedly pouting lips of the Aylesford bucket-horses and the Rhenish coin-horse may be a deliberate emphasis on the internal/external divide, depicting both boundary and entrance, in the same way that traditional shamans are sometimes presented as 'skeletal' images, with visible bones and internal organs (Vitebsky 1995: 18). Lips are also the agents of ingestion and of speech and song: the dancing man on the Rhineland coin is either singing or directing something towards his mouth; the Aylesford pantomime beasts may have emphatic lips in order to represent their ingestion of the liquor held inside the vessel itself, and thus provide a link between the inside and outside of the bucket. The lips may also present a purposefully rude, aggressive and shocking image, a mask-like grimace that may be to do with trance-utterances, the pain and effort of possession by spirits and the dissonance of proclamations that may come to ritualists from the Otherworld.

Before we leave the Aylesford horses, something should be said about their double form: they may simply represent a pair of confronting dancers, but their twinning may reflect their status as two-spirit persons, dwellers in two worlds. Twins and doubles are often perceived as having special powers and abilities to contact the world of the dead (see Chapter 7): this is the case in Classical mythology, in which the heavenly twins Castor and Pollux were associated with rebirth and protection (Scullard 1981: 65–66; Simon 1990: 35–42). Other religious traditions, too, hold twins to be especially sacred: in Yoruba ritual, twins are perceived to be powerful intercessors between humans and the spirit-ancestors (Abim 2000a: 128–129). The pair of 'horses' on the Aylesford bucket may, by their doubling, act as referents for their ability to cross thresholds and access two dimensions, just as suggested earlier for the double torc-motif. The notion of 'twoness' is an important element in Scottish prognosticatory folklore tradition (MacInnes 1989: 12): the Gaelic terms for second sight are *An Dà Shealladh* (the two sights) or *An Dà Fhradharc* (the two visions).

Symbolic transference of human to animal may be achieved by wearing masks. The act of putting on a different face from one's own serves to change, to hide and to present visual ambiguity between head and body. Wearing a mask affects both spectator and wearer: the viewer sees a new face but the wearer also experiences change: it may hamper or alter vision and may cause difficulties in breathing or speaking. Like donning animal costume, putting on a mask displays the change of realities that occurs within the context of ritual performance, just as it does during carnivals or other

festivals, where people behave in contra-normative ways. Masks may represent the spirits of the dead or mythical characters (Lincoln 2000: 140), or they may be worn by participants in ritual in order both to reflect and to enter other layers of the cosmos. In southern Nigeria, masks are made and worn in ceremonial performances, in order to communicate with the ancestor-hunters whose forms are mimicked in the masks, and thereby to comfort the newly bereaved (Abim 2000b: 136–137). Dressing up in costumes and masks, as 'other' people, spirits or animals, is also traditionally associated with both death and healing, both of which are rites of passage, involving changed states and perceived as associated with spiritual intervention.

The great Romano-British curative sanctuary at Lydney (Glos) was dedicated to a local deity, Nodons (Wheeler & Wheeler 1932), to whom dedicatory inscriptions were offered there. The shrine is curious in the absence of an anthropomorphic cult-statue but in the richness of dog-imagery, mostly in the form of small bronze figurines. Analysis of an unpublished assemblage from the site, recently returned to the estate of the site-owner, Lord Bledisloe, has revealed the presence of a collar, probably designed for the control of a large dog, of the same type as the superb figurine of a young, couchant deerhound offered to the god by a visiting pilgrim, which is depicted wearing such a collar. This find suggests that live dogs were kept at Lydney, perhaps for their healing powers, exactly as has been recorded at the great Asklepeion in Epidaurus. But one image from Nodons's shrine, cut as a profile from a thin strip of sheet bronze, is not a straightforward dog (it is actually a bitch), for it has a human face (Green 1997a: 907, fig. 7) (Figure 6.11), turned towards the viewer, and the ears are ambiguous and could be either human or canine. The twist of the body so that the face gazes out front equally exhibits somatic tension that may make a deliberate contribution to the instability and ambivalence displayed by the image.

The human-faced dog from Lydney may be read in several ways: the image could represent the god Nodons himself, perceived in therianthropic form; it might depict a healing shaman, taking on the persona of a beast in order to facilitate transference between worlds, with the aid of an animal-helper; it may even evoke ritual performance in which dogs wore 'human' masks or ritualists wore dog-skins. The notion of animals being dressed up or wearing masks may not be as far-fetched as it seems: in an Iron Age Pazyryk burial-mound in the foothills of the Central Asian Altai Mountains the remains of horses were interred, wearing golden deer-masks, complete with antlers; and earlier, Bronze Age, artefacts from the Caucasus depict horses with antlers (Larsson 1999: 9–16; Chernykh 1992), perhaps a reference to a longstanding tradition. The Pazyryk burials, dating to 300–200 BC, are incredibly preserved in the extremely low-temperature environment, and show an intense animal symbolism; not only were animals and images of animals interred in the tombs, but the tattoos on the bodies of the dead depict a range of beasts, both real and monstrous (Parker Pearson 1999b: 64–65), exhibiting a symbolism

Figure 6.11 Bronze dog-figurine with human face, from the Romano-British temple at Lydney Park, Glos. © Nick Griffiths.

that explored the relationship, differences and equivalence between humans, beasts and between various species of animal.

In an entirely different context, that of Anglo-Saxon funerary practice, Howard Williams (2001: 200) draws attention to the ambiguous treatment of animal-images on bone tools which, according to the perspective of the viewer, might appear to depict a human face or mask, sometimes the head of a beast. Moreover, cremation-urns in Anglo-Saxon graves frequently contain the calcined remains of sacrificed animals – particularly horses and sheep – as well as people, and depictions of beasts often decorate the pots, thereby having both an internal and external presence (op. cit.: 195–202). In terms of what we are seeing on the composite Lydney dog/human figurine, useful reference may be made to Piers Vitebsky's discussion of animal symbolism in shamanistic traditions (1995: 82–83): he argues that different stages in shamanic transformation may be expressed by dressing up as a beast, acting in the way it acts and 'becoming' that animal.

Of cats' ears and antlered men

Thus was Cairbre the cruel
who seized Ireland south and north
two cat's ears on his fair head
a cat's fur through his ears.

(Stokes 1897: 384, para 241).

Reference is made to Cairbre Cinn-Cait (Cairbre of the Cat Head) in a poem by the medieval Irish writer Eochaid ua Floinn, preserved in a twelfth-century Irish text, the *Cóir Anmann* (Ross 1967: 100). The description is interesting and ambiguous: the allusion to cat-features may refer to the 'bestiality' of a cruel warlord; it may parody a physical peculiarity – bristly hair, pointed ears. But, instead, the poem may contain a reference backwards to an earlier, pre-Christian cosmology in which ritualists assumed the guise of cats during ceremonial occasions, perhaps in acknowledgement of a cat-centred cult analogous to the jaguar-imagery of certain Amerindian traditions (Saunders 1994).

The poetic description of a cat-headed medieval Irish warrior-hero brings to mind both a newly discovered stone head, found while digging a grave, at a churchyard in Doncaster, and a curious group of images from the Roman legionary fortress at Caerleon in south-east Wales. The Doncaster carving (Figue 6.12), virtually life-size, consists of a severed human head, with typically Iron Age lentoid eyes, wedge-nose and slit mouth, but with a cat's ears (Peter Robinson, pers. comm.). Whilst the head has no reliable archaeological context, it is in the vicinity of known Iron Age occupation and, though the carving is not certainly of pre-Christian date, it bears certain features that suggest its affinity with early sculptures: apart from its therianthropic form, the face shows a marked asymmetry, particularly between the two eyes, that links it stylistically with such Roman-date stones as the horned head from Chesters (Ross 1967: 82, pl. 21d) and the late Roman severed head from

Figure 6.12 Romano-British (?) stone head with cat's ears, from Doncaster, Yorkshire. © Doncaster Museum, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.

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Caerwent in south-east Wales (Boon 1976: 163–175; Brewer 1986: pl. 20, no. 53) (Figure 7.2) and, indeed, with prehistoric British iconographic tradition (B. Coles 1990, 1998) (see Chapter 7).

The military images from Caerleon are on a series of decorated *antefixa* (triangular clay roofing-tiles used to cover gable-ends), which seem to have possessed apotropaic (protective) symbolism. George Boon (1984: 1) explains that *antefixa* are quite rare in Britain and that 'even in classical lands they were chiefly employed on public, sacred and the better class of private buildings and by no means always then'. Several of the Caerleon antefixes bear images of human heads, often accompanied by what are best interpreted as celestial symbols (Green 1984b; 1991a: 90, fig. 72), but on some tiles, the furry head and ears are those of a cat (Boon 1984: Bii.1, Bii.2) and, significantly, one of them (op. cit.: Bi.3) bears the image of a human face with pointed feline ears and asymmetrical features (Figure 6.13) (though this reading of the imagery is disputed by George Boon, who – erroneously in my opinion – considers them to be derivatives of Classical *gorgoneia*). Images of cats are rare in Iron Age and Roman Britain, and not common anywhere in early European art: the enamelled cat-faced handle of the Snowdon bowl (Green & Howell 2000: 38, col. pl. between 62–63) and the decorative handle-terminal on a mirror from Holcombe in Devon (Megaw & Megaw 1989: 211, fig. 353), both dating to the first century AD, are rare examples of cat-motifs in European art. Indeed, domestic cats may have only made their appearance in Britain during the Iron Age (there is, for instance, evidence for
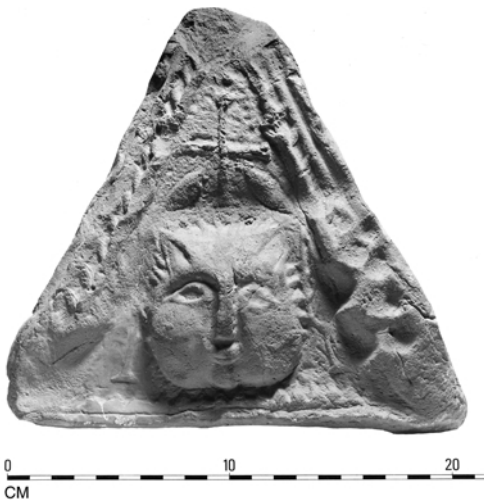
Figure 6.13 Clay antefix (roofing-tile) with cat-eared human head, from the legionary fortress at Caerleon, South Wales. © National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

the presence of cats at Danebury and for new-born kittens at Gussage All Saints in Dorset: Cunliffe 1986a: 126–135; Davis 1987; 169–195). But there is no reason to assume that the cat-faces on the Caerleon antefixes and the Doncaster head are those of domesticated felines; they may, instead, represent local wild cats.

The presence of human, cat-eared human and cats' heads on the Caerleon antefixes suggests that such images were intended in some way to protect the buildings they adorned. Although such structures were meant for legionary use, it is likely that the local inhabitants were involved in the inspiration for the decoration on these roof-tiles. Moreover, by the later first century AD, when the fortress at Caerleon was constructed as the home of Legio II Augusta, the soldiers of that legion would have included recruits from Gaul and probably also from Britain: we know that prior to its sojourn in Britain, the unit was stationed in Strasbourg, and that some of its officers and men, commemorated by inscribed tombstones at Caerleon, hailed from Gaul and Germany (Arnold & Davies 2000: 41; Manning 2001). Indeed, legionary fortresses like Caerleon should not be thought of as separate islands imposed upon a local population but as installations that became thriving 'towns' and developed well-integrated relationships with the indigenous environment (Manning 2001: 41–42). This means that there is no reason not to allow for a degree of local involvement in the image-making of the Caerleon antefixes. It is valid to suggest that the antefix-monsters and the Doncaster head perhaps represent traditions related to other hybrid figures occurrent in the artistic repertoire of Gaul and Britain, including the antlered motif, to which attention is now turned.

Headgear plays an important role in Siberian/Central Asian and American shamanic performance: antlers, horns and feathers all contribute to the visuality and reality of spirit-contact and the ritualization of that contact (Devlet 2001: 50; Vitebsky 1995: 52, 54, 81, 91). A group of images from Iron Age and Roman Europe presents a specifically therianthropic symbolism: the blending of human and stag. Most commonly, such mixing involves the depiction of people wearing antlers, but sometimes other animal features, such as hooves, are present, and very occasionally, the whole body shows merger of human and stag. This last pattern of representation resonates with iconographic traditions, such as those exhibited in southern African San rock art, where humans and antelopes appear as a balanced mixture between man and beast (Lewis-Williams 1995: 3–23, fig. 8; Jolly 2002: 85–103). But it is interesting that antlers are usually the only zoomorphic feature on the western European deer/human hybrids; the face and body are generally human (Aldhouse-Green 2001c, 2001d).

Human/stag imagery is perhaps at its most interesting in the Iron Age phases of rock art at Val Camonica in North Italy (Priuli 1988, 1996), where antlered people and half-stag, half-human beings are represented (Figures 6.14, 7.3). As Richard Bradley (2000: 68–69) comments, Camonica Valley, like Mont Bégo in the French Alps, is 'situated at the edge of the settled landscape

and contains a mixture of abstract and naturalistic designs'. At Mont Bégo, the emphasis is on bulls and bull-horned images; at Camonica, the stag is the dominant animal. Therianthropes are very often associated with hunting societies, whilst agricultural communities accord greater disjunction between humans and animals (Bradley 2001: 261–263, referring to Ingold 2000), perhaps because the nature of domestication denies equivalence and places humans at the apex of hierarchy. It is significant, too, that therianthropic imagery concentrates upon those animals that have the greatest practical impact upon the human communities that produced them: thus, in San tradition, the eland and other antelopes figure most prominently (Lewis-Williams 1995); people using the cave at Chauvet (in the Ardèche area of south-eastern France) 31,000 years ago chose the mammoth to explore the intimacies and differences between people and hunted prey (Lawson 2001).

Situated high in the Italian Alps, in a wild and remote mountain landscape, Camonica Valley, near Brescia, formed a natural corridor for the movement of game in antiquity. The sloping rocks of the valley were exploited by Camunian artists, from the Neolithic to the late first century BC, when the region was absorbed into the Roman empire. The imagery is diverse and complex, animal-centred, and some of it appears to reflect details of a cosmological, visionary, trance-induced mindscape in which reality merged with fantasy and the material and imaginary worlds interacted and flowed into one another. The clustering and stacking of images seems to suggest that certain places on the rocks were particularly sacred, and some iconography contains strong resonances with shamanistic traditions: people wear animal-skins and masks; their hair stands on end and they engage in acts of sacrifice and ritual dancing. Chris Scarre (1998: 145–157) has interpreted one scene on the Bedolina rock as indicative of a mental map of the Otherworld, constructed as a guide to ritualists venturing into the spirit-world. Such then is the context for the production of mixed human-and-hunted animal pictures on the Camunian rocks.

The stag/human hybrid images from Camonica fall into two groups: human figures with antlers (Figure 6.14), and stags with human upper bodies emerging from their backs (Figure 7.3), as if the animal and its rider have merged into a single composite, centaur-like monster (Aldhouse-Green 2001c: figs. 7.2, 7.4; Priuli 1988: 78, nos. 134–137; 1996: 29, fig. 51). The presence of these two forms suggests, perhaps, the display of different stages in the blending of human and beast, and we might speculate as to whether the antlered anthropomorphic form develops into portrayal of a more insistent and intense connection between the two species. This is a difficult argument to sustain with conviction, for close-dating of the images at Camonica is impossible and, what is more, the stag/human images here are scattered over several rock sites in the valley. But what we may be witnessing is exploration of different kinds of metaphoric relationship between wilderness and order and between prey and predator or herder and herded. The previous
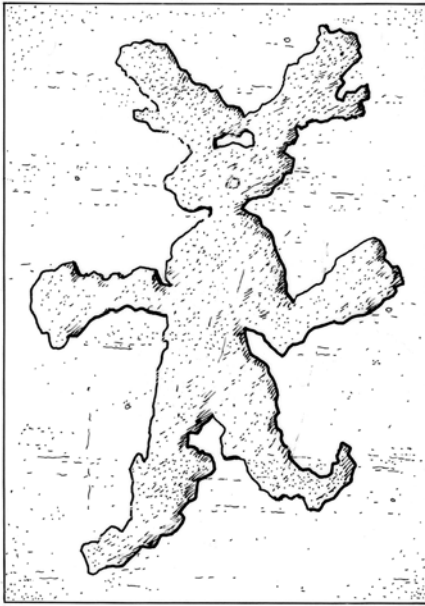
Figure 6.14 Hybrid stag/human on a rock-carving at Camonica Valley, North Italy. © Anne Leaver.

chapter discussed the association between people and deer, particularly stags, and the symbolism resulting from observation of cervid behaviour (for example, their social systems and their seasonal movement through the landscape) and the human experience of managing wild deer. The hybrid images at Camonica appear to manifest essentially masculine identities: they sometimes hold weapons in their hands, and in life (with the exception of reindeer) only stags are antlered. The antlers themselves may be over-emphasized, with fourteen tines, as if to portray alpha-male animals, at the peak of physical condition, able to compete successfully with other males and to act as the main progenitor of the herd: this is especially evident on the half-stag, half-human images (Aldhouse-Green 2001c: fig. 7.4). 'The fighting success of stags determines their mating success, since only stags that can defend harems successfully father many calves' (Clutton-Brock & McIntyre 1999: 22). It is easy to imagine how such linkage between conflict and fertility could act as a metonym for human land-guardianship and prosperity. (But caution needs to be exercised in assuming a simple male–hunter–stag–antler cluster of meaning: in some shamanistic societies, where deer-imagery is prominent, the antlers all but lose their animal-symbolism and, instead, the number of antler-tines depicted represents the number of animal-helpers available to the shaman: Devlet 2001: 50.)

The context for the therianthropic images, on rock art dominated by stag-figures, suggests an intimate relationship between beasts and half-beasts. Piers Vitebsky (1995: 106–107) comments that, in certain shamanistic hunter-societies, the shaman understands the movements of game because he has been an animal, thus having the ability to negotiate with the spirits for the souls of slain beasts and to ensure their return to be hunted again. The discrepancy between the two groups of stag/humans at Camonica may indicate differing perceptions of equivalence or superiority of one element over the other: in the antlered human figures, humanity appears to be dominant, whereas the images with merged stag and human bodies appear to express balanced equality. But the latter could also be read in terms of human manipulation of the wild, for in the merged stag/people pictures, the human rides the stag, as if it were a horse, and the human element thus retains control and responsibility (Ingold 1986: 103). A similarly asymmetrical relationship between human and deer may be represented by the later Iron Age bronze figurine from Bouray, Essonne (Figure 7.8), of a young naked man, wearing a torc and seated cross-legged, with hooves instead of feet (Pobé & Roubier 1961: pl. 11; Joffroy 1979: no. 78).

Study of other Iron Age and Roman-period human/stag therianthropes may help develop understanding of their meaning and, in particular, to test theories as to whether such images represented masked and dressed-up people or monsters. One icon in particular seems to show the latter: this is the image depicted on the reverse of a late Iron Age silver coin in the numismatic collections of the National Museum of Wales (Boon 1982: 276–282). It shows a human head with knobbly antlers, surrounded by circular motifs, possibly representing celestial bodies. But visible between them is a headband supporting a central wheel-shaped headdress; the face itself looks like a mask, with cut-outs for eyes and a moulded nose. The wheel-topped headgear is strongly reminiscent of the bronze diadems from a Romano-British temple at Wanborough in Surrey, found with other regalia, including sceptre-fittings (O'Connell & Bird 1994: 98–120). There is some coeval faunal evidence for the wearing of antler-headdresses: a shrine of middle Iron Age date at Digeon (Somme) in northern Gaul (Meniel 1987: 101–143) produced a set of ten antlered red-deer skull-caps, each frontal bone pierced as if for fastening to a headband; and a similar find came from a pit containing Roman pottery at Hook's Cross in Hertfordshire (Tony Rook, pers. comm.; Aldhouse-Green 2001d: fig. 15). Antlered headdresses are recorded in hunting societies from the Mesolithic site of Star Carr in Yorkshire (Mithen 1999: 45–46; Morrison 1980: 120) to early eighteenth-century Siberia, whence Nicholas Witsen drew a picture of an antler-wearing Tungus shaman, wielding a drum (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998: 11, fig. 3). In the context of Roman Gaul, the images from Savigny (Côte d'Or) (Deyts 1992: 45) (Figure 6.6) and Sommerécourt (Haute-Marne) (Espérandieu 1915: no. 4839) (whose heads have sockets for detachable antlers) might represent shamanic figures that could be adapted according to season, in mimicry of the cycle of antler-shedding and regrowth.

As discussed earlier in connection with the horned snake, one of the inner plates of the Gundestrup cauldron depicts an antlered human (Figure 6.2), wearing a torc and holding a second, seated cross-legged on the ground with a stag beside him and a ram-headed serpent grasped in his hand (see above). Double hybridization is exhibited, in the stag/human and the snake/ram, and each pairing displays an apparently oppositional relationship between wilderness and human-management. Antlered images persisted in Roman Gaul (and, exceptionally in Britain) (Aldhouse-Green 2001c: 80–93) and retain much of their earlier symbolism (the serpent, the torc – sometimes doubled – and cross-legged position). A complex pillar-stone from Paris, dedicated in AD 26 by a guild of Seine boatmen, is potentially the most informative image, for not only does it depict the head of a bearded, elderly antlered man, with a torc hanging from each antler, but it bears the inscribed word 'Cernunno', thus dedicating the carving to 'the horned one' (Espérandieu 1911: no. 3133). The context of this figure is significant, for it shares the column with a range of other images, some overtly Roman, others Gaulish (Duval 1961: 265–268), and may thus, like the complex iconography of the Gundestrup cauldron, serve as a narrative text, illustration of a mythic episode or even an epic poem.

Of the several Gallo-Roman antlered images recorded, two suffice to indicate the continuance and increasing complexity of the human/stag hybrid motif. On a rare figurine-type, red-deer antlers are worn by women (Boucher 1976: nos. 317–318; Deyts 1992, 40: fig. 7.10), thus exhibiting a deliberate gender-twist (see Chapter 3; Figure 3.12), in addition to the presentation of a blend of human and animal forms. These images may represent multi-layered monstrosity or they may lend weight to the notion that they depict women dressing up in antler-headdresses, though the statuettes themselves give no hint that artificial antlers were strapped on. In Chapter 3, ideas of mixed-gender images are explored; it is possible that intentional tensions of gender-contradiction are presented by antlered female figurines, and that we should regard such mixing as social metaphors for the interrogation of gender-roles and issues of belonging, marginality, exclusion and bridge-building between apparently polarized opposition (Green 1997a).

The second image is a relief-carving from Reims, in north-east Gaul (Figure 8.8), on a stone depicting three figures (Espérandieu 1913: no. 3653; Green 1989: fig. 38). The central one is bearded, antlered and wears a torc; he sits cross-legged on a throne, dispensing a river of largesse (coins, corn or grapes) from a large open sack, spilling out its contents before a small stag and bull standing at the foot of the dais. He is flanked by two 'Classical' deities, whose attributes appear to identify them as Apollo and Mercury. The discrepant sizes of the figures on this relief may be significant, for the central, antlered figure is large, both in proportion to his divine companions and, more emphatically, to the animals at his feet. There is no doubt that the sculptor intended the eye to be drawn to this central character, and his relationship to the others is dominant. It is worth drawing attention to the

persistence of juxtaposed wilderness and order, seen in the other analogous representations considered earlier: apart from the blend of human and wild animal embraced by the antlered image himself, the stag and bull represent forest and field, wild and domestic, though the thread of masculinity runs through the entire scene. The relationship between *gallitas* and *romanitas* presented by the depiction of the three beings on the Reims stone is fundamental to its meaning, but the complex issues of identity, resistance and colonialism – as discernible in iconography – is the theme of Chapter 8, where the Reims image is revisited.

Being other: monsters and visions

Whatever the precise meanings with which hybrid, animal/human or animal/animal representations were imbued, the intention must have been to disturb, to counter material realities and present both difference and linkage between states of being. The presentation of spirit-monsters or masked, dressed-up priests served to make statements about otherness, about the desire to express relationships, tensions, contradictions and disturbance. The inspiration for such imagery may have come from dream-visions, from the trance-experience of ritualists or simply from a love of paradox and expression of the imagination. But it is likely that this uneasy exploration of the grotesque arose from transformatory experiences, whether founded in the spirit-world or in earth-world experience. Unnatural, monstrous images may have been inspired by notions of marginality, boundary-crossing and risk, the psychic dangers that ritualists or shamans encounter in their constant movement between cosmological layers of existence.

The trans-species motifs examined here are, in a direct sense, surreal: they are based ultimately on fragmented realities but mixed so as to produce composite images that, by virtue of their hybridity, contain new energy, potency and meaning. In her biography of Francisco de Goya, Julia Blackburn (2002) describes some of the nightmare monsters painted by this powerful artist. In 1792, the the age of forty-seven, Goya contracted a malady that left him profoundly deaf. The blurb on the book's dust-jacket explains that Goya was influenced both by the disjunctive turmoil of his aural isolation and the confusion and violence wrought by the war going on in Spain and that he 'transformed what he saw happening in the world around him into his visionary paintings'. Blackburn describes some of Goya's disturbing art, which resonates strangely with the mixed images of European antiquity: 'And here is the woman whose features are hidden behind a sheep's head mask and the mask of an old man is on her lap as if it has sprouted there, the nose like a huge penis. A man with the face of a bird rides a bear with the face of a donkey' (Blackburn 2002: 80).

The broader arena of alternative realities is explored in the next chapter.

7

PATHS OF PERCEPTION

Ways of seeing, ways of telling

> But the continent they found on their voyage of discovery
> was not the never-never land of the fourth dimension but the
> fascinating reality of visual ambiguity.
>
> (Gombrich 1982: 150)

In a contribution to a critical anthology of modern art and modernism, Ernst
Gombrich was commenting on the Cubist work of Braque and Picasso.
The iconographic repertoire of artists producing figural images in Iron Age
and Roman Europe includes a great deal that appears consciously to avoid
material realism and, instead, to explore other realities and ways of seeing
that broke the boundaries of earthly experience and the mimesis that was
the cornerstone of Classical representation. Schematism, visual punning,
ambiguity and irony, a feel for texture, form and spatial relationships all
underpin imagery that sought to distort, manipulate, over-emphasize and
minimize elements of the human or animal form. The results of such
'somatic negotiation' serve to present challenges, dissonances and alternat-
ive perceptions whose symbolism may make powerful statements about
attitudes to pictorial representations and their subjects. By their release
from the straitjacket of life-copying, artists were able to concentrate on the
message within their images, to excise the unnecessary and underline what
was important. By adopting alternative visualities, artists were freed from
containment within rigid bodily syntax and were able to express sophisti-
cated and multi-layered ideas, ideologies and symbolic meanings. Perhaps
they were also acknowledging the essentially false premise that the gods
were made in the image of humans.

Through a glass darkly: distortion, asymmetry and exaggeration

> Pictorial structures are the results of the artist applying the con-
> ceptual patterns associated with the transmission of a specific
> message.
>
> (Wedde 1992: 183)

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In considering the body, we have set notions concerning size, proportions and symmetries and the relationship between one somatic element and another. Iconographic deviations from the 'normative grammar' of the material body may therefore serve deliberately to disturb, contradict and skew earth-world realities, knocking the consumer off course and opening up new ontological pathways. The actuality of the body remains the axis of representation, and its surreal treatment can manipulate the realities presented by personhood itself, its environment and its cosmological situation.

Six-finger exercise: the Pauvrelay 'musician'

> … and each leg shall be jointed twice and have one foot, and each foot five toes, and each toe shall end with a flat nail … and any creature that shall seem to be human, but is not formed thus is not human.
>
> (from John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids,* 1958: 13)

In his futuristic novel, Wyndham presented a chilling world where the odds were stacked against the chances of breeding true and genetic mutation of people, animals and plants was an endemic scourge, where anything or anybody not conforming to the Norm was pitilessly destroyed as the work of the Devil and an abomination against God. By contrast, the symbolic imagery of later European antiquity suggests that somatic deviancy could be a means of imbuing the body with special potency, of empowering an image and endowing it with particular meaning.

In a museum collection at the Musée du Grand-Pressigny is a limestone figure, probably of later Iron Age date, of a naked man with a torc around his neck, from Pauvrelay à Paulmy (Indre-et-Loire) in central Gaul (Deyts 1992: 18; 1999: 83, no. 38; Coulon 1990: 69–71) (Figure 7.1), one of several torc-wearing images from the region. His hairless head is large, with round staring eyes, his legless torso virtually featureless. His hands appear to hold a wind-instrument, with a carnyx-like mouthpiece, held at a slight slant from the vertical, as if in the act of playing it, a supposition supported by the nails, that are flattened, as if pressing down on finger-holes. The viewer's attention is drawn above all to the hands, which are heavily sculpted in high relief; the left hand appears 'normal', with broadly correct variation in finger-lengths (although the thumb is presented more like a finger), but the right hand is different: the knuckles and thumb are clearly delineated but – more importantly – it has six digits. Simone Deyts (1999: 83) suggests that this is a sculptural error, but such a view is unconvincing for, though the fingers are somewhat coarse, the hands are carved with some care, and it seems unlikely that the artist would unintentionally represent one normal and one abnormal hand. It is, perhaps, more plausible to argue that the right hand is

Figure 7.1 Stone image of a six-fingered flute-player, from Pauvrelay (Indre-et-Loire). © Anne Leaver.

deliberately different. If this is so, it is possible that the sculptor's intention was to depict a real musician, who had this abnormality. Alternatively, it may indicate a desire to present asymmetry, or the hand might have been rendered thus in order to draw attention to the skill of the musician, his dexterity and his accomplished playing.

The Pauvrelay image raises some important issues concerning specialness, deviancy and the depiction of musicians in Iron Age and Gallo-Roman iconography. I have argued elsewhere (2001a: 157–160) that a factor in selecting victims of human sacrifice in European antiquity seems to have been the presence of some somatic abnormality, deformity or disability, as if – perhaps – such individuals were regarded as touched by the gods and compensated by them for their malady with a particular talent or blessing (Garland 1995: 61, 99): Julius Caesar used his epilepsy to project just such a message. Indeed, one of the ritually murdered bog-bodies from Lindow Moss, a mature adult male killed and deposited in a remote Cheshire peat-marsh in about AD 100, had a vestigial extra thumb on his right hand (Turner 1996: 34–35; 1999: 229), that may have marked him out as a marginal being, a special person, perhaps not properly belonging to the core of his community.

The depiction of musicians in Gaulish imagery is rare, but analogies to the Pauvrelay flute-player are recorded. One of the legless stone images from the

Iron Age settlement at Saint-Symphorien, Paule, in northern Brittany (Deyts 1999: 25, fig. 1) depicts a lyre-player, the only one of the four to wear a torc, as if to portray an individual of special status. Derek Allen (1980: 67) was one of the numismatists to draw attention to the association between lyre- and torc-motifs on Iron Age coinage. But whilst the coin-lyres are generally four-stringed, the Paule figure plays a more complicated, six-stringed instrument. To the Gallo-Roman period belong two images of musicians from healing-spring temple-sites in Burgundy, both pan-pipe players: a fragmentary stone figure comes from *Fontes Sequanae* (Aldhouse-Green 1999: 22, fig. 11) and a complete image from Beire-le-Châtel (op. cit.: 130, pl. 6b; Deyts 1976: 9). Interestingly, like the Pauvrelay flute-player, the hands of these two temple-musicians are also emphasized, though not depicted with extra fingers. In speculating on the special status of the being imaged at Pauvrelay, the sacred context of other musician representations may be significant. Scholars such as Vitebsky (1995: 68–79) and Watson (2001) remind us that sound is an important element in shamanistic and other ritual events.

'Warp spasm' and asymmetry at Caerwent

> His face and features became a red bowl: he sucked one eye so deep into his head that a wild crane couldn't probe it onto his cheek out of the depths of his skull; the other eye fell out along his cheek.
>
> (from the *Táin*; trans. Kinsella 1969: 153)

This quotation from the early medieval Insular prose tale, the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, describes the berserk-change that transformed the young Ulster hero Cú Chulainn: when in battle-mode he was imbued with war-fury, given to him by Otherworld forces, and quite literally went out of his mind. The story-teller describes how his body revolved within its skin and how a nimbus, the 'hero-light', encircled his head. The asymmetry of Cú Chulainn's face may be significant in presenting a deliberate, non-normative distortion, a shocking visage that proclaimed his possession by invading spirit-forces. This description of the Ulster champion invites comparison with the appearance of shamans during trance-experience: a photograph of a Mongolian shaman, taken in 1934 (Vitebsky 1995: 10), and the filming of a San elder during an altered state (BBC 2000) illustrate this kind of facial grimace.

In 1901, excavators at the Roman city of Caerwent found a carved sandstone human head reposing on a platform 'in a chamber, evidently a shrine', in part of a late Roman house-complex (Boon 1976: 163–164, fig. 1; Brewer 1986: no. 53, pl. 20). George Boon draws attention to the situation of the head-shrine 'in a remote corner of the grounds, as far as possible from the main dwelling' (Boon 1976: 173). He argues that the Orpheus-mosaic in the

main building perhaps represents symbolism associated with Christianity, and that its owners, eschewing paganism for the new faith, may have relegated the head and its worshippers (possibly domestic servants or farm-workers) to the bottom of the garden. The head, virtually life-size (Figure 7.2), is carved with a flat back, as though to be seen only from the front, and its deliberately truncated neck indicates that it was intended as a genuine *tête coupée* rather than a head broken off a statue. Apart from its apparently sacred context, the treatment of the physiognomy is remarkable, for it seems to have been intentionally asymmetrical, with the two eyes discrepantly carved, so that the right is deep-set and wide open, while the left is much more shallowly sculpted and appears to represent a closed eyelid.

The asymmetrical treatment of facial features on human images is well attested in later prehistory, being noted, for instance, on Iron Age wooden figures at Roos Carr (Figure 4.4) in north-east England, Ballachulish in Argyll (Figure 4.2) and Broddenbjerg in Denmark, on earlier, Bronze Age statuettes, including the one from Ralaghan in Co. Cavan, and in Gallo-Roman sacred wooden sculptures from Chamalières (Puy-de-Dôme) and *Fontes Sequanae* (Côte d'Or) (B. Coles 1990: 318–320; Coles & Coles 1996: 71–76; Aldhouse-Green 1999: pl. 27; Romeuf 2000: 71). In Romano-British contexts, the cat-eared heads from Doncaster and Caerleon (Figures. 6.12, 6.13) and other

Figure 7.2 Stone image of a severed human head from a late Roman house at Caerwent, South Wales. © National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

British stone heads, like the horned one from Chester (Ross 1967: pl. 21d), exhibit discrepancies between one side and the other. Bryony Coles (1990) comments on the gender-ambiguity apparent on many of the prehistoric asymmetrically faced wooden figures. Other areas of the human body might equally be presented in discrepant ways: one of the Iron Age chalk figurines from Garton Slack, Yorkshire (Stead 1988: 9–29), had one deformed and shortened arm; another in the same tradition, from Withernsea, is oddly treated, in that the dalek-like image is depicted wearing what appears to be a cloak, but with visible, asymmetrically positioned male genitals (Figure 3.8). In discussing the symbolism of Iron Age European metalwork-art, Martyn Jope (1987: 97–123) argued convincingly for the metaphoric potency of asymmetrical designs, as depicted by the swirling, lop-sided patterns on the backs of British mirrors, like the one from Great Chesterford in Essex (Megaw & Megaw 1989: 212, fig. 355). So the asymmetry of the Caerwent head has a context; it is probably neither due to accident, carelessness nor lack of finish on the part of the sculptor. It is likely that such discrepant treatment of the face is, instead, something to do with the symbolism of the head and the desire to project an image of strangeness, otherness and sanctity, on analogy with the elongated images of heads depicted in Nigerian Benin iconography (King 2000a: 40). The schema of the severed head has a long-established pedigree in European imagery, particularly in the later Iron Age and Roman periods (Lambrechts 1954). The greatest concentration of such representations lies in the Lower Rhône Valley, in the sanctuaries of Roquepertuse and Entremont (Benoit 1969); the closed eyes and absence of mouths on some of these images have led to their interpretation as the heads of the dead. But the great janiform head mounted on the lintel at Roquepertuse (op. cit.: pl. XXXIV, XXXV) is more likely to depict a deity, guarding the inner space of the shrine and its approach.

Size matters: power and enlargement

> The child … can use the most unlikely tools for the most unlikely purposes – a table upside down for a spaceship, a basin for a crash-helmet. For the context of the game it will serve its purpose rather well. The basin does not 'represent' a crash helmet, it *is* a kind of improvised helmet, and it might even prove useful. There is no rigid division between the phantom and reality, truth and falsehood, at least not where human purpose and human action come into their own.
>
> (Gombrich 1987: 84)

A persistent characteristic of figural imagery in the period under study is the exaggeration of one somatic element, usually the head on a human figure. In animal-representations, deer-antlers and the dorsal bristles of wild boars are

most commonly treated in an out-of-proportion, larger-than-life manner. The inference is that craftsmen and their patrons desired to over-emphasize the nodal features of certain images because they constituted the metaphoric 'trigger' or signifier that gave the representation its meaning. Like asymmetry and the 'deformity' of the Pauvrelay right hand, this kind of emphatic distortion denied the grammars of naturalism because the intended message depended upon the rejection of mimetic boundaries and the need to write large.

The greatest concentration of stag-imagery is presented on the prehistoric rock-engravings from Camonica Valley in northern Italy (Anati 1965; Priuli 1988, 1996). The disproportionately large size of the antlers on many of the figures indicates a preoccupation with the form, shape and symbolism of this anatomical detail. On one complex scene a stag, ridden by a human figure whose body merges with that of his mount, bears antlers more than three times the height of the animal itself (Anati 1965: 171; Green 1992: fig. 3.13; 1997a: fig. 10) (Figure 7.3). The antler-proportions closely resemble those worn by the two stags on the Hallstatt-period bronze 'cult-wagon' (Figure 5.7) from the chieftain's tomb at Strettweg in Austria (Bonenfant & Guillaumet 1998: 59–64). Several rock-surfaces at Camonica depict groups of stags, all with enormous antlers, so that the herds look like forests on the move (Priuli 1988: 53, 68, 85). Indeed, the tree-symbolism is overtly presented in the imagery of animals from whose heads project a central 'branch' with smaller branches radiating from it (op. cit.: 80). The ambiguity of the antler-tree motif at Camonica is further complicated by the blurring of

Figure 7.3 Merged stag/human on a rock-carving at Camonica Valley, North Italy © Paul Jenkins.

antlers and rayed 'solar' symbols (Green 1991a: 23; Anati 1965: 167). It is possible that ambivalent symbolism is intended, with a shared signifier tapping into what was important for the Camunians: masculinity, hunting, the forest wilderness and the sun, all of which could be contained within the single antler-form. The seasonal change of the woodland, the shedding and regrowth of antlers and the cyclical behaviour of the sun may all have fed into the one highly charged motif.

The large size of a stag's antlers (indicating a high level of fitness), together with his sheer physical strength, are a proclamation of success, fertility and control. An essentially similar kind of thinking may have influenced the production of other animal-images with over-emphasized features. The Romano-British bronze figurine of a goat, found at Dumbuck in Dunbartonshire (Green *et al.* 1985; Green 1992: fig. 2.26), has enormously exaggerated horns that dwarf its body and the figure only remains balanced because of the elongation of the torso and the short thick legs (Figure 7.4). Similar celebration of 'horn-power' may be observed on some of the iron fire-dog terminals from late Iron Age Britain, notably on the one from Barton (Cambs) (Green 1992: fig. 2.23), which depicts slender bulls' heads with huge up-curved horns. Such over-emphatic treatment of cattle-horns finds analogies in the bull-dominated

Figure 7.4 Romano-British bronze goat with exaggerated horns, from Dumbuck, Dunbartonshire. © National Museums of Scotland.

Bronze Age rock art of Mont Bégo in the French Alps (Priuli 1996: 62; Briard 1987; Scarre 1998: 154–155), described by Chris Scarre as 'a place of special sacredness for prehistoric communities of the surrounding lowlands, a quality that was enhanced by its very remoteness'. It is, perhaps, valid to draw analogies with the significance of bull-horns to the Minoans, for whom the so-called 'horns of consecration' contained symbolism associated with territorial power (d'Agata 1992: 247–255).

The reverse of a silver coin in the collections of the National Museum of Wales depicts two wild animals, a stag and a boar in profile, surrounded by circular 'celestial' motifs (Figure 7.5). The stag's head is dominated by a great eye and heavy antlers; the boar, positioned above or, in perspective, behind it, has an equally prominent eye, a tusk and an enormous dorsal ridge, a thick as the creature's entire body (Green 1992: fig. 3.4). Both beasts are shown running (perhaps pursued by a hunter), and both antlers and bristles are depicted slanting backwards, as though to indicate fast movement (and thus, perhaps, to symbolize concepts of space, time, linear sequence and becoming: Thomas 1996: 31). Exaggerated bristles like this – indicative of boars in fighting mode – are a persistent theme in Iron Age porcine imagery, particularly on coins, like the bronze issues of the Veliocasses (National Museum of Wales Collection). In non-numismatic boar-figures, artists frequently used the exaggerated dorsal space as a vehicle for involved abstract pattern: the little boar-figurines from Lunçani (Romania) and Báta (Hungary) (Megaw 1970: nos. 225; Megaw & Megaw 1989: fig. 248) show this very clearly.

Figure 7.5 Iron Age coin depicting a stag and boar, with exaggerated antlers and dorsal bristles, from Maidstone, Kent. © Paul Jenkins.

In others (Figures 5.8–5.10), the ridge merely emphasizes the ferocity of the animal presented in the curled snout and exposed tusks. Like antlers and horns, the hyperbolic treatment of boars' crests appears to have contributed to the repertoire of 'power-representation' also observable in human imagery, and to which the discussion now turns.

One of the carved rocks at Val Camonica is known as the 'Roccia della grande mano' (Priuli 1996: 121, fig. 201). It depicts a human figure, the head undeveloped and merged with the torso, the left arm handless but the right ending in a huge hand, as big as the rest of the body (Figure 7.6). I suggest elsewhere that one way of reading the image is as the result of 'hallucinogenic distortion', as drug-induced shifting visuality during trance-experience (Aldhouse-Green & Aldhouse-Green 2004). Such hand-emphasis is recorded elsewhere in Camunian rock art and is also a persistent feature in Scandinavian rupestrine imagery. It is of interest that the dominance of this big right hand is counterbalanced by the diminution of the head and the absence of a left hand, as if to place further emphasis on the all-important right hand, perhaps because it was the main agent of action in the body, and had a broader signature in terms of empowerment: in the Benin iconography of the Lower Niger, the hand was symbolic of male aggression and control (Dean 1983: 33–40). Attention is drawn to the hands in some Gaulish Iron Age imagery: in Chapter 3, reference was made to the raised thumbs on the asexual granite Breton statue from Lanneunoc (Figure 3.16) and on Armorican coins. The six fingers at Pauvrelay may present similar emphasis.

Another repeated somatic exaggeration, in the repertoire of the northern rock-artists, occurs in the representation of so-called 'big men'. They are often depicted with hugely over-emphasized calf-muscles and enormous, erect phalluses; the southern Swedish images from Kasen Lövåsen in Bohuslän and
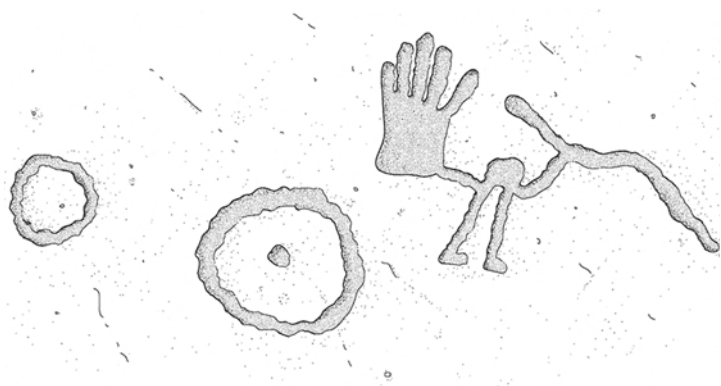
Figure 7.6 Image of an individual with vast right hand, on the 'Roccia della grande mano' at Camonica Valley. © Anne Leaver.

Boglösa in Uppland (J. Coles. 1990: 42, figs. 11g, 25; 2000: 51, pl. 63; Bertilsson 1987: fig. 52:10) have bird-beaked heads, as if engaged in transformatory rituals, and the 'big men' are sometimes shown dancing. Their bulging calves may, like the antlers of alpha-stags, be designed to be read as presentations of fitness, power and status. Seen in this context, the big right hand at Val Camonica could equally reflect power, skill and dominance, and the ability to do and to control more successfully than others.

In the Iron Age and Roman-period anthropomorphic imagery of temperate Europe, exaggeration appears at its most persistent in the treatment of eyes, heads and hair. The metalwork art of temperate Europe during the later first millennium BC was dominated by 'abstraction' and by a paucity of mimetic anthropomorphic representation, but the human head, albeit often in distorted form, was a recurrent motif spanning a wide time/space continuum, and may represent some manner of shared world-views. In the later fifth century BC, the cremated remains of a woman were interred under a barrow at Kleinaspergle, one of a cluster of high-status later Hallstatt tombs in the vicinity of a hillfort known as the Hohenasperg, in Baden-Württemberg (Megaw 1970: no. 50; Megaw & Megaw 1989: 55, fig. 47). She was accompanied in the grave by drinking-equipment, including Attic ware and a bronze flagon, the base of its handle decorated with a human head (Figure 7.7). Vincent Megaw (1970: 64) draws attention to the influence of satyr-images on

Figure 7.7 Head on the base of a bronze flagon-handle, from Kleinaspergle, Germany. © Paul Jenkins.

Italic *stamnoi* on treatment of the German flagon-face, but more local to central Europe is the use of unrealistic parody or caricature, in the bulging cheeks, chin and forehead and – above all – in the prominent eyes. The sense of monstrosity is enhanced by zoomorphic ears and exaggerated masses of hair and beard that flow from the face in great cascades of overlapping plates. Similar emphasis on the hair and eyes can be observed on the decoration of other early Iron Age flagons from funerary contexts, notably on the handle of a bronze jug, broadly coeval with the Bad Dürkheim vessel, found at the Dürrnberg cemetery in Austria. Both ends of this flagon-handle depict human faces, with over-large eyes (Megaw & Megaw 1989: pls.V, VI): the head at the handle-base is surrounded by running spirals that appear to present rampant hair and beard; the one at the top is shown apparently in the process of being devoured by a weird, cat-like animal.

The dominance of eyes in depictions of the human face is maintained in later Iron Age and Gallo-Roman iconography (Figure 4.4). Thus, on the somatically distorted bronze image from Bouray (Essonne), probably produced in the second or first century BC (Figure 7.8), prominent paste-inlaid eyes are displayed in a disproportionately large head, clearly intended to hold the viewer's gaze (Joffroy 1979: no. 78; Green 1996: 37). In this case it is the differential material and colouring of the eyes rather than their size that clamour for attention. But during the first century AD, Gallo-Roman healing-sanctuaries, like those at *Fontes Sequanae* in Burgundy and Chamalières in the Auvergne, were the repositories for votive offerings, in the form of stone or wooden
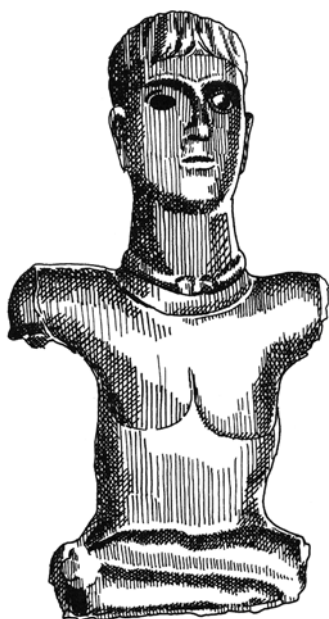
Figure 7.8 Bronze figure of a torc-wearing man, with huge head and small, hooved feet, from Bouray, Essonne. © Paul Jenkins.

images of pilgrims who came to worship and pray for a cure. The iconography of many such sites displays a preoccupation with the eyes (and sometimes they are the only facial feature indicated in an otherwise minimalist representation): at *Fontes Sequanae* pilgrim-portraits emphasizing the eyes are often complemented by small bronze *támata* (model body-parts) depicting pairs of eyes (Deyts 1983: nos. 26, 38, 75; 1994; 120, pls. 13, 15, 52–54; Aldhouse-Green 1999: pls. 18, 25). Some images apparently depict blindness (Deyts 1994: 40; Aldhouse-Green 1999: pls. 17, 18), and the heavy, elongated eyelids suggest the agony of trachoma.

The examples of eye-emphasis presented here serve to indicate a variety of possible interpretations for such imagery. The context of the Gallo-Roman curative shrines suggests that the message intended for the divine presence involved the underlining of the condition from which relief was sought. But the 'bug eyes' of Iron Age metalwork art clearly accord with a different perspective, and the frequent association between exaggerated eyes and other contra-normative elements, such as zoomorphic/anthropomorphic hybridization, perhaps leads to notions of transformation and even shamanism. The entranced Mongolian shaman described above (Vitebsky 1995: 10) has unfocused, bulging eyes turned up in his head, and they, together with his stiff, jerking movements, are transparent indicators of his entrancement. Whatever the precise, and context-dependent, meanings of eye-symbolism in iconography (and whole books have been written on the subject: for example, Crawford 1957; di Stasi 1981), the overarching intention is to draw the eyes of the spectator, to cause engagement between viewer and viewed and lock them together in a shared experience. For humans, eyes are inextricably linked with the experiential world, with situatedness and personhood within it. People (and animals) generally make eye-contact before body-contact, and thus literally come face to face with others. In this connection, it is interesting that some of the Iron Age 'war-sanctuaries' of southern Gaul – Entremont and its fellows – contain iconography wherein the human head is depicted with closed eyes (Benoit 1969: pls. LX, LXI), as if to reflect death, closure, absence of engagement and the negation of being. For some young children (I experienced this in my own childhood), shutting the eyes makes the world, disagreeable humans – and oneself – disappear.

The Bouray figure (Figure 7.8), seated in a crossed-leg position, with a torc round his neck and hooves for feet, a stone statuette of a robed horse-woman, probably the horse-goddess Epona, from the Gallo-Roman town of Alesia (Figure 8.7), and a figure of a seated woman from the *civitas* capital at Caerwent, in south Wales (Figure 7.9), have one thing in common – their disproportionately large heads. In discussion of the 'bug' eyes in many faces depicted in Iron Age decorated metalwork, mention was made of the persistent motif of the human head, even though representations of entire beings is rare for temperate Europe during the first millennium BC. These heads may be distinct, like those from Kleinaspergle and Dürrnberg (above),

Figure 7.9 Stone statuette of a seated woman, from Roman Caerwent. © National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

or they may be ambiguous and half hidden, like those on the Battersea shield-cover (Green 1996: 105). We have seen, too, that in the Rhône Valley area of southern Gaul, such as Entremont and Roquepertuse, carvings of severed heads formed part of temple-furnishings. The considerable number of stone head-images from secure Roman contexts in northern and western Britain, such as those from Caerwent (see above), Caerhun in North Wales (Brewer 1986: no. 52, pl. 19) and Corbridge in the north-east (Phillips 1977: nos. 122, 124, pl. 33), is indicative of a tradition wherein the head could act as *pars pro toto* for an entire human body.

The anthropomorphic figures from Bouray, Alesia and Caerwent serve to illustrate habits of somatic emphasis presumably based on the perceived necessity to draw attention to the head, perhaps because it was seen as the 'power-house' of spiritual energy, as was the case in Benin symbolic art (King 2000a: 40; Schaefer 1983: 71–78). Like modern (sometimes satirical) cartoon art which presents tiny, generic bodies surmounted by large, fully identifiable heads, in depictions of well-known personalities (as in the sketch of Lord Beaverbrook by David Low in 1926, illustrated in Gombrich 1999: 202), or carnival effigies where parading participants wear grotesquely large papier-mâché heads that diminish their bodies, there is a sense of caricature, of parodied exaggeration that puts the head centre-stage. In an archaeological

context, this kind of somatic dimorphism is shown at an extreme level in early Iron Age bronze figurines from western Siberia, which depict grossly enlarged, antlered heads on top of minute bodies (Fedorova 2001: 59).

The figurine from Bouray (Green 1996: 37) (Figure 7.8) displays a deformed body: the head, neck and shoulders are massive, the foreshortened torso has powerfully demarcated, although asymmetrical pectoral muscles, but the legs are puny, and the replacement of human feet with deer-hooves serves to enhance the surreal character of the piece (Carol van-Driel Murray comments that 'feet are on the frontier', and 'it is in their feet that mermaids, centaurs, satyrs and the Devil himself are distinguished from humankind': 1999: 131). Similarly grotesquely proportioned is the seated female stone image from Roman Caerwent (Figure 7.9) who, once again, exhibits a top-heavy, hooded head and upper body, but with tiny arms and even smaller legs that could never support her (Green 1996: 118; Brewer 1986: 13, no. 14, pl. 6). She sits in an armchair and holds a small circular fruit and a palm-leaf or conifer in her hands. Whilst the Bouray figure has no secure archaeological context, the Caerwent statuette came from the base of a deep pit in the Roman town, near to the main temple. The Alesia carving of Epona (Green 1992: fig. 8.5) (Figure 8.7) again exhibits a play on size and this time displays a contra-normative dimorphism between the horsewoman and her mount, a small pony that looks totally incapable of bearing her weight. Epona's limbs and torso are roughly in proportion but her head is exaggerated so that the body appears squat and foreshortened.

In all these images, realism has been subordinated to the desire to convey messages about the importance of the head, whether for reasons of identity, empowerment or for other, hidden, purposes. In the first century BC, Diodorus Siculus (V: 29) said of the Gauls that they regarded the enemy-heads taken as battle-trophies as more highly prized than their weight in gold. But the exaggeration of the head is situated within an artistic context in which avoidance of realism was itself a driving force in representation, and we should avoid simplistic paradigms in attempting to find meaning. The complexity of disproportion is illustrated by one of the numerous 'Jupiter column' sculptures of Roman Gaul and the Rhineland, figure-carvings of celestial horsemen riding down snake-limbed monsters at the summit of tall pillars dedicated to the Roman sky-god or his consort Juno (Bauchhenss & Nölke 1981). The imagery on these *Iupitersäulen* is generally interpreted as allegorical representation of binary opposition, whether between good and evil, light and dark, conqueror and conquered (Aldhouse-Green 2001g), and the monstrosity of the giant beneath the flailing hooves contrasts with the military realism and *romanitas* of the horseman. One of these groups, from Neschers (Puy-de-Dôme) in eastern Gaul (Pobé & Roubier 1961: no. 185; Green 1989: fig. 53: see Chapter 8, Figure 8.5), displays significant emphasis in the great size of the monster's bearded head which, like the image from Bouray, displays deformity in the hunched back and over-muscled shoulders.

The facial expression, apparently one of anguish, is all the more evident because it is 'writ large' and is the irresistible focus of the viewer's gaze.

Schematic shorthand: the semiotic hypothesis

> Despite an often stencil-like character, they even show individual stylisations; abbreviated and reduced to the essentials like a telegram message, they may thus be considered works of art.
>
> (Capelle 1999: 153)

The passage comes from a discussion of Bronze Age Scandinavian rock art but it applies equally to a form of minimalist representation identified in a huge range of spatial and temporal contexts, from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Roman period.

Schematism is a way of representing human or animal figures by reducing form and shape to essentials, cutting out all detail. In discussing schematic depiction in Disney animation, Ernst Gombrich rightly argued (1987: 282) that visual simplicity carries power: 'And how could Disney have enchanted us if he and his team had not probed into the secret of expression and physiognomy that allowed them to perform the true magic of animation …' Much more recently, in a children's radio review programme (BBC 2002b), an art critic made the comment that 'you cannot draw a cartoon horse unless you can draw a real horse'. Schematism allows you to do things with an image impossible with a mimetic representation: it permits ambiguities of interpretation impossible for a detailed or 'photographic' depiction; it can present an 'unfinished', flexible canvas upon which consumers can physically (by painting, for instance) or metaphorically impose detail and meaning that is dependent upon their cognitive context. Its stark economy acts as a form of energy, of empowerment, for it distils the essence of a body, renders it down to its essentials and inhibits distraction. The ambiguity of a schematic motif might be highly significant in serving to join two different but interrelated concepts in a single image: Alistair Whittle (2000: 243–259) has suggested that such interplay may be present on certain designs found on Breton megaliths of the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition; the motifs generally interpreted as axe-symbols sometimes also resemble the form of whales. It may be that both motifs were symbolically important for these sea-communities and that each interpretation acted upon and reinforced the potency of the other.

Schematic representations may also serve deliberately to deny individual identity, to achieve anonymity and thus elevate the image beyond the terms of earth-world and humankind. In their analysis of the Aurignacian art of south-west Germany (between *c*. 36,000 and 28,000 years BP), Thomas Dowson and Martin Porr make the point that the facelessness of anthropomorphic images could relate to a desire to convey the absence of special or

privileged status to living human communities (Dowson & Porr 2001: 174). Their study-area is of extreme interest since there is a pattern of representative form that differentiates between human and animal images: whilst the human figures are rendered schematically, the animals are depicted according to 'different grammars' of production, and are presented in detail (though the Aurignacian artists made a deliberate choice not to portray hooves or feet); in hybrid human/animal images, only the zoomorphic elements have any mimetic detail (op. cit.: 168). Dowson and Porr interpret this discrepant treatment in terms of expressing the 'real' world of the spirits, represented by the animals, as opposed to the muted shadowiness of people.

In terms of our study-frame, schematic imagery should be regarded as part of the freedom from realism exhibited by figural artists who, perhaps, were working within a context where the visual message assumed an importance far greater than the desire or need for naturalism. The scornful dismissal of distorted and schematic sculptures by scholars of Roman provincial art, as the primitive and technologically impoverished scrawlings of indigenous stonemasons, unused to the rigours of mimetic art and unsuccessfully attempting to ape the sophisticated art of their betters (Henig 1984; Johns 2003), is unconvincing. There may, indeed, have been 'bad' artists at work in Roman Britain, but notions of artistic excellence should not begin and end with the Classical paradigm, and lack of detail and of attention to somatic realism should not condemn schematism as incompetent but, rather, as the result of people working to a different template of purpose.

In the context of Aegean Bronze Age imagery, Michael Wedde (1992: 182) issues a timely warning that 'soft interpretations need to be corseted, particularly in so fluid a domain as pictorial exegesis'. If we disaggregate the production of imagery from the production of art, then value-judgements about expertise become less relevant, particularly if the image-producers were operating within a cognitive frame wherein the depiction of cosmological phenomena or spirit-beings needed to be presented as different from earth-world realities. If we look at the artistic repertoire present, for instance, at Romano-British sites like Cirencester, a whole spectrum of representative styles is reflected. There is broad, though by no means universal, concordance between style and content, with the more 'classicizing' subjects, such as Mercury and Minerva, depicted in a more mimetic and less schematized fashion than the Gallogenic *genii cucullati*, and it seems likely that symbolic perception played some role in determining the mode of image-composition. If indigenous Britons were operating within an essentially different ontological religious milieu from that of the Roman world, that may explain why the sacred world was viewed in a manner foreign to the homocentric vision of Classical divinity. In the context of prehistoric rock art studies, Paul Bouissac (1993) terms the notion that representative expression could be sublimated by the desire to communicate meaning the 'semiotic hypothesis'. Dowson and Porr's (2001) exegesis on Aurignacian figural representation reveals that

schematism and 'realism' could be adopted by one and the same individual, sometimes on a single object, in order to distinguish humans from spirit-beings. Similar contiguity of discrepant styles has been noted on prehistoric rock art, for instance at Badami in southern India, where Mathpal (1993: 17) has identified at least six different styles on one composition; the gamut of styles represented makes the best sense in relation to the specific symbolic purpose of each image.

Ambiguity and inversion: riddle at Bad Dürkheim

In adumbrating the interpretative opportunities offered by schematic reductionism (above), I alluded to the potential for flexibility, and the deliberate ambiguities or self-contradictions enabled by such 'open-ended' imagery. A good example comes from a female grave, dating to the late fifth or early fourth century BC, at Bad Dürkheim in the Hunsrück-Eifel region of Germany. One of the grave-goods in the tomb consisted of a fragmentary openwork sheet-gold plaque, at the centre of which is a tiny diamond-shaped human mask (Megaw & Megaw 1989: 70, fig. 76; Green 1996: 83, fig. 55). It is a trick-image for, viewed from one way up, the face is that of a bearded elderly man wearing a leaf crown, but turned upside down it represents a younger-looking beardless face with a triangular top-knot of hair and the leaf-crown becomes a kind of bonnet under the chin, in what may be a conscious visual pun on either old age/youth or male/female (or indeed both) (Figure 7.10). So the cheek-bone contours of the old face, when inverted, become the eye-brows of the younger/female face; the beard becomes hair and the elderly turned-down mouth changes, on the reversed face, to a smaller, smiling one. Such conscious ambiguity is only possible because the economy of line used in the production of the faces, and the illusive play of subject and background (Gombrich 1982: 151), allows for flexible interpretation. The addition of any further detail would cancel out its efficacy as a mutable symbol, for elaboration would merely serve to 'fix' the image in one dimension.

The overt relationship between youth and old age and/or male and female embodied on the Bad Dürkheim mask may act as a signifier for other changeful states of being: if age is the primary theme, it is possible to build metonymic constructs in terms of such mutable interconnections as past → future, ancestral memory → divination, youthful vigour → mature experience and so on. If gender were to be the nucleus of the meaning conveyed by the Bad Dürkheim face, then the male/female inversion represented might be associated with gender issues (and possibly fertility) *per se* or with other relationalities, such as opposition, difference, belonging and exclusion (see Chapters 2 and 3). But bearing in mind the funerary context of the piece, its symbolism may also reflect the transition between two worlds triggered by death. In certain traditions, inversion is closely associated with the Otherworld. For the Arctic Saami people, the Otherworld is a back-to-front
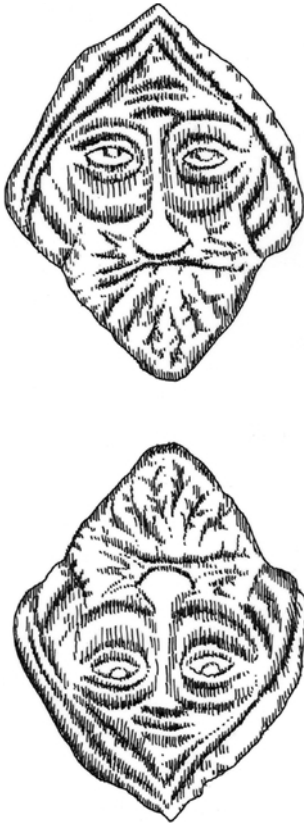
Figure 7.10 Fragment of a gold openwork plaque depicting a reversible human
face, from Bad Dürkheim, Germany. © Paul Jenkins.

version of the material world; the dead walk upside down in the footsteps of
the living, and images of the gods were formed from the upturned roots of
living trees (Bradley 2000: 7, 12). Far away, in the Orissa region of eastern
India, Sora communities also perceive the spirit-world as an inversion of
earth-life, with the seasons reversed; and within some Indonesian cosmolog-
ical systems, the dead speak backwards (Vitebsky 1995: 64). In San rock art,
the depiction of animals upside down is a convention for representing death
(Lewis-Williams 2001: 30, fig. 2.7).

Silhouettes and matchstick men

> If horses or oxen could draw, they would draw gods that
> looked like horses and oxen.
> (Xenophanes, *Satires* frag., after Paden 1992: 20–21)

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Burgundy is an area of Roman Gaul where the horse-goddess Epona appears to have been particularly popular. In this region, her imagery generally takes the form of a horsewoman mounted side-saddle on a mare sometimes accompanied by a foal (see Chapters 3 and 5). Two stone reliefs, from Chorey (Espérandieu 1910: no. 2046; Green 1989: fig. 64) and Cissey (op. cit.: no. 2121), appear to reflect the concepts associated with the Epona schema but without the anthropomorphic element, for they each depict a mare and foal. Furthermore, the Chorey image exhibits an economy of form that attends only to the essentials of the composition: two dimorphic equids, in a nursing mother/suckling infant relationship. The artist has seen fit to omit all unnecessary detail, so that the eye of the viewer could concentrate on the 'guts' of the intended symbolism. If it is correct to infer that these Burgundian carvings belong to the Epona 'package', the absence of the horsewoman herself may be part of the minimalist treatment of the subject.

The representation of hooded figures (*genii cucullati*), often in threes, in Roman Britain and Gaul has been mentioned in Chapter 2. Of the several hooded triads from the Dobunnic Cotswold region (Henig 1993: nos. 95–107), two – one from Cirencester, the other from near Lower Slaughter (both in Gloucestershire: op. cit.: nos. 96, 95) – stand out for their extreme schematism. The Lower Slaughter stone consists merely of an incised 'scratching', hardly worthy of the term 'sculpture', but the Cirencester depiction (Figure 7.11) is different, for while its treatment is severely minimalist, care has been taken over its execution. The three figures appear as precise, silhouetted outlines, standing proud within a sunken frame; the bodies consist merely of hoods and cloaks beneath which pairs of slanting legs display rapid movement to the spectator's right, and the asymmetrical points of each hood reinforce the images' profile presentation, to the viewer's right. The sculptor has distilled the iconography to leave only the essential elements: threeness, hoodedness, the *sagum* or *birrus britannicus* and movement. Unlike the cognate trio from Pithiviers in central Gaul (Deyts 1993: 98–102) (Figure 2.12), whose bodies and emblems are clearly, if stiffly, delineated, there is no attempt at either realistic detail of the human form or individuality on the Cirencester image; here, corporeality is sublimated to the idea of Gallo-British male outer dress. Light, shadow, texture and the relationship of positive image to negative backdrop are all emphasized in an image that arrests the eye and provokes thought (particularly if the stone were dramatically lit so that the relief-carving stood out). The viewer is able to impose imaginative detail (or not) and thus the responsibility for symbolism is shared between artist and patron/consumer. The absence of humanness serves to add a mysterious, otherworldly dimension to the image; the hooded obscurity of the head, the hidden body create a sense of awe, a feeling of unease, and this may have been the precise intention.

The schematic images from the Burgundy and Cotswold regions represent only a minute contribution to a persistently minimalist tradition, influencing

Figure 7.11 Genii cucullati from Cirencester, Glos. © Cotswold District Museum
Service.

a great deal of Gallo-British stone sculpture, in which absence may have been
as significant as presence. The torc-wearing but otherwise 'somatically blank'
image from Alesia has already been discussed (Chapter 1, Figure 1.3); like
the Cirencester *cucullati*, the few elements selected for detail – in this case a
torc – draw the attention because nothing else is there to distract the eye.
Broadly analogous schematism can be identified in much earlier prehistoric
European contexts, albeit within completely different cultural and ideolo-
gical contexts. The Neolithic/early Bronze Age 'statue-menhirs' of Iberia,
northern Italy, Brittany and southern France exhibit extreme minimalist
stylization in which particular elements (breasts or jewellery, for instance)
are selected for 'presence', while faces and most anatomical details are omit-
ted (Oliveira Jorge 1999: 137–144; de Marinis 1999: 145–152), although the
artists responsible were clearly quite capable of producing realistic and
complete stone figures. In interpreting so-called 'blank' images, such as
those of Cirencester or Alesia, we should be aware of work undertaken in
the early Bronze Age Aegean: scholars of Cycladic imagery are increasingly
of the view that at least some of the generic marble images may have had
anatomical details added with paint (Marthari 1999: 159–163). The three

highly schematized wooden heads adorning the votive boat from Nydam in southern Denmark (Gebühr 2001; van der Sanden & Capelle 2001: 21), made – but never used – in the early fourth century AD and sunk, full of battle-scarred and ritually damaged weapons, as an offering to the gods, may equally have been painted, though their remote and expressionless faces (see front cover) may have been fashioned in deliberate denial of *humanitas*. Free-standing statues, like the one from Alesia, may even have been dressed up for festivals and maybe assumed different personae at different religious celebrations.

At the extreme end of the schematic spectrum are the 'matchstick' figures, images in which all that is depicted is the basic linear idea of a body. This form of representation occurs on small objects, sometimes in temple-contexts. Two pieces of Romano-British ceremonial regalia, from shrines in southern England – Woodeaton (Oxon) and Farley Heath (Surrey) – serve to exemplify this tradition. Both consist of images in repoussé on sheet-bronze: the Woodeaton image (Green 1976: pl. VIf; Kirk 1949: 1–46) appears in the middle of a small triangular plaque, and takes the form of a naked, stick-like male body, with emphatic genitals and an overlarge head (Figure 7.12); he carries something in each hand, possibly a club and dagger. In the light of other, overtly military, imagery from the site, it seems likely that this figure depicts a warrior; in its matchstick form, it bears a strong resemblance to the
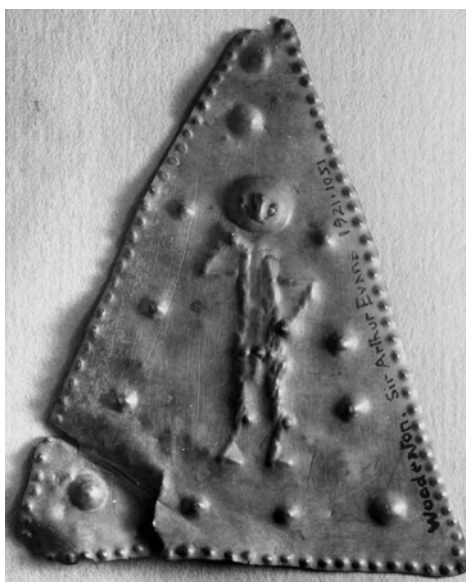
Figure 7.12 Sheet-bronze plaque depicting a 'matchstick man' in repoussé, from a Romano-British temple at Woodeaton, Oxon. © ✝ Betty Naggar.

linear image of a man armed with a sword and shield scratched onto a circular stone from a late Roman context found at Tre-Owen in Powys (Brewer 1986: no. 15, pl. 6). The imagery on the sheet-bronze sceptre-binding from Farley Heath is interesting for, though equally 'simply' executed in linear outline, the iconography is complex and includes a range of human and animal figures and inanimate objects that appear to integrate as a coherent text (Green 1986: fig. 22; Goodchild 1938, 1947). Certain of the motifs – solar symbols, smithing equipment and the long-shafted hammer, for instance – resonate with imagery occurrent elsewhere in Gallo-British iconography, and the glyphs on the sceptre-binding may be best understood as presentation of a lost mythic narrative.

The portrayal of figures in matchstick or outline form can be approached at several levels. The apparent simplicity of their production may or may not raise questions of artistic competence, but – in a sense – this is a red herring, for the purpose of the imagery is likely to have had little to do with art for art's sake but rather to have been concerned with ways of presenting other worlds and ways of perceiving those worlds. 'Open' or outline figures, and so-called 'X-ray' or transparent images, are habitually presented within religious contexts, in shamanistic systems, for instance, where spirit beings are depicted. This kind of iconography has been recorded in prehistoric (and modern) rock art as far apart as northern Australia (Chaloupka 1993: 77–98), Namibia (Blackmore 1996) and Canada (Vitebsky 1995: 18). The exact meaning of such representations must rely on context, but a common factor may be the desire of the artist to display the ability of the ritualist to enter different worlds and to move freely between them.

The power of number

> And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.
>
> (*The Revelation of St John The Divine* 5: 6)

Number is a fundamental element in human cognition. Numbers are 'used as paradigms of identity' (Crump 1992: 4, citing Bloor 1983). They are used to express order, time, direction, sequence, ranking and thus provide a means of exploring issues concerned with living in the world as self in relation to other people and to the experienced world. Particular numbers may have specific significance according to different cognitive systems: in the final book of the Bible, the *Revelation* accords seven a special symbolism that is persistently applied to a range of referents, including stars, eyes, horns, seals and spirits, all perhaps pivoted upon the seven churches in Asia

to which John's message is addressed. In this context, then, the number seven assumes a transferable sanctity that becomes semi-detached from its original host.

Traditional cosmologies, such as those of Siberia and the Saami together with many other religious systems (Vitebsky 1995: 10, 46), embrace a two- or three-tiered universe (divisible into vertical or horizontal registers), for upper and lower worlds, the dwelling-places of people, spirits and the dead. The Siberian upper, spirit-world is warm, whilst the underworld is dark and cold; 'middle earth' is the home of humans and is prey to disease that seeps up from the lowest realm (Jordan 2001: 89). The Lohorung Rai communities of Nepal also perceive the middle of three dimensions to belong to people (Hardman 2002: 86), with the 'ancestors and well-integrated dead' inhabiting the upper world, while the lower world is that of 'primeval snake-ancestor-spirits'. The triple worlds of the Saami of Greenland High Arctic communities are perceived to meet at the liminal space of the hearth (Bradley 2000: 12; Gulløv & Appelt 2001: 159). In cosmological constructs like these, the shaman's ability to cross the frontiers of these three worlds and liaise between them is crucial to the well-being of the community. The notion of triple or double worlds is mirrored by the shaman's own persona as a multi-faceted being, capable of manifestation in synchronous male/female/hermaphrodite or human/animal form. Bradley (2000: 135, after Randsborg 1993) suggests that cosmic layers or divisions may be recognized iconographically, citing carvings inside the Bronze Age burial cist at Kivik in Scania, whose tiered organization has been interpreted as reflective of upper, middle and lower worlds. Such layering might equally be recognizable, for instance, in the upper and lower registers of imagery on the late Iron Age cauldron from Gundestrup (Kaul *et al.* 1991) (Figure 5.2), and in Romano-British villa-mosaics that depict Orpheus in the centre of concentric rings around which animals run in a perpetually circling frieze, as if they inhabit a lower world controlled by the spirit-being at the centre of the universe (Scott 1993: 103–114).

In the iconographical traditions within the present study-frame, the numbers two and three are habitually selected for repetitions of heads, bodies and other somatic elements. The persistence, particularly of triadism, argues for its significance as the number three, over and above mere intensification, and for meaning associated specifically with trinitarian perceptions related to cosmological perspectives and a shared world-view, in which triplism was a resonant motif. It may be that elements of tiered universes, differing states of being, age, sequence and order may contribute to the recurrent theme of multiple imagery (Green 1991b). Times of being (past, present and future), place (layered worlds or multi-directionality), elements (air, earth, water) are just a few models of meaning perhaps implicit in triple imagery. A nineteenth-century cartoon by Daumier (Gombrich 1999: 204, fig. 287) depicts a caricatured head of Louis-Philippe as a *signum*

triceps – a triad of past, present and future, in a deceptively simple image of age, time and sequence.

Measuring lifespans: hags, matrons and maidens

A few miles north of Cardiff, motorists travelling on the A470 are distracted by the dramatic sight of a fairy-tale castle rising from the beech forest, its turrets and conical roofs glinting red and silver in the sunlight. This is Castell Coch, the Victorian fantasy residence, built on the site of a medieval castle, of John Patrick Crichton Stuart, third Marquis of Bute and his architect-designer, 'the eccentric genius' William Burges, who together created a 'fabulous masterpiece of escapism' (McLees 1998: 2). Above the fireplace in the drawing-room of Castell Coch is an elaborately painted carving of the three Fates, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, spinner, measurer and cutter of the life-thread. Beneath each Fate is an appropriate image of the human age-sequence: a baby, a youth and an old man (op. cit.: 1, 35), and the goddesses, too, exhibit apt gradations of age.

A feature of Gallo-Roman female triadic imagery is age-discrepancy, indicative of order, time and change, something touched upon earlier, in examination of femininities, illustrated by the three bare-breasted women from Vertault (Figure 3.10). In the iconography of the Rhenish Ubii, a repeated pattern of age-differential can be discerned in the representation of three women on a number of grandiose public stone altars and modest clay figurines, designed for private consumption. The large monuments are sometimes inscribed with dedications to a local triad of deities known as the *Matronae Aufaniae*, a territorial sobriquet, and though their names and iconography connect them to their Ubian homeland, the dedicants are sometimes high-ranking 'Roman' officials: a case in point is the stone set up in Bonn by a treasury-minister (a *Quaestor)* of Cologne in AD 164 (Espérandieu 1938: no. 7761; Wild 1968: pl. 1; Green 1989: fig. 85) who might, none the less, have been a local man.

The Rhenish goddesses are depicted in a highly idiosyncratic manner: two middle-aged women, wearing huge circular headdresses, flank a young girl with bare head and long flowing hair. On the Bonn altar, they are all clad in long robes, carry baskets of fruit or bread and sit side by side on a bench; the two older women turn towards the central girl, only she has a footstool and she is much smaller than her companions. Above and behind the main triad are the busts of three women, who appear as though a group of devotees looking over the wall of a gallery. On a small pipe-clay figurine also from Bonn (Green 1989: fig. 86) (Figure 7.13), the women are treated almost identically to those on the stone, but here they are all the same size, and the central girl is differentiated from her sisters not only by age and hairstyle but also in her possession of a lunate neck-ornament. What is interesting about both these images (and cognate depictions in the region) is the age-variation

Figure 7.13 Pipe-clay group of three women, probably the *Matronae Aufaniae*, from
Bonn, Germany. © author.

between the three: at first glance, a dyadic relationship is expressed, with
youth flanked by maturity. But close scrutiny reveals that, while the greatest
distinction is between the central girl and her older companions, age-
differences can also be identified between these two, as if the entire span of
life – from adolescence to old age – is present. Here, then, three represents the
passage of time, the relationships (and differences) between youth, the
middle years and old age, the future, present and past. Broader issues
explored in the imagery might include kinship, rites of passage and tiered
cosmological perspectives. The particular attention paid to the young girl may
point to the notion of initiation into adulthood and the importance of sup-
port, advice and wisdom from the elders (her lunate pendant may even refer
to the onset of her menarche). The frequently male dedication of the Ubian
monuments indicates that devotion to the goddesses was not the preserve
of women, and that the ideas expressed in the imagery were by no means
gender-specific but were related to profound issues of human concern. Life,
death and after-death and the relationships between tiers of being, the bur-
geoning of strength and latent fertility of youth, mature wisdom and the
power of the elders, who were responsible for memory (H. Williams 2003)

and the reaffirmation of identity, may all have fed into the presentation of the maiden, matron and old woman of the Roman Rhineland.

Three × three: a double triad at Bolards

Les Bolards at Nuits-Saint-George (Côte d'Or) was a frontier settlement that grew up at a major crossroads on the border between the tribal territories of the Lingones, Aedui and Sequani. Centrally placed by the forum-basilica of the modest town was an imposing temple containing the healing paraphernalia common to many Burgundian thermal shrines, including pipe-clay figurines, bronze eye-plaques and stone sculptures of doves. The religious precinct was used from the first century BC until its abandonment in the early fifth century AD; the stone edifice was erected, on an already sacred open-air site, in the late first century AD.

In the south part of the temple was a stone carving of three anthropomorphic beings, dated by the excavators to the second century AD (Figure 7.14). The stone is divided into two registers, the lower displaying a frieze of

Figure 7.14 Sculpture of a triad, including a triple-faced being, from Bolards, Nuits-Saint-Georges, Burgundy. © Anne Leaver.

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animals – a bull, stag, boar, dog and hare – with a tree in the middle. Three seated beings occupy the upper register: on the left is a female figure, wearing a long robe and accompanied by emblems of prosperity (a cornucopiae and a basket of fruit), and holding an offering-plate. The central image is hermaphroditic (see Chapter 3, Fig 3.11), semi-clad and long-haired, with developed breasts and male genitals; it wears a mural crown, signifying its role as guardian of the town. The right-hand figure is male, bearded and antlered and triple-faced, gazing to the front, left and right; next to him is a bag (of money, grain or fruit) (Planson & Pommeret 1986: 53–54; Deyts 2001, 129–142; Pommeret 2001: Inv. 82, figs. 8–9).

The Bolards sculpture is complex and multivocal, containing powerful nuances overtly concerned with tensions between gender (see Chapter 3) and wilderness/domestication. In the present context, it is the repeated use of three that draws the attention: the group of male, female and hermaphrodite form a triad, and the three faces on the antlered male figure intensify the imagery. It should be recalled that the combination of antlers and triple faces recurs in other Gallic contexts, notably at Savigny, near Autun, Langres (Deyts 1992: 45, 46) (Figure 6.6), also in Burgundy, and far away at Condat, near Bordeaux (Espérandieu 1908: no. 1316). (Essentially similar symbolism is present on a second triadic group, from Beaune, in the same region, where three naked male figures sit facing the viewer: here, the central figure is triple-faced and next to him is a uni-faced, antlered and goat-legged man: Espérandieu 1910: no. 2083; Green 1989: fig. 79.) Apart from the issue of number, the carving at Les Bolards sets out to present a range of contra-normative elements (dual sexuality, antlers on a human head) to which the triple-face motif contributes. The entire image seems to evoke notions of boundaries and edges: between male and female, wild and tame, order and disorder; the three-faced image directs his glance at both sides of the border-divide as well as along the axis of the threshold, and it is tempting to relate the motifs on the carving to the physical situation of the town and its temple, at the boundary between three self-determined political groups.

Reims, Lugdunum and Llandaff

The majority of triple-faced images from Gaul (Lambrechts 1942: 33–44; Nerzic 1989: 70–76) are those of mature, bearded men. There is a significantly homogeneous group of images, centred around Reims, tribal capital of the Remi, that consist of disembodied, bearded triple faces (Hatt 1984). They consist of severely rectangular stone blocks within whose frame are carved three faces with shared eyes but with three distinct noses and bearded mouths (Green 1989: figs. 76, 77). Unlike the Burgundian triple-faced images (above), where directionality is an issue, all three faces on the Reims stones look straight ahead. On the top surface of the stones are zoomorphic symbols (a ram's head, tortoise and cockerel) that may relate the *tricéphale*

to a local Mercury-cult, since these animals belong to the original myth of Hermes/Mercury and are frequently present in his iconographic 'package' (a triple-faced image of 'Mercury', with all his normal accoutrements, is recorded from Paris: Lambrechts 1942: 34, no. 6). The Reims faces conform to a standard pattern of mature bearded maleness, and the authority and experience of middle-aged manhood may therefore be a significant factor in their symbolism. (If there is a Mercury-connection, the depictions run counter to the Classical 'norm' of the god's iconography, for in the Graeco-Roman pantheon, Mercury is a beardless youth.) But certain outliers to the Remic group reflect the spectrum of youth and old age (Hatt 1984: figs. 1–12). This is important, for this iconography specifically links number with time, a feature of triplism that we have met already in the imagery of the Ubian goddesses.

Visitors to the Musée de la Civilisation Gallo-Romaine at Lyon, sited directly adjoining the theatre-complex in the heart of ancient Lugdunum, are confronted by the monolithic presentation of a Roman city. The *colonia* was founded in 43 BC on the site of an ancient Gaulish sacred settlement, significantly situated at the confluence of the two Rhônes and the Saône. It was here that, on 1 August 12 BC, Augustus's stepson Drusus established a great federal sanctuary to Rome and Augustus, to act as a political and religious focus for all the Gallic tribes (Audin 1975: 10). While the museum displays and key publications (Audin 1975, 1979) rightly emphasize the importance of Lugdunum as a major centre of *romanitas*, neither the visual presentation of the city's material culture nor the literature make more than a passing reference to Lugdunum's Gallic identity. Indeed, Audin (1975: 17) places considerable emphasis on the 'religion of purely Roman obedience' presented here. But one of the most interesting pieces of iconography from the site is a triple-faced bearded head, looking in three directions, which hints at a once rich indigenous cosmology (Figure 7.15).

There is an uncanny resemblance between some of the triple faces from Roman Gaul and the 'Trinity corbel' in Llandaff Cathedral, Cardiff, carved by the Victorian mason Edward Clarke (Llandaff Cathedral 1999: 7, no. 7), in imitation of some of the 'quaint and grotesque' heads sculpted by the medieval craftsmen who produced the original decorative stonework of the nave (Figure 7.16). The Llandaff corbel-head has three bearded mouths and noses but only four eyes shared among all three faces, thus exhibiting a similar economy of features to the Gallo-Roman faces from Reims. The comparison between the iconography of pagan Gaul and Victorian Welsh Christianity is a salutary one, for it serves as a reminder that meaning is contingent upon context, however outwardly similar the imagery. There is a huge cosmological gulf between the Holy Trinity of Christian tradition and the triple-faced spirit-beings of Gaul, but we may learn something by juxtaposing the two systems for a moment, for the Llandaff corbel makes a significant point about separation and integration that transcends the Christian framework.

Figure 7.15 Stone carving of a triple head, from Lugdunum. © Musée de la Civilisation Gallo-Romaine, Lyon, France (Cliché Ch. Thioc).

Figure 7.16 Nineteenth-century Trinity corbel from Llandaff Cathedral, Cardiff. © R.J.L. Smith & Associates.

The 'three-in-one' symbolism of Father, Son and Holy Spirit depends on a sub-tle blend of oneness and threeness that may be applicable to pagan cos-mologies, and it would appear that the visual linkage exhibited in the shared eyes and merging of faces provides clues to the ambiguities of relationship between the beings so represented.

Triads and dyads

> It is characteristically human to think in terms of dyadic relations:
> we habitually break up a triadic relation into a pair of dyads.
> (Turner 1966: 71; after Kempe 1890)

The surreality presented by triple-visaged images is similarly expressed by the addition of a third horn to depictions of bulls in the Gallo-British artistic repertoire, a well-documented schema in Gaul, with British outliers (Colombet & Lebel 1953: 130ff.) What is more, the motif is not confined to bull-images but transgresses to other, 'inappropriate' host-figures: horses, boars and humans (Green 1998b), suggesting the evolution of an independ-ent referential status. It even seems as though the motif did not originate with the bull, since its earliest recorded presence is on horses carved in stone at the Iron Age *oppidum* of Mouriès in southern Gaul (see Chapter 6) and the copper-alloy fitting in the form of a triple-headed human mask found in first-century BC levels at the *oppidum* of Hafenturm, near Cologne (Green 1998b: fig. 4) (Figure 7.17). In terms of ideas expressed, the latter image bears a strong resemblance to a curious little hollow-cast bronze head from a Roman healing-sanctuary at Great Walsingham in Norfolk (Bagnall Smith 1999: 26–28, pl. III a–c). It has a torc round its neck and has three knobbed horns projecting from its hair or cap, and looks more like a traditional jester or playing-card joker than a Romano-British sacred image (Figure 7.18). But its neck-ring, the knobs on its horns, and its facial likeness to many Iron Age and Roman images, such as the two-horned bucket-mount heads from the late Iron Age burial at Baldock (Stead & Rigby 1986: 56, fig. 22), embed the Walsingham find firmly within ancient British tradition.

Of the many figurines of triple-horned bulls from Roman Gaul, one – from Auxy in Burgundy – bears an inscription attesting its unequivocally sacred character (Lebel & Boucher 1975: 108, no. 232). A rare group of stone bulls comes from a Burgundian healing-shrine at Beire-le-Châtel, which also pro-duced a triple-horned human head, exemplifying the transference of the motif between animal and human hosts at a single site. A British three-horned bull from Colchester (Eckhardt 1999: 50–90, pl. XB) is of especial interest since it comes from an exotic grave at the very beginning of the Roman period (AD 52–65), is made of pipe-clay (rather than the usual bronze) and appears to represent the humped Zebu cattle that belong to oriental and

Figure 7.17 Bronze triple-horned human face from a late Iron Age site at Hafenturm, Germany. © Paul Jenkins.

African contexts; it wears the sacred belt worn by sacrificial bulls in Roman rituals, such as the *suovetaurilia*, and seen on images, for instance, on the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus in Rome (Open University 1982: pl. 58) and on Trajan's Column (Adkins & Adkins 1996: fig. 99).

The addition of a third horn to bull-images creates a tension and contradiction between dyadism and triadism; the extra horn fills the space framed by the two and thus creates a physical (and perhaps metaphorical) bridge across the boundary, the no-man's-land between opposed pairs. Relationships and oppositions between three and two can be explored through the analogy of central African Ndembu cosmology, as studied by Turner (1966: 47–84), who drew attention to the oscillation between dyads and triads in the colour classification of the Ndemba, for whom red, white and black possessed discrete symbolism; yet the Ndembu trinary system tended to be subverted into a binary construct wherein red + white were joined in opposition to black. In the triple-horned bull-imagery of ancient Gaul, we may be able to identify a reverse process in which the number two was transformed into a trinary format. If, as is suggested by the persistently triplistic imagery of Gallo-British iconography, threeness possessed significance over and above intensification through multiplication, the third horn perhaps acted as an immediate transformatory agent not only in terms of norm → non-norm but – perhaps also – profane → sacred.

Figure 7.18 Bronze head with triple-horned cap, from the Romano-British temple at Walsingham, Norfolk. © Jean Bagnall Smith.

Seeing double

The term 'doublethink' comes from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1954: 171). He uses this notion to describe 'the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously and accepting both of them', thereby acknowledging two alternative realities at the same time. Liebeschütz (1979: 36) adopts Orwell's word to express the frictions and ambiguities between Greek and Roman Stoic philosophy and belief in the gods. But 'doublethink' may also usefully be adopted in explorations of multiple images, especially in cases of paired opposition. Two pieces, one from Bavaria, the other from North Wales, serve to illustrate such twinning. The German image, from the great *oppidum* on the Danube at Manching, consists of a linch-pin, probably from a cart, dated to the second century BC (Megaw & Megaw 1989: 144; Green 1996: 109, fig. 77). It takes the form of back-to-back cattle-heads (essentially similar, though in miniature, to the bull-head terminals of fire-dogs, like that from Capel Garmon: Chapter 5). The paired symbolism on the fitting is itself doubled, for beneath the double bovine head, at right angles to it, are a pair of long-necked birds' heads. The Welsh paired image occurs on two copper-alloy plaques from a middle/later Iron Age

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Figure 7.19 Middle/later Iron Age copper-alloy plaque with motif of two conjoined human heads, from Tal-y-Llyn, Meirionethshire. © National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

hoard at Tal-y-Llyn in Meirionethshire (Savory 1976: 56, pl. IIIa) (Figure 7.19). Each plaque is trapezoidal, with nail-holes for attachment to a rigid surface; both bear images of two opposed human heads joined by a single long neck. Jeremy Dronfield's discussion of the 'tunnel experience', induced during shamanic trance, that he suggests is present on Irish passage-grave art (Dronfield 1996: 37), prompts me to wonder whether something of the kind is represented at Tal-y-Llyn. The occurrence of back-to-back janiform-heads, seen – for instance – on the early Iron Age statue from Holzerlingen in Germany (Megaw 1970: no. 14) and the great double head adorning the entrance to the shrine at Roquepertuse in Provence (op. cit.: no. 235) may express the ability to gaze in different directions – out and in, towards the past and future and/or into multiple worlds. Interestingly, the early Christian polemicist Minucius Felix (*Octavius* 22.5–23.1), in scoffing at Roman paganism, specifically pokes fun at double-headed Janus 'as if he could walk backwards' (Beard *et al.* 1998, vol. 2: 29). A nineteenth-century German satirist caricatured Napoleon by drawing him as a janiform head, mounted on a dais

of human skulls, 'smiling at the past and trembling at the future' (Gombrich 1999: 202–203, fig. 286).

The notion of pairing as a significant mode of symbolic expression is supported by its presence in other manifestations, notably in the deposition of Iron Age cauldrons in Ireland, Scotland and Wales (Green 1998d) and in the burial of paired bodies in Britain and Europe (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 164–165; Whimster 1981: no. 392; Fox 1923: 77–79). The number two may be associated with notions of 'self' and 'other' or with upper and lower realms. In Classical tradition, twins were imbued with special significance, and the Dioscuri were divine twin brothers who belonged to Upper and Lower worlds and formed a link between them (Beard *et al.* 1998: vol. 1, 12; Feeney 1998: 104). The Dioscuri were transitional beings whose epiphany involved their allegiance to mortality and immortality. The dual persona of the shaman, as a 'two-spirit', often expressed in terms of gender- or species-transgression (Vitebsky 1995: 10–11; Jacobs *et al.* 1997), may equally be associated with twinned imagery.

Summing up: the 'wives' of Bath

> Images seem to speak to the eye, but they are really addressed to the mind. They are ways of thinking in the guise of ways of seeing.
>
> (Duff 1975: 12; quoted in Marshall 2000: 326)

The twisting of earth-world reality discernible in all the imagery presented in this chapter can be recognized as a form of surrealism, a mode of perception that Arnold Hauser described as an expression of living on two levels, two spheres of consciousness that interconnect and contradict, like dream-experience (Hauser 1962: 224). Empirical observation is acknowledged and subverted. Codes of reality are disturbed and the resultant dissonance forms reagents for new energies and forces, what Martyn Jope (1987: 108) has called 'pressure tectonics'. Exaggeration, asymmetry, repetition and schematic reductionism all contributed to a form of visual messaging that informed, influenced and empowered the image and what it represented: the signifier and the signified.

It is fitting to end with a Romano-British carving that encompasses most of the ways of seeing with which this chapter has been concerned on a single image: a small schist relief-carved plaque from Bath (Green 1991b: pl. 10). It depicts three schematized human figures in silhouette, whose long, pleated robes may denote their femininity (though breasts are not indicated) (Figure 7.20). They have over-large heads, no mouths, huge, prominent eyes and tiny limbs. Given their provenance, it is tempting to see this triple image as a local version of the heavily classicized goddess

Figure 7.20 Schist plaque depicting three women, from Roman Bath. © Institute of
Archaeology, Oxford.

Sulis Minerva, to whom the great healing-spring temple was dedicated.
The imposition of schematized triplism may have been an effective and
deliberate alternative to the *romanitas* of the presiding deity (Cunliffe &
Fulford 1982: no. 26, pl. 7). We explore the notion of 'resistant' icono-
graphies in Chapter 8.

8

RESISTANT ICONOGRAPHIES

Post-colonial perspectives

> Most of Britain is marshland. … The barbarians usually swim in these swamps or run along in them, submerged up to the waist. Of course, they are practically naked and do not mind the mud because they are unfamiliar with the use of clothing, and they adorn their waists and necks with iron. … They also tattoo their bodies with various patterns and pictures of all sorts of animals. Hence the reason why they do not wear clothing, so as not to cover the pictures on their bodies.
>
> (Herodian, *History* III: 14, 67; trans. Whittaker 1969: 359)

Herodian was writing in the late second to early third century AD. His description of the Britons represents stereotypic 'barbarization' at its most extreme: every element is the antithesis of sophisticated Classical urbanity, and the passage exhibits the perceived threat posed by 'the primitive' (Fincham 2000: 27). Previous chapters in this volume have considered inherent iconographic tensions between the realism of Graeco-Roman image-making and the seemingly deliberately surrealist paradigms of some Gallo-British figural representation. The focus of the current chapter is on issues associated with colonization, domination, attitudes and resistance and the controversial matter of religious and artistic synthesis. The *topos* of Mediterranean superiority over the foreign, captured so graphically by Herodian, contains resonances with current debates concerning the influence of Classical traditions on the indigenous communities sucked into the slipstream of *romanitas* and notions of unilinear 'progression' from barbaric ignorance towards the *telos* of conquering enlightenment.

Social anthropologists interested in the principles underlying 'acculturation' (Shaw & Stewart 1994: 6; Meyer 1994: 45) argue strongly against notions of linear progression from indigenous belief-systems to those espoused by the intrusive systems introduced under the umbrella of colonialism. Study of the association between local and imported religions, in Africa and India for instance, demonstrates the complexity of relationships between indigenous and foreign systems, the instability of boundaries between them, the endless possibilities for subversion of colonial orthodoxies and the way in which both local and intrusive ritual systems can be manipulated 'to serve often

very different agendas' (Mosse 1994: 85–107). In his study of Roman Catholicism and Hinduism in the Tamil Nadu village communities of southern India, David Mosse gives a good illustration of indigenous appropriation: he discusses the manner in which the Catholic nine-day devotion, the Novena, has been syncretized with the local Hindu festival of Nine Nights, the *Navarattiri* (Mosse 1994: 89). Similarly, in parts of Africa subjected to Christianization, local spiritist traditions synergize with the pentacostal aspect of the Trinity: in Zulu Zionism, the Holy Spirit finds a natural role as a healer spirit (Kiernan 1994: 75–76). In Venezuela, there is fusion between the Christian holy day of San Domingo and the Día del Mono (the Day of the Monkey), a local Carib festival, both celebrated on 28 December (Guss 1994: 148).

The religious imagery of Roman Gaul and Britain exhibits shades of syncretism between indigenous tradition and systems imported from the Roman world. Religious synthesis is an exciting subject, for even cursory study reveals that it is multi-directional, dynamic, reversible and capable of endlessly negotiated and re-negotiated permutations. Syncretism is context-dependent; whilst the inequality between colonizers and colonized societies and 'the pervasive nature of domination' (Bond & Gilliam 1994: 8) has to be acknowledged, the colonial model must take into account the balancing factor of numerical asymmetry: there are always far more colonized than colonizers. Successful syncretism requires the presence of certain equivalences between the systems involved, in order to 'serve as conduits for integration' (Shaw & Stewart 1994: 16). But even more important is the recognition that religious synthesis is inextricably bound up with notions of power, agency, identity and personhood. Syncretism may be top down or bottom up; it may be imposed by the officially empowered, by the colonialists 'in charge', but it can also work from below and can be used by subject peoples for their own ends: such appropriation is well illustrated by inversion, where orthodoxy is turned upside down, often by the lower echelons of colonized societies, who play out subversions of power, in carnivals, for instance, where official systems may be mocked and challenged in the 'safe' environment of festival (Miller 1995: 67), just as class-inversion was complicit in the celebration of the Roman Saturnalia, during which slaves aped their betters and noblemen acted as servants.

Religion played an important role not just in synthesis or syncretism between local and intrusive ideologies but in the objectification of resistance to domination. Siberian shamans acted as foci for resistance to Communism (Vitebsky 1995: 116–117), in a manner analogous to the behaviour of the Gallo-British Druids when faced with the annihilation of their power-structure under Roman imperialism (Webster 1999: 1–20). Both shamans and Druids were perceived as dangerous to subjugating powers because they represented the heart of indigeneity, of memory, the pivot of challenge to the new order. One way in which such challenge was presented was in the

vaticinatory abilities displayed by local ritualists, who acted as seers, predicting the future and thus controlling the spirits. Sometimes their prognostications included the foretelling of doom for their people's oppressors. The Druids predicted the fall of Rome (Webster 1998, 1999); and in medieval Welsh literary tradition, Merlin is similarly presented: in the twelfth-century *Book of Carmarthen* and the *Book of Taliesin* (compiled *c.* 1275), the 'magician' is described as a 'wild man' (a renunciate 'drop-out') and, like other wild men, he is associated with prophecy, notably predicting the deliverance of oppressed lands (Wood 1989). Local ritualists are frequently linked with recusancy, renunciation and with nostalgic retro-ideologies that hark back to a golden age of freedom and indigenous political and religious empowerment, the so-called 'edenic discourse' (Ramos 1994: 74–88). Remembrance, whether grounded in genuine or constructed memory, is a powerful ideological tool (Alcock 2002: 36–44; Bradley 2002).

The aim of this chapter is to relate notions of acculturation, appropriation, cultural synthesis, domination, protest and resistance to the specific arena of imagery in Roman Gaul and Britain and to attempt an exegesis of *apparently* syncretist representation within a colonialist and post-colonialist context. Active agencies likely to have been engaged in any relationship between colonizer and colonized include perceptions of visible imperialist attitudes (Portugal 1995: 284–298) and strategies for protest or resistance. The first may even involve ideas essentially analogous to westernization policies, such as were imposed on the Saami, the Australian Aborigines and the native Americans respectively by the Norwegian, Australian and American governments; and, on a less destructive scale, colonialism may bring with it coercive or pervasive religious systems that may subdue or change local traditions, perhaps because of the introduction of writing or a developed iconographic system. The second may include an active response to religious oppression, resulting in the construction of new, alternative systems: in a modern context, this can be discerned, for instance, in the development of Jamaican Rastafarianism, which was tied to 'a passionate mythology of a future return to Africa under the leadership of an African Messiah' (Paden 1992: 42).

Strategies for protest may involve the deliberate withholding of information about local religion from intrusive inquiry, resulting in ignorance, or at best partial understanding, which may itself be used as an agency for subversion. Paden (1992: 103, citing Clifford 1989: 145) describes an encounter between the French ethnographer Marcel Griaule and members of a West African Dogon community: when he questioned them initially about their belief-system, he was answered according to a 'level of instruction offered by elders to beginners'; later on, when considered worthy, he was given the more profound information appropriate to an initiate. This kind of guarded response to foreign inquiry may resonate with colonial antiquity: Julius Caesar's naïve account (*de Bello Gallico* VI: 17) of the Gaulish pantheon, where he lists the gods by Roman names, may have been

the result of just such deliberate obfuscation on the part of indigenous religious leaders.

The way in which resistance, appropriation and negotiated syncretism can be played out in material culture is aptly illustrated in Tan's account of aboriginal Catholicism in the Paiwan communities of southern Taiwan (Tan 2002: 167–187). This synthetic belief-system involves the melding of Christianity with the indigenous tradition of *tsemas* (multiple spirits), particularly those of the *vuvu* (the ancestors). In the village of Tjauber is a wooden carving known as the 'Paiwan Cross'. On the cross is the image of Christ that 'resembles the imagery of a chiefly ancestor on the central post of a traditional ritual house' (Tan 2002: fig. 1). The process of carving wood involves 'magical production bound up with ritual regulations and cosmological concerns', and it is clear that Taiwanese Paiwan Christianity involves a balanced and equivalent blend of local and intrusive symbolism. The Tjauber cross contains a fundamental syncretistic message that involves inclusivity and appropriation, rather than overt resistance or denial, the most important element being the mutual empowerment resulting from the juxtaposition of two cosmologies that are perceived as broadly sympathetic with each other. Indeed, it is the 'cross-stitching' (Kiernan 1994: 77) or interface between two syncretistic religious systems that provides clues as to how they work in synergy.

The Paiwan situation presents an interesting and potentially highly relevant model for approaches to aspects of Gallo-British religious iconography under Roman imperial rule, to which we now turn. Before scrutinizing specific images, two agencies should be appreciated as being highly influential to the way religious concepts were expressed: the disruptive technologies introduced by the iconographic habit and the epigraphic habit (Webster 1995; Green 1998a). *Romanitas* brought with it to Gaul and Britain a 'creative explosion of representational iconography' that served to codify and enframe cosmologies, whether or not of indigenous Gallo-British genesis (Green 1998b: 223). Although figural imagery was undoubtedly present in the pre-Roman Iron Age of western Europe, there is no doubt that the habitual and patterned representation of spirit-beings was largely an introduced phenomenon that not only affected expression but the very nature of the gods and the attitudes of their devotees. The previous chapter explored ways in which the form of imagery itself played a part in presentations of difference, self-identity and a conscious eschewance of Roman mimetic tradition.

A final introductory point relates to the political context in which 'syncretism' or 'synthesis' took place. Attitudes to the introduction of *romanitas* to Gaul and Britain are a matter for vigorous current academic debate. Some scholars (Webster 1995: 153–161; 1997: 324–338; Drinkwater 2000: 458–459) take the view that the 'profound social dislocation in occupied territories' caused by Roman annexation cannot be overestimated, while others (Creighton 2000: xi; Henig 2002) suggest that Britain was 'riddled with

Romans' for a hundred years or so before the official Claudian invasion and that, during the period between Caesar's visits in 55/54 BC and annexation 'proper', members of the British nobility regularly sent their sons to Rome to learn how to be Romans. Greg Woolf (1998: 218) rightly points out that the Gallic elite, who oversaw the building of Roman towns and educated their sons to speak Latin, would have been centrally involved in formulating the new syncretized Gallo-Roman religion from top down, though their influence would not necessarily account for any bottom-up responses to Roman religious expression.

On the face of it, we can view the interface between Gallo-British and Roman cult either in terms of chasmic dislocation and coercion *or* of neutral ideology and benign syncretism (Aldhouse-Green 2003b). But, on analogy with the patterns of colonialism and post-colonial religious synthesis explored briefly above, both of these models may be somewhat simplistic. There may have been several layers of hybridization, appropriation and re-packaging, particularly where syncretism was driven from the bottom up. Patterns of colonialism and resultant religious composition vary considerably and all syncretism derives from multidirectional forces. In the Bahia region of Brazil (Williams 1979; Green 1998a; Aldhouse-Green 2003b) there is an inextricably interwoven religious system compounded of Portuguese Roman Catholicism, local Amerindian and Yoruba traditions, the last a contribution from West African slavery originating here in the sixteenth century. The Bahia system has embraced 'top down' syncretism from white colonials but manipulated, modified and interrogated within the context of 'bottom up' traditions that are just as influential.

Memory, retro-symbolism and recusancy

Memory is the treasure house of truth.

(Rees 2002)

Memory is the one thing that we have all got – that is inescapable. And also we are completely scuppered without it.

(Bradbury 2003: 16)

Studies in social anthropology alert us to the complexities of post-colonial religious syntheses and counter-syntheses (Stewart & Shaw 1994; Miller *et al.* 1995). The imagery resulting from the interaction between traditions can be read in terms of the playing-out of negotiations between the two or more contributors involved, and the presentation of equivalences, assumptions of dominance or subjugation and appropriation. Indigenous power-broking, within a colonial system, may involve desires, by local aristocracies and

religious leaders, to retain agency and renegotiate societal influence within a new milieu. Such desires may well call upon the ancestral past to reinforce bids for ascendancy via remembrance (Hope 2003: 113–116), while adopting strategies of novelty and exogeny in order to revitalize old cosmologies. The wearing of the distinctively British dragonesque brooch by people in post-conquest Britannia (Jundi & Hill 1997: 125–138) may have made powerful statements about self-identity despite the new order. In present-day Greece, Charles Stewart has drawn attention to the blend of retro-ideologies from Classical tradition with modern social perception, and the influences of the past upon Greek national identity (Stewart 1994: 127–144).

Divided consciousness: horns, hats and old age

In Classical iconography, Mercury is depicted according to a fairly constant grammar of presentation that includes beardless youth, a certain androgyny of appearance and semi-nakedness. He is generally accompanied by a package of symbols – such as a purse, caduceus and animal 'familiars' – that relate to aspects of his mythology or function. Syncretistic appropriation shows itself at work in a number of representations exhibiting the 'Mercury package' but whose somatic treatment veers significantly and intentionally from the Classical *topos*. I want to illustrate this pattern with reference to three 'Mercury' images: from Lezoux (Puy-de-Dôme) in the Auvergne (Hatt 1989: 205, fig. 173; Nerzic 1989: 48), Paris (Nerzic 1989: 72) and Emberton (Buckinghamshire) in southern England (Green 1986: fig. 98; Henig 1993: no. 77, pl. 22).

The stone statue from Lezoux (Figure 8.1) stands 2.50 m high: it depicts an elderly man, with curly hair, full moustache and beard and clad in a heavy Gallic *sagum* or *birrus* and ankle-boots. On his head is a *petasos* (winged hat); in his right hand he grasps a purse dragged down by its weight of money; his left once encircled his missing herald's staff or *caduceus*, presumably made separately of metal. Beneath his chest is carved an ansate plaque inscribed 'Mercurio et Augusto Sacrum'. The familiar Mercury-motifs tie this image into concepts of *romanitas* but it has been subverted by manipulation of age and clothing so as to appropriate it to a Gaulish paradigm. What is more, the figure's maturity, evident not only in its physiognomy but also in its bowed shoulders and static position, may be read as indicative of retrospection, of ancestral memory, time past and a sense of *maiestas* far removed from the sprightly youth of the Classical Mercury-prototype. The relief from Paris presents a broadly similar set of motifs to the carving from Lezoux, in the depiction of Mercurian motifs – a purse, ram and tortoise – in association with an elderly Gallic-garbed man. Here, though, the counter-thrust against *romanitas* is emphasized by the image's three interlocked faces, which link it to the triplistic surrealism identified as belonging to a distinctively indigenous Gallo-British iconographic repertoire (see Chapter 7).

Figure 8.1 Stone statue of Mercury, from Lezoux (Puy-de-Dôme). © author.

The image from Emberton (Figure 1.10) presents a different, though related, schema of appropriation: its archaeological context is a Romano-British well. Like the Gaulish depictions, it represents a native-clad figure, but it is treated so schematically that the folds of its woollen garments are merely suggested by incised lines. As argued in the previous chapter, it is evident that the reductionist treatment of the image served to create visual ambiguities that may have presented flexible intention but may also have been designed to subvert Roman cosmology: the *petasos* worn by Classical depictions of Mercury has undergone a subtle but important shift, for the wings are transformed into horns, thereby expressing allegiance with native tradition in which horned anthropomorphic beings played a significant role (Chapter 6). It is possible to read such emblematic manipulation as both syncretistic and resistant: horns and wings have little in common apart from their excrescent relationship with the head or body, yet 'simple' depiction of the one permits transformation into the other. The Emberton image, therefore, is presented in such a way as to negotiate between *britannitas* and *romanitas*; it may stand for itself alone but may also serve as a metonym for a broader scheme of relationships between Britain and Rome. This notion of substitution is endorsed by other finds from Britannia: the great temple to Mercury at Uley in Gloucestershire contained many votive figures of the god

Figure 8.2 Bronze horned head of Mercury, from Uley, Glos. © Paul Jenkins.

wearing his winged hat, but on at least one image the wings are replaced by horns (Woodward & Leach 1993: 98–99) (Figure 8.2), and others exhibit visual ambivalence.

Imaging remembrance: lotus-buds, mistletoe and 'subjugated knowledge'

Dominating the temple-pediment at the entrance to the great shrine of Sulis Minerva at Bath is a carved human face (Figure 8.3): it is that of a man, with a heavy moustache, full beard and luxuriant hair (Cunliffe & Fulford 1982: nos. 32–37, pl. 10). His identity has been the subject of much debate: the wings and snakes in his hair have claimed him as a male version of Medusa, but his locks swirl as if under water, and there are eels arising from them, suggesting that a water-god, a denizen of the healing spring-water of the temple, is depicted. Furthermore, the radiating hair resembles that of a solar deity, and he may, therefore, also represent the heat of the spring-water that caused the holy precinct to be built around it (Cunliffe 1986b: 1–14). But one feature of the Bath pediment-head (Aldhouse-Green 2003b) is the curious tri-lobed symbol carved on his forehead, which contributes to the frowning glance that he bestows on visitors to the temple.

The device carved on the Bath 'gorgon's' forehead might not excite comment were it not for the striking resemblance it bears to motifs found on a series of early Iron Age sculptures from Germany: on stone funerary

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Figure 8.3 The 'gorgon' on the temple-pediment at Bath. © Anne Leaver.

monuments from Heidelberg (Figure 2.2), Glauberg (Figure 1.9) and Pfalzfeld (Frey 1996/97, 1998; Green 1996: fig. 32; Megaw & Megaw 1989: figs. 82, 83). Indeed, the staring eyes and frowning glare of the Bath face is highly reminiscent of the forbidding expressions observed on the Continental grave-sculptures. The tripartite symbol has been interpreted as a lotus-motif, and this is interesting – particularly in a sepulchral context – since in antiquity the lotus was a symbol of renewal: the lotus is a member of the water-lily family, and its flowers close and submerge at night, rising above the surface and flowering at dawn (Lehner & Lehner 1960: 35). But all these tomb-statues bear strange double-comma-shaped crowns perhaps representing mistletoe-leaves (Raftery 1990; Aldhouse-Green 2000: 7–8); this may be highly relevant to the marks on their foreheads, since botanical consultation (John Box, pers. comm.) has led to the suggestion that the forehead motifs depict mistletoe buds and berries, symbols that may have been heavily charged with connotations of fertility, rebirth, seasonality and eternity. Mistletoe presents a striking appearance in winter, appearing as a bright, white-studded green clump on apparently dead trees. The colour and viscosity of the berries resemble milk or semen, and the position of the berry between two leaves is sexually suggestive. Pliny's *Natural History* (XVI: 95) refers to a solemn druidical

ceremony involving cutting the mistletoe from a sacred oak and using it as an antidote for barrenness and disease.

Whether the – virtually identical – motifs on the heads of images from Roman Bath and from Iron Age German graves represent lotus or mistletoe, they are sufficiently idiosyncratic to suggest some kind of shared association or common world-view. The Iron Age sculptures date to the fifth or early fourth century BC; the Bath 'gorgon' was probably carved when the temple was constructed, in the later first century AD. But at least some of the sculptors working at Bath were almost certainly of Gaulish origin (Blagg 1979: 101–107), and I have suggested elsewhere (Green 1999: 48–66) that conscious reference to 'past' may have played an important part in the symbolic fabric of Roman and medieval Europe, just as can clearly be observed in traditional communities, for example among aboriginal Australian groups, who continually use ancestral memory as points of reference to cosmological perception and ritual practice (Flood 1997; David *et al.* 1998: 290–304). The presence of the tri-lobed plant motif on the gorgon head at Bath raises the issue of whether it may represent a deliberate presentation of 'retro-ideology' that served to empower the image by reference to signifiers from an earlier symbolic repertoire, from a reservoir of knowledge tapped by sculptors (or patrons), perhaps inspired by earlier stone imagery still visible in Continental contexts.

Bucket-motifs and sinistrality: the Lemington goddess

In later Iron Age northern Gaul and south-east Britain, the cremated remains of high-ranking individuals were frequently accompanied by stave-built buckets, bound in bronze or iron (Lejars & Perrin 2000: 37–41). These vessels may have been used in public 'power-drinking' ceremonies of legitimation, where large quantities of wine, mead, beer or fermented berry-juice were consumed (Arnold 1999, 2001). It is therefore significant, perhaps, that the bucket-motif recurs in Romano-British imagery, particularly in southwest England: the *colonia* at Gloucester and the sacred city of Bath have both produced relief-sculptures of women accompanied by such vessels (Green 1989: fig. 22; Henig 1993: figs. 78, 88) and, in each case, by a male figure bearing the attributes of Mercury; the image from Gloucester holds a ladle over her bucket.

The most interesting figure-with-bucket from the Cotswold region is the small, schematically carved image found at Lemington (Glos) but almost certainly originally from the great Roman villa-complex at Chedworth (Green 1995: 75; Henig 1993: fig. 94) (see also Chapters 1 and 3, Figure 1.11). The figure is usually interpreted as female because of an inscription on the base that reads 'to the goddess Riigina (Queen)'. But the epigraphy is by no means certainly contemporary with the carving and may have been scratched on considerably later, and – despite its long hair and robe – there is nothing

intrinsically gender-specific about the image (though the graffito-artist clearly identified it as female). The figure's right hand is poised above a cylindrical object resembling a stave-bucket and in its left hand it holds a spear, point uppermost.

Two particular issues about the composition of the Lemington imagery are the sinistrality of the figure and the apparent dissonance of symbolism between the vessel and the spear. There is no reason to believe that 'handedness' accorded to a different pattern of frequency in antiquity from the present and, therefore, roughly 10 per cent of the Romano-British population was probably left-handed; so the presence of a left-handed image was probably meaningful. In the Roman legionary army, a left-handed weapon-carrier would have severely compromised the efficiency and safety of a fighting unit and obligate left-handers would almost certainly not have been recruited. But the Lemington figure has a pre-Roman counterpart, on the reverse of certain late Iron Age Breton coin-issues, dating to the first century BC, bearing female images bearing weapons in their left hands (Green 1998c: fig. 88) (Figure 3.2). It is possible that the motif of left-handedness was a deliberate contravention of *romanitas*, just as may have been the case with the image of the naked and female coin-warrior: both public nudity and the notion of warrior-women might well have been perceived as 'tropes of otherness', foreign and distasteful to Roman *mores*. But left- or right-handedness may have taken on particular significance in literate societies, where precision-dexterity is crucial, and the Lemington figure may therefore contain additional meaning, perhaps in terms of attitudes to writing.

The contiguity of bucket and spear as the Lemington figure's attributes may be highly significant, in terms of the juxtaposition of containment and warfare/protection. The apparent discrepancy perhaps finds resolution in terms of Arnold's (1999, 2001) hypothesis of drinking as an exhibition of power. A similar message may be present on other Cotswold imagery, notably in the depictions of warriors at Custom Scrubs (Green 1986: fig. 14; Henig 1993: fig. 60), accompanied by weapons and cornuacopiae. The bucket, a peculiarly British motif, may be associated not only with holding liquor but with the storage of hidden knowledge, of memory (Davidson 1989b: 66–75) or even of initiation-rites: Piers Vitebsky points to the use of cauldrons, among traditional shamanic communities in the Amazon, as vessels in which the shaman's ritually dismembered body is re-integrated by being 'cooked' in initiation-ceremonies of dissolution and re-incorporation as a new, enlightened being receptive to spirit-communication (Vitebsky 1995: 60–61). The Lemington figure's spear is held upright in the left hand, very like the position of a distaff; indeed, there may be an intentional ambiguity between the motif of spear and spindle and, since spinning was traditionally a woman's occupation, the image may present a contest between masculinity and femininity (see Chapter 3), an idea supported by the lack of gender-specificity in the figure itself.

Bulls, woodcutters and colonial discourses

In AD 26, during the reign of Tiberius, a guild of Seine boatmen (the *Nautes Parisiacae*) set up a great stone columnar monument, dedicated to Jupiter, depicting a range of divine beings belonging to both Roman and Gaulish traditions, some with associated inscriptions. Two of the pillar's carved surfaces (juxtaposed on a single stone) depict cognate scenes: in one, a bull stands before a deciduous tree, identified as a willow or lime; two egrets or cranes perch on the bull's back, a third stands on his head, between the horns; above the relief are inscribed the Gaulish words 'Tarvos Trigaranus' (the 'three-craned bull') (*C.I.L.* XIII: no. 3026; Espérandieu 1911: no. 3133). The second scene displays a similar tree being attacked by a bearded man, stripped to the waist, wielding a chopper in his right hand, while his left grasps the tree-trunk (Espérandieu 1911: no. 3134) (Figure 8.4): his name, written above his head, was Esus, a Gaulish title meaning simply 'lord'. A closely analogous and broadly synchronous image from Trier occurs on a stone erected by a Mediomatrician citizen named Indus: it depicts another woodcutter while, emerging from the foliage in the tree above his head, are three cranes and a bull's head (Espérandieu 1915: no. 4929; Schindler 1977: 32, Abb. 91; Wightman 1985: 178). Indus's monument was dedicated to Mercury and he, like the *Nautes Parisiacae*, may have been a river-man, perhaps a shipper of goods on the Rhine.

Figure 8.4 The pollarding scene on the 'Esus' stone from the *Nautes Parisiacae* pillar, Paris. © Paul Jenkins.

The iconography of the Treveran and Parisian monuments is so similar as to accord, almost certainly, with shared patterns of meaning, with cognate cosmological perceptions or to a common mythological framework, whatever that may have been. But it may be possible to read other, broader meaning into the imagery, perhaps related to discourses between *gallitas* and *romanitas*. Such a notion is particularly pertinent early in the Gallo-Roman period, when one might expect ongoing power-negotiations between the old and new orders to be played out in politico-religious arenas. Both monuments were dedicated 'up front' to deities with Roman names: Jupiter was the all-powerful lord of the firmament and focus of fealty to Rome, and Mercury's multifarious roles included business and travel. But it may be that the imagery on each monument set out to subvert the imperialist message, not only by the inscription of Gaulish names, like 'Tarvos' and 'Esus', but by subtle manipulations of the iconography itself. At first glance, the woodcutters on the Paris and Trier stones appear to be cutting down their trees, but close inspection suggests that pollarding is being enacted. It is possible to read such an image according to oppositional perspectives: on the one hand, pollarding exercises control over the environment and the 'disorder' of natural growth; on the other hand, trees, like limes, frequently subjected to pollarding, display tenacious capacities for regeneration, even if the entire head is lopped off. It may be that, in these contexts, a tensive ambiguity is being deliberately presented in an image of point and counterpoint, in a shifting tableau of negotiated, disassembled and re-authenticated synthesis, driven by an intention to reassert identity within a framework of tacit resistance. The control/pollarding is perhaps countered by the tree's ability to renew itself, in an allegory of Gaulish self-determination. It may even be appropriate to read into such imagery a 'discourse of tolerance' in which power-balance and the 'politics of difference and identity' are acknowledged and fostered (van der Veer 1994: 196–215).

The Parisian and Treveran images present an integrated picture of agency (woodcutter/pollarding) and result (the modified tree), together with zoomorphic motifs of bulls and cranes/egrets. Whilst the particulars of any specific myth have to remain out of reach, the imagery presented may feed into a composite symbolic message that ultimately depended on empirical observation. Cranes migrate according to season; their appearance on a full-leafed tree may relate to spring or summer; the bull appears as a powerful, emphatically male animal, and may signify fertility but also the broader concepts of empowerment, force and control. What is more, it may be possible to identify a close link between birds and beast, for egrets are wading-birds that feed on cattle-tics and the image may thus present a metaphor of symbiosis between species, or between land, air and water. The triplistic form of the birds may also be significant in terms of indigenous tradition (Chapter 7) in which a habitual link between bulls and three is discerned.

Inventing a pantheon? 'New' religious movements and alternative iconographies

> The god they worship most is Mercury, and they have very many images of him. They regard him as the inventor of all the arts, the guide of all their roads and journeys, and the god who has greatest power for trading and moneymaking. After Mercury they worship Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva, having almost the same ideas about these gods as other peoples do: Apollo averts diseases, Minerva teaches the first principles of industry and crafts, Jupiter has supremacy among the gods, and Mars controls warfare.
>
> (Caesar, *de Bello Gallico* VI: 17; trans. Wiseman & Wiseman 1980: 123)

In this passage about the Gaulish pantheon of deities, Caesar writes as though complete fusion between Gallic and Roman gods had taken place. About a hundred and fifty years later, Tacitus (*Germania* XLIII; trans. Mattingly 1948: 136) made a similar statement when describing aspects of Germanic religion among the Naharvali: '… the gods, translated into Latin, are Castor and Pollux. That expresses the character of the gods, but their name is Alci.' This so-called *interpretatio romana* may be indicated in epigraphy, where divinities with ethnic duality in their names – like Sulis Minerva, or Apollo Moritasgus, for instance – are recorded (Green 1998a: 18; Webster 1995). But, as Jane Webster reminds us, *interpretatio* has to be acknowledged within a context of 'a post-conquest discourse'. I would, however, take issue with her argument that religion in Roman Britain (and Gaul) was entirely the result of coercive colonial domination. What I do subscribe to is the notion of a 'creation of Gallo-Roman religion' (Woolf 1998: 215), contrary to Jean-Louis Brunaux's assertion (2000b: 19–21) that there was no 'religion gallo-romaine'.

In attempting to understand what was going on in the temples and shrines of the western Roman provinces, the images provide a vital clue, for certain groups clearly indicate the construction of an alternative repertoire of cult-iconography that, whilst – for the most part – seemingly possessing no genesis in Iron Age tradition, none the less indicates a large measure of independence from Classical symbolism. At the same time, there is limited evidence of a pre-Roman ancestry for certain image-types, such as the cross-legged, antlered form (Figure 6.2). What is interesting – and particularly striking in the case of Roman Britain – is that regions where Roman influence gained a firm and early foothold (such as the Cotswolds) are the same areas that evince the development of a rich and lively Gallo-British iconography (Green 1998a: 23). What I think we need to understand is that the creation of new and different religious images in Roman-colonized Gaul and Britain may have been

initiated from more than one direction: it may be that iconography and cos-mologies were being manipulated under the new order, by both indigenous and colonizing agencies, for particular agendas and for the dissemination of specific messages concerning power, politics, identity, unity and dissension.

Contested sovereignties: cosmic battles

A sculptured group from Neschers (Puy-de-Dôme) in the Auvergne illustrates a complex interchange between two beings: a man on horseback and a hybrid 'giant', part-man, part-serpent, beneath the front hooves of the horse (Aldhouse-Green 2001g: fig. 2; Pobé & Roubier 1961: no. 185) (Figure 8.5). The carving belongs to a sculptural tradition endemic to eastern Gaul and the Rhineland during the second century AD onwards, the so-called *Iupitergigantensäulen* (Bauchhenss & Nölke 1981), and occurs neither before the Roman period nor outside the western provinces (Gaul, Germany and – very occasionally – Britain). Although a number of variations can be discerned, the central theme concerns two beings, one apparently domin-ated by the other. The cavalryman's horse is at a gallop and its rider often holds a thunderbolt and sometimes a shield in the form of a wheel (Bauchhenss & Nölke 1981:Tafel 40,2); the giant is bowed under the weight of the horse and often displays an anguished facial expression: this is clearly

Figure 8.5 Sculptured group of horseman and monster from a Jupiter-giant column at Neschers, Vosges. © Paul Jenkins.

visible on the Neschers monument. The context of this statuary is import-
ant: the groups are at the summit of tall columns, some of which are carved
in imitation of tree-trunks, and at the base are images of Roman deities and
inscriptions dedicating the monuments to Jupiter or Juno (Bauchhenss &
Nölke 1981: Tafel 28,1).

Epigraphy claims the Jupiter-columns as Roman, as do the relief-carvings
that adorn their bases. It seems clear, too, that the iconography for the rider-
group at the top took its inspiration from the Greek mythical combat
between the Gods and the Giants (Bauchhness 1976; Boardman 1989: 168,
pl. 326). But there is an important divergence between the two, for the Greek
fighters are never depicted on horseback, and the model was therefore mod-
ified to provide a new iconographic message within an appropriate context,
namely a social milieu in which horsemanship had powerful meaning, and it
may be no accident that the regions where the columns were most densely
distributed coincide with the areas of eastern Gaul and the Rhineland that
supplied the bulk of auxiliary cavalry for the Roman imperial army defend-
ing the *Limes* between the empire and the barbarians to the east. Generally
the horseman resembles Jupiter: mature, bearded, semi-clad, with his thun-
derbolt, but sometimes – as at Köln and Tongeren (Belgium) – he appears as
a Roman general (Bauchhenss & Nölke 1981: Tafeln 68,3; 99), and we may
be witnessing a politically driven iconic fusion between the conquering
emperor and the father-god. Such conflation is well known in Roman art:
a good example comes from a Pompeiian wall-painting discovered during
the construction of a motorway, which depicts the young Nero as Apollo,
with laurel-wreath and lyre (Owen 2003: 21).

The 'giant' beneath the flailing hooves is an enigmatic creature, a 'trope of
otherness': the Neschers statue displays him as huge-headed, with immensely
powerful shoulders, hunched to take the weight bearing down upon them.
The serpentiform lower limbs identify him as non-human, as a monster-being
straddling the world of people and beasts. The relationship between the
protagonists in the group is interesting: the horseman may carry a thunder-
bolt, the identifying emblem of Jupiter, but he rarely carries a weapon and
the double-giant figure at Tongeren (Vanvinckenroye 1975: 73, Afb. 37) is
exceptional in its possession of a club. So conflict between the two beings
may be more apparent than real, and I have elsewhere explored the notion
that deliberate paradox, contradiction and ambiguity may be present in the
interaction between the rider and the 'fallen' giant (Aldhouse-Green 2001g:
37). The complexity of oppositional relationships between horseman and
giant is displayed by one Jupiter-giant image from Metz in eastern Gaul,
where – contrary to common patterns of imagery – the monster has a young,
smiling countenance, its full, beardless cheeks perhaps representing femininity
(Rose & Bardies 2003). On the column-monuments, the horseman is closely
associated with light and the sun: he may carry a 'solar' shield and he often
bears a lightning-symbol of shining metal; the horse itself has strong links

with the sun in European antiquity during the Bronze and Iron Ages (Green 1991a: 107–121): the coinage of later Iron Age Gaul and Britain shows a habitual association between the two motifs, and horses are sometimes depicted flying (Creighton 2000: 23–27, 45–47).

Creighton points to the recurrent presence of horsemen on certain issues (op. cit.: 103) of Tincomarus which, he argues, were derived from power-imagery associated with equestrian power-symbolism of the late Roman Republic and with the imagery of Octavian (Augustus) at the time of the Battle of Actium. It may be that empowerment is the nucleus of Jupiter-column iconography. But if power is the main message of the horseman, how does the treatment of the 'giant' accord with this perception? If the horse-man is a celestial being, the snake-man appears as its antithesis: its demeanour and its herpetological dimension seems indicative of its chthonic status. But snake-symbolism is complex, and in both Classical and Gallo-Roman imagery it possesses connotations not only of the underworld but also of healing (see Chapter 6). Anna Chaudhri (2001: 79–90) draws atten-tion to the wide-ranging Indo-European *leitmotif* of conflict between celes-tial, thunder-wielding gods and the chthonic serpent, citing examples as wide apart as Vedic and Norse mythology. She explores the Caucasian version of this tradition in Ossetia, where the thunder-wielding Elijah engages in per-petual battle with Ruĭmon, the serpent of chaos and destruction. But, like the snake in Graeco-Roman symbolism, the Ossetian cosmic serpent has an ambiguous persona: though harmful to the living, it is a friend to the dead. Furthermore, the battle between celestial and underworld forces by no means always results in triumph for Elijah, upper world, good and light; although he generally succeeds in dragging Ruĭmon up to the sky, the Ossetian snake sometimes pulls him to earth.

The ambivalent relationship between the firmament and the chthonic forces of Ossetic mythology seems also to be played out in the imagery of the Gallo-Germanic Jupiter-columns. For, on the Neschers monument, for instance, the snake-limbed monster could be interpreted as not trampled by the horse's hooves but as supporting the animal and its mount; the anguished expression and wrinkled brow perhaps signify not subjugation but the effort involved in holding up the forces of the sky and upper world. The iconographic context of the summit-group is relevant to its meaning: the presentation of the column as a symbolic tree is significant: the pillar at Hausen-an-der-Zaber (Bauchhenss 1976) is depicted as an oak-tree in full leaf, complete with acorns. In many traditions, including the medieval Icelandic myths preserved in the *Edda*, the cosmic tree represented the link between upper, middle and lower worlds (Davidson 1988: 170–173; Faulkes 1987: 17), its spreading roots mirroring its branches reaching towards the sky. The sea-sonal change undergone by deciduous trees could be seen as a metaphor for transformation and for the interdependence of life and death, light and dark, summer and winter; the same duality may be reflected in the symbolism of

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the rider-and-giant group at the top. There may be a social dimension to the interface between the horseman and the monster on these columns, namely the allegory of relationships between Rome and Gaul, at the same time one of domination and subjugation on the one hand, and mutuality on the other.

Opening doors and imaging appropriation:
two faces of Epona

Though [Lateranus] slays, in Numa's fashion,
lambs and russet steers,
he swears before Jove's high altar
by none but his revered
Goddess of horses, and images daubed
On the stinking stalls.

> (Juvenal, *Satires* VIII: lines 154–156;
> trans. Creekmore 1963: 142)

The horse-goddess Epona (subject of Juvenal's scornful allusion, above) appears to have sprung, fully-fledged, into the epigraphic and iconographic scene of Roman Gaul without a pre-Roman progenitress. She is important, for the association – on some monuments – of her name and image gives her a firm and unequivocally Gallic identity; yet she was accorded sufficient prominence, unique among her peers, for her to be granted a place in the official Roman calendar of festivals, on 18 December, and she is mentioned by such Roman authors as Juvenal (above), Apuleius (*Metamorphoses* V; 27) and Minucius Felix (*Octavius* XXVII: 7), though Juvenal used Epona as a means of poking fun at Gauls living in Rome and pretending to be Romans, and the Christian polemicist Felix jeered at her as an example of barbaric and animal-worshipping paganism. None the less Epona attracted worshippers all over the western Roman empire: her monuments are recorded from Scotland to Bulgaria.

Apuleius, born in about AD 123 at Madaurus in North Africa, became a priest at Carthage. His *Metamorphoses* is an elegant and humorous exploration of magic and, in the central episode in which his hero, Lucius, is turned into an ass, he includes a sympathetic reference to an image of Epona set up in a stable in northern Greece:

> As I stood in my lonely corner, banished from the society of my four-footed colleagues and deciding on a bitter revenge on them next morning as soon as I had eaten my roses and become Lucius again, I noticed a little shrine of the Mare-headed Mother, the Goddess Epona, standing in a niche of the post that supported the main beam of the stable. It was wreathed with freshly gathered roses ….
>
> (*Metamorphoses* V: 27; trans. Graves 1950: 92)

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For Juvenal and Apuleius, then, Epona's cult was – justifiably – associated with horse-craft and the stable, but the Punic cleric also referred to her as 'mother', a term endorsed by the goddess's iconography, which shows the goddess seated between two or more horses, or side-saddle on a mare, with symbols of the earth's produce or accompanied by a foal suckling, sleeping beneath her or trotting at her heels (Green 1989: figs. 6–8; 1995: 184–187; Oaks 1986, 1987).

Two Gallic images of Epona, from Gannat (Allier) (Espérandieu 1908: no. 1618; Ferguson 1970: pl. 38) (Figure 8.6) and Alesia (Green 1992: fig. 8.5; Le Gall 1963: 164) (Figure 8.7), serve to illustrate the complexity of her symbolism, which appears to extend far beyond the framework of the horse-motif, although this image is constant and therefore arguably crucial to meaning. The relief from Gannat depicts a woman, clad in a long robe, seated in characteristic side-saddle mode upon a high-stepping horse, as if on parade (this universal riding position may serve to emphasize the goddess's femininity). There is iconographic tension in the imagery, for the woman's body is twisted so that, though her legs and torso face the viewer, her face and mount are in profile; what is more, visual contradiction can be discerned in the horse's slow pace, which is at odds with the notion of movement presented by the woman's cloak, which flies in an arc around her head. This last feature is significant since the sculptor has clearly derived inspiration

Figure 8.6 Epona on a stone from Gannat, Allier. © Paul Jenkins.

Figure 8.7 Statuette of Epona, from Alesia, Burgundy. © Paul Jenkins.

from a Classical prototype-image, that of Europa being carried off by Zeus/ Jupiter in the guise of a bull: the nimbus of Europa's cloak is identical to the treatment of Epona's scarf-like garment on the Gannat stone and a Gallic horse has been substituted for the bull of Classical myth.

It is quite likely the myth of Europa was carefully selected by the Gannat craftsman or patron, for it contains powerful metaphors associated with abduction, rape, journeys, resistance, transformation, monstrosity and apotheosis (Souli 1995: 26; Henig 1984: 178). At least some of these issues might have been explored within the imagery and persona of Epona, and ideas of change and transition may be followed through on the Gannat relief, in the presence of a large key in the goddess's right hand. A key of this size is for opening gates or doors, and it is tempting to interpret the motif as indicative of Epona's persona as a transfunctional being, able to move between worlds and cosmological dimensions as well as holding the keys to the stable. But such imagery resonates within socio-political ideologies as well, for the key may also symbolize affiliation to both sides of any binary divide, including linkage and progression between indigenous and Roman identity, sickness and health, life and death, childhood and adulthood. Hilda Davidson (1993: 45–46) has suggested that divine key-bearers in ancient northern European

tradition may have been associated with control of the keys to the dairy; if this has any relevance to Epona, it may be that the production of butter and cheese were perceived as transformatory processes and required divine authority. Davidson thus interprets a small wooden figurine of a woman, with a key and a napkin (? a cheese-cloth), from Roman Winchester, as a dairy-goddess (Cunliffe & Fulford 1982: no. 115, pl. 31). But there may be a wider issue concerned with ownership and control of *habitus*, just as was the case with the chatelaines of early medieval Europe. Epona's key may even have represented a freedom from seclusion and sexual (Gilchrist 1999: 111–113) or social exclusion, and thus presented a nuanced counter-motif to the male control implied by the 'abduction of Europa' imagery (perhaps providing a metonym for Roman colonialism) that may have inspired the Gannat Epona. But it is possible to invert this notion and read Epona's key as a motif of apartness, inclusion, shutting-out and shutting-in (on the model of medieval cloistering: Gilchrist 1994: 150–169), perhaps from the perspective of cult-solidarity, religious secrecy and the presentation of an alternative, resistant view of the world within an imperialist context.

The statuette of Epona from Alesia (Figure 8.7) is very different from the Gannat relief. Whilst the latter was carved within the orthodox parameters of Classical realism and, as I have indicated, according to inspiration from Classical myth, the artistic treatment of the Burgundian carving (Deyts 1992: front cover; Green 1996: 79, pl. 50; Aldhouse-Green 2004b: fig. 18) is firmly grounded in the 'independent' paradigm of indigenous Gaulish iconicity. The disproportion of Epona's head in relation to her torso and her body to that of her horse have been discussed in Chapter 7. In this context, the image's special significance lies in the twisted circular object she holds in her right hand, which could represent a torc or wreath (or both).

This ring-motif raises a number of interesting issues concerning sovereignty, resistance, memory and appropriation. The symbolism of torcs as status-indicators was explored earlier (Chapter 2). But its presence at Alesia may provide clues as to Epona's Gallic origins, for pre-Roman Iron Age coin issues, in the region of Amiens, for instance, depict warrior-horsewomen brandishing torcs. I am tempted to see, in the persistent imagery of cavalry-women on Gallic coinage, inspiration for the development of Epona in Roman Gaul, who may have lost her military persona, at least in visible terms, under the *pax romana* (Green 1998c: 182–183). Support for such a view comes from other pre-Roman coin-imagery, notably in Normandy, that depicts mares and suckling foals (Gruel 1989: 90); these are recurrent motifs in the Epona-iconography of Roman Burgundy (Green 1989: figs. 6, 7). It is also relevant to comment on the popularity of Epona's cult among the cavalry troops on the Rhine frontier, some of whom were of Gallic origin and were the descendants of the free Gaulish noblemen whom Caesar called *equites* (Caesar, *de Bello Gallico* VI: 13; Oaks 1986, 1987; Linduff 1979). Considered from such

a perspective, it is possible that Epona's ring-motif at Alesia may (like the horns or winged hat on the Mercury-relief from Emberton; Figure 1.10) be read in alternative ways: as a Gallic torc or a Roman victory-wreath. In this way, a single motif may have been manipulated, appropriated and re-appropriated in an antiphonal message of *gallitas* and *romanitas*.

Epona's 'power-base' was her horse: this was the nexus of her identity and was presented not only in her imagery but also in the etymology of her name. Gaulish horsemen were renowned throughout the Roman empire, and Caesar himself used auxiliary cavalry from the friendly Burgundian polity of the Aedui in his campaigns against the rest of Gaul. But Epona's imagery indicates that she was concerned with horse-breeding and prosperity, and – taken altogether – we begin to build up a composite picture of a multi-functional deity whose unifying theme may have involved status, power, transition, horse-craft (including control of breeding-stock and horse-training), territorial protection and the resultant florescence of the land. The transitionality of the goddess – already implied by her polysemous ring-emblem – may be endorsed by her horse-imagery, for not only does the horse reflect physical movement, but the breaking from the wild and subsequent training is itself a vivid metaphor for change.

Symbiosis and partnership on a stone at Reims

The relief-carving from Reims (Espérandieu 1913: no. 3653; Green 1989: fig. 38) depicts three figures in human form: two standing figures, identified as the Roman deities Apollo and Mercury, flank a bearded man, wearing a torc round his neck and antlers sprouting from his head, seated cross-legged on a dais (see also Chapter 6) (Figure 8.8). On his lap is a large bag of grain or money which pours out in a stream towards a small bull and stag facing each other at his feet. The relief is significant in terms of its presentation of the relationship between the figures: Apollo and Mercury are distinctly smaller than their central companion; they stand while he is enthroned, and they turn towards him as if in attendance, in deference to his higher rank. The sculpture may be read in terms of the cross-stitching that bound *romanitas* and *gallitas* together in a symbiotic partnership of balance; Gaul and Rome are presented as working in harmony, and there is no hint at protest or domination, though the Roman gods maintain their Classicism and the antlered divinity's 'otherness' is emphasized by the torc, antlers and cross-legged position. The wild stag and domesticated bull perhaps stand for woodland and cultivated land, wilderness and order and their integration. But Apollo and Mercury are young while the antlered god is old, and that, too, may convey messages associated with ancestral pasts, the investment of the present with memory, the 'new order' looking forward with youthful eyes to the future of a Gaul seamlessly incorporated into the Roman empire.

Figure 8.8 Triad of Apollo, Mercury and antlered deity, from Reims. © Paul Jenkins.

Resistance and persistence: boundaries in the mind

In the BBC Radio 4 programme *Word of Mouth* (Rosen 2003), Michael Rosen explored the notion of cultural persistence in the context of language survival, citing an extreme instance of ethnic disruption, namely the transportation of black slaves from West Africa to the plantations of the United States and the Caribbean. Despite strenuous attempts, on the part of slave-owners, to stamp out local vocabularies, the presence of Senegalese loan-words in the current linguistic repertoire of black Americans and West Indians indicates a deliberate intention to maintain elements of West African tradition by their forebears. I cite this as an example of modern-period persistence and resistance, and it is possible to trace what may be the result of similar attitudes in the iconographies of Gaul and Britain during the period of their inclusion in the Roman Empire. Alongside these retro-ideologies, we may discern patterns of appropriation, invention and the presentation of new, alternative repertoires of imagery that belonged directly to religion but may have been used indirectly to make statements concerning perceptions about social and political identity, belonging and exclusion that express negotiations of boundaries, pathways and relationships. In Roman Gaul and Britain, religious iconography was used to manipulate, negotiate, and subvert in ways relevant

both to religious expression and to broader discourses of tension, challenge and acceptance. Attitudes of indigenous independence, a desire to contest, modify and appropriate schemata of expression and presentation, on the part of the colonized, have to be viewed in conjunction with colonialist perspectives that, at their most jingoistic, found voice in comments such as those made by Herodian and quoted at the beginning of this chapter. But even Herodian's 'trope of otherness' may contain a genuine nugget of persistent praxis: we should not forget the possibility that Lindow Man's body was painted (Aldhouse-Green 2001a: 124) nor omit to acknowledge the evidence for tattooing or painting on the faces depicted on Iron Age coins (Fischer 2003). In many traditions, patterning the body serves as a confirmation of social status, and – as Herodian suggests – stops one feeling naked (King 2000a: 26); in early Roman Britain, tattooing with woad or indigo may have acted as signifier of not being Roman (Carr 2001: 112–124).

The evidence from the western Roman provinces reveals as complex, as multi-layered and as nuanced a socio-religious system as in present-day Brazilian Bahia or Hindu/Christian Tamil Nadu. And nowhere in the record of Gallo-British customs from Roman writers is there any hint of attempts to suppress local cults. Unlike the Saami shamans' drums, confiscated and burnt by the Danish–Norwegian authorities in 1700 (Pareli 2000: 47), the indigenous religions of Gaul and Britain flourished, developed, changed, resisted or persisted, largely under their own momentum.

POSTSCRIPT

Images unlocked?

> They do not, however, deem it consistent with the divine
> majesty to imprison their gods within walls or represent them
> with anything like human features. Their holy places are the
> woods and groves, and they call by the name of god that hid-
> den presence which is seen only by the eye of reverence.
>
> (Tacitus, *Germania* IX; trans. Mattingly 1948: 108)

This book commenced with an allusion to Penelope Lively's *A House
Unlocked* and with a quotation from Somerset Maugham's *Honolulu*. Both
gave me ideas and provided nuggets of inspiration for my approach, for each
author was concerned with the use of objects as keys to closed doors, as tips
of submerged icebergs. The beginning of Maugham's short story exhibited
the ability of images (and other objects) to bring other worlds within one's
grasp; Lively's journey through Golsoncott provided me with a vision of how
whole worlds can be invoked by reference to just a few things, and so with
a way of managing a bewildering array of images by judicious choice. This
caused me agonies of indecision and regret, for so many meaning-rich images
had to be laid aside unexplored. For me, images – of humans and animals – are
a particular source of excitement because they constitute one of the most
articulate forms of material culture, packed with a polyphony of visual and
symbolic language within their physical form, and enabling a view of the
communities that produced and consumed them that goes far beyond the
bodies they display. Images are symbols: they reflect selves and others,
notions of being and not being. They can manipulate experienced realities
and thereby affirm, reassert or reject. They can act as motifs of revisionism, as
agents of retrospective ideologies and the nostalgia of ancestral memory.
They can represent, codify and contribute to the formation of new ideas, envi-
sion futures and explore both the lived world and cosmologies of the spiritual
domain. Images can challenge, resist, subvert, parody and manipulate; they can
be employed to voice concerns and reinforce attitudes. Images can reflect
arcane secrecies or shout public statements. Their materiality and physicality
may present obvious or subtle notions associated with the human condition
and explore relationships between individuals, groups, animals and spirits.
Images can reflect society as it is, but they may also act as agents for change.

For me, the most satisfying way to conclude a piece of research is to revisit
areas of personal discovery and newness, and the opportunity to adopt for

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European Iron Age and Roman-period imagery approaches that have made sense of other material culture, whether belonging to antiquity or to traditional societies of the present or recent past. The function of images is all too readily assumed to have been passive, to represent the divine, to possess a single role and a single moment of use. While acknowledging that some or all may sometimes be valid, this volume has sought to challenge these monolithic assumptions. Tacitus's comment (above) clearly indicates the incorrectness of making the straightforward equation between image and god-representation, and it is all the more interesting that he also observed the Germanic custom of carrying 'figures and emblems' from their sacred groves into battle (*Germania* VII), as if they did possess holy images of some kind.

It is possible to argue that images could work as artefacts within the groups who made them, that they may have been endowed with flexible uses and meanings, capable of changing according to for whom they were intended. Images were not just looked at, they were elements in interactive relationships with their creators and users; they were physically handled, walked around (so that the backs and sides as well as the fronts of images were visible) and sometimes charged with spiritual energy, in other words 'ensouled'. We should recognize that a given image might have a complicated biography and that its excavated location may represent only one (and not necessarily the final) episode in its history. We need to acknowledge that an image's materiality had a bearing on its meaning, and that impermanence, durability, decay and change may all have fed into a rich ontological tapestry. The archaeological and cognitive context of an image are essential to its understanding, however incomplete interpretation must be. While it is wholly valid to take a lateral glance at other image-rich traditions, the meaning of the iconography in our study-areas has to be grounded in Iron Age or western Roman provincial paradigms. All that wider comparisons can do is to provide broad frameworks for ideas. A good illustration of context-contingency is the need to understand images in Roman Gaul and Britain against the backdrop of post-colonial domination, appropriation, acquiescence and resistance.

One of the most striking motifs of the book is the metaphoric and metonymic richness of the images under scrutiny. A single figure can say so much: the hooded, heavy-clad pilgrim can evoke notions of journeys and strangerhood; the woman wearing antlers opens a door on complex issues of gender, transvestism and shamanism; a wooden figure 'drowned' in a marsh may reflect human sacrifice and substitution of images for real people; an ornate bull-headed fire-dog introduces the transformative magic of iron-production and a surreal, fantasy-world where bulls have manes and horses have horns; a tiny amulet of a bound captive shows us a grim world of humiliation, otherness and defeat; a simple relief carving of 'Mercury' with winged hat or horns hints at appropriation and subversion; and three women of different ages, sitting on a bench together, suggest notions of time passing, and

the one-way journey from birth to death. Certain images enable us to make tentative identifications of holy men and women, ritualists, even shamans; and the surreal, dreamlike qualities of others may exhibit the results of their visionary experiences. Images make it possible for us to come, quite literally, face to face with the communities that produced, used and (sometimes) abused them. They hold the attention because they simultaneously hide and reveal so much. No, the images of antiquity cannot be unlocked, but their study perhaps enables a veiled glance at their societies through a small, distorted lens.

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