



Bodies in the Bog and the Archaeological Imagination

Karin Sanders

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Over the past few centuries, northern Europe's bogs have yielded mummified men, women, and children who were deposited there as sacrifices in the early Iron Age and kept startlingly intact by the chemical properties of peat. In this remarkable account of their modern afterlives, Karin Sanders argues that the discovery of bog bodies began an extraordinary—and ongoing—cultural journey.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sanders shows, these eerily preserved remains came alive in art and science as material metaphors for such concepts as trauma, nostalgia, and identity. Sigmund Freud, Joseph Beuys, Seamus Heaney, and other major figures have used them to reconsider fundamental philosophical, literary, aesthetic, and scientific concerns. Exploring this intellectual spectrum, Sanders contends that the power of bog bodies to provoke such a wide range of responses is rooted in their unique status as both archeological artifacts and human beings. They emerge as corporeal time capsules that transcend archaeology to challenge our assumptions about what we can know about the past. By restoring them to the roster of cultural phenomena that force us to confront our ethical and aesthetic boundaries, *Bodies in the Bog* excavates anew the question of what it means to be human.

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