



Making Sense of Things

Archaeologies of Sensory Perception

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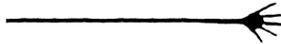
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A Peaceful Sleep and Heavenly Celebration for the Pure and Innocent. The Sensory Experience of Death during the Long Eighteenth Century

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Death is the one thing that impacts life more than any other. The death of a loved one evokes feelings and leaves footprints on our minds. The experience of watching a close relative of mine slowly dying of cancer in a hospital ward is one that I will probably carry with me for the rest of my life. A couple of months ago when washing my hands I was immediately flung back to the feelings I had while visiting my relative in hospital. The cause of this *déjà vu* was the smell of the soap, which had the exact same fragrance as the one used in the hospital. Standing there washing my hands I felt depressed and powerless. This very personal example illustrates the power of sensory impressions on our emotions.

Trying to make sense of senses and emotions

Both sensory impressions and emotions are biological in the sense that we experience them through physical reactions in our bodies (Houston & Taube 2006:135; Tarlow 2000:728). At the same time they are both culturally conditioned. Ideas about the senses in a particular cultural context impact the way the sensory impressions are experienced (Houston & Taube 2000:262). The sensory impressions from the same stimuli can be valued differently over time and space, but the ability to experience them is nevertheless universal. Emotional reactions, such as grief or fear, also vary socially and culturally over time, between societies and between different social groups within the same society. Both the

cues - such as sensory impressions - to an emotional reaction and how that reaction is experienced are culturally specific (Tarlow 1999:33f). It is also fair to assume that a sensory impression can be perceived differently depending on the emotional state of the receiver.

Sensory impressions can trigger highly individualized emotional responses. Roland Barthes, focusing on the sense of sight, aptly illustrates this in *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* originally published in 1982 (Barthes 1993). Barthes speaks of two different levels of meaning in relation to the photographic image. The *studium* stands for its denotative qualities which bear culturally specific connotations (Barthes 1993:26; Tilley 1999:271). The second level of meaning, *punctum*, is a highly personal response resembling a prick or a pin-point. A detail in a photograph can give the viewer a psychological sting, causing him or her to remember and associate, thereby evoking emotions (Barthes 1993:26f). Christopher Tilley has pointed out that material metaphors can work in the same punctual way. He argues that the punctum of the artefact is “the mental image analogies and associations” that it conjures up when “seeing a thing, or an aspect of a thing such as its colour or shape” that “stings the memory into recalling other artefacts experienced and used in prior actional contexts” (Tilley 1999:271). Tilley is here referring to the visual aspects of the artefact, but I would like to widen the discussion to incorporate all senses. It is my belief that all senses can be understood to work on our minds this way. As pointed out by others before me, one of the strengths of material culture is its three dimensionality and ability to work on all our senses, thereby evoking memories and emotions through sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing.

Thoughts on death can be so deeply rooted that they are taken for granted and never put into words. The study of material practice may be a way to reach them, and particularly the study of metaphor in material culture (Tarlow 1999:46ff). The metaphor redescribes reality. It can make us understand and experience something in terms of another experience. This is often done by using concepts well known from the physical world to understand more abstract, emotional and unknown concepts (Tilley 1999:17f) such as death. Material metaphors play an important part in rituals by linking the indescribable with the experience of concrete sensory impressions. Objects given metaphorical qualities are active in the ritual and can be loaded with meaning, memories and therefore also with emotion (Tilley 1999:10, 75).

The early modern body as materiality – a study of burgher and noble society

I consider the dead body to be active in the creation of social practices and therefore regard it as materiality (Nilsson Stutz 2008:23). The manipulation, masking or enhancement of the sensory impressions when viewing and perceiving the dead body can tell us of the emotional attitudes towards a body on the brink of putrefaction. By studying the material prerequisites for sensory impressions and the redescription of metaphor in graves we can reach the associations ascribed to death and get closer to the emotions the participants of the funeral were meant to feel.

Research on the senses has often regarded the Early Modern period - presenting major changes such as the printed word, the Reformation with its focus on the scripture and movement away from the sensual culture of touching of relics and scenting of the divine, and the Enlightenment with its emphasis on empirical, visual observation - as the time when sight came to take its place as preeminent among the senses (Smith 2007:21ff). This view has been contested by others who call attention to non-visual senses such as touch, taste, and smell as being critically important to the development of modernity (Smith 2007:31, 80ff, 65). No one has ever experienced the world through only one sense. In real life all senses appear together, sometimes in complementary fashion, sometimes in tension. In order to get closer to the lived experience of people in the past the analysis benefits from taking all sensory inputs into account. Of interest for this study is how the senses work together to create the whole perceptual field.

In this article the emotional attitudes to death within the eighteenth-century burgher and noble society of Sweden will be analyzed through the study of coffin burials. The material content of coffins, i.e. the remnants of how the bodies of the deceased were prepared, dressed, adorned and equipped, will be discussed in relation to four of the five Aristotelian senses - namely sight, smell, hearing and touch.

The makings of a grave

Throughout the early modern period in the Western world dying was, if not hindered by sudden deaths from illness, accidents, crime or warfare, done at home. The ideal way of passing was in the presence of relatives who would gather and live in the home of the dying person to be there

when he or she drew their last breath. The body was subsequently washed, dressed, adorned and shrouded. Throughout the early modern era, and well into the modern, the dead body was shown to family, relatives, neighbors and friends before the funeral either during the wake or when the body was laid in the coffin (Arvidsson 2007:150; Åhrén Snickare 2002:130). The coffin was then kept at home awaiting burial. However, unlike other social groups, the nobility were legally allowed to store the coffin in church before the funeral (Arvidsson 2007:151).

When performing the formalized acts of preparing the dead for funeral the participants share a commitment – an agreement to take part in actions out of the ordinary. Scholars focusing on the ritual from an act perspective, such as Roy A. Rappaport (1979), Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw (1994), emphasize this commitment as one of the prerequisites for classifying an act as ritual (Habbe 2005:33, 36). The participant is able to take a stand and make this commitment due to the fact that the form of the ritual is stipulated beforehand. The ritual is perceived of as a predetermined external entity and participants may have their own intentions when partaking without threatening the stipulated purpose (Humphrey & Laidlaw 1994:88f; Habbe 2005:33f). When preparing the dead for funeral there are cultural understandings connected to the ritual act, but that same act can be looked upon as ritual, symbolic or with indifference depending on through whose eyes the act is being seen (Habbe 2005:36, 59). The formality of the ritual both restrains the participants and allows them a space for their own personal motifs. It also sets standards for the appropriate emotional outlet, but can at the same time be said to legitimise the sanctioned way of showing emotion. The ritual thus serves as a way to both channel and restrain emotion (Habbe 2005:49). Above all, rituals are collective acts legitimised by the collective. This collectiveness of the ritual can create a sense of trust and security and at the same time uphold the collective norms and conventions in society (Habbe 2005:49, 56).

How then, do all the individually felt reactions surrounding the dead body make it possible to study sensory impressions and emotions of the past? Emotions are partly constructed through material practice. If certain emotions correspond with the values of a society, they will be created and recreated (Tarlow 1999:35). It is my assumption that recurring patterns in graves concerning preparation, dress, adornment and equipment of the dead body bear witness to a collective cultural understanding – a meaning on the level of Barthes' *studium* if you will.

These patterns may mirror the reflected or unspoken collective emotional attitudes towards death. The material actions triggered by punctual, individual emotional responses might be traced in deviations from these patterns and may indicate individual acts not necessarily performed or supported within the collective context of the ritual.

What we see inside the coffin are therefore the traces of collectively authorized actions but also there must have been room for personal actions towards the dead body as long as it was kept at home. The fact that the priest in 1686 was forbidden to take part in the last rituals held at home before closing the coffin lid and departing to church for the funeral (Arvidsson 2007:240) might have further enabled individual material actions towards the dead.

The royal naval church of Karlskrona

The Royal Naval Church Ulrica Pia is situated in the city of Karlskrona, in the province of Blekinge, on the south coast of Sweden. This parish church for the military and civilian employees of the Royal Naval Base was consecrated in 1685 (Malmberg 1980:7ff). The 23 brick-built burial vaults underneath the church floor contained 401 whole and fragmented coffins when they were excavated during the winter months of 1942-1943. From the documentation it is hard to establish how many bodies were found. The textiles report, which documents the best preserved textiles found in situ, describes the graves of 109 individuals. The total number of individuals found therefore probably exceeds this figure. Many graves can be dated to the mid and late eighteenth century by means of coffin plates, coffin styles or textiles, but burials from the late seventeenth century also occur. The dating must in most cases be regarded as roughly estimated, which makes it difficult to comment on changes in practices over time. The coffins were only partially inspected since no textiles or objects within them were allowed to be moved. Certain aspects, such as objects or clothing underneath the shrouds, may therefore have been overlooked. No osteological analysis was performed. In the report the sex and age of the dead has been determined through coffin plates and estimated through coffin size, with the help of textiles and by observing tooth development (ATA 3260/43). The incertitude in this procedure has been taken into account when interpreting the graves in this article.

For a fuller analysis the graves of the Royal Naval Church are compared to the forty eighteenth-century graves of burgers and nobility excavated

in vaults of the Sankt Olai Cathedral of Helsingør, Denmark, in 2000 (Aagaard 2001:99f). Parallels will also be drawn with graves of the cemetery of Linköping cathedral in Sweden. The excavation there of 2002-2003 gave the opportunity to archaeologically and osteologically document graves dating from AD 1100-1810 (Tagesson 2009:153f) and therefore offers a long term perspective on the burial customs of city dwellers from a wider social strata (Nyberg 2005:8f). Early modern graves are still a limited research area in Sweden. The examples from British burial customs used in this article should therefore be viewed as food for thought – as possible ways of thinking about the Swedish material that may be challenged once a fuller body of material has been analyzed.

Sight

When studying the graves of the Royal Naval Church and those of the comparative material of the cathedral of Helsingør, two material metaphors become evident. They are the metaphors of sleep and of heavenly celebration. As we shall see these material metaphors are created through the complementary work of several sensory impressions.

All the dead in the Royal Naval Church are resting their heads on pillows. They give the impression of having been tucked in, lying under covers or creatively draped winding sheets. Adults are shrouded in plain white cotton or linen fabric, their shrouds draped as shirts or dresses. Underneath they wear shirts and shifts that have been used in life. The visible parts of these, the collars and the ends of sleeves, are decorated with lace and frills. Within peasant society tradition dictated that men and women were buried in their finest shirts and shifts, namely those worn on their wedding day (Troels- Lund 1904:107, 109; Åhrén Snickare 2002:131f; Hagberg 1937:181). This may also have been the custom higher up in society. The fact that the shirts and shifts in the Royal Naval Church have been previously worn is perhaps an indication of this.

The absolute majority of adults, both men and women, have their heads covered. Caps made especially for the funeral occur in both male and female graves. Women and men are also buried in headgear worn in life – either in night caps or caps worn during the day. A few women are particularly warmly dressed, wearing both double caps and a kerchief. A handful of men were buried in their wigs. The dead are also well dressed around the neck, wearing jabots or scarves. Due to the limited

investigation of the bodies the footwear - concealed under shrouds and winding sheets - has been recorded in only a few cases. It appears that wool or cotton socks were the most common wear although a pair of shoes did occur in a child's grave - one of the few graves dating to the seventeenth century according to the report.

In a handful of coffins in the Royal Naval Church the face of the dead was found covered by a face cloth, a paper sheet or a veil. A comparison can here be made to the cathedral of Helsingør where all buried individuals had their face covered this way (Hvass 2001:86). An engraving from 1736 documenting British burial customs shows the gathering around a corpse before the funeral in what appears to be the home of burghers or nobility. A woman in the picture removes the face cloth from the deceased to take one last look (Cunnington & Lucas 1972:162). Here the viewing of the face seems to have been regulated. The mourner could decide for him or herself when it was time to come face to face with the dead. Whether or not the same practice existed in Sweden is hard to tell from the material at hand in this study. There may of course have been regional differences to this practice. Since face cloth is lacking in the majority of graves in the Royal Naval Church it may be that only the faces of badly preserved bodies were hidden. In one grave in particular it is tempting to draw this conclusion since the facecloth was thoroughly tucked in underneath the cap and scarf of the dead woman. Her head had then been covered by a big sheet of paper.

The majority of the dead are wearing gloves, usually made of leather. Decorative bows placed around the wrists, the neck and on the head are a common feature. The skin of the dead is covered to a great extent. It appears as if attention is meant to be drawn to decorative details on clothing and elaborately draped winding sheets. The covering of a putrefying face, and of pale and lifeless hands with gloves, should be viewed as part of creating the illusion of a peacefully sleeping body.

In contrast to the rather plain fabrics found in the graves of adults, the children are often clothed and shrouded in coloured or patterned fabrics. Silk fabric is also more common among the young. Another difference is that their shrouds have often been draped in order to imitate clothes worn in real life such as coats, trousers, jackets and dresses. These garments have been decorated with buttons, cuff links and clasp buttons that do not serve any functional purpose apart from creating the illusion of real clothes. Great effort has also been put into arranging the winding sheets in the shape of fans by the children's feet or as halos

round the head. The overall impression is that graves of children are more adorned and they appear more dressed up in their colourful and patterned garments. However, the impression of more exclusive fabrics should, due to the rough dating of the graves, be viewed with slight caution. It cannot be ruled out that the children buried in silk fabric principally belong to the later seventeenth and earlier eighteenth century. The authorities tried to regulate the fabrics of shrouds through laws and ordinances. According to these the nobility were allowed to use silk up until 1731 when the use of linen was commanded (Arvidsson 2007:148). A comparison can be made with smaller studies on graves in Norway which show a tendency of a change towards simpler fabrics among the upper social strata by the mid eighteenth century (Vedeler 2010:254).

The vast majority of children wore burial coronets. They were worn as a single chaplet or in combination with a small cage-shaped crown (Figure 1). The coronets in the Royal Naval Church are mostly made of real or artificial myrtle, although laurel leaf, box and lingonberry sprigs occur as well. Garlands and bouquets of real and artificial flowers also adorn their bodies.

The excavation of the cemetery of the Linköping cathedral showed that burial coronets were introduced there in the late seventeenth century to early eighteenth century, becoming most common in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century (Nyberg 2005:21). The coronets in Linköping were mostly made of flowers and decorated with copper spirals, little brass plates or pearls tied around a wire (Tagesson 2009:163). The earliest archaeological evidence of a burial coronet in Sweden is one made of pillow-lace which dates to the later part of the sixteenth century. It was found in the cemetery of St. Nicolai church in Norrköping in 2004-2005 (Konsmar 2007:16f).

In a seminar paper on the graves of Linköping I have previously shown that burial coronets could be worn by children of both sexes and also by young men and women, although there appears to have been a difference in the placing of coronets. Children and young women wore them on the head and young men had them placed on their bodies (Nyberg 2005:19). Graves of women and men in the Royal Naval Church further strengthen this observation. Four women are wearing myrtle coronets whereas a man has twigs of myrtle in his hands and on his chest. Based on the text on coffin plates and tooth development these individuals have been determined to have been young adults.



Figure 1: This picture of buried children evokes strong feelings through time and space. The meticulous care in dressing and adorning is a moving testimony of the emotional reaction upon the death of a child. Notice the artistic fan and halo-shaped drapery by the head and feet and how the shroud to the left imitates a real coat with clasp buttons. The children's heads are crowned with coronets. Photograph: Lars-Göran Kindström, Swedish National Heritage Board, Department of Heritage Resources.

The use of *bridal* coronets has a long tradition in Sweden. Written sources from the sixteenth century describe how the young bride wore a coronet as a symbol of chastity and virtue. Starting in the eighteenth century myrtle crowns in combination with chaplets were worn by brides as part of their bridal trousseau. The use of myrtle at weddings started in towns and spread to the countryside. If short on real myrtle the crowns and chaplets could be supplemented with lingonberry sprigs or imitations made of paper (Mattson & Dackenberg 2005:38ff). It therefore appears that coronets of myrtle were used in both weddings and burials in the eighteenth century.

In my seminar paper on the Linköping graves I discussed the different placement of coronets from a gender perspective. I interpreted the fact that men, unlike women and children, did not wear coronets on their heads as a sign that they were on their way into a more official male sphere. By studying, learning a trade or coming of age, the young man may have been regarded as too old for wearing a coronet (Nyberg 2005:21). The common denominator of women and children is rather that of chastity and innocence. It is clear that a single chaplet could be worn by both boys and girls. With regard to the similarity of the adornment of a bride it may be that the combination of chaplet and crown was reserved for girls. In 1666 a parish priest described in his diary how his little dead daughter was wearing her bridal dress and garb (Hagberg 1937:198). The funeral attire here seems to have gone all out in wedding symbolism.

Within Christianity laurel, which adorned several buried children, has been a symbol of immortality. Tradition maintains that the earliest Christians laid their dead on laurel leaves since “those fallen asleep in Christ never cease to live” (my translation; Dahlby1963:230). The coronets, worn by children and unmarried virgins and made of different materials, thus seem to bear several related connotations. They represent immortality and victory over death. They also stand for chastity, purity and innocence and perhaps also the celebration of triumph over carnal lusts. The full blown wedding symbolism also suggests the celebration of a heavenly marriage to Christ.

The Moravian Church (herrnhuter), a revivalist movement that grew strong in Sweden in the eighteenth century, preached an individual relationship with Christ. This was often expressed as a physical relationship with Jesus where death was referred to as becoming his wife in heaven (Jarrick 1987:30, 37, 40). Although coronets had been

used earlier, the incorporation of the ideas of the Moravian Church into the state church and wider society (Jarrick 1987:53, 63) might have contributed to the popularity of the marriage metaphor as seen in the increasing number of coronets in Linköping during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The singling out of the young and unmarried from the adult and married, performed through particular and more elaborate adornment, suggests above all a greater emotional hardship in losing someone young who had not yet fulfilled their lifecycle of marrying and having children of their own. Death is portrayed as a celebration thereby focusing on a positive continuation.

Smell

The report on the Royal Naval Church describes three of the buried individuals as 'embalmed'. An additional ten are described as 'mummified'. Since bodies in grave vaults can become naturally mummified (Löwegren 1962:112), and since the investigation of bodies was limited, it is hard to tell how many of the dead had actually been given an embalming treatment after death.

In a publication published in 1775 the Swedish surgeon and obstetrician Herman Shützerantz describes how the method of dry embalming was used when the body was to be put on display for a longer period of time, such as with royal and princely funerals. The body is then emptied of its intestines, carefully washed on the inside and thereafter filled with aromatic spices and treated with balms (Löwegren 1962:101). According to Shützerantz the purpose of embalming royal corpses was not just to prevent putrefaction and smell before the burial, but also to enable the possibility of seeing the face and appearance of the royalty on certain occasions in the future (Löwegren 1962:95). Since embalming seems not to have been performed on all bodies it may have been reserved only for those who, due to various circumstances, were prevented from being buried quickly. A simpler way of dampening the smell of putrefaction was through the use of fir twigs found in several graves. In one grave a major's wife was resting under a cover made of fir twigs (Figure 2).

The adorning flowers also would have contributed to the 'smellscape' surrounding the dead body. Myrtle, laurel and box all give a distinct smell. A little girl in the Royal Naval Church was, partly to this end, holding a bouquet of clove and lemon in her hands. In the graves of

Helsingør cathedral twenty types of plants could be identified. They had been used as upholstery in mattresses and pillows for the dead to rest upon and for decorative as well as scenting purposes (Karg 2001:134). Most of the graves had been upholstered with hops which bear an aromatic scent. The tranquilizing effect of hops may also have been thought to symbolise or give a pleasant sleep to the dead (Karg 2001:134, 137). Valerian, which was found in the grave of Swedish king Gustav Vasa, possibly the first person to be embalmed in Sweden in 1560 (Löwegren 1962:86ff; Olsson 1956:55), is to this day used as a natural cure for insomnia.

The fresh fragrance of herbs was meant to lead associations away from putrefaction and to paint a picture of beautiful sleep and celebration. The smell of coronets made of myrtle may even have led associations to the joyous wedding. An individual example testifies to how attempts of scent diversions, through personal association, could have quite the opposite effect. In her autobiography the Danish princess Leonora Christine, daughter of King Christian IV, describes how she developed an aversion to the smell of rosemary after viewing her dead twelve-year-old brother lying in state in 1628 (Bøggild Johannsen 1988:35). Rosemary was found in several graves in Helsingør cathedral (Karg 2001:134). From pictures and written sources we know that rosemary was also commonly used in England to freshen the air around the corpse. Here sprigs of rosemary were both held in the hands of mourners and lain down around the body (Gittings 1984:110, 124). The association of smell and disease existed in different shapes from the Middle Ages well into the nineteenth century (Smith 2007:67). Therefore the perfume of herbs in graves may also have been understood to fight unhealthy impurities emitted from the dead body.

It is evident from several written sources that the smell of decomposing bodies in church was a problem. In 1588 Swedish king John III complained about how the clergy looked after their churches since the stench made churchgoers vomit. And despite efforts to fight the cadaverous odors with fir branches and incense in a Stockholm church in 1686, a meeting for clergymen had to be adjourned due to the terribly disturbing smell (Malmstedt 2002:48). However, the right of the dead to be buried within the sanctity of the church was greater than the need to eradicate the disturbing and possibly dangerous smells for another 100 years. Despite the nuisance, the selling of intramural graves was not forbidden until 1783 (Lindahl 1969:197ff). Already

existing family graves could still be used; the latest coffin plate in the Royal Naval Church dates to 1837. In Stockholm in the late eighteenth century public announcements were made stating that the relatives were responsible for ensuring that the coffin was properly closed with putty and resin, due to the unhealthy vapors from the body (Arvidsson 2007:149f). The coffin lids in the Royal Naval Church were fastened with wooden plugs, but from the mid eighteenth century iron screws were added. The shrouds or winding sheets were laid over the edge of the coffin together with what is described as a red or black lacquer or sealing wax which also helped fasten the lid.



Figure 2: A Major's wife is resting under a cover of fir twigs to dampen the smells of putrefaction. Photograph: Lars-Göran Kindström, Swedish National Heritage Board, Department of Heritage Resources.

Hearing

The fastening of shrouds and winding sheets to the edge of the coffin also must have helped in keeping the body in place and upright. The excavation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century graves in vaults underneath Spitalfields church in London showed how professional undertakers had used different techniques to keep the body in a precise position. Silk ribbons were used for trussing the body by, for example, tying hands to the body, keeping feet close together and for fastening caps (Janaway 1993:104f). The graves of the Royal Naval Church were not examined closely enough to discover particular examples of trussing since no shrouds were removed. Most hands appear to have been resting freely. In one case the shroud had slipped off revealing a man's feet tied together with a black silk ribbon. In ethnological sources the tying of feet has a basis in folk beliefs of the nineteenth century, where it is explained as a strategy to keep the ghost of the dead from walking (Hagberg 1937:204f). It is hard to tell if this was also the case with this man who died in 1714, several generations before. Dying too hastily or in the wrong way without the gradual preparation and process of dying in the presence of family, kin and friends (Halam, Hockey & Howarth 1999:116) might have prompted extra precaution.

There was no detailed investigation conducted of the upholstery material in the Royal Naval Church. The report only briefly mentions bodies lying on hay. Apart from plants, sawdust and paper shreds were used in the graves of Helsingør cathedral (Hvass 2001:88). The upholstery creates a soft bed for the dead body that appears to be lying comfortably. The dry and porous material also helps absorb liquids from the body's decomposition and keeps the body from moving around and bumping against the coffin walls when being transported (cf. Janaway 1993:102). Both the fixed upright position of the body and the soft bedding must have prevented the limbs of the dead body from moving and making noises. The material testimony of sound in the graves is therefore rather that of no sound. In order to preserve the image of death as a peaceful sleep not a sound should be heard from the body to make anyone believe otherwise.

There seems to have been a fear of burying someone still alive. A contribution to this debate in Sweden was made with the translation of anatomist Jacob Bénigne Winsløw's thesis in 1751 on the uncertainties

of the signs of death and on precipitate burial and embalming. In his thesis he could show proof of 49 live burials and he presented a number of techniques to avoid this; for example by exposing the dead body to strong smells, loud shrieking noises and pricking with pins. Of course one of the safest methods would be to wait for putrefaction to set in (Winslōw 1751). To what extent Winslōw's thesis had an impact on the handling of dead bodies in practice is of course hard to say. It is, however, a symptomatic sign of the importance of the body to be lying absolutely still and quiet throughout the funeral ceremony.

Touch

The experience of touch is elusive in the archaeological record, but at the same time very evident. All that we see in the graves has been made and done with human hands and therefore comes into being through the sense of reflected or unreflecting touch.

In line with Norbert Elias' 'civilising process' the sense of touch underwent a change during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Social control was now upheld by keeping one's hands to oneself (Smith 2007:102). As Elizabeth D. Harvey suggests, drawing on Norbert Elias, this disciplining and orchestrating of touch made it emotionally meaningful. While physical impulses were hindered and kept on the inside, tactility became a way to channel physical expression of emotion (Harvey 2003:9).

Through the many steps of preparation there must have been opportunity to touch the body of the deceased. There may have been something almost therapeutic in physically preparing your loved one for sleep and festivity. The dead were dressed in handicrafts such as lace. Lace that comprised textures meant to be touched (Smith 2007:109). The dressing of the dead in fabrics with lacework and frills and the adornment with flowers, making them as beautiful as possible, must have provided an opportunity for the tactile transference of emotions to the dead and thus must have been an important part of the grieving process. The giving of personal objects to the deceased, in the Royal Naval Church exemplified by a snuffbox and a hymn book, in Helsingør by a copy of Voltaire's tragedy *Oedipus* stuck between the mattresses (Hvass 2001:89), and in Linköping shown by wedding rings, clay pipes and an egg found in a child's grave (Nyberg 2005:17f), injects an extra dimension into the creation and recreation of a meaningful relationship with the dead

through material practice. These single objects which do not recur in graves are most likely the results of acts driven and motivated by individual emotions. They either represent an aspect of the relationship with the deceased or were chosen because they represented or were thought to have been needed by the dead. Of course fear of the dead returning may also be represented in these objects.

According to Eva Åhrén Snickare it was not until the nineteenth century that a gradual development towards a professionalization of undertakers started in Sweden, beginning in the higher social strata of society and spreading from towns to the countryside (Åhrén Snickare 2002:127). There had always been caution and particular social rules for handling the dead body (Troels-Lund 1904:163), but now the washing and dressing was left in the hands of others. This process left the bereaved separated from the dead. Not having to feel the cold body of the corpse, but seeing it fully prepared for the funeral, put death a step further away from the living, making the metaphors of sleep and festivity even more convincing.

A peaceful sleep and a heavenly celebration

The material prerequisites for sensory impressions found in graves of burghers and nobility in the eighteenth century show that they were meant to paint an intersensorial picture of death as a peaceful sleep and a heavenly celebration. The senses of sight, smell, hearing and touch all worked together to make death beautiful and to avoid the experience of a body in the process of putrefaction. The metaphors of sleep, celebration and wedding redescribe the abstract and unintelligible death in terms of well known, familiar, safe and even joyous concepts from daily life. These understandings bear culturally specific connotations that may be particular to the social groups studied here. Further studies will have to show if these ideas permeated the wider society and if there are differences in material expressions between social groups over time.

The manipulated sensory impressions of the dead body may not always fill their metaphorical purpose when faced by the individual. For instance, the herbs used to scent the dead body can cause quite the opposite emotional reaction to that intended. They may become associated with death and sorrow. The sensory impression here leads to a personal association, causing emotions that may lead to material actions. The inclusion of personal and singled out objects in graves, only

touched upon in this article and in need of further exploring, should most likely be seen in the light of personal and emotionally driven acts towards the dead body. Acts not necessarily performed within the collective context of the ritual.

When dealing with material traditions that last over several hundred years, such as burial coronets, a question has to be raised regarding the meaning of practices over time. Surely there must have been shifts in emotional meaning over centuries. Part of the reason for upholding rituals and traditions is the feeling of security in doing something your ancestors have done. This creates inertia in the changing of practices. When does material practice go from being emotionally meaningful to becoming convention? Does a material practice cease to be only when performing it is utterly unthinkable to the people involved? These are important questions and it is hoped that more light can be shed on them in the future.

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