

**The Wiley Blackwell
Companion to Religion
and Materiality**

The Wiley Blackwell Companions to Religion

The Wiley Blackwell Companions to Religion series presents a collection of the most recent scholarship and knowledge about world religions. Each volume draws together newly commissioned essays by distinguished authors in the field, and is presented in a style which is accessible to undergraduate students, as well as scholars and the interested general reader. These volumes approach the subject in a creative and forward-thinking style, providing a forum in which leading scholars in the field can make their views and research available to a wider audience..

Published

The Blackwell Companion to Judaism

Edited by Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck

The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion

Edited by Richard K. Fenn

The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible

Edited by Leo G. Perdue

The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology

Edited by Graham Ward

The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism

Edited by Gavin Flood

The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism

Edited by Alister E. McGrath and Darren C. Marks

The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology

Edited by Gareth Jones

The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics

Edited by William Schweiker

The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality

Edited by Arthur Holder

The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion

Edited by Robert A. Segal

The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'ān,

Second Edition

Edited by Andrew Rippin

The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought

Edited by Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi'

The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture

Edited by John F. A. Sawyer

The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism

Edited by James J. Buckley, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, and Trent Pomplun

The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity

Edited by Ken Parry

The Blackwell Companion to the Theologians

Edited by Ian S. Markham

The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature

Edited by Rebecca Lemon, Emma Mason, John Roberts, and Christopher Rowland

The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament

Edited by David E. Aune

The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth Century Theology

Edited by David Fergusson

The Blackwell Companion to Religion in America

Edited by Philip Goff

The Blackwell Companion to Jesus

Edited by Delbert Burkett

The Blackwell Companion to Paul

Edited by Stephen Westerholm

The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence

Edited by Andrew R. Murphy

The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics, Second Edition

Edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Pastoral Theology

Edited by Bonnie J. Miller McLemore

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Social Justice

Edited by Michael D. Palmer and Stanley M. Burgess

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions

Edited by Randall L. Nadeau

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to African Religions

Edited by Elias Kifon Bongmba

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism

Edited by Julia A. Lamm

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion

Edited by Ian S. Markham, Barney Hawkins IV, Leslie Nuñez

Steffensen and Justyn Terry

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Interreligious Dialogue

Edited by Catherine Cornille

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism

Edited by Mario Poceski

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology

Edited by Orlando O. Espín

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Ancient Israel

Edited by Susan Niditch

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics

Edited by Ken Parry

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity

Edited by Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Politics and Religion in America

Edited by Barbara A. McGraw

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology

Edited by John Hart

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology, Second Edition

Edited by William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Scott

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Materiality

Edited by Vasudha Narayanan

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Wisdom Literature

Edited by Samuel L. Adams and Matthew Goff

The Wiley Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadith

Edited by Daniel W. Brown

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom

Edited by Paul Middleton

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism

Edited by Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Vevaina

Forthcoming

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Islamic Spirituality

Edited by Vincent J. Cornell and Bruce B. Lawrence

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religious Diversity

Edited by Kevin Schilbrack

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christianity, 2 Vols.

Edited by Nicholas A. Adams

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Old Testament Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha

Edited by Randall D. Chesnut

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion, Second Edition

Edited by Robert Segal

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Materiality

Edited by

Vasudha Narayanan

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2020
© 2020 John Wiley & Sons Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by law. Advice on how to obtain permission to reuse material from this title is available at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

The right of Vasudha Narayanan to be identified as the author of the editorial material in this work has been asserted in accordance with law.

Registered Offices

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, customer services, and more information about Wiley products visit us at www.wiley.com.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty

While the publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this work, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, written sales materials or promotional statements for this work. The fact that an organization, website, or product is referred to in this work as a citation and/or potential source of further information does not mean that the publisher and authors endorse the information or services the organization, website, or product may provide or recommendations it may make. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a specialist where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Narayanan, Vasudha, editor.

Title: The Wiley Blackwell companion to religion and materiality / edited by Vasudha Narayanan.

Description: First Edition. | Hoboken : Wiley, 2020. | Series: The Wiley Blackwell companions to religion | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019003273 (print) | LCCN 2019011029 (ebook) | ISBN 9781118688328 (Adobe PDF) | ISBN 9781118660089 (ePub) | ISBN 9781118660102 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Religion and culture. | Material culture—Religious aspects. | Materialism—Religious aspects.

Classification: LCC BR65.C8 (ebook) | LCC BR65.C8 W55 2019 (print) | DDC 200—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019003273>

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Images: Dervish © logosstock/Getty Images, Tibetan Singing Bowl © Veena Nair/Getty Images, Virupaksha temple © Neha Gupta/Getty Images, Three church bells © Yaroslav Mikheev/Getty Images, Cold green square paper © Julia Cherkinski/Shutterstock

Set in 10/12.5pt Photina by SPi Global, Pondicherry, India

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Acknowledgments	viii
About the Editor	ix
Notes on Contributors	x
1 The Persistence, Ubiquity, and Dynamicity of Materiality: Studying Religion and Materiality Comparatively <i>Manuel A. Vásquez</i>	1
I. Religious Bodies	43
2 The Incarnate Body and Blood in Christianity <i>Jessica A. Boon</i>	45
3 Perspectives on Rabbinic Constructions of Gendered Bodies <i>Gwynn Kessler</i>	61
4 The One and the Many: Ancestors and Sorcerers in Hohodene Worldview <i>Robin M. Wright</i>	90
5 Cognitive Science, Embodiment, and Materiality <i>Nathaniel F. Barrett</i>	108
II. Practices and Performances	129
6 From Bells to <i>Bottus</i> : Analysing the Body and Materiality of Indian Dance in an American University Context <i>Harshita Mruthinti Kamath and Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger</i>	131
7 Spirit Incorporation in Candomblé <i>Paul Christopher Johnson</i>	150
8 Spiritual Warfare in Pentecostalism: Metaphors and Materialities <i>Simon Coleman</i>	171
9 Consider the Tourist <i>Thomas S. Bremer</i>	187

III. Spatiality, Mobility, and Relationality	207
10 Moving, Crossing, and Dwelling: Christianity and Place Pilgrimage <i>John Eade</i>	209
11 Hindu and Sikh Processions in Europe: Material Objects and Ritual Bodies on the Move <i>Knut A. Jacobsen</i>	226
12 Geopolitics, Space Sacralization, and Devotional Labour on the US–Mexico Border <i>Elaine A. Peña</i>	241
13 The Imagination of Matter: Mesoamerican Trees, Cities, and Human Sacrifice <i>David Carrasco</i>	258
14 Material Religion, Materialism, and Non-human Animals <i>Anna L. Peterson</i>	274
IV. Sacred Objects and Beings	291
15 Assembling Inferences in Material Analysis <i>David Morgan</i>	293
16 Woven Beliefs: Textiles and Religious Practice in Africa <i>Victoria L. Rovine</i>	316
17 Beyond the Symbolism of the Headscarf: The Assemblage of Veiling and the Headscarf as a Thing <i>Banu Gökarıksel and Anna J. Secor</i>	328
18 Indigenous Sacred Objects after NAGPRA: In and Out of Circulation <i>Greg Johnson</i>	341
19 Relics in the Sikh Tradition <i>Anne Murphy</i>	356
V. Religion, Food, and Comensality	373
20 Religion, Food, and Agriculture: Three Case Studies <i>A. Whitney Sanford</i>	375
21 Vaishnava Vegetarianism: Scriptural and Theological Perspectives on the Diet of Devotion <i>Steven J. Rosen</i>	395
22 <i>Prasāda</i> , Grace as Sustenance, and the Relational Self <i>Andrea Marion Pinkney</i>	414
23 To Eat and Be Eaten: Mesoamerican Human Sacrifice and Ecological Webs <i>Kay A. Read</i>	433
VI. Media and Material Religion	453
24 Cinema <i>S. Brent Plate</i>	455
25 Religion and Digital Media: Studying Materiality in Digital Religion <i>Heidi A. Campbell and Louise Connelly</i>	471

	CONTENTS	vii
26	Aural Media <i>Rosalind I.J. Hackett</i>	487
VII.	Economies and Governmentalities of Religion	507
27	Colonialism, Orientalism, and the Body <i>Sylvester A. Johnson</i>	509
28	Dharmaśāstra: Materiality in and of the Hindu Code <i>Patrick Olivelle</i>	530
29	Religion and Ethnicity as Located and Localized <i>Terje Østebø</i>	545
30	Never Again: Religion, Commodities, and the State <i>Kevin Lewis O'Neill</i>	567
	Index	583

Acknowledgments

This volume is a product of several scholars who have all worked in the field of religion and materiality for a very long time. We wanted to collectively come up with a volume where the chapters have analytical depth and the book as a whole would have comparative breadth, cover multiple traditions, geographical foci, and time periods, in addition to showcasing diverse expressions of religious materiality. The result has been a set of chapters where the topics have been carefully researched, rigorously analyzed, and presented through a wide array of disciplinary lenses.

It is a pleasure to thank the many people who have made the production of this volume possible. Several people at Wiley helped in seeing this book through its many stages. I am particularly grateful to Rebecca Harkin for initially suggesting this idea, to Juliet Booker for all continued help, and to Rajalakshmi Nadarajan for her efficient and professional attention to all the details and diligent work in the last stages of the production.

Manuel Vásquez did the heavy lifting for the editorial work when the chapters started to come in. He has also written the introduction, highlighting the contributions of each chapter and skillfully connecting them with the cutting-edge theoretical and methodological debates informing the turn to materiality in religious studies and, more broadly, in the humanities and social sciences. And finally, a big “thank you” to the many authors in this volume for their scholarship and for their patience during the several years it took to see this volume come out.

Vasudha Narayanan
Distinguished Professor, Religion
University of Florida

About the Editor

Vasudha Narayanan is Distinguished Professor of Religion at the University of Florida and a past President of the American Academy of Religion. She is an associate editor of the six-volume *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (2009–2014). Her publications include numerous articles as well as several books namely *The Vernacular Veda: Revelation, Recitation, and Ritual* (1994), *The Life of Hinduism* (co-edited with John Stratton Hawley, 2007), and *Hinduism* (2009). Her research has been supported by the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation; the Centre for Khmer Studies; the American Council of Learned Societies; National Endowment for the Humanities; the American Institute of Indian Studies/Smithsonian; and the Social Science Research Council.

Notes on Contributors

Nathaniel F. Barrett is a research fellow at the Institute of Culture and Society, University of Navarra (Pamplona, Spain). His current research focuses on the nature and evolution of affect, motivation, and enjoyment.

Jessica A. Boon Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, specializes in late medieval and early modern Christian culture, particularly Iberian spirituality and mysticism 1450–1550. Her first monograph is *The Mystical Science of the Soul: Medieval Cognition in Bernardino de Laredo's Recollection Mysticism* (University of Toronto Press, 2012). She publishes on Spanish mysticism, the history of science and spirituality, Passion devotion, Mariology, and theories of gender, pain, affect, materiality, and embodiment.

Thomas S. Bremer Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Rhodes College, is a historian of religions in the Americas. Much of his published work has focused on religion and tourism. His most recent book is *Formed from This Soil: An Introduction to the Diverse History of Religion in America* (Wiley, 2014).

Heidi A. Campbell is Professor of Communication and affiliate faculty in Religious Studies at Texas A&M University. She is director of the *Network for New Media, Religion and Digital Culture Studies* and author of over 90 articles and books on new media, religion, and digital culture including *When Religion Meets New Media* (Routledge 2010), *Digital Religion* (Routledge 2013) and *Networked Theology* (Baker Academic 2016).

David Carrasco is a Mexican-American historian of religions who explores the question 'Where is your sacred place' in his research and writing on Mesoamerican cultures and the Mexican-American borderlands. His studies with Mircea Eliade, Charles Long, and Paul Wheatley led him to study the rise of primary urban generation in Mesoamerica and the role of ceremonial centres in the Aztec empire and their transformations during

the Gran Encuentro with Spanish imperialism between 1517 and 1810. He is the director of the Moses Mesoamerican Archive at Harvard University and the recipient of the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle.

Simon Coleman is Chancellor Jackman Professor at the University of Toronto, and co-editor of the journal *Religion and Society: Advances in Research*. His research interests include Pentecostalism, pilgrimage, cathedrals, urban religion, and religious infrastructures, and he has carried out fieldwork in Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Nigeria. Recent books include *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (2015, NYU Press, co-edited with Rosalind Hackett) and *Pilgrimage and Political Economy* (2018, Berghahn, co-edited with John Eade).

Louise Connelly is a Senior E-Learning Developer at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include social media, virtual worlds, and Buddhist communities and identity online. Her publications include 'Virtual Buddhism: Buddhist Ritual in *Second Life*' in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, H. Campbell (ed.) (Routledge, 2013) and 'Virtual Buddhism: Online Communities, Sacred Places and Objects' in *The Changing World Religion Map*, S. Brunn (ed.) (Springer, 2015).

John Eade is Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Roehampton, Visiting Professor at Toronto University and a member of the Migration Research Unit, UCL. His research interests focus on urban ethnicity, identity politics, global migration and pilgrimage. Relevant publications include the co-edited volumes *Contesting the Sacred* (1991), *Reframing Pilgrimage* (2004), *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies* (2015), and *New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies* (2017).

Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger is Professor of Religion in the Department of Religion at Emory University. Her theoretical interests include performance, vernacular religion, and gender. She received a John Simon Guggenheim and Summer National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships in 2014–2015 to support research and writing for her book *Material Acts in Everyday Hindu Worlds* (in press, SUNY Press). Her publications include: an introductory textbook, *Everyday Hinduism* (2015); *When the World Becomes Female: Possibilities of a South Indian Goddess* (2013); *In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India* (2006); *Gender and Genre in the Folklore of Middle India* (1996); and two edited volumes, *Oral Epics in India* (1989) and *Boundaries of the Text: Epic Performances in South and Southeast Asia* (1991).

Banu Gökariksel is Associate Professor of Geography and Global Studies and the Royster Distinguished Professor at the Graduate School of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She served as the co-editor of the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* (2014–2018) and is the recipient of the 2018 American Association of Geographers Enhancing Diversity Award and the 2017 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Chapman Family Teaching Award. Her research analyses the politics of everyday life and questions of religion, secularism, and gender with a focus on bodies and urban space.

Rosalind I.J. Hackett is Distinguished Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee. In fall 2018, she was the Gerardus van der Leeuw Fellow, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Groningen. Her recent (co-edited) books are *Displacing the State: Religion and Conflict in Neoliberal Africa* (2012), *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa* (2015), and *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (2015). She is an Honorary Life Member of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR).

Knut A. Jacobsen is Professor of the Study of Religions at the University of Bergen, Norway and author and editor of many books and numerous articles in journals and edited volumes on Sāṃkhya and Yoga, and on various aspects on religions of South Asia and in the South Asian diasporas. He is the author of *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga: Material Principle: Religious Experience, Ethical Implications* (Peter Lang, 1999), *Kapila: Founder of Sāṃkhya and Avatāra of Viṣṇu* (Munshiram Manoharlal, 2008), *Pilgrimage in the Hindu Tradition: Salvific Space* (Routledge, 2013), and *Yoga in Modern Hinduism: Hariharānanda Āraṇya and Sāṃkhyayoga* (Routledge, 2018) and editor of *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary India* (Routledge, 2016). Jacobsen is the founding Editor-in-Chief of the six volumes *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Brill, 2009–2015) and the *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.

Greg Johnson is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Johnson's research focuses upon the intersection of Indigenous traditions and law in American Indian and Native Hawaiian contexts. Recent publications include *Sacred Claims: Repatriation and Living Tradition* (University of Virginia Press 2007), *Handbook of Indigenous Religion(s)* (Brill 2017), edited with Siv Ellen Kraft, and *Irreverence and the Sacred: Critical Studies in the History of Religions* (Oxford 2018), edited with Hugh B. Urban.

Paul Christopher Johnson is Professor of History and of Afroamerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan, and Co-Editor of the journal, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. He wrote *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé* (Oxford 2002), *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa* (California 2007), and *Ekklesia: Three Inquiries on Church and State* (Chicago 2018), with Winnifred E. Sullivan and Pamela E. Klassen, and edited *Spirited Things: The Work of 'Possession' in Afro-Atlantic Religions* (Chicago 2014). He is completing a new book, *Automatic Religion: Nearhuman Agents of Brazil and France*.

Sylvester A. Johnson is Associate Professor of African American Studies and Religious Studies at Northwestern University. He researches religion, race, empire, and sexuality in the Atlantic world and the relationship between humans and intelligent machines. He recently authored *African American Religions, 1500–2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (Cambridge University Press 2015).

Harshita Mruthinti Kamath is Visweswara Rao and Sita Koppaka Assistant Professor in Telugu Culture, Literature and History at Emory University. Her research

focuses on the textual and performance traditions of Telugu-speaking South India in conversation with theoretical discourses on gender and sexuality in South Asia. She is the author of *Impersonations: The Artifice of Brahmin Masculinity in South Indian Dance* (2019). She has also co-translated the sixteenth-century classical Telugu text *Parijatapaharanamu (Theft of a Tree)* with Velcheru Narayana Rao, which will be published as part of the Murty Classical Library of India (Harvard University Press).

Gwynn Kessler is an Associate Professor in the Department of Religion at Swarthmore College. She is the author of *Conceiving Israel: The Fetus in Rabbinic Narratives*, and she is currently working on a monograph about queer theory and rabbinic literature.

David Morgan is Professor of Religious Studies at Duke University. He is author of several books, including *The Forge of Vision: A Visual History of Modern Christianity* (2015), *The Sacred Gaze* (2005), and *Visual Piety* (1998). He is an editor of the journal *Material Religion*, and co-edits a book series on 'Research in Material Religion' published by Bloomsbury. His latest book is *Images at Work: The Material Culture of Enchantment* (2018).

Anne Murphy is Associate Professor in the Department of Asian Studies and co-Director, Centre for India and South Asia Research, at the University of British Columbia. Her research concerns the vernacular literary and religious traditions of the Punjab region (India and Pakistan) in the early modern and modern periods, with a current focus on the history of the Punjabi language and its cultural production. Past research has addressed memory, history and representation; trauma and representation; material culture and its intersection with textual representations; and religious cultures in interaction.

Patrick Olivelle is Professor Emeritus, University of Texas at Austin and past President of the American Oriental Society. The author of over 30 books and 50 articles, his books have won awards from the American Academy of Religion and the Association of Asian Studies. His major publications include: *Hindu Law: A New History of Dharmaśāstra* (2018), *Reader on Dharma: Classical Indian Law* (2016), *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India* (2013), *Viṣṇu's Code of Law* (2009), *The Life of the Buddha* (2008), *Manu's Code of Law* (2005), *Upaniṣads* (1996), and *Āśrama System* (1993).

Kevin Lewis O'Neill is a Professor in the Department for the Study of Religion and Director of the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies at the University of Toronto. He is the author of *City of God* (California 2010), *Secure the Soul* (California 2015), and *Hunted* (Chicago 2019).

Terje Østebø received his Ph.D. in the History of Religion from Stockholm University, and is currently the Chair of the Department of Religion and an Associate Professor at the Center for African Studies and the Department of Religion, University of Florida. His research interests are Islam in contemporary Ethiopia, Islam, politics, and Islamic

reformism in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, as well as Salafism in Africa. He has lived in Ethiopia for six years, and has extensive field-research experience. Important publications include: *Muslim Ethiopia: The Christian Legacy, Identity Politics, and Islamic Reformism* (co-edited with Patrick Desplat), (Palgrave-Macmillan 2013); *Localising Salafism: Religious Change among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia* (Brill 2012)

Elaine A. Peña is an Associate Professor of American Studies at the George Washington University. She is currently a Visiting Scholar in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh. Her research has been published widely in journals such as *e-misférica*, *American Literary History*, and *The Drama Review*. She is the author of *Performing Piety: Making Space Sacred with the Virgin of Guadalupe* and the editor of *Ethno-Techno: Writings on Performance, Activism, and Pedagogy* with Guillermo Gómez-Peña.

Anna L. Peterson is a Professor in the Department of Religion at the University of Florida. Her research and teaching areas include social, environmental, and animal ethics. Her recent books include *Being Human: Beasts and Boundaries in Nature Ethics* (Columbia, 2013) and the edited volume *Religion and Ecological Crisis: The Lynn White Thesis at 50* (Routledge, 2016). Her most recent book is *Cats and Conservationists: The Debate Over Who Owns the Outdoors*, co-authored with Dara Wald (Purdue 2020). Her current research explores the place of practice in ethical theory.

Andrea Marion Pinkney is an Associate Professor at McGill University, in Montreal. Her current research interests include infrastructure and religious tourism in India, Hindu scriptural heritage in contemporary India (Uttarakhand *māhātmya*); and *prasāda* in the classical and contemporary religious traditions of North India. Her other research interests include Sikh Studies, contemporary Buddhism in Southeast Asia, and religious studies as an academic discipline in Asia.

S. Brent Plate is a writer, editor, and part time college professor whose books include *A History of Religion in 5½ Objects*, *Blasphemy: Art that Offends*, and *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World*. His essays have been published in Newsweek.com, *The Christian Century*, *The Islamic Monthly*, and elsewhere. He is President of the Association for Religion and Intellectual Life/ Crosscurrents, and holds a visiting appointment at Hamilton College, NY.

Kay A. Read Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies (DePaul University), holds degrees in Art (University of Illinois, 1969), Religious Studies (University of Colorado, 1982); and History of Religions (University of Chicago, 1983, 1991). Her interests include Mesoamerican cosmology, mythology, imagery, sacrifice, time, comparative ethics and the interface of religion, nature and culture.

Steven J. Rosen (Satyaraja Dasa) is a practitioner/scholar and an internationally acclaimed author. He is the founding editor of *the Journal of Vaishnava Studies* and associate editor of *Back to Godhead* magazine. His 30-plus books include *Essential Hinduism*

(Rowman & Littlefield), *Krishna's Other Song: A New Look at the Uddhava Gita* (Praeger-Greenwood); and *Sri Chaitanya's Life and Teachings: The Golden Avatara of Divine Love* (Lexington Books).

Victoria L. Rovine is Professor of Art History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on clothing and textiles in Africa, with particular attention to innovations in forms and meanings across cultures. She has published two books: *Bogolan: Shaping Culture through Cloth in Contemporary Mali* (Indiana University Press, 2008), and *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear* (Indiana University Press, 2015). Her current research is focused on colonial-era French West Africa.

A. Whitney Sanford is a professor in the Religion Department at the University of Florida. She is currently conducting ethnographic research on the Florida rivers, exploring human attachment to place and water, for a book tentatively entitled 'River People of Florida'. Her books include *Living Sustainably: What Intentional Communities Can Teach Us About Democracy, Simplicity, and Nonviolence* (University Press of Kentucky, 2017), *Growing Stories from India: Religion and the Fate of Agriculture* (University Press of Kentucky, 2012) and *Singing Krishna: Sound Becomes Sight in Paramanand's Poetry* (SUNY 2008).

Anna J. Secor is Professor of Geography at the University of Kentucky. Her research focuses on theories of space, politics, and subjectivity. She is author of over 30 articles and book chapters. Her work develops ideas of topology in geography by engaging the texts of Lacan, Deleuze, and Agamben. Her research on Islam, state, and society in Turkey has been funded by the National Science Foundation. Recently, she has completed a collaborative NSF-funded project with Banu Gökariksel (UNC) on the production and consumption of Islamic fashions in Turkey, and currently she and Gökariksel are collaborating on another NSF-funded project on the role of religion in public life in Turkey.

Manuel A. Vásquez is an independent scholar who has published extensively in the fields of religion in the Americas, globalization, transnational migration, and method and theory. His works include *The More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (2011), which has been the focus of symposia in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, *Religion*, and *Religion and Society: Advances in Research*.

Robin M. Wright is associate professor in the Department of Religion at the University of Florida. Research and fieldwork have focused on Indigenous religious traditions in South America and more broadly, the Americas and the world. He is the author of *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon* (2013) and *Cosmos, Self, and History in Baniwa Religion: For Those Unborn* (1998).

CHAPTER 1

The Persistence, Ubiquity, and Dynamicity of Materiality

Studying Religion and Materiality Comparatively

Manuel A. Vásquez

1.1 The Persistence of Materiality

On 26 February 2001, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the leadership of the Taliban issued an edict regarding the destruction of religious images. It noted the presence of multiple ‘statues and non-Islamic shrines located in different parts’ of the emirate. ‘These statues have been and remain shrines of unbelievers and these unbelievers continue to worship and respect them. God Almighty is the only real shrine [*taghit*] and all fake idols should be destroyed.’ Thus, the edict concluded: ‘as ordered by the *ulema* [the council of religious and legal scholars] and the Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan all the statues must be destroyed so that no one can worship or respect them in the future’. Arguably, the most high-profile and controversial enactment of the edict was the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas. Standing at over 150 ft tall at the foot of the Hindu Kush in the central highlands of Afghanistan, the statues were not only amongst the world’s largest figures of the Buddha, but also material evidence of the widespread circulation of Buddhism along the Silk Road, a transcontinental network that connected the Mediterranean with India and China. Built in the fifth century CE in the Greco-Indian Gandhara style developed by the descendants of Greek artists who came to the region with Alexander the Great, the statues also underscored the key role of materiality in the encounter and cross-fertilization of cultures and religions along the Silk Road. A Taliban spokesperson characterized the efforts to demolish the Bamiyan figures in military terms, almost suggesting that the statues actively resisted the attempts: ‘Our soldiers are working hard; they are using all available arms against the Buddhas.’ After 20 days of trying through various means to weaken the structures, including the use dynamite, anti-aircraft guns, and tank shells,

the figures were finally destroyed, along with many smaller statues of Buddha housed at the National Museum in Kabul.

The demolition of the Buddhas brought widespread condemnation, not only from the West but from neighbouring Muslim countries, as well as those with large Buddhist and Hindu populations. The United Nations' General Assembly was 'appalled' by the Taliban's edict and actions and adopted a resolution stating that 'the artifacts being destroyed in Afghanistan, including the Buddhist statues in Bamiyan, belonged to the common heritage of humankind. Their destruction was an act of intolerance that struck at the very basis of civilized coexistence and was contrary to the real spirit of Islam'. The resolution also 'strongly called upon the Taliban to protect Afghanistan's cultural heritage from all acts of vandalism, damage and theft. It also called upon Member States to help safeguard the unique Buddhist sculptures in Bamiyan, using appropriate technical measures, including, if necessary, their temporary relocation or removal from public view'.¹

We start the volume with this case not to stress the radical iconoclasm of the Taliban, a strategy that, notwithstanding the UN's General Assembly's assertion that the destruction of the Buddhas 'was contrary to the real spirit of Islam', can easily be co-opted by a 'clash of civilization' geopolitical gaze to portray Islam as not coeval with us, as a barbarian, uncivilized, and intolerant religion driven by a pre-modern traditionalism contrary to modern notions of human rights and universal cultural values. To begin with, the Bamiyan Buddhas and surrounding Buddhist monasteries were attacked before the arrival of Islam by Hephthalites (also known as White Huns), for example, who worshipped Hindu gods, such as Vishnu and Shiva, and Zun, a merging of a local mountain deity and classical Shaivism (Wink 1990, pp. 117–119). Moreover, the giant Buddhas had co-existed with Islam for centuries, surviving the Mongol, Mughal, and British empires and the Soviet intervention. While there is indeed a proscription in the Qur'an against *shirk* (the elevation of anyone and anything to Allah's singular preeminent place), Jamal Elias (nd, 14) notes 'that there is no clear islamic [sic] condemnation paralleling the Biblical ban in the second commandment. Qur'anic condemnations are nowhere as explicit, perhaps the clearest being "And Abraham said to his father Azar: Do you take idols (*aṣṇāman*) as gods? Indeed I see you and your people in manifest error"' (6:74).² Finbarr Flood (2002, p. 652), furthermore, shows that historically Islam is not characterized by 'a timeless theology of images'. He points to the waxing and waning of iconoclastic 'moments' within Islam in response to socio-political and cultural complexities, a similar dynamic that one can find in other religions, like Christianity during the Byzantine era, the conquest of the Americas, and the Protestant Reformation (see Kolrud and Prusac 2014).

Flood's and Elias's points dovetail with Webb Keane's observation that with its mistrust of institutional and ritual mediation and its emphasis on *sola fides* and *sola scriptura*, the Protestant Reformation reinforced an iconoclastic 'entextualization of world' (2007, p. 68), as part of a 'creed paradigm' that made the voluntary declaration of faith by the autonomous religious subject the core of authentic religion. 'In the pre-Reformation era, collective recitation of a creed was often linked to the penitential system that reformers rejected. The reformers instead stressed the sincerity and privacy of the creed. Religious materializations such as rituals, offerings, priesthoods, sacred

sites, relics, communities, holy books, and bodily disciplines persisted but usually in a position subordinate to that of statements of belief' (p. 75). James Simpson (2010) goes further, arguing that in its professed aim of breaking radically with tradition, of shattering the prejudices and idols that kept humanity from exercising autonomy on the basis of rationality, Western modernity was driven from the outset by a strong iconoclastic impetus. More specifically, the Kantian separation of pure reason (science), practical reason (ethics), and aesthetics (art) into autonomous spheres, each operating with its own 'transcendental' principles, a separation at the heart of the Enlightenment and Western secular modernity, had profoundly de-materializing effects. For 'transcendental' here meant not just principles not derived from revelation (religion), but also that these principles are a priori conditions of human experience, conditions not affected by the contingencies and particularities of embodied existence.

...substantial aspects of the Enlightenment project aimed to protect art from the sensory excesses of material religion, to protect especially *fine* arts from the day-to-day sensory and material muckiness of religious art and artifact, to abstract and elevate this protected and purified category of object in such a way to disavow human kinships with the substance of that messiness and neutralize its threat. (Promey 2014, p. 2, emphasis in the original)

We shall have more to say about the sources of what is, at the very least, a profound ambivalence towards materiality in Western modernity and in the discipline of religious studies, which is, after all, a modern regime of knowledge. But notice here that iconoclasm cannot be unproblematically attributed to the barbarism of the pre-modern religious Other. '[I]conoclasm is not "somewhere else." Instead, it lies buried deep within Western modernity, and especially deep with the Anglo-American tradition. This tradition insistently and violently repudiates idols and images as dangerous carriers of the old regime' (Simpson 2010, pp. 11–12). Thus, we see how French revolutionaries spurred by the universal ideals of fraternity, equality, and solidarity set out not only decapitate the leaders of the *ancien régime*, but also its icons (Gamboni 1977). Comparisons of this sort demonstrate that when it comes to materiality, it is much too simplistic to oppose irrational, iconoclastic tribal religion to a rational, tolerant, and cosmopolitan modernity. While answers may differ widely, from various forms of iconoclasm to the celebration of the 'threatening, yet glorious' 'power of the material as material' (Bynum 2011, pp. 121–122), the question of materiality is an enduring and vital one across religions and cultures.

Flood argues that at the local level, there has been a far more nuanced management of religious materiality in Islam. The physical obliteration of religious images has been rare. Far more common has been 're-purposing' of images in prescribed ways through defacement, decapitation, mutilation, and substitution with 'safe' depictions such as those of gardens and trees. Thus, to the extent that local and historical resources allow any generalization, 'iconoclastic practice in the medieval Islamic world... was less an attempt to negate the image than to neutralize it' (Flood 2002, p. 647). Furthermore, the "'deanimating" [of] existing images by depriving them of a soul (*ruh*)' (p. 648) involved an implicit recognition of their potential efficacy. This reading certainly makes sense of the Taliban's spokesperson alluding to the Bamiyan figures as resisting their

military efforts to destroy them. The figures themselves had agency, evincing an obduracy that affected the Taliban's actions. This reading also explains all the rich materialities that accompany Islam, from architecture and calligraphy, to textiles, particular styles of dress (see the chapters by **Banu Gökariksel and Anna Secor**, and **Victoria Rovine**) and the embodied practices, landscapes, and infrastructure involved in the Hajj – the donning of the ihram garments, the prayers at the massive encampment at Mina, the stoning of the devil at the three Jamarat walls, the circumambulation and kissing of the Ka'aba. The dynamic assemblage of these materialities and activities is key to the practitioner's experience of Islam as an efficacious religion.

If the challenge is not the outright denial of matter but rather the contested (im)proper deployment and management of what various materials afford us, we can also understand Michael Sells's point that the Taliban themselves depend on particular forms of materiality. For Sells, these include religious and financial networks that have made possible the transnational spread of rectificationist versions of Islam, such as Wahhabism. They also include the global media through which the Taliban made a spectacle of their act of iconoclasm. If they are going to claim authority as the defenders of the purity of Islam, this act must be disseminated globally to members and non-members of the *ummah*. This is why Sells concludes that the Taliban are not a pre-modern or anti-modern form of traditionalism. Quite the contrary, they are the product of a late modern, or perhaps postmodern, globalization, driven electronic media.³

Positing that what is at stake is the power of and over materiality also foregrounds the contradictions in the United Nations' response to the Taliban's edict and actions regarding the destruction of images. Flood rightly takes to task the 'contemporary iconolatry' (2002, p. 651) that undergirds this response, an iconolatry that is paradoxically iconoclastic in the sense that it expunges the religious valence of the Buddha figures and elevates them as the animated material expression of the *Geist* of a particular people or even of the entire humanity. This is an operation of disenchantment and re-enchantment that bears striking similarities with the re-purposing of icons in Islam and of Catholic images and relics by Protestants in art museums. The Buddha figures become so special, thus so 'sacred', to draw from Ann Taves's definition of what counts as religious, that they have to be protected by a special international organization or 'relocated' – even if temporarily – to a museum in the metropole. Here, the UN's contemporary iconolatry must contend with the legacies of colonialism and Orientalism, which as **Sylvester Johnson** shows in his chapter in the *Companion* functioned through a simultaneous denial of embodiment of the colonizer (making himself a universal sovereign subject) and an intense interest in the utter materiality of the colonized. In the Orientalist gaze, the colonized is so primitive, so immature, so tied to her body and her immediate environment that she cannot legislate herself through universal values disclosed by Reason. She must be civilized; but to train her body, we must extract truth for it, summon texts, codes, and artefacts that enable the colonizer to elucidate her essence. To be sure the colonial process of subjection and subjectivation was not a one-way, top-down process. David Chidester speaks of a 'triple mediation' in the production of imperial knowledge. This mediation brought together 'metropolitan theorists' like Max Müller and James Frazer, who 'deployed a comparative method that inferred characteristic of the "primitive" ancestors of humanity from reports about contemporary

“savages” living on the colonized peripheries’, with ‘European observers, primarily travelers, missionaries, and colonial agents’ who mastered local language and provided accounts of indigenous life, and ‘local experts’, who served as ‘nameless translators, or converts at remote mission stations’ (Chidester 2004, p. 72). Nevertheless, these complex mediations were undergirded by one-sided power asymmetries and by relations of exploitation disguised by the benevolent paternalism of the *mission civilisatrice*. The Taliban challenged this hypocritical paternalism when they pointed to the fact the West (in this case the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York) offered money to purchase and relocate the statues of the Buddha but not to feed the starving children of Afghanistan.

Throughout all the twists and turns of this case, what remains constant is the *pervasiveness of materiality*. And we have not even discussed the avowed anti-materialism of Buddhism. Isn’t the essence of Buddhism to seek release from *samsara*, the cycle of life and death, from the impermanence and illusory existence of materiality, including our own bodies? What are we to make of the colossal statues of the Buddha, the sheer size and physicality of which were marks of the success and prestige of Buddhism in the region? As John Kieschnick (2003, p. 4) observes, ‘Buddhist teachings are suffused with a suspicion of sensual pleasure and a tendency to denigrate and renounce the material world’. Nevertheless, Kieschnick warns, ‘there is a danger of giving too much weight to the role of ideas in the formation and development of material culture. Many things are employed according to traditions of religious behavior rather than as outgrowths of well-defined doctrinal precepts’ (p. 14). Indeed, ‘if...we leave the world of recondite doctrine and statements of principle and look instead at the way Buddhism has been practiced, we find material goods everywhere’ (p. 5). Pointing to the ubiquity of stupas containing relics of Bodhisattvas, numinous statues of the Buddha, and Buddhist rosaries and sacred texts carried by merchants and monks in their travels, as well as the networks of economic and political patronage that enabled the growth of the *sangha*, the formation of canons and schools, and the establishment of monasteries, Kieschnick demonstrates that ‘[c]ertain objects could be harnessed for the greater cause of the rejection of the material world, but to do so required meticulous attention to detail and adherence to codes of behavior in their manufacture and use’ (pp. 5–6). No wonder, then, the painstaking regulations regarding monastic life, down to ‘the cut and hem of the monk’s robes, the material from which his alms bowl was to be made, and the length of his walking staff’ (p. 5).

Given the stubborn presence of materiality, whence comes the entrenched representation of Buddhism as an other-worldly philosophy? Gregory Schopen (1997) has shown how early European scholars of Indian Buddhism, imposing misreadings of Darwinian evolution and their Christian assumptions that a legitimate religion must have established universal doctrines and sacred texts, disregarded material culture – bones, stones, coins, statues, inscriptions, caves, and footprints – in the study of how Buddhism was practised in daily life in various local contexts. For example, every time scholars of Buddhism ‘encountered evidence that even suggested that monks and nuns owned personal property, they first signaled their surprise...and then immediately invoked either explicitly and implicitly the rules in the canonical monastic code against it, to assert in one way or another, that they were not really seeing what they saw. Either

that, or they neutralized what they were seeing by attributing to it a “late change” or implied “decline” within the tradition’ (Schopen 1997, p. 4). After all, in their crude attachment to materiality, personal property among monks and nuns as well as popular everyday practices and objects of devotion betrayed the lofty life-transcending core teachings of Buddhism, teachings that seemed to be an alternative or even an antidote to modernity’s ‘iron cage’, which included the expansion and deepening of Western capitalist materialism. These Western scholars ‘axiomatically assumed that the textual ideal either was or had been actually in operation, that if it said so in a text it must have been so in reality’ (p. 4). We will have more to say about the hegemony of textualism in religious studies, but in this case, the texts upon which scholars relied to construct the ideal of Buddhist monasticism came rather late in the development of the tradition and ‘may not have been even known to the vast majority of practicing Buddhists – both monks and laity’, let alone ‘fully implemented in actual practice’ (p. 2).

Donald Lopez is even more specific, pointing to Eugène Burnouf, the chair in Sanskrit at the Collège de France and author of *Introduction à l’histoire du Bouddhisme indien* (1844), as the source of ‘our image of the Buddha, of the simple teacher of morality, seated beneath a tree’ (Lopez 2012, p. 87). Whereas a wider consideration of sources shows jostling appropriations of the Buddha as an idol known by many names or as multiple gods, it is this Enlightenment-based, Kantian view of the Buddha as an ethical teacher that ‘has remained largely unchanged in the European imagination, or at least in the scholarly imagination’, informing a Buddhism that ‘became a model against which the various contemporary Buddhisms of Asia were measured and generally found to be lacking, not only by Europeans but eventually by Buddhist elites in Asia as well’ (p. 88).

Thus, what appears *prima facie* to be a simple case of double iconoclasm – the elimination of the icons of an iconoclastic religion by another iconoclastic religion – offers, in fact, a clear example of the persistence and ubiquity of materiality. After all, as Kolrud and Prusac (2014, p. 6) write, ‘Iconoclasm depends on the power of the image, in as much as a neglected image, which is no longer the object of worship or hatred, remains an unlikely target’. One of key goals of the turn towards materiality is developing a richer understanding of the power of images beyond traditional modernist approaches which see it as the result of naïve, erroneous, or pathological human projection. This is certainly how Marx and Freud, building on Hegel, saw them (Vásquez 2016). Whether we understand the power of religious bodies, objects, and landscapes as emerging from their dynamic interaction with various other bits of materiality, as those influenced by Bruno Latour and Actor-Network theorists do, and/or as afforded by the inherent potency of matter, the aim is to take seriously the centrality of matter in the practice of religion, even when (or especially when) that centrality is actively denied.

The doggedness and ‘everywhereness’ of matter has led some prominent voices in the turn towards materiality to make some bold ontological and epistemological claims. As Keane puts it: ‘that religions are material is non-trivial’ (2008, p. 231). For ideas and beliefs ‘are not transmitted telepathically. They must be exteriorized in some way, for example, in words, gestures, objects, or practices, in order to be transmitted from one mind to another’ (p. 230). As such, ‘[m]ateriality is a precondition for the social circulation and temporal persistence of experiences and ideas. This is true, of course, not just

of ideas but of any materialization, including rituals, institutions, altars, icons, offerings, bodily habits, and so forth' (2008). Recognizing the primacy and necessity of materiality, Birgit Meyer states unequivocally that 'the idea of an immaterial religion is a fiction: even a semiotic ideology that denounces religious things and pictures cannot do without material forms' (2012, p. 319).

As contributors to the turn towards materiality, we also affirm the latter's inescapability, and we do so not only by acknowledging the unavoidable materiality of mediation in the production and circulation of meaning, but also by embracing the embodiment of both the religious practitioners and the scholars who study them. This embodiment involves a material being-with, being-amongst, and being-through materiality (Vásquez 2011) that has binding consequences for how we practise religion and how we study it. Nevertheless, we share Bruno Reinhardt's concern with not turning materiality into another totalizing framework and falling into the same trap to which the otherwise fruitful linguistic turn succumbed, becoming a suffocating textualism. According to Reinhardt, anthropologists, and we would add religious scholars, 'have progressively recast materiality as an immersive environment with no outside position' (2016, p. 78). This would make materiality just the inverted image of the overweening idealism behind the most simplistic readings of Derrida's declaration that '*il n'ya pas hors de texte*'. Indeed, if 'all religion is material religion' (Engelke 2011, p. 209), in what sense is the persistence and ubiquity of materiality a non-trivial insight? Or as Reinhardt (2016, p. 78) asks: 'What is not materiality after all?' In answer to these questions, Matthew Engelke (2011) argues that the task is 'understanding what precisely constitutes the *materiality* of material religion, what makes religious materiality either significant or religious, and according to whom'. In other words, we need to explore how what religious practitioners often understand and refer to as transcendent, immaterial, uncanny, supernatural, and the ultimate Other comes to be experienced immanently, rendered materially present for embodied beings like us and, potentially, non-human animals, as **Anna Peterson** challenges us in her chapter. Adapting from Engelke's work among African Christians, we can say that from the point of view of materiality, the fruitful question to investigate comparatively is how various religions negotiate boundaries and tensions between presence and absence, which can often be paradoxically simultaneously present (Engelke 2007, pp. 11–16, see also **Jessica Boon** in this *Companion*).

Given the tensions and paradoxes involved, for us, the turn to materiality is more a mode of problematizing, an open and flexible critical framework for asking (new) questions and recovering certain kinds of data that approaches which have privileged ideas, beliefs, creeds, and texts have excluded. In that sense, the turn to materiality is driven by a 'limit-attitude', to borrow from Foucault (1984, p. 45), a will to think critically and act transgressively at the limits of the field, so as to continue to expand the on-going conversation about religion.⁴ We agree with Reinhardt that 'material religion is... not an empirical field waiting passively for more and more ethnographic coverage', a sort of positivist position that would imply that now that we have finally broken through textualism, we can capture religion in its 'essence and appearance' once and for all. Rather, the non-reductive materialist study of religions is more like a 'field of problematization', a strategic epistemological intervention which generates ever new ways of approaching religion(s) with rigorous-yet-fallible methods that enable its proper contextualizations – the

placing of the religious practitioners and practitioners of religious studies in the multiple cultural and natural contexts from which they have evolved, on which they depend and through which they create their life worlds.⁵ It is a disciplined engagement with religion that foregrounds the multiple ‘conditions of felicity’,⁶ the materials, agents, processes, practices, dispositions, relationalities (including inclusion, exclusion, domination, resistance, forms of disciplining self and other), mobilities, spaces, affordances, and affects that go into making particular religious phenomena legitimate, authoritative, and efficacious. This engagement is also keenly aware of the conditions of felicity of the theories it generates, of the materializing effects of these theories.

1.2 Sources of the Ambivalence Towards Materiality

If materiality is constitutive of religion and life itself, how come it has been so repeatedly denied or ignored, particularly in religious studies? While, the denial of materiality in religious studies has a particular genealogy connected to the discipline’s rise out of Protestant Christian theology and Western colonialism, materiality poses an unavoidable existential paradox. On the one hand, it is the essential ingredient for the self to live, to exercise transcendence, to engage in transformative practice upon him/herself and his/her environment. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty puts it, before the thinking self, which Descartes posited as the irreducible foundation of knowledge, there is the embodied ‘pre-reflective’, ‘tacit’ cogito, the flesh of our bodies touching and being touched by the flesh of the world. This dynamic reversibility of flesh ‘coiling over’ flesh, of flesh summoning flesh, makes possible the emergence of the representations through which we come to think about the experience of our enfleshment. In Merleau-Ponty’s words:

If, reflecting on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is one with my existence as body and with the existence of the world and, finally, because the subject which I am, taken concretely is, inseparable from this this body and this world. (2012, p. 408)

If materiality enables selfhood, it also discloses our finitude, the transitory and protean nature of our bodies and the world, making us utterly vulnerable to pain, suffering, loss, and death, just as it affords the possibility of attachment, joy, the experience of abundance, presence, and satisfaction. Different traditions and schools of philosophy have sought to resolve the tension between the possibility of transcendence and the experience of radical immanence that the materiality affords, but a preferred strategy in Western thinking has been to deny or seek to overcome the radical immanence, finitude, and changeability – read corruptibility – of materiality and to affirm transcendence one-sidedly, by detaching the latter from its material conditions of possibility and positing it as a more foundational, essential, and real reality. This has certainly been the case since Plato’s reading of the ultimate meaning of Socrates’s life and death: that all the vicissitudes of his mortal life made sense as part of a search for universal and unchanging forms like Goodness, Beauty, and Justice. The search for detached, foundational transcendence would recur, in Descartes’s cogito, Kant’s a prioris, Hegel’s absolute

knowledge, Husserl's transcendental ego, and so on. It is true that one can be a materialist and still be consumed by the search for unchangeable foundations and totalizing viewpoints, as evinced by physicalism and certain reductive versions of Marxism.⁷ However, these materialisms do not do justice to the creativity, vibrancy, polymorphousness, and complexity of matter. In fact, these materialisms have been part of the problem, re-inscribing static and simplistic dualisms and casting the focus on materiality in a bad light, leading Marx to complain rightly that

the chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence, it happened that the *active* side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed by idealism, but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such. (Marx 1978, p. 143)

We, thus, need a materialist framework that foregrounds becoming – process, historicity, alterity, tension, entanglement, and relative (in)determinacy – as nature's most salient feature (Connolly 2011).

While the quest for foundations, essences, and totalizing systems has allowed for rewarding expressions of transcendence, it has also set up intractable dualisms – between body and soul, matter and spirit, materialism and idealism, particularity and universality, contingency and necessity, finitude and eternity, humanity and God, nature and culture – that have vitiated Western thought and action, and the discipline of religious studies within it. Materiality (including our bodies), although a condition for the emergence of dualistic thinking itself, has been denigrated as the inferior pair, always to be derived from or explained through terms associated with detached transcendence.

But the disparagement of materiality is not just the result of philosophical attempts to cope with the paradoxes of materiality. Because materiality entails change and contestation – the possibility that a particular thing, body, and landscape may function or be appropriated differently in accordance with the context – it unavoidably raises issues of power. Materiality involves what Keane terms 'bundling': 'the contingent coexistence of an indefinite number of qualities in any object, which always exceeds the purposes of the designer... Bundling gives to material things (including linguistic forms) an inherently and irreducibly open-ended character' (Keane 2008, p. 230). In social fields marked by power relations, the open-endedness of things leads to attempts to stabilize them, to freeze them within self-evident larger configurations and regimes of value, as regulated by rules that are universal and, thus, go without saying. Hence, the construction and maintenance of orthodoxy often goes hand-in-hand with the assertion of a de-materialized and de-historicized transcendence.

Building on Marx's concept of ideology, Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1991) asserts that religious elites often present their ideas, practices, and the institutions they lead as given for all times and places, as standing above the constraints of nature, society, and history, constraints that would relativize them, opening them to contestation. A key component of 'the *religious labor* carried out by specialized producers and spokespeople' within the religious field, is 'the principle of *ideological alchemy* by which the transfiguration of social

relations into supernatural relations operates and it is therefore inscribed in the nature of things and thereby justified' (Bourdieu 1991, p. 5). Through this ideological alchemy, religious elites also endeavour to show that the ideas, practices, and institutions of their rivals in the social, cultural, economic, and religious arenas are determined by narrow material interests. In other words, materiality necessarily opens up struggles around the legitimate boundary between transcendence and immanence, between presence and absence, between the sacred and profane, between what is ritually efficacious and what is not. No wonder, then, that it is in the interest of religious elites to deny materiality as much as possible, as Protestant missionaries in Africa and Oceania tried to do by presenting a belief and text-based faith against local 'animist' and 'fetishistic' religions. Since denying materiality altogether is not possible – as the denial requires the deployment of other material practices, as we saw in the case of both the Taliban and Buddhists in the Silk Road – the next best thing is to sacralize a particular regime of management of materiality or to purify certain objects, practices, bodies, and landscapes from profane 'accretions' and 'superstitions' in order to forestall struggles (Keane 2008, p. 231). This explains the Vatican's efforts to control local popular devotions and practices throughout the Catholic world. In response, these local devotions invariably flaunt their materiality, the sheer reality and unruly abundance of crying statues, Holy Hosts that turn into blood, the healing power of water and dirt, in order to assert their legitimacy.

To the extent that religious studies uncritically takes for granted the narratives of religious elites, it reproduces the denial of materiality, an operation that also legitimizes the discourses of the discipline by obscuring the material conditions of their production. Materiality is troublesome for all involved; better neutralize its effects!

The close connection of materiality with orthodoxy and heterodoxy, with domination and resistance, goes a long way towards bringing down to earth the denial of materiality in the modern study of religion. Scholars such as Talal Asad (1993), Matthew Engelke (2011), Webb Keane (2007), and Birgit Meyer (2010) trace this denial to the Protestant Reformation's emphasis on *sola scriptura* and *sola fides*, which generated a representational economy characterized by a suspicion of mediation other than the Bible and the voluntary profession of faith by the autonomous and self-transparent subject. In an effort to curb the abuses of Catholicism, the Reformers challenged the efficacy of images, objects, relics, and rituals, any form of materiality which might give the clergy a privileged access to sacred and, thus, legitimize their power as sanctioned mediators. Granting power and agency to these materialities was, at best, superstition at odds with the authority that secular modernity had given to rationality as the arbiter of truth; at worst, it was idolatry, an accusation that would take a particular force during colonialism, in the violent encounter with indigenous practices.

It is not as if phobia towards materiality started out of the blue with the Reformation. There were intense iconoclastic controversies in Byzantine Christianity in the eighth and ninth centuries, partly in response to the spread of Islam, that contributed to the schism with Western Christianity in 1054.⁸ And there is, of course, Catholicism's entanglement with colonialism. The word fetish, after all, comes from *feitoço* (from *feito*, something made by humans [for the purpose of witchcraft] rather than having life and *raison d'être* of its own), which Portuguese explorers used to identify autochthonous beliefs and practices that, in their eyes, misattributed power and agency to materiality,

particularly human artefacts, setting them apart from and making them inferior to legitimate forms of Catholic sacramentality.⁹ This 'denial of coevalness' (Fabian 1983), in turn, legitimized the Portuguese and Spanish colonizers' destruction of 'savage' local traditions and the forcible conversions to the true, civilized religion. Tomoko Masuzawa has shown how the founders of *Religionswissenschaft* inherited and reproduced this prejudice against fetishism. She notes that in the eyes of the discipline's founders, fetishism was associated with 'absolute materiality', representing a form of consciousness even baser than idolatry and totally opposite to true spirituality. She observes: 'Fetish is materiality at its crudest and lowest; it points to no transcendent meaning beyond itself, no abstract, general, universal essence with respect to which it might be construed as a symbol' (2000, p. 248). As such, 'the fetishist is not only mistaken, she denies her own agency. To surrender one's agency to stones, statues, or even written texts is to diminish one's responsibility' (Keane 2007, p. 77), a responsibility that is critical for the voluntary and authentic acceptance of Jesus Christ as one's saviour.

Herein lies the semiotic transmutation promulgated by the Reformation: it unleashed a 'process entextualization', a 'dematerialization of meaning' (Keane 2007, pp. 14, 62) that predicates the authority and authenticity of religion upon the sincere expression of one's inner belief – a confessional form of subjectivation in Foucaultian terms (see Asad 1993) that has a close elective affinity with modern notions of sovereignty and citizenship – through the profession of a creed. According to this new 'semiotic ideology' (Keane 2008, pp. 16–21), in the most evolved and, thus, 'true' religions, this creed is enshrined in the abstract, universal theology of the great sacred texts. We have seen how this textualism has dominated the study of Buddhism and, Richard King (1999a) and Sharada Sugirtharajah (2003) among others have made the same point about how scholars in the metropole such as William Jones and Max Müller constructed a timeless, universal, spiritual, and scripturally-based essence of Hinduism (see **Patrick Olivelle's** chapter on the Dharmaśāstra, which points to the materialities of everyday life even in the texts and laws). Meyer (2010, p. 746) also notes this process of dematerialization in Weber's comparative sociology of religion, which, despite his ambivalence towards the iron cage and disenchantment brought about by modern capitalism, privileges 'content and meaning above form', considering Protestantism's this-worldly asceticism as more transformative than 'magical' forms of religiosity that invest materiality with agency. Critiquing the failure of sociology to offer nuanced, non-reductive readings of the global proliferation of Pentecostalism and other spirit-centric forms of Christianity that see no contradiction between salvation in the beyond and health and wealth in the now, that engage as exorcism of possessing evil spirits (see **Simon Coleman's** piece on spiritual warfare), Meyer rightly complains that 'Max Weber's analysis of Protestantism as a salvation religion that moved beyond reliance on concrete material forms has served as a distorting lens even in the study of Protestantism' (2012, p. 9). Weber

suggests a parallel between the religious devaluation of art and the devaluation of the magical, orgiastic, ecstatic and ritual elements of religiosity in favor of ascetic and spiritual or mystical elements. The higher religion develops, the less it depends on material forms. Obviously this view echoes typically Protestant criticism of Catholicism and, for that matter, 'paganism' as 'idol worship', as being steeped in a magical attitude that falsely attributes a spirit to inanimate matter (p. 10).

In that sense, Robert Orsi is correct in pointing out that religious studies' inability hitherto to place materiality front and centre is deeply connected to theological and political struggles between European Protestants and Catholics over the issue of presence (and absence) of the supernatural in nature, struggles that found their most poignant expression in debates over the Eucharist, over transubstantiation versus consubstantiation and symbolic remembrance.

'Religion' is derived from 'Protestantism'. This is the dominant view among scholars of religion today, but it is only partially accurate... it is historically more accurate – and theoretically and historiographically more generative – to say that 'religion' was the creation of the profound rupture between Catholics and the varieties of Protestantism over the question of presence, of the ongoing and intensifying caricatures of each other's theologies and rites of presence and of their mutual denunciations of practicing what in their respective judgments were not really 'religion'. (Orsi 2016, p. 32)

Orsi further argues that these sectarian struggles, the religious and political identities and borders generated by them, were carried to the colonies, where missionaries and administrators sought to impose them upon their subjects. No wonder, then, that 'the fissure of presence/absence has run through the center of Western culture and through all of the modern world wherever the armies, missionaries, and merchants of Protestant and Catholic empires landed, which is to say almost everywhere' (p. 45).

As compelling as this totalizing reading is, it neglects that struggles over presence and absence, over materiality and immateriality, over transcendence and immanence did not just take place in the 'West.' For example, Indian philosophy and theology contain a variety of perspectives involving 'different kinds of "matter-s" and different meanings attached to them' (Narayanan 2016, p. 345), from the dualism of Samkhya, which sets up a tension between spirit and matter similar to Aristotelian hylomorphism – the notion that Platonic forms and matter are inextricably linked in the process of bringing existence forth – to Shankara's Advaita (non-dualist) Vedanta.¹⁰ Yet, even in Samkhya, *purusha* (pure consciousness) has to interact with *prakriti* (nature) in order to come to know its own essence. Purusha is, in fact, inactive and devoid of all qualities, while prakriti is generative. It is matter as driven by forces ('strands', *gunas*) that gives purusha pure potency, the power to become through periods of equilibrium and disequilibrium. In turn, Shankara's assertion that God is *Brahman*, the eternal, infinite, and ultimate reality of all there is, entails a pantheism that cannot malign materiality without contradiction, even if liberation means achieving the realization that bodies and things are merely transitory and illusory, that, at bottom, Brahman is their unchanging essence. This cosmology, moreover, opens the way for the qualified non-dualism of Ramanuja, who saw the material world as Brahman's body. Ramanuja 'materializes' Advaita Vedanta: the universe is the glorious manifestation of Brahman and Brahman is in all things, yet Brahman exceeds and grounds the universe. Thus, devotion (*bhakti*) to a personal god (Vishnu) through embodied practices, including *puja*, *darshan*, the recitation of the divinity's name or mantras, festivals like Navaratri, and *gatka* performances, and through sacred objects and places, such as *murtis*, *prasad*, rivers, groves, and temples, so widespread in 'lived Hinduism' is not only a valid path to Brahman, but

a font for a higher, more immediate and direct experiential knowledge, beyond the limits of reflective, introspective awareness (see **Jacobsen, Pinkney, Rosen, and Sanford**). And if Shankara is read as an absolute idealist foreshadowing Schelling and Hegel, then, Lokayata (later known as Charvaka) represents the opposite pole of Indian monism: a materialism that denies Vedic supernaturalism, giving primacy to the senses and bodily pleasures. The original sources of this materialism are piecemeal and there is evidence that its proponents were persecuted and primary texts were destroyed by advocates of theism. This may account for Lokayata's marginal status in Indian thought (Bhattacharya 2011; Chattopadhyaya 1959).

It is beyond the purview of this chapter to provide a comprehensive treatment of the question of materiality in Indian philosophy and theology. Such cross-religious and cross-cultural analyses are much needed if we are serious about the turn to materiality being driven by a 'limit-attitude'. And these analyses should not simply remain at the philosophical level, but must also endeavour to study how these various views shape and are shaped by the practices of individuals located in socio-historical and ecological fields of power. To the extent that we can generalize, all orthodox schools of Hindu thought (*astikas*) affirm what I have called the persistence and ubiquity of matter. '[A]lmost all forms of matter point to and even are encompassed in the understanding and experience of the supreme deity or *brahman*, and the affordances of matter... ultimately lie in the path to liberation or *moksha*, variously defined' (Narayanan 2016, p. 331). Debates within and among *astikas* also show that struggles and ambivalences over materiality are not unique to Western thinking, even with its global extension through colonialism and capitalism. Still, to the extent that the discipline of religious studies is a Western construct, Orsi's reading of the centrality of Catholic-Protestant theological conflicts is reflective of our own biases towards matter.

Up until the last couple of decades, the denial/dismissal of materiality had been normative in religious studies. At first sight, Mircea Eliade's history of religions school, which dominated religious studies up until the 1970s, did foreground materiality, always seeking to include as many hierophanies, that is, spatio-temporal and material expressions of the sacred, as possible in its comparative analyses. Eliade referred to 'the paradox' or the 'dialectic of hierophanies', whereby the sacred, which is by definition *sui generis*, universal, and foundational, 'manifest[s] itself in the profane', 'in material things' (1958, p. 29). Thus, while 'a hierophany is always a historical event (that is to say, always occurs in some definite situation)' (p. 3), 'every hierophany shows, makes manifest, the coexistence of contradictory essences, sacred and profane, spirit and matter, eternal and non-eternal, and so on' (p. 29). Placing the paradox of hierophanies at the centre of the history of religion approach would seem to offer a promising way to repair the dualisms that have characterized Western thinking and, more importantly for our intents and purposes, to recognize the vital role that materiality plays in making religious experience possible. However, because Eliade saw religion in essentialist terms, as the irreducible experience of *homo religiosus*, an ahistorical self whose relation to the sacred was shaped by archetypal forms, he took materiality to be simply a medium for the historical manifestation of a deeper, more ontological, and trans-historical reality. Eliade and the history of religions approach were not interested in materiality *qua* materiality, as agentic materials that afford and constrain particular experiences which

come to be deemed as religious, but as the expression an unconditioned *Ganz Andere* (the Wholly Other). In other words, the dominant school of thought in religious studies did not grapple with the full implications of the inescapability of material mediation.

Clifford Geertz's interpretive anthropology, which arose as an alternative to the history of religion from the 1970s until the emergence of postmodernist and postcolonial critiques, went some way towards re-contextualizing and re-historicizing the study of religion, demanding 'thick descriptions' of particular, local religious beliefs and practices, while acknowledging the positionality of the scholar in the process of interpretation (Geertz 1973). Nevertheless, because Geertz understood religion primarily as belief and cognition, as internally coherent and relatively autonomous symbolic systems that provided 'models of and for' making sense of bafflement, suffering, and evil, his approach tended to reproduce some of the Christian, Protestant, notions of what counts as real religion. It is worth quoting Talal Asad's critique in this regard, for arguably, more than any text, it marks the beginning of a turn to materiality, particularly to practice, embodiment, and embeddedness in power relations, in religious studies.

...what appears to anthropologists today to be self-evident, namely that religion is essentially a matter of symbolic meanings linked to ideas of general order.... that it has generic functions/features, that it must not be confused with any of its particular historical and cultural forms, is in fact a view that has a specific Christian history. From being a concrete set of particular rules attached to specific processes of power and knowledge, religion has become abstracted and universalized. (Asad 1993, p. 42)

Not only is Geertz's supposedly-cross-cultural definition of religion conditioned by historical, social, political, and cultural processes, but by setting religion as a separate symbolic system with its own internal logic, it fails to recognize the ways in which religious phenomena are inextricably entwined with material life.

If religious symbols are understood, on the analogy with words, as vehicles for meaning, can such meanings be established independently of the form of life in which they are used? If religious symbols are taken to be as the signatures of a sacred text, can we know what they mean without regard to social disciplines by which their correct reading is secured? If religious symbols are to be thought of the concepts by which experience are organized, can we say much about them without considering how they come to be authorized?

...Religious symbols – whether one thinks of them as communication or cognition, of guiding action or of expression emotion – cannot be understood independently of their historical relations with nonreligious symbols and of their articulations in and of social life, in which work and power are always crucial. (Asad 1993, p. 53)

Building on Asad's genealogical approach, as well as on Edward Said's appropriation of Michel Foucault's notion of regimes of knowledge in his critique of Orientalism, Russell McCutcheon (1997), Tim Fitzgerald (2000), Tomoko Masuzawa (2005), and Jason Josephson (2012) have shown how the construction of the category of religion in general and of particular (world) religions, has been connected with colonial, imperial, nationalist, and capitalist projects and how the discipline of religion has

manufactured its own *sui generis* object and the methods to study it, thereby guaranteeing its institutional autonomy and privileges. These works have undoubtedly deepened the materialist turn. However, their emphasis on deconstructing the discourses of the discipline pose the danger of navel gazing, making the study of religion a critical discourse on the discourses of the discipline and ignoring the rigorous analysis of the variegated phenomena that at a particular time and place are deemed religious (or not), and how materiality is central to this contested process of the construction of religion, not just in academia, but in the public sphere, in everyday life. Such a navel gazing has often been exacerbated by an absolutist appropriation of the linguistic turn among some influential post-structuralists, who have insisted that language is not just a very useful metaphor to understand the dynamics of human activity, but that there is nothing beyond language.¹¹ Paradoxically, this linguistic reductionism has reproduced the same decontextualized symbolicism and textualism that Asad critiqued in Geertz. Archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen speaks of a 'tyranny of the text' to stress

how the textual approach campaigned for by poststructuralists (and others) has reinforced the hegemony of the text, allowing (in a very literal sense) no space outside it. Finally fully conquered, the materiality of things ended up as little more than an arbitrary quality in dematerialized discourse... In the wake of an idealist intellectual tradition that has continuously devalued, stigmatized, and demonized the material (always bypassed, always made transcendental), to conceive of any material experience that is outside of language becomes the subject of suspicion. (Olsen 2013, p. 56)

Does that mean that we should eschew the study of texts and beliefs in religious studies? That would re-introduce another unhelpful dualism – between material religion, which is all about embodiment, practice, and power, and 'immaterial' religion, concerned with texts, beliefs, meanings, and symbols. Instead, it is more productive to consider the materiality of texts, the materials out of which they are made (as **Kevin O'Neill** does for the Truth Commission Reports in Guatemala) and what these materials afford, their contexts of production, circulation, valuation, and use, how they are part of 'textual communities' that deploy these texts in their everyday life (Blackburn 2012), as they 'dwell' and 'cross' (Tweed 2006), as they make boundaries within and without and challenge them. By the same token, we can approach belief materially, focusing on the somatic, social, and ecological vectors, as well as on the 'representational economies'¹² that make it possible and plausible. Tanya Luhrmann (2012, pp. 39–71), for example, illuminates how, in a secular society that dismisses the presence of God, American Evangelicals must develop an embodied 'mode of attention' that allows them to discern when God is truly 'talking' to them (rather than the devil or perhaps it is just an uncanny coincidence). This mode of attention is a 'richly layered skill' that has to be developed through training within an interpretive community, through practices like prayer, fasting, and role playing. We shall have more to say about learning bodily to be religious later on.

While the current turn towards materiality recognizes the materiality of language, symbols beliefs, symbols, and texts, it entails a broader, more open-ended effort to

explore the multifarious ‘vibrancy of matter’ (Bennett 2010), dynamics of material unfolding that make representation and semiosis possible in the first place.

1.3 Characterizing the Turn to Materiality

1.3.1 *The Recovery of the Body*

Central to the turn has been an increasing focus on the body. The body, whether it concerns the incarnation, the passion, the resurrection, or nature of the Eucharist, has always been central in Christianity. Theologian Mayra Rivera recognizes the diversity of Christian views about the body. However, she identifies two broad traditions. One emerges from Apostle Paul’s separation between spiritual and carnal bodies, a separation that is ‘as wide as the chasm between heaven and earth’ (Rivera 2015, p. 29). The chasm is determined by sin, which is an inherent condition of the body’s fleshy nature. Or as Paul writes: ‘For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into slavery under sin.’ That is why ‘I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh’ (Rm 7:14–18). Thus, at a very minimum, the Pauline tradition expresses a profound ambivalence about the body and materiality. It is not an outright dualism: spiritual and carnal bodies ‘reach toward each other across a vast ontological distance. The expectation might be that the flesh will become – might be becoming – spirit. But ultimately “the flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”’ (Rivera 2015, p. 29). This ambivalence will interact with philosophical currents, most prominently with Cartesian thinking, to harden into the spirit-matter dualism that was central for the rise of Western modernity. The gulf between the unconditioned, disembodied, and sovereign mind and the contingent and mechanically determined body (as part and parcel of the material world) guaranteed what Pierre Bourdieu calls the ‘scholastic vision’, which ‘presupposes a single, fixed point of view – and therefore, the adoption of a posture of a motionless spectator installed at a point (of view) – and also the use of a frame that cuts out, encloses and abstracts the spectacle with a rigorous, immobile boundary’ (Bourdieu 1997, pp. 21–22). This scholastic view enabled the rise of modern science, and to the extent that it sees itself as a science distinct from theology as the term *Religionswissenschaft* indicates, of the discipline of religions studies.

Rivera, nevertheless, also identifies a more somatophilic tradition in Christianity anchored in the Gospel of John, which ‘conveys the intertwining of the material and the spiritual – word and flesh, life and light, and so on’ (Rivera 2015, p. 27). In this gospel, ‘Jesus describes his flesh as bread given to be eaten. “The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” The prologue describes the confluence of word, life, flesh; here we are invited to contemplate the convergence of flesh, life, bread’ (p. 22). Such a convergence highlights the central role that materiality plays in the divine salvific plan, in a kind of immanent transcendence (God lovingly emptying him/herself into the world and becoming vulnerable), where the various material elements are transubstantiated through their enmeshing.

While Johannine tradition has been consistently submerged by the Pauline narrative, it has irrupted periodically in different forms in the writings and practices of mystics like Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila and various forms of pietism, and in liberation, process, feminist and other contextual theologies. The Johannine appreciation for the potency of the flesh in tension with Pauline suspicions of it have also informed the seminal studies of the body in Christianity of scholars such as Caroline Walker Bynum (1987, 1995, 2006), Peter Brown (1981, 1988), and William Christian (1981). In many ways, their works dovetailed nicely with the efforts of phenomenology, from late Husserl through Heidegger to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, to foreground *Dasein*, the embodied and historical self emplaced in his/her life-world. Indeed, phenomenology broadly understood not in the Eliadean or van der Leeuwian sense as a search for universal patterns or underlying essences, but as a keen concern for the lived experiences of the situated individual, has animated the study of lived religion, particularly the study of Christianity at the popular level, where the body and materiality often play a major role (Csordas 1994; Orsi 2005). **Jessica Boon**'s essay on the incarnate body and blood in Christianity builds upon these seminal works. She argues that in medieval Christian theology, the blood of Jesus was hyper-material, standing for an abundant, fully potent, and living materiality that can offer alternative ways to rethink not only our dualistic and reductive conceptions of the body but of our perception of matter as inert. More about this later.

The foregoing shows that, despite the dematerializing focus on religion as belief, creed, and text, there has always been a concern for the body. However, the body came to occupy centre stage in critical theory and cultural studies following the events of May 1968 in France. Thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze sought to make sense of the rapid mobilization of mass resistance against the power of the capitalist state over not just the economic system, but over all aspects of life, from education to sexuality. By the same token, they felt that it was necessary to theorize how this state, which for a moment seemed to be on the brink of collapsing, was able to reassert domination. What was needed was an analysis of the 'microphysics of power', of the various mechanisms that operate at the crevices and terminal points of sociality through which particular subjects are constituted out of 'docile bodies', out of bodies observed, disciplined, and inscribed by discursive and non-discursive practices (Foucault 1980). The circulation of power at this capillary level explains the pervasiveness, and thus, the resilience of domination, as well as its fragility, since power does not issue from a single, centralized, top-down source, but is produced piecemeal, in the localized encounter of bodies. Marx (1908, p. 396) had already written movingly about how capitalist production 'converts the labourer into a crippled monstrosity, by forcing his detail dexterity at the expense of a world of productive capabilities and instincts ... Not only is the detail work distributed to the different individuals, but the individual himself is made the automatic motor of a fractional operation... making man a mere fragment of his own body'. Foucault extends and deepens 'old' historical materialism by bringing into focus a myriad of struggles and manoeuvres over the body not just issuing from class, or even economic, dynamics.

Since 1968, the body has been embroiled in multiple controversies, including the challenges posed by advances in genetics and biotechnologies, the threat of climate

change, the fear and public performance of terrorism, the use of torture by the state and non-state actors, the construction and control of illegal immigration, human trafficking, the public visibility of religion in secular modernity, struggles over gender identities, racial profiling, and discrimination against disabled people, the global commodification of sports and entertainment, the popularity of reality TV, and the ever presence of social media in daily life. While all these debates have foregrounded the body in different ways, Foucault has continued to serve as a central point of reference. From a materialist point of view, he argued that power did not operate just discursively, through the extraction of truth from bodies and the production of specialized corpuses of knowledge that eventually solidified into the social and medical sciences, but also through the placement of bodies in spaces where they could be isolated, observed, prodded, trained, and managed. The best known example of how Foucault recovered the agency of space, disclosing its capacity to generate particular forms of subjectivity, is of course the 'panopticon'. It is true that produced and productive space had been the subject of geographers like Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Yi-Fu Tuan (1977), as well as of scholars of religion from Durkheim and Eliade and J.Z. Smith (1978, 1987) and Thomas Tweed (1997, 2006). However, Foucault gave a new impetus to the study of spatial dynamics. While some of the authors in the *Companion's* section on 'spatiality, mobility, and relationality' partake the Foucaultian focus on space, domination, and resistance, most notably **Elaine Peña's** analysis of the geo-politics of borderlands religion, these contributions demonstrate the interplay between materiality and religious place-making. In turn, building on Tweed's insight that religion is about dwelling and crossing, **John Eade** discusses how mobility, in this case pilgrimage, is intimately connected with the transformation of landscapes through a 'monumentality' (i.e. 'erect imposing structures around the human and natural environment') that is often a material source for the re-assertion of nationalism and for advancing regional and global projects of evangelization.

Foucault combined his microphysics of power with an 'ascending analysis' in the notions of 'biopower' and 'governmentality'¹³ to examine power from its 'infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms... have been – and continue to be – invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc. by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination', such as the state in late capitalism (1980, p. 99). Because biopower targets simultaneously biological and social bodies, with the aim to 'conduct the conduct' ('*conduire les conduits*') of individuals and populations, regulating, for instance, fertility, mortality, and criminality rates as well as indices of health, production, and consumption, these notions have provided new ways to explore the entanglement of embodiment, subjectivity, and political economy.¹⁴ This Foucaultian line of research on the body has been crucial in the development of a robust anthropology of Christianity, arguably best exemplified by the works of Ruth Marshall (2009) and Kevin O'Neill (2009) which focus on the production of Christian citizenship by pneumatic transnational forms of Christianity that advocate a gospel of health and wealth and engage in spiritual warfare. O'Neill, for example, shows how in post-civil war Guatemala embodied practices such as speaking in tongues, power prayers, fasting, exorcism of demonic spirits, and public confessions of one's sinfulness

saddle Pentecostals with a 'weighty responsibility' that 'promotes self-governing subject – citizens whom governments do not have to rule because these men and women manage themselves' (2009, pp. 5, 15). In light of the generalized climate of insecurity following the peace accords and the social dislocation produced by the imposition of a neoliberal economic project (and the accompanying downsizing of the welfare state), this incorporated self-government has significant implications for Guatemalan civil society. While his piece in the *Companion* does not explicitly address the body – focusing more on the material production of truth and memory in post-civil war Guatemala – O'Neill's essay and those in the section entitled 'Economies and Governmentalities of Religion', address the ways in which religion and materiality are implicated in political and economic logics.

Within a broad post-structuralist tradition, Foucault's analytics of the body could be read as a genealogical study in Western modernity of what Marcel Mauss called 'techniques du corps', 'the ways in which... men [*sic*] know how to use their bodies' (1973, p. 70), regimes of practices that cultivate and inculcate specific embodied skills, producing, for example, expert swimmers, pianists, and dancers, as well as subjects who recognize and enact proper ways of eating, walking, talking, sitting, praying, meditating, performing exorcism, enacting sacred rituals, or experiencing God 'as if he were real in the flesh and standing by your side, with love' (Luhmann 2012, p. 38). Mauss's pioneering work also inspired Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which places the body front and centre as the mediator between individual and society, production and reproduction, and between agency and structure. Bourdieu defines the habitus as 'embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history' (1980, p. 56). More specifically, one's habitus is an incorporated system of dispositions, propensities, and tastes that make possible 'regulated improvisation', that is, the production practices that are in sync with the dynamic context in which one is embedded. In other words, the habitus is what gives a successful player an intuitive 'feel for the game', a visceral practical sense of what is possible and what is not that is not exhausted by the conscious knowledge of the game's rules. Thus, the habitus is doubly corporeal: it is generated by the bodily internalization of the materiality of the one's life-world and, simultaneously, it is generative of this material life-world through embodied action, i.e. through its externalization. The habitus is 'a socialized body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of the world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world' (Bourdieu 1998, p. 81). The habitus's double corporality enables us to overcome some of the dualities that have dominated Western thinking, between

determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconscious, or the individual and society. Because the habitus is an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning. (Bourdieu 1980, p. 55)

This 'constructionist' strand of thinking about the body – the body as artefact, as a 'memory pad' inscribed with a *hexis*, a way of bearing oneself that is as 'durable as the indelible inscriptions of tattooing' (Bourdieu 1997, p. 141), has proven extremely fertile in the study of the construction of binding-yet-contested gendered, racial, colonial, and religious/pious identities. It has shown that belief 'is not a "state of mind", still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas or doctrines... but rather a "state of the body"' (p. 68). This insight has informed not only Asad's critique of Geertz's symbolism, but also Saba Mahmood's study of the 'cultivation of the ideal of virtuous self' through embodied rituals of piety among Muslim women. For these women, 'bodily acts – like wearing the veil or conducting oneself modestly in interactions with people (especially men) – do not serve as manipulable masks in a game of public presentation, detachable from an essential interiorized self. Rather they are the *critical markers*, as well as the *ineluctable means* by which one trains oneself to be pious. Thus while wearing the veil at first serves as a means to tutor oneself in the attribute of shyness, it is also simultaneously integral to the practice of shyness' (Mahmood 2001, p. 214). Mahmood's work is not just a compelling illustration of the tight relationship of embodiment and religious subjectivity; it is also a critique of essentialist notions of agency in Western modernity, one that 'parochializes the normative subject of feminist theory as desirous of freedom from relations of domination' and introduces alternative forms of self-making (p. 203).

By challenging the taken-for-granted notion that the body is a given, an unchanging (and thus not in need of critical scrutiny) nature that grounds the self, constructionist approaches have underscored the body as a shifting arena in struggles around individual and collective identities. **Gwynn Kessler**'s piece on the Rabbinic constructions of gender illustrates the pay offs of approaching the body in non-essentialist ways. As she examines how the tradition deals with physical bodies and physiological processes, she demonstrates how the sources grapple with somatic malleability and fluidity, constructing gender more as a matter of 'doing' than of 'being'. Here, Kessler builds creatively on Judith Butler's influential understanding of gender as performative, as the relatively stabilized effect of the repeated performance of acts. In Butler's words, '[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (1990, p. 25). The implication is that what we take unproblematically to be the natural body, upon which we come to impose a multiplicity of disciplines in order to produce particular identities is, in fact, already the unrecognized outcome of performances within power-laden social and cultural fields. Moreover, the assertion of the 'naturalness' of the body is a way to reify and render normative the outcomes of particular performances. In that sense, Butler goes beyond Foucault and Mauss, who assumed that there is a (raw) body anterior to discourse and practice.

Constructionist approaches to the body stand in tension with an emerging research programme that focuses on the neuro-cognitive dimensions of embodiment. This programme posits that the body is not just as an endlessly malleable socio-cultural construct but, above all, a biological entity that is the product of a long process of natural evolution, an entity endowed with fairly stable structures of cognition and experience, including a capacity for religious experiences that are cross-culturally patterned and

recurrent. Researchers within this programme have broadly concentrated on two areas: (i) seeking to demonstrate the ‘naturalness’ of religion, that is, how it is the by-product of the ways in which the mind has evolved to ensure the humanity’s adaptation and survival and, consequently, how religion is acquired and transmitted across times and spaces (see for example Barrett 2004; Boyer 1994, 2001; Dennett 2006; Guthrie 1993); (ii) studying the neurophysiology of religious experience, identifying the neural correlatives, i.e. how the brain and, to a lesser extent, the sensorimotor system affords and is transformed by religious phenomena (see for example D’Aquili and Newberg 1999; Newberg 2010). These two research foci have certainly materialized the study of religion further, rightly challenging the knee-jerk anti-essentialism of constructionist perspectives and contributing to a more holistic understanding of embodiment that includes neuro-cognitive and ecological processes. Nevertheless, as **Nathaniel Barrett** writes in his chapter entitled ‘Cognitive Science, Embodiment, and Materiality’, this research has tended to fall into the traps of mentalism (continuing to equate religious experience with mental operations, such as the imputation of human agency to natural phenomena, as in the classical definition of animism), functionalism (viewing religious states as defined only by how they function in relation to other states regardless of the physical structures of the body), and/or reductionism (seeing religion as the neuro-chemical activity of certain parts of the brain).

Accounting for all the richness of religious experience requires what Barrett terms non-reductive “radical” kinds of embodied cognitive science (such as dynamical systems theory, ecological psychology, and enactive theory), which are ‘primarily concerned with the context-sensitive, dynamic emergence (or “soft assembly”) of cognitive processes over the course of development and in the midst of situated activity’. For a radically embodied cognitive science of religion, it is not a matter of opposing fixed biological constraints to open-ended cultural production, as if nature and culture were two separate realms that need to be unified by taking one side of the duality. It is not an irresolvable contest between ‘epistemological relativists’ and ‘power polemicists’ (Cohen et al., 2008), on the one hand, and, on the other, reductive physicalists. Rather, since ‘cognitive processes emerge from the non-linear and circular causality of continuous sensorimotor interactions involving brain, body, and environment’ (Thompson 2007, p. 11), it is a matter of departing from ‘naturalcultural contact zones’ (Haraway 2008), from relations of reciprocal influencing among multiple forms of materialities, among interpenetrating neural, social, technological, and ecological networks from which our lived bodily experiences emerge and are sustained. Another way of putting it from a non-reductive materialist perspective: the focus should fall on the mutually transformative interplay amongst systems – embodied brain and the embrained body, society, and the natural environment – all characterized by differential degrees of plasticity (Malabou 2008).¹⁵

In this regard, some of the most promising research bridging constructionism and radically embodied cognitive science fall under what we may call ‘aesthetics of religion’, aesthetics understood as not in a disembodied, disinterested Kantian fashion, but going back to the ‘Greek term *aisthesis*: an epistemological concept that denoted *sensory perception*, but also referred to the larger process of how human beings make sense of their environment and of themselves through their senses’ (Grieser and

Johnston 2017). Religion is not simply about concepts of gods and beliefs in spirits, as conventional cognitive science of religion tends to assume, but it often departs from an elemental viscerality, a 'feltness of the supernatural' (Cassaniti and Luhrmann 2011, p. 44) that is inextricably connected with senses.¹⁶ Religion is more than often a multi-sensorial event that involves not just sights, but also intense sounds, smells, taste and tactile experiences. As such, phenomenologies of religion must move beyond ocular-centrism, the hegemony of vision in Western thinking (Levine 1993). As we saw with the 'scholastic vision', this privileging has contributed to disembodiment because it has construed visuality as the activity of an-all-seeing spectator removed from the flow of history. But as the activity not of a disembodied eye, but of eyes that are part and parcel of whole bodies, of interactive perceptual systems, '[v]isuality is itself... a multisensory phenomenon'. 'In embodied perception, as distinguished from the products if not the practice of scholarly writing, one sense cannot be effectively isolated from others. The senses are deeply intertwined, furthermore, not only among themselves but also with feeling, emotion, and affect as well as cognition' (Promey 2014, pp. 3, 11).¹⁷ These observations certainly resonate with **Brent Plate's** assertion in his chapter on cinema that 'watching a film is a sensual experience done by actual bodies in actual space, and often with other bodies in a proximate space, an activity that becomes religious in its form... [t]he material effects of cinema linger on long after the show is over, and people religiously reproduce the world of the film in other aspects of their lives. *Cinema is a material media practice* that is constantly embodied and re-embodied in and through bodies, time, and space'. **Heidi Campbell** and **Louise Connelly** also demonstrate how religion on-line, a medium that the early literature on cyberspace extolled as providing a view from everywhere and nowhere, not only relies on materials networks and devices, but also involves the mixing of virtual and physical ritual practices, objects, and spaces. They also point to the need to develop an aesthetics of digital religion, 'a mapping of visual sensorial engagement of digital artifacts in human-computer interactions'. For example, we need to investigate how immersive digital environments and the mobile devices that we carry everywhere will shape our senses and neuro-motor system.

Rosalind Hackett's piece on 'Aural Media' contributes in the direction of a rounder approach to the full human sensorium in religious studies, demonstrating how 'sound and hearing constitute one of the optimal entry points for exploring materiality and immateriality in relation to religion'. In the same fashion, the chapters in the section on food and commensality, a thriving subfield in religious studies, show how religion is about the contact with and ingestion of foods and objects that are imbued with sacred power or auspiciousness, as is the case of *prasāda* (see **Andrea Pinkney's** chapter), or potentially polluting and charged negative karmic residues that have materializing effects in the cycle of birth and rebirth, as in the case of meat (see **Steven Rosen** on Vaishnava Vegetarianism). We shall have more to say about the relational potency of things vis-à-vis the embodied self later on. Pinkney's and Rosen's chapters also demonstrate Vasudha Narayanan's assertion that even when the goal is liberation from the materializing effects of karma, considerable physical devotional labour and an array of objects, landscapes, and tightly regulated material procedures are involved in bringing about the 'dematerialization' of the material.

By asking 'how in the context of religious practice are the senses stimulated, governed and disciplined? How are religious experiences, emotions and attitudes created, memorised and normalised? How do religious perceptual orders interact with those of a larger culture?' (Grieser and Johnston 2017), the aesthetics of religion approach dovetails nicely with constructivist concepts like *habitus*, techniques of the body, and bio-power, without ignoring the neuro-physiology of the human sensorium. We can examine, for example, the acquisition of proprioceptive memories and other body schemas by Santería initiates as their mirror neurons are culturally coded watching and dancing with their *padrinos* as they receive the *orichas* with the correct etiquette.¹⁸

Aesthetics of religion also considers how the senses are connected to emotions and affects. The latter are 'those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension... or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability' (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, p. 1). A focus on affects allows us foreground the body's capacity 'to affect and to be affected' by and during the religious event. We can explore in depth what we mean by the expressions like 'to feel something in one's bones', 'to love someone with every fibre of one's being', 'that was a kick in the guts', 'it left me breathless and speechless', or 'it got under his/her skin'. These expressions strain to grasp haltingly potent 'preverbal intensities' (Guattari 1995, p. 9) supported by autonomic nervous system responses that precede and overflow the Cartesian 'I think therefore I am'. Buddhism even poses the issue of precedence of the body and affects more radically, attributing the stabilized self to the dependent and fluid co-arising of these 'bundles' (*skandhas*) along with cognitions, volitions, and consciousness. Drawing from his fieldwork among the Oromo of Eastern Ethiopia, **Terje Ostebo** argues that religion and ethnicity are 'about the visceral experience of selfhood, of how people exist in the world'. Moreover, 'they are intimately tied to the natural-cultural landscapes to which and within which we belong', the deeply felt embodied memories of belonging to a group located in a particular place.

Donovan Schaefer (2015) draws creatively from affect studies to challenge the ideology of human exceptionalism and its accompanying linguistic fallacy – the refusal to analyse religion and power outside language and texts – to recover religion's 'animality', the visceral intensities that we share with non-human animals. As he asks:

What would happen if we subtracted the framework of human exceptionalism from religion, following the Darwinian turn to an animalist understanding of human religious expression? What if religion is not only about language, books, or belief? In what ways is religion – for humans and other animals – about the way things feel, the things we want, the way our bodies are guided through thickly textured, magnetized worlds? Or the ways our bodies flow into relationships – loving or hostile – with other bodies? How is religion made up of clustered material forms, aspects of our embodied life, such as other bodies, food, community, labor, movement, music, sex, natural landscapes, architecture, and objects? (Schaefer 2015, p. 3)

These are questions that, as we shall see a little later, begin to expand the scope of turn towards materiality beyond the body, nesting the much needed explorations of

embodiment within 'ecologies of life', the dynamic webs in which human and non-human animals are entangled with each other and with things and environments. But before we move in that direction, it is important to highlight another set of contributions to the reinvigorated interest in the body in religious studies. In addition to affect, the aesthetics of religion is inextricably tied to bodily posture and motion. Drawing from the works of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) and Brian Massumi (2002) and from his experiences as a dancer and in the classroom, teaching religion and dance, Sam Gill has argued for the 'primacy of movement', the insight that motion is foundational for our sense of self, as well as our perceptions of others and our environments. For 'we are born into the world not with concepts and consciousness, but as moving bodies. We do not learn how to move as we come to life even in the womb and after we are born; we come with movement as identical to life itself. Life means movement from beginning to end' (Gill 2012, p. 14). The focus on bodily posture and motion opens the space to explore religion as performance, be it through dance, acting, chanting, doing yoga, playing (and watching) sports (Alpert 2015), or gaming (Campbell and Grieve 2014).

Writing also as scholars and practitioners and adding performance studies¹⁹ to the mix, **Harshita Mruthinti Kamath** and **Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger** explore 'corporeal-kinetic learning', to put it in Sheets-Johnstone's words, in classical Indian dance. They consider the materials, from saris to circular *bottus* on the forehead and bells on the ankles, as well as the 'bodily labour' that go into producing multi-layered and efficacious sensory experiences that are key for inculcation of knowledge of Hindu traditions in diaspora.

Beyond opening up all these invigorating vistas, a renewed focus on the body also has important methodological implications, which hitherto have been not fully explored in the study of religion. In his excellent *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*, Loic Wacquant stresses 'the necessity of a sociology not only of the body, in the sense of object, but also from the body, that is, deploying the body as tool of inquiry and vector of knowledge' (2004, p. viii). For Wacquant, doing 'carnal sociology' demands the practice of an 'enactive ethnography' (2015, p. 2), 'an embedded and embodied social inquiry, based on physical co-presence with(in) the phenomenon in real time and space' (2015, p. 4). In other words, enactive ethnography places the 'physical person [of the fieldworker] on the line' (2004, p. 3), plunging him/her into an 'initiatory immersion and even moral and sensual conversion to the cosmos under investigation' (2004, p. vii). More specifically, to develop a 'vibrant, full-color' account of the 'pugilistic practical sense' which is 'impregnated' upon the boxer's body through a long, arduous, and rigorous training regime, the ethnographer must move from participant observation to 'observant participation' in the 'minute and mundane rites of daily life in gym' (2004, p. 6).

What would religious studies from the body look like? Does enactive ethnography require the scholar of religion to become an initiate in the tradition s/he is studying, in effect turning him/her into an advocate, a 'care taker' rather than a critic as Russell McCutcheon (2001) puts it? These are challenging questions that taking the body seriously as 'at once the seat, the instrument, and the target' of action (Wacquant 2004, p. 16) for both the religious practitioner and the practitioner of *Religionswissenschaft* make inevitable. These questions may not have a one-size-fits-all answer, requiring instead

the constant, reflexive negotiation in situ of the demands stemming from the embodied competences instilled by the religious and scholarly communities. If Gill, Kamath and Flueckiger offer a guide, a carnal religious studies would mean an openness to the efficacy of the religious event, to the full material infrastructure that, to draw from phenomenologist Michel Henry (2008), makes (religious) appearing(s) appear for flesh-and-bone individuals. At the very minimum, it would mean a fuller, multi-sensorial, full-bodied engagement in 'the taste and the ache of action, the sound and fury of the social [and religious] world[s]' (Wacquant 2004, p. vii), adopting more creatively experimental and self-reflexive postures that render more porous and uncertain the boundaries between the emic and the etic, the insider's practices and the outsider's gaze (which is after all a practice and the product of its own embodied dispositions and material conditions), upon which critical perspectives like those of Bruce Lincoln (1996) and McCutcheon are built.²⁰

1.3.2 *Bodies and Things in and of the Material World*

For all of its contributions, the constructionist approach inspired by Foucault and Bourdieu has been rightly taken to task for its tendency to view the body in passive terms, as 'providing the primary "raw material," the presocial "base" upon which the collective categories and values are engraved... [becoming] a "simple piece of wood each has cut and trimmed to suit him"' (Comaroff 1985, p. 7).²¹ In the most totalizing version of this approach (in some of the work of Butler), the physical body disappears under the deluge of self-referential discourse. But, as Comaroff notes, the ethnographic record amply demonstrates the body's generativity, how it affords and constrains specific experiences and offers biological metaphors of birth, growth, alimentation, reproduction, ageing, and death that come to represent socio-cultural processes. This is illustrated in **Robin Wright's** chapter on the spiritual and physical body of Kuwai, one of the most important spirits in Hohodene cosmology. In this case, Kuwai's body is not simply the source of metaphors to understand the order of things, but his body, his organs, fluids, orifices, and hair, are the sources of life and death itself, of everything that is vital in Hohodene culture from shamanic powers to heal and kill, to sacred rocks, places, musical instruments, and chants.

How can we take seriously this alternative ontology in which Kuwai's body is the 'one and the many', in which Kuwai 'embodies simultaneously the multiplicity and unicity of the universe, expressing how the material and spiritual body is one with the plethora of living entities'? In engagement with the ontology of medieval Christianity, an ontology that also does not fit Western modernity's dualisms, Bynum (2011, p. 32) has called for a 'move beyond study of "the body" to [the] study of matter'. And so that we do not think that this is an issue relevant only for an enchanted past, her call comes a time when, because of neoliberal capitalism's over-production, reliance on consumerism, and the commodification of culture and knowledge to extract surplus, we are more than ever surrounded by a 'profusion' of things (Appadurai 2006). With globalization and transnational migration even those vast sectors of the world's population who do not have access to many of these material goods, desire them intensely or are deeply

offended by them, as we saw in the case of the Taliban at the beginning of this introduction. **Knut Jacobsen**'s piece on Hindu and Sikh processions in Norway illustrates how ritual bodies and objects intermingle to create powerful public displays of loss and sorrow and to carve out identity and dignity away from the homeland in turmoil.

It is important to clarify that Bynum is not calling us to abandon altogether the fruitful focus on the body. Rather we must 're-situate' body, approaching it not just as a more naturalized and historicized notion of the human self, but as part of living matter. Standing in the materialist Aristotelian tradition, medieval thinkers 'understood "body" to mean "changeable thing": gem, tree, log, or cadaver, as well as living human being. Understood in medieval terms, to explore "the body" was to explore stars and statues, blood and resin, as well as pain, perception, and survival' (Bynum 2011, p. 32). In other words, to capture more richly the generativity of the body, the affordances and constraints it presents, including the capacity to produce the representations through which we experience (it) meaningfully, we must recuperate the dynamicity and fecundity of matter itself, of which the body is made and in which it exists.

Hitherto, there have been two broad efforts to craft this more robust, expansive materialism. The first one has a more constructionist character. Bruno Latour and other Actor-Network theorists have taken the Foucaultian insight that power and subjectivity are not essences that individuals possess and exercise but are, instead, relational processes, and have applied it to the question of agency. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is 'a semiotics of materiality. It takes the semiotic insight, that of the relationality of entities, the notion that they are produced in relations, and applies this ruthlessly to all materials – and not simply to those that are linguistic' (Law 1999, p. 4). Moreover, ANT 'tells us that entities achieve their form as a consequence of the relations in which they are located. But this means that it also tells us that they are *performed* in, by, and through those relations' (Law 1999). 'An "actor" in the hyphenated expression actor-network is not the source of action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it. Action is borrowed, distributed, suggested, influence, dominated, betrayed, translated' (Latour 2005, p. 46).

In ANT, agency emerges in the interplay of heterogeneous assemblages of 'actants', which include not just humans but also a variety of non-humans. Within these associations, the various actants 'enroll', co-opt, or align with each other in order to generate relatively durable social outcomes. Thus, in his study of how Pasteurization became a widespread policy in France, Latour challenges the heroic view of history that centres on Louis Pasteur's genius in his struggle against germs. Latour argues that a dense and heterogeneous network of physicians, hygienists, government officials, scientific journals, test tubes, microscopes, sterilizing substances, and microbes interacted to stabilize a scientific view of illnesses that guaranteed the public acceptance of Pasteurization. As Latour (2010, pp. 19–20) puts it, '[t]he laboratory becomes, so to speak, the prosthesis allowing the ferment of lactic acid to speak as well as Pasteur; it allows the articulation between Pasteur and "his" ferment, between the ferment and "its" Pasteur'. In other words, agency is not something that belongs intrinsically to humans as sovereign, fully intentional, en-souled subjects standing over against the 'inert' or machinic (material) non-human entities. Rather, there is a wide range of agentic modalities. '[T]here might exist many metaphysical shades between full causality and sheer in-existence: things

might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on' (Latour 2004b, p. 226). By 'dehumanizing' agency and recovering 'the missing non-human masses' as efficacious actors without which society could not be achieved, ANT widens considerably the scope of study of materiality beyond the body, as called for Bynum.

Building on Latour and ANT, Matthew Day (2010), **David Morgan** (2014), and Vásquez (2011) have called for an understanding of various religions as evolving, agentic, heterogeneous networks that may involve priests, prophets, monks, missionaries, immigrants, pilgrims, healers, tourists, and scholars alongside texts, relics, icons, money, embodied habituses, architectural styles, and notions of honour and prestige. Several chapters in this *Companion* exemplify the benefits of this relational view of agency and materiality. **Greg Johnson**, for example, shows how the circulation of ancient Hawaiian religious objects following the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) does not simply 'reanimate' tradition and a sense of community, but also transforms the bodily dispositions and skills of those who come in contact with them. Amongst the Makah, 'objects of lore (e.g., seal skin floats, specially woven fiber ropes, and mussel shell-tipped harpoons, as well as a range of ritual objects) were suddenly objects of touch, feel, and gesture. Makah people expressed understandable fascination with and appreciation for the material mastery of their ancestors, as well as gestural curiosity about the objects. How would they use this float or that harpoon? How was it held or thrown? What somatic re-education would be needed to viscerally comprehend the point and power of the harpoon? This gestural curiosity soon crystallized in a desire to hunt once again'.

Johnson's focus on the circulation in and out of sacred objects within networks and fields dovetails very nicely with Morgan's recent call to 'make materiality evidential' and to develop robust methods, rather than simply approaching it with a theoretical attitude, as part of a paradigm shift in religious studies in the Kuhnian sense. Building on Arjun Appadurai's and Igor Kopytoff's notions of the 'social life or the biography of things' (see Appadurai 1986), Morgan (2017) argues for 'framing the study of an object's materiality in a series of steps that follow it from production to use', a trajectory that requires the analysis of nine aspects: 'medium, design, manufacture, function, comparison, remediation, deployment, reception and ideology or cultural work'. He puts this frame to work in the *Companion* in his textured analysis of Sacred Heart of Jesus, in which he also engages Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome²² to produce an 'account that is not strictly linear, but a network, a reverberation between object and everything we see beyond it that has gone into crafting the object'.

For his part, **Paul C. Johnson** writes eloquently about how, 'spirit possession' in Candomblé is 'the ritual expression of competent material and bodily work', a work demanding careful 'assemblages of bodies, spaces and things [that] facilitate and even constitute the "presence" of gods, spirits or ancestors'. The public presencing of these beings requires that

the proper material context has already been carefully built... such that the orixá [spirit]'s incorporation is the outcome of accumulated material labor carried out over days of preparation, including the preparation of the right foods, the right decorations, the right

clothing, and the right aural context, each of which themselves act on the dancer and the audience – whether through sound, smell, taste, physical solidity or permeability-shaping their thoughts, moods, potentialities, inclinations and movements. This assemblage of actants and modes of agency, interacting together with individual will, produce the field called *axé* and the incorporated *orixás* who serve to channel and perform its various material and historical manifestations – thunder, war, prosperity, beauty, water, soil, disease, political rule, kinship, technology, plants, wind ...

Day notes rightly that Latour and ANT also challenge the denial of coevalness that is closely related with secular modernity's rejection of religion, which, as we saw above, is associated in the modern mind with the intimate interaction and ontic shifts amongst human, non-human animals, plants, things, and spirits. Science understood these ontic shifts as the projections of primitive thinking, as naïve forms of fetishism or shamanism. Apparitions, miraculous icons, and beliefs in shape-shifting shamans are all misattributions of causality that modern science shatters with facts. But Latour (1993) shows that 'we have never been modern', or rather that the 'moderns' also depend heavily on and interact closely with things and technologies. Try, for instance, to separate us from our iPhones and Androids, which are constantly interpellating us. As such, what we have are not facts opposed to fetishes, but 'factishes', constructed-yet-binding facts that emerge from historical, contested-yet-stable 'regimes of enunciation'. Factishes, 'quasi-objects', or 'weak objects', that is, hybrids constructed out of the mixing objects and words 'do things, they too make [us] do things' (Latour 2004b, p. 243). At a time when there is glib talk of 'alternative facts', it is important to stress that Latour is not advocating for a self-contradictory relativism, which can follow from crude readings of postmodernism. Quite the contrary, Latour is deeply concerned that a totalizing constructionism has severely weakened critique.²³ As he puts it, for ANT, '[t]he question was never to get away from facts but closer to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism' (p. 231). Reading ANT in a materialist key, we can say that it brings us back to our bodily enmeshment in the plethora of things amongst which we exist and which we have ignored for too long in our reductive textualist concern. ANT foregrounds the affordances²⁴ that things offer us, as well as to their obduracy, the constraints that they present as we encounter them through our bodies, which as we have seen, are bio-cultural realities. This entanglement of material agencies, which has to be approached with fine-tuned tools that allow us to document the coming together of the various assemblages, is what gives rise to our lived worlds.

The task then is not to debunk religion, but to understand comparatively the "conditions of felicity" of the various activities that in our cultures are able to elicit truth'. In many religions, these conditions of felicity include not just human ritual labour in the production of trained bodies and purified, auspicious spaces, but also the work of 'transcendental beings' like gods, spirits, and impersonal forces. Should a non-reductive materialism not take them into account as key actants in the heterogeneous gatherings that make possible many a religious phenomenon?

Why not say that in religion what counts are the beings that make people act, just as every believer has always insisted? That would be more empirical, perhaps more scientific, more

respectful, and much more economical than the invention of two impossible non-existing sites: one where the mind of the believer and the social reality are hidden behind illusions propped up by even more illusions. (Latour 2005, p. 235)

In other words, Latour challenges us to break with the modernist doxa in religious studies and ‘*grant the gods their agency*’ (Day 2010, p. 278). For, ‘as long as they make a difference in what people do, the gods are *real actors* with *relative existence*’ (pp. 280–281, emphasis in the original). Thus, scholars of religion need to ‘start attending to the networks from which these actors emerge and the labor required to make them real and obvious’ (p. 281). Day goes on to write that a networks approach to religion can help us overcome the unproductive impasse between emic and etic perspectives and between criticism and care-taking (McCutcheon 2001). We can

kick the habit of treating those ‘non-obvious beings’ that fill the pages of books about religion as if they were stand-ins for something else. The gods, ghosts, spirits, and prophets that speak are not ciphers for ‘Society’ (e.g., Durkheim), ‘Culture’ (e.g., Geertz), or ‘Economy’ (e.g., Marx). Rather, they are one of the many non-human actors who circulate within a given network: agents who make their presence felt by sharing the labor required to gather, attach, move, motivate or bind their fellow actors together into a social aggregate. (Day 2010, p. 278)

Defining ‘non-obvious beings’ as actants within particular networks has opened new spaces to develop a rich anthropology of the ‘uncanny’ and of the alternative ontologies that may accompany it (Goslinga 2013). For instance, studying ghosts and spirits in Buddhist festivals in Laos could involve analysing ‘under which circumstances they appear to which people. This would imply a focus on the multifaceted regimes of communicability that evolve between humans and spirits’ (Ladwig 2013, p. 431). After all, ‘ghosts can be beings with desires, with taste, with biographies. They appear in specific ways at places at a certain time; they slip into objects, they live in them, they consume things, leave material traces and demand a certain treatment as social beings’ (p. 428). Thus, our task as scholars of religion inspired by a non-reductive materialist turn is to trace the ‘tracks’, ‘footprints’, or ‘imprints’, the signals ‘left in the material domain of something that in conventional ways is not graspable for most people not endowed with special capacities to do so... the trace itself can point to the immanence of a being through its material manifestations’ (p. 431).

In this *Companion*, **Kay Read** presents a pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican view of the cosmos as ‘complex, intertwined, fertile, comestible’, as characterized by structured-yet-dynamic food webs that establish ‘symbolic and physically real sacrificial relationships involving cooking, eating, fertility and war’ among humans and the gods. Both humans and gods are efficacious actors; they sacrifice and are sacrificed. ‘Sacrificial blood is and begets nourishment; people and gods cook and feed each other out of debt for their own mutual existence. Just as gods nourished each other, so too is the merit of all humans’. Along the same lines, **David Carrasco** borrows from Paul Wheatley to describe pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican cities as ‘ecological complexes’ in which ‘agriculture, technology, warfare, exchange, and territory were *integrated* through a religious

imagination', a 'cosmo-magical thinking' that 'provided elites with divine authority and persuasiveness to shape the city as an *imago mundi*, an earthbound image of the cosmos'.

Reference to ecology and ontology brings us to the second line of inquiry into materiality, which has a more ontological tenor. It ratifies the constructionist emphasis on relationality and dynamism, but grounds it in a new understanding of matter as intrinsically generative. Building on thinkers such as Epicurus, Lucretius, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty, Whitehead, and Deleuze, the 'new materialists' move from views of nature as mechanistic or passive vis-à-vis humanity's creative agency towards an understanding of matter as 'vibrant' and auto-poietic, i.e. self-propelling, self-creating, and self-organizing. Political scientist Jane Bennett uses the term 'thing-power' to affirm 'material recalcitrance', the 'capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will and design of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own' (Bennett 2010, p. viii). For the new materialists,

materiality is always something more than 'mere' matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable. In sum, new materialists are rediscovering a materiality that materializes, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us to think of causation in far more complex terms; to recognize that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces and to consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency. (Coole and Frost 2010, p. 9)

The new materialists subscribe to a non-dualistic, immanentist ontology: 'if matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and objects minimized, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated. All bodies become more than mere objects, as the thing-power of resistance and protean agency are brought into sharper relief' (Bennett 2010, p. 13). Bodies – human and non-human – and the practices they make possible are the products of 'differential patterns of mattering' (Barad 2007, p. 140), the outcomes of the 'intra-action' of social fields, discursive matrixes, and neural and ecological webs. Here, the notion of intra-action stands 'in contrasts to the usual "interaction," which presumes the prior existence of independent entities or relata' (p. 139). These entities/relata only have agential separability with the material phenomena they generate through their intra-action. Within the 'swarms of vitalities at play', 'different materialities ... will express different powers' (Bennett 2010, p. 31).

To characterize this enmeshment, Tim Ingold (2011, pp. 89–94) introduces an ecological dimension, challenging Latour for assuming that 'the materiality of the world... is fully comprehended in the things connected'. For Ingold, relationality and the distributive, delegatory properties of the network that in Latour's eyes give rise to our factishes, are themselves grounded in and enabled and constrained by materiality itself, 'by the material media in which living things are immersed'. Ingold sees reality not as 'an assemblage of bits and pieces but a tangle of threads and pathways. Let us call it meshwork, so as to distinguish it from... networks. My claim, then, is that action is not the result of an agency that distributed around the network, but rather emerges from

the interplay of forces that are conducted along the lines of the meshwork', the webs which are not only anchored in nature but are part of it. In that sense, '[b]ringing things to life, is a matter not of adding to them a sprinkling of agency but of restoring to them the generative fluxes of the world of material in which they came into being and continue to subsist. This [is the] the view that things are in life rather than life in things' (Ingold 2011, p. 29), which was the simplistic way in which anthropologists characterized primitive religion, i.e. animism, since E.B. Tylor.²⁵

Echoing the new materialists and Ingold's ecological anthropology, object-oriented ontologists and speculative realists like Timothy Morton speak of 'hyperobjects', things like global warming that, while closely entangled with humans, transcend temporal and spatial human scales, actively shaping our range of actions.²⁶ Hyperobjects are 'viscous, which means that they "stick" to beings that are involved with them' (Morton 2013, p. 1). Despite our best efforts to insulate ourselves from them through language (of denial), '[o]bjects are what they are, in the sense that no matter what we are aware of, or how, there they are, impossible to shake off' (p. 35). In that sense, 'hyperobjects end the possibility of transcendental leaps "outside" physical reality. Hyperobjects force us to acknowledge the immanence of thinking to the physical' (p. 2). This is because 'it's not a matter of making some suicidal leap into the honey, but of discovering that we are already inside it' (p. 32). Lest we think that this is a return to a naïve realism and oppressive essentialism so dreaded by constructionists, Morton points to the fact that even though we have an embodied 'vivid intimacy' with climate change, we cannot grasp or control the totality of its causes, dynamics, and effects. Hyperobjects 'are near, [yet] they are also very uncanny', involving a highly complex meshwork of actors, processes, and events (p. 28).

Thus far, the new materialists have been reluctant to 'grant gods their agency', as the Latourian constructionists suggest, for fear of succumbing to dualism or to 'the temptation in vitalism to *spiritualize* the vital agent' (Bennett 2010, p. 81, emphasis in the original). They wish to remain faithful to a radically immanent plane. Coole (2010, p. 92), for instance, ask 'is it possible... to grasp matter's dynamic and sometimes resistant capacities, without relying upon mysticisms derived from animism, religion, or romanticism?' Here, the new materialists might be operating with a one-dimensional view of religion, one that is even at odds with Ingold's call to 'rethink the animate and re-animate thought' (2011). If the new materialists were to see religions as situated practices, discourses, spaces, and objects that negotiate the interplay of transcendence and immanence, of absence and presence, as we argued above, they could offer, along with ecological anthropologists and speculative realists, more productive tools to make sense of what Jennifer Scheper Hughes (2012, p. 17) calls '*mysterium materiae*, the mystery of living matter', i.e. that fact that within communities of devotion certain objects are not simply external expressions of inner belief, but they are themselves lively, transgressively abundant. In fact, they may even be regarded, felt as persons by the religious practitioners. Thus, *mysterium materiae* is to be distinguished from Rudolf Otto's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which is all about internal states vis-à-vis the Sacred. Take Bynum's work on Christian materiality. She stresses 'the self-referentiality' of this materiality: images and relics do 'not merely signify... a power that lies beyond'. 'In their insistent materiality', they 'do

more than comment on, refer to, provide signs of, or gesture to the divine' (2011, pp. 35, 66). Rather, these images call attention to their materiality qua materiality, 'not only to the materials of which they are made (crystal, gold, gems) but also to the materials (bones, cloth, wood) they contained, displaying their wondrous transformational power'. This is why Bynum finds Latour and other constructionists limited. They give things only 'metaphorical agency; it is like that of human actors. Typewriters, keys, ploughs, statues, and relics shape those who employ them. They come closest to acting when they come closest to living – that is, to being like a human agent' (p. 281). While Latour's proposal for a 'parliament of things' (Latour 1993, pp. 142–145), where humans give non-humans recognition and the right 'to talk', is inclusive and opens the way to think materiality, power, and agency in innovative ways, it remains in the thralls of anthropocentrism and, thus, pray to the dualism that has led to the denigration of matter in the first place.

Reflecting on his fieldwork amongst the Runa of Ecuador's Upper Amazon, Eduardo Kohn (2013, p. 7) has called for 'an anthropology beyond the human' that can help us understand 'how forests think', that can allow us to appreciate 'the ecology of selves', the web of relations that the Runa sustain with a dazzling array of non-human beings with whom they share the tropical rain forest. In my view, this appreciation is one of main pay offs of the turn to materiality in religious studies: it leads to a more capacious, complex, and dynamic understanding of agency. The multifariousness of matter affords diverse forms of agency – well beyond the unproductively rigid borders established by Western modernity pitting humans (active subjects) vs. non-humans (passive objects) (Latour 2004a). Indeed, Kohn's work is part of the 'ontological turn' in anthropology that seeks to de-colonize the discipline and 'provincialize Europe' (Chakrabarty 2000), taking seriously the viability of non-Western modes of being. For Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, a leading voice in this turn, this is a return to the roots of anthropology. 'Anthropology is alterity that stays alterity or, better, that *becomes* alterity, since anthropology is a conceptual practice whose aim is to make alterity reveal its powers of alteration' (Viveiros de Castro 2011, pp. 145). In his work on indigenous peoples of the Amazons, Viveiros de Castro contrasts Western 'multi-culturalism', which presupposes 'the mutual implication of the unity of nature and the plurality of cultures – the first guaranteed by the objective universality of the body and substance, the second generated by the particularity of spirit and meaning' – with Amerindian 'multinaturalism', which assumes 'spiritual unity and a corporeal diversity. Here, culture or the subject would be the form of the universal, whilst nature and the object would be the form of the particular' (Viveiros de Castro 1998, pp. 469–470). Thus, in multinaturalism, the focus is on 'the conception, common to many peoples of [South America], according to which the world is inhabited by different sorts of subjects or persons, human and non-human, which apprehend reality from distinct points of view' (p. 469). Working with similar materials, Philippe Descola (2013) has argued that our modern worldview, in which nature is 'the domain of objects that [are] subject to autonomous laws that form a background against which the arbitrariness of human activities [can] exert its many-faceted fascination' (p. xv), is but one modality of inhabiting the

world and giving it meaning, existing alongside animism, totemism, and analogism, each with its own operative notions of agency and relationality.

The strategy of contrasting distinctive ontologies carries the danger of Orientalism, opening the door for long-discredited structuralist theories about the 'separate but equal' logics of primitive mentalities.²⁷ It may be more fruitful and prudent to think of porous, often hybrid-yet-binding perspectives articulated by the coming together of networks of agents, materials, landscapes, and events, some of which are shared, some of which are not, allowing thus for compatibility as well as incongruence, coalition-building as well as agonism across time and place. Nevertheless, Kohn's, Viveiros de Castro's, and Descola's efforts to relativize our taken-for-granted worldview are valuable. They point to the need to think at the limits of our Western understandings of materiality, to theorize and research materialities in the plural and comparatively.²⁸ **Anne Murphy**, for example, shows how relics in the Sikh tradition, though puissant signifiers of authority and collective memory, do not function like relics do in Christianity and Buddhism, along the lines that Bynum and Hughes describe so well. This difference has to do with 'fundamental *nirgun* (non-material) commitments of Sikh thought and practice to that which lies beyond representation'. Like anthropology, the discipline of religious studies deals with alterity within and amongst traditions and, to paraphrase Viveiros de Castro, it is our task to explore the diverse ways in which materiality makes possible for alterity to reveal its powers of alteration.

1.4 The Collection

This collection seeks to encourage the comparative studies of materialities across historical periods and religious traditions. The contributions are divided according to some of the currently most salient foci of interest in the study of religion and materiality. These foci should not be understood as fixed, definitive, and self-contained categories, but heuristically, as theoretically and methodologically strategic points of entry into the poly-faceted, interconnected, and shifting maze of religious materialities. For example, **Tom Bremer**'s essay on religion and tourism is included under the rubric of practices and performances to highlight how travel and consumption is connected with the production of authenticity. However, the chapter touches on issues of place-making and mobility, the power of capitalism via commodification, and the quest for real embodied experiences of unspoiled nature and unfamiliar peoples, among other things. In a similar way, **Whitney Sanford**'s chapter is in the section on food and commensality; yet, it also addresses ritual practices and the formation of emplaced communities, sustainable livelihoods versus conventional, capital-intensive agriculture, and the well-being of the body and environment. All the other chapters could, likewise, have been placed in multiple sections, with each placement inflecting the materials in certain ways. I hope that this chapter has illuminated some of the potentially fertile points of contact, tension, and passage among a luxuriant array of chapters that evince the great promises of the comparative study of religious materialities.

Notes

- 1 See www.un.org/press/en/2001/ga9858.doc.htm.
- 2 This verse appears in the Qur'an, 6:74.
- 3 <http://groups.colgate.edu/aarislam/msells.htm>.
- 4 Assessing the legacy of the Enlightenment, Foucault points not to particular concepts, foundations, or institutions, but to 'an ethos of permanent critique of our historical era' that is 'oriented toward the "contemporary limits of the necessary," that is, toward what is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects'. Applied to the study of religion, a limit-attitude requires us to ask constantly what are those assumptions, concepts, and approaches that were considered indispensable but have become, in fact, an impediment to developing rich and compelling understandings of religions in all their complexity, diversity, change, and interaction with other socio-cultural and ecological dynamics.
- 5 Thus, I agree with J.Z. Smith's understanding of comparison as an exercise of positioned imagination, of departing from alterities that are salient for the researcher (and the practitioner), from 'differences that make a difference' to quote the pragmatism's adage, placing the phenomena brought into creative comparison in their proper contexts. Smith (1982, 2000). Salience understood here in Merleau-Ponty's sense: as the dynamic outcome of flesh coiling upon itself, of the flesh of our bodies touching and being touched by the flesh of the world.
- 6 I borrow the term from speech-act theory, which uses it to characterize the necessary conditions to make the performance of an utterance successful, giving the latter its expressive, assertive, declarative and directive force. See Austin (1962).
- 7 For example, the Second International's quest for a scientific historical materialism.
- 8 Chris Hann rightly takes current anthropology of Christianity to task for neglecting the role of Eastern Christianity in shaping modernity, including modern understandings of materiality. He goes even further, challenging the usefulness of the Weberian thesis about the unique link between Western Christianity, more specifically Protestantism, and modernity (via rationalization, disenchantment, secularization, privatization, and entextualization), seeing this thesis as an impediment to a broader comparative focus on diversity and tensions within the Christian 'civilization'. See Hann (2007, 2014).
- 9 As Pietz (1985, p. 16) writes, the 'problem of the fetish' 'arose within and remains specific to a particular type of cross-cultural experience first engaging European consciousness in ongoing situations on the West African coast after the fifteenth century'. Notice here how the construction of fetishism is a 'dialogical' process, involving colonizer and colonized in an asymmetric relationship.
- 10 On Indian philosophy, see King (1999b) and Radhakrishnan (2009). I thank Vasudha Narayanan for her invaluable input in my brief characterization of materiality in Hindu traditions.
- 11 For a more extended critique of this linguistic reductionism, particularly as articulated by early Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, see Vásquez (2011).
- 12 That is what Keane suggests when he focuses on the 'semiotic ideology' of Calvinism in order to see how Christian missionaries situated 'words, things, and persons (along with other agentive beings such as spirits) dynamically within the same world with one another' (2007, p. 18) through their discursive practices.
- 13 By biopower (or alternatively biopolitics), Foucault meant 'the disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population [that] constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed', beginning in the seventeenth century

- (Foucault 1978, p. 139). He also coined the neologism 'governmentality' to make sense of the expansion of the scope of political power beyond the Crown after the sixteenth century. From then on, "government" did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed – the government of children, of souls, of communities, of the sick ... To govern, in this sense, is to control the possible field of action of others' (2003, pp. 326, 341; see also Foucault 2008, pp. 108, 193).
- 14 More recently, Giorgio Agamben has built upon and gone beyond Foucault to understand the operation of power in the contemporary 'state of exemption', 'a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system' (Agamben 2005, p. 2). Thus, whereas Foucault speaks of power over the desires and capacities of the body, Agamben seeks to address power over 'bare life' ('zoepolitics') and he uses the notion of *homo sacer* (from Roman law, the sacred man, sacred the sense of being radically set apart, a man who is banned, an out-law literally who can be killed by anybody with impunity, but may not be sacrificed as part of a sanctioned religious ritual). While Agamben developed his approach in relation to the authoritarian Nazi state, it has been used to study the suspension of juridical rights during the war on terror post-9-11. Vásquez (2014) also drew from it to analyse the figure of the 'illegal' immigrant.
 - 15 Malabou uses the term plasticity to emphasize the process of becoming, since it implies a certain degree of fixity and systematicity, as well as flexibility and open-endedness, the capacity to mould and to be moulded, not least through self-ordering dynamics.
 - 16 See Birgit Meyer on the 'aesthetic of persuasion' of Pentecostalism, which uses 'sensational forms', that is, 'authorized modes of invoking and organizing access to the transcendental' that enable the powerful and visceral religious experiences (Meyer 2010, p. 751).
 - 17 See also the influential work of David Morgan (2005) on religious visual culture.
 - 18 Shaun Gallagher (2005, p. 234) defines body schemas as 'nonconscious system[s] of processes that constantly regulate posture and movement – system[s] of motor-sensory capacities that function below the threshold of awareness, and without the necessity of perceptual monitoring'. Mirror neurons are associated with learning skills and instinctive-yet-culturally appropriate reactions through imitation and empathy, as they fire not just when the person acts, but when the person witnesses others performing. See Rizzolatti and Craighero (2004).
 - 19 Richard Schechner (2002) is key in this area.
 - 20 For an ethico-methodological reflection on embodiment, see Marquardt and Vásquez (2014). Orsi points in the same direction in his call to approach scholarship as relationality and exchange, an 'in-between orientation', 'a disciplined suspension of the impulse to locate the other (with all her or his discrepant moralities, ways of knowing, and religious impulses) securely in relation to one's own cosmos'. Robust and nuanced research entails 'experiencing one's own world from the disorienting perspective of the other... and this necessarily entails risk, vulnerability, vertigo; it invites anger and creates distress' (Orsi 2005, pp. 198, 204). Despite the emphasis on contextualization and historization in their approaches to religion, the dualisms set up by Lincoln between 'good manners' and 'good conscience' and by McCutcheon between critics and caretakers operate with a view of the scholar as a disincarnate analyst. The sociology of critique (rather than critical sociology) explores the dynamics of domination and resistance, not from the point of view of the sovereign scholar, whose privileged externality allows him/her to unmask ideologies unproblematically, but from the

- multiple points of views of the actors in situ who have in-corporated contested procedures for evaluating and legitimating their actions to others. Embedded, embodied experience of the religious practitioner's lifeworld is, thus, less about reverence, than about methodological rigour. See Boltanski and Thevenot (2006).
- 21 Paradoxically, neuro-cognitive research programme on the body can also construe it in static and passive terms, as the stabilized outcome of a long biological evolution. E. O Wilson, one of the more nuanced proponents of epistemology behind this programme puts it thus: 'The genes hold culture on a leash. The leash is very long but inevitably values will be constrained in accordance with their effects on the human gene pool' (1978, p. 167).
 - 22 Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to two planes of becoming: 'arborescent', which seeks firm foundations by establishing fixed dualities and linear and hierarchical connections ultimately grounded on a centralized axis, and 'rhizomatic', constituted by a myriad of heterogeneous, proliferating, and deterritorializing connections.
 - 23 Latour notes how critique has been normalized and co-opted: 'entire Ph.D. programs are still running to make sure that good American kids are learning the hard way that facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, that we are always prisoners of language, that we always speak from a particular standpoint, and so on, while dangerous extremists are using the very same argument of social construction to destroy hard-won evidence that could save our lives' (Latour 2004b, p. 231). Against this co-optation, he calls for 'bring[ing] the sword of criticism to criticism itself' (p. 227) and for the 'cultivation of a stubbornly realist attitude', an ethos that '*adds* reality to matters of fact and not *substract* reality' (p. 232).
 - 24 Ecological psychologist James Gibson introduced this term to highlight the dynamic complementarity between the animal and its environment. The latter's physical aspects furnish possibilities for action to the animal, possibilities that are perceived and realized through the animal's physicality and activities. Affordances are '*relative to the animal*. They are unique for that animal. They are not just abstract physical properties. They have unity relative to the posture and behavior of the animal being considered. So, an affordance cannot be measured as we measure in physics' (Gibson 1986 [1977], p. 127). Thus, the notion allows for a realism that eschews both positivism and relativism, since it foregrounds embodiment, emplacement, practice, and identity, but without slipping into an everything-goes kind of subjectivism.
 - 25 For a creative recovery of animism that resonates with the turn to materiality in religious studies, see Harvey (2014).
 - 26 Speculative realism is a kaleidoscopic philosophical movement, but its proponents commonly reject Kantian 'correlationism', the idea that everything is reducible to the experience of the transcendental subject, to phenomena as humans perceive it. Against this anthropocentrism, they insist that there is a world not only not exhausted by human constructs (thus the realism), but that this world is vital in the emergence of human consciousness from its midst. As Morton puts it, 'the problem is not that things are truly distant, but that they are in our face – they are our face' (2013, p. 28). Given the 'stick mesh of viscosity' in which we find ourselves, we cannot achieve objectively neutral, universal, and totalizing accounts of our reality (thus the speculative character of the realism). For a good example of speculative realism, see Meillassoux (2008).
 - 27 To be fair, Descola is careful to stress that the various 'ontological parcels' he characterizes are primarily 'a handy intuitive way of synthesizing under a simple label (such as "the Modern West" or "shamanistic societies") "families" of practices and mind-sets that seem to display affinities

despite the diversity of their concrete manifestation' (2013, p. 309). Still, his structuralist approach seems to underplay the 'links that they weave between one another, the ways they affect one another, and the manner in which they treat one another [which] can all vary through and through' (p. 310).

- 28 Latour himself has relativized his take on networks. They are 'just one, somewhat heterogeneous mode of existence' (Tresch 2013, p. 304). See also Latour (2013) and his exchanges with Viveiros de Castro and Descola.

Works Cited

- Agamben, G. (2005). *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Alpert, R.T. (2015). *Religion and Sports: An Introduction and Case Studies*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Appadurai, A. (ed.) (1986). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Appadurai, A. (2006). The thing itself. *Public Culture* 18 (1): 15–21.
- Asad, T. (1993). *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford University Press.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Barrett, J. (2004). *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bhattacharya, R. (2011). *Studies on Charvaka/Lokayata*. London: Anthem Press.
- Blackburn, A. (2012). The text and the world. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (ed. R. Orsi), 151–167. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Boltanski, L. and Thevenot, L. (2006). *On Justification: Economies of Worth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1980). *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). Genesis and structure of the religious field. In: *Comparative Social Research: Religious Institutions*, vol. 13 (ed. C. Calhoun), 1–44. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997). *Pascalian Meditations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical Reason*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Boyer, P. (1994). *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Boyer, P. (2001). *Religion Explained: The Human Instincts that Fashion Gods, Spirits, and Ancestors*. London: Random House.
- Brown, P. (1981). *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, P. (1988). *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University.
- Burnouf, E. (1844[2012]). *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien*. Paris: Nabu Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Bynum, C.W. (1987). *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food for Medieval Woman*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Bynum, C.W. (1995). *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, 200–1336. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bynum, C.W. (2006). *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bynum, C.W. (2011). *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*. New York: Zone Books.
- Campbell, H. and Grieve, G.P. (eds.) (2014). *Playing with Religion in Digital Games*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Cassaniti, J. and Luhrmann, T. (2011). Encountering the supernatural: a phenomenological account of mind. *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 2: 37–53.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Chattopadhyaya, D. (1959). *Lokayata: A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House.
- Chidester, D. (2004). "Classify and conquer": Friedrich Max Müller, indigenous religious traditions, and Imperial comparative religion. In: *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity* (ed. J. Olupona), 71–88. New York: Routledge.
- Christian, W.C. (1981). *Local Religion in Sixteenth Century Spain*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, E., Lanman, J., Whitehouse, H., and McCauley, R. (2008). Common criticisms of the cognitive science of religion – answered. *Bulletin/CSSR* 37 (4): 112–115.
- Comaroff, J. (1985). *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Connolly, W. (2011). *A World of Becoming*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Coole, D. (2010). The inertia of matter and the generativity of the flesh. In: *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (eds. D. Coole and S. Frost), 92–115. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Coole, D. and Frost, S. (eds.) (2010). *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Csordas, T. (1994). *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Healing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- D'Aquili, E. and Newberg, A. (1999). *Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.
- Day, M. (2010). How to keep it real: The prospects for an academic life after "religion". *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 21 (4): 272–282.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Dennett, D. (2006). *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Viking.
- Descola, P. (2013). *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Eliade, M. (1958). *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Engelke, M. (2007). *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Engelke, M. (2011). Material religion. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (ed. R. Orsi), 209–229. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fabian, J. (1983). *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia.
- Fitzgerald, T. (2000). *The Ideology of Religious Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Flood, F.B. (2002). Between cult and culture: Bamiyan, Islamic iconoclasm, and the museum. *Art Bulletin* LXXXIV (4): 641–659.

- Foucault, M. (1978). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1984). What is enlightenment? In: *The Foucault Reader* (ed. P. Rabinow), 32–50. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (2003). Society must be defended. In: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*. New York: Picador.
- Foucault, M. (2008). The birth of biopolitics. In: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*. New York: Picador.
- Gallagher, S. (2005). Dynamic models of body schematic processes. In: *Body Image and Body Schema: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Body* (eds. H. De Preester and V. Knockaert), 233–250. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Gamboni, D. (1977). *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gibson, J. (1986[1977]). The theory of affordances. In: *Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing: Toward an Ecological Psychology* (eds. R. Shaw and J. Bransford), 127–143. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gill, S. (2012). *Dancing Culture Religion*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Goslinga, G. (2013). Spirited encounters: notes on the politics and poetics of representing the uncanny in anthropology. *Anthropological Theory* 12 (4): 386–406.
- Grieser, A. and Johnston, J. (2017). What is an aesthetics of religion? From the senses to meaning – and back again. In: *Aesthetics of Religion: A Connective Concept* (eds. A. Grieser and J. Johnston), 1–49. Berlin: DeGruyter.
- Guattari, F. (1995). *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Sydney: Power.
- Guthrie, S. (1993). *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hann, C. (2007). The anthropology of Christianity per se. *Archives Européennes de Sociologie. European Journal of Sociology* 48 (3): 391–418.
- Hann, C. (2014). The heart of the matter: Christianity, materiality, and modernity. *Current Anthropology* 55 (Supplement 10): S182–S192.
- Haraway, D. (2008). *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Harvey, G. (2014). *Food, Sex and Strangers: Understanding Religion as Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge.
- Henry, M. (2008). *Material Phenomenology*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Hughes, J.S. (2012). *Mysterium materiae*: vital matter and the object as evidence in the study of religion. *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 41 (4): 16–24.
- Ingold, T. (2011). *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. New York: Routledge.
- Josephson, J. (2012). *The Invention of Religion in Japan*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Keane, W. (2007). *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Keane, W. (2008). On the materiality of religion. *Material Religion* 4 (2): 230–231.
- Kieschnick, J. (2003). *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- King, R. (1999a). *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India, and the 'Mystic East'*. New York: Routledge.
- King, R. (1999b). *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kohn, E. (2013). *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Kolrud, K. and Prusac, M. (eds.) (2014). *Iconoclasm from Antiquity to Modernity*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Ladwig, P. (2013). Ontology, materiality and spectral traces: methodological thoughts on studying Lao Buddhist festivals for ghosts and ancestral spirits. *Anthropological Theory* 12 (4): 427–447.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (2004a). Nonhumans. In: *Pattern Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture* (eds. S. Harrison, S. Pile and N. Thrift), 224–227. London: Reaktion Books.
- Latour, B. (2004b). Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2): 225–248.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, B. (2010). *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Latour, B. (2013). *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Law, J. (1999). After ANT: complexity, naming and topology. In: *Actor-Network Theory and after* (eds. J. Law and J. Hassard), 1–14. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Levine, D.M. (ed.) (1993). *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lincoln, B. (1996). Theses on method. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8: 225–227.
- Lopez, D. (2012). From stone to flesh: the case of the Buddha. In: *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality* (eds. D. Houtman and B. Meyer), 77–89. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Luhmann, T.M. (2012). *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. New York: Vintage.
- Mahmood, S. (2001). Feminist theory, embodiment, and the docile agent: some reflections on the Egyptian Islamic revival. *Cultural Anthropology* 16 (2): 202–236.
- Malabou, C. (2008). *What Should We Do with our Brain?* New York: Fordham University Press.
- Marquardt, M.F. and Vásquez, M.A. (2014). From the body: an exchange on scholarship and advocacy. *Religion* 44 (2): 233–258.
- Marshall, R. (2009). *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Marx, K. (1908). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1. Chicago, IL: Charles Kerr Company.
- Marx, K. (1978). Theses on Feuerbach. In: *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed. R. Tucker), 143–145. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Masuzawa, T. (2000). Troubles with materiality: the ghost of fetishism in the nineteenth century. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2): 242–267.
- Masuzawa, T. (2005). *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mauss, M. (1973). Techniques of the body. *Economy and Society* 2: 70–88.
- McCutcheon, R. (1997). *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McCutcheon, R. (2001). *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Meillassoux, Q. (2008). *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. London: Continuum.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2012). *Phenomenology of Perception* (trans. Donald A. Landes). London and New York: Routledge.
- Meyer, B. (2010). Aesthetics of persuasion: global Christianity and Pentecostalism's

- sensational forms. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109 (4): 741–763.
- Meyer, B. (2012). “There is a Spirit in that image”: mass-produced Jesus pictures and Protestant-Pentecostal animation in Ghana. In: *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality* (eds. D. Houtman and B. Meyer), 296–320. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Morgan, D. (2005). *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Morgan, D. (2014). The ecology of images: seeing and the study of religion. *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 5: 83–105.
- Morgan, D. (2017). Material analysis and the study of religion. In: *Materiality and the Study of Religion: The Stuff of the Sacred* (eds. T. Hutchings and J. McKenzie), 14–32. London: Routledge.
- Morton, T. (2013). *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Narayanan, V. (2016). Matters that matter: material religion in contemporary Hinduism. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary India* (ed. K. Jacobsen), 329–346. New York: Routledge.
- Newberg, A. (2010). *Principles of Neurotheology*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Olsen, B. (2013). *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- O’Neill, K. (2009). *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala City*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Orsi, R. (2005). *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Orsi, R. (2016). *History and Presence*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Pietz, W. (1985). The problem of the fetish, I. *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (April 1): 5–17.
- Promey, S. (2014). Religion, sensation, and materiality: an introduction. In: *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice* (ed. S. Promey), 1–21. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (2009[1929]). *Indian Philosophy*, 2e, vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reinhardt, B. (2016). “Don’t make it a doctrine”: material religion, transcendence, critique. *Anthropological Theory* 16 (1): 75–97.
- Rivera, M. (2015). *Poetics of the Flesh*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Rizzolatti, G. and Laila Craighero, L. (2004). The mirror-neuron system. *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 27: 169–192.
- Schaefer, D. (2015). *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Schechner, R. (2002). *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Schopen, G. (1997). *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.
- Seigworth, G.J. and Gregg, M. (2010). An inventory of shimmers. In: *The Affect Theory Reader* (eds. M. Gregg and G.J. Seigworth), 1–25. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1999). *The Primacy of Movement*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Simpson, J. (2010). *Under the Hammer: Iconoclasm in the Anglo-American Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, J.Z. (1978). *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, J.Z. (1982). In comparison a magic dwells. In: *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (ed. J.Z. Smith), 19–35. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, J.Z. (1987). *To Take Place: Toward a Theory in Ritual*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Smith, J.Z. (2000). Epilogue: the “end” of comparison: redescription and rectification. In: *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (eds. K.C. Patton and B.C. Ray), 237–241. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sugirtharajah, S. (2003). *Imagining Hinduism: A Postcolonial Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Thompson, E. (2007). *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Science of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Tresch, J. (2013). Another turn after ANT: interview with Bruno Latour. *Social Science Studies* 43 (2): 302–313.
- Tuan, Y.-F. (1977). *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tweed, T. (1997). *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tweed, T. (2006). *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vásquez, M.A. (2011). *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vásquez, M. (2014). From colonialism to neoliberal capitalism: Latino/a immigrants in the U.S. and the New Biopolitics. *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 13 (1): 81–100.
- Vásquez, M.A. (2016). Toward a transnational, post-colonial phenomenology of the Spirit: pneumatic religion and cosmopolitics in the Americas. *E-misférica* 12 (2) <http://hemisphericinstitute.net/en/emisferica/emisferica-122/toward-a-transnational-post-colonial-phenomenology-of-the-spirit-pneumatic-religions-and-cosmopolitics-in-the-americas.html> (accessed 28 June 2016).
- Viveiros de Castro, E. (1998). Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4 (3): 469–488.
- Viveiros de Castro, E. (2011). Zero and the art of anthropology: of lies, beliefs, paradoxes, and other truths. *Common Knowledge* 17 (1): 128–145.
- Wacquant, L. (2004). *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wacquant, L. (2015). For a sociology of flesh and blood. *Qualitative Sociology* 38: 1–11.
- Wilson, E.O. (1978). *On Human Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wink, A. (1990). *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Vol. 1, Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, 7th–11th Centuries*. Leiden: Brill.

Section I

Religious Bodies

CHAPTER 2

The Incarnate Body and Blood in Christianity

Jessica A. Boon

The brief papal letter known as *The Tome of Leo the Great* included in the records of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) served as the doctrinal elaboration of Christ's dual nature as fully human, fully divine. In the words of the historian Henry Chadwick, Leo's letter defined Christ as 'perfect God and perfect man, consubstantial with the Father in his Godhead, and with us in his manhood...made known in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation...' (1967, pp. 203–204). If the divine took on full humanity, however, questions arise as to whether this humanity subsisted as other humans did – did the flesh of Jesus function as human flesh? How had conception occurred? Did he experience normal bodily functions throughout his life? Did he suffer pain physically or emotionally? What occurred to his body after death? Does any trace of his embodiment continue; i.e. can his body continue to materially impact his devotees?

In Manuel Vásquez's *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (2011), he devotes the first half of his study to embodiment rather than things. From this point of view, the questions listed above about Jesus' physicality ought to be central to a materialist study of Christianity. Yet apart from David Morgan's attention to the sacred heart of Jesus (2012b) and Jansen and Dresen's comparative analysis of blood and milk in Christianity and Islam (2012), few theorists of material religious culture have considered how devotees and theologians in different historical eras have believed Jesus' humanity to have been physiologically materialized.¹ Even though studies of materiality consistently acknowledge the Incarnation as the rationale for a visual and material emphasis in Christian culture, theorists of religious materiality move quickly to examine 'things, uses, and paradigms' (Morgan 2010, pp. 71–73), such as the central role of sacred images, relics, and rosary devotions in the material practices of devotees (e.g. Engelke 2012, p. 213). For these scholars, the material body of Jesus justifies material practices, but Jesus' own body is not given much consideration.

In this chapter, I suggest that late medieval Catholicism's emphasis on Jesus' humanity provides extensive resources for considering the incarnate body, and particularly the blood, of Jesus as *living matter*. This approach problematizes definitions of materiality that 'freeze objects into stuff' (Bynum 2011, p. 282) by defining matter as generative and labile, thus complicating any presumed spiritual/material dichotomy.

2.1 Medieval Materiality and the Body of Christ

Recently, Caroline Walker Bynum, the premier medievalist working on the study of body, particularly gender, has proposed doing away with body studies entirely in favour of the study of 'Christian materiality' (2011). She argues strenuously and persuasively that 'body' is too narrow an analytical frame, for medieval thinkers apprehended body as 'matter', and thus all discussion of human bodies evokes the larger category of '*materia*'.

[M]edieval theorists... understood 'body' to mean 'changeable thing': gem, tree, *log*, or cadaver, as well as living human being. Understood in medieval terms, to explore 'the body' was to explore *stars* and statues, *blood* and resin, as well as *pain*, perception, and survival. (Bynum 2011, p. 32, my italics)

For medieval devotees, to explore the cosmos that Christ as God created was to explore body, to venerate the wooden cross on which Jesus died was to venerate body, to be devoted to Jesus' wounds was to be devoted to body, all part and parcel of the broader category of matter.

In the conclusion to her reframing of body studies as materiality, Bynum directly counters contemporary theorists who assume an unbridgeable divide between living and non-living material, in which they theorize the 'social life of things' yet attribute them agency primarily in relation to the humans that act upon them (e.g. Appadurai 1986; Miller 1987; Brown 2001; Daston 2007).²

[T]he natural philosophers of the Middle Ages understood matter as the locus of generation and corruption. ... [T]he basic way of describing matter...was to see it as organic, fertile, and in some sense alive. (Bynum 2011, p. 30)

Medieval thinkers considered matter *itself* to be changeable, deteriorating, transformative. Bynum details how miracles of metamorphosis – relics that light up or weep, hosts that bleed or appear as flesh, bodies that receive stigmata, candles that never burn out – became much more common starting in the twelfth century (pp. 128, 140, 283).

Understanding body as a sub-category of matter has important implications for the study of late medieval devotion, which was emphatically somatic, as seen in the popular spiritual practices focused on Jesus' humanity, particularly his suffering and death (his Passion). These Passion devotions were central in religious art that rendered the gore of the flagellation, crucifixion, and deposition (removal of Jesus from the cross), in best-selling meditation manuals that modelled how to imaginatively yet piously reconstruct

the details of Jesus' life and death not attested to in the Gospels, and in rosary practices that interwove reflection on Mary's agony at the sight of her bleeding son with repetitions of the *Ave Maria* and the Pater Noster (Bestul 1996; Derbes 1996; Winston-Allen 1997). Not only did medieval devotees pay lavish attention to Jesus' pulped and macerated flesh, however, but his bodiliness was also rendered excruciatingly palpable through lengthy consideration of other living *materia*, such as his flowing blood or the living wood of the cross.

I propose here that Bynum's reframing of the central concern of late medieval devotion from 'somatic' to 'material' has significant implications for a study of the incarnate body of Christ in material practice. The body of the divine must be understood as materialized on multiple levels. For one, it was physiological flesh that had a medical history and which could be wounded, yet its matter also ascended in entirety into heaven. 'Christ's bodily matter lives at the moment he expires – and forever' (Bynum 2011, p. 258). If Jesus' bodily matter lives forever, however, then his materialization in medieval visionary experiences during which Jesus' bodily touch comforted, wounded, and even sexually aroused his devotees is also significant to understanding the incarnate body.

I suggest that the categorization of Jesus' flesh as living matter even after his death is most clearly manifest in debates over his blood, which was according to medieval scientific accounts the principal life-giving humoral fluid and according to medieval theological accounts the source of salvation. The rest of this chapter examines these various levels of materiality in the incarnate divine by following the traces (and the gushing fountains) of Jesus' living blood, drawing on theological discussion, mystical texts, and religious images from Europe during the twelfth to sixteenth centuries. By assessing medieval medico-theological views concerning the physiology of the divine, with particular emphasis on the role of blood,³ this chapter moves beyond defining Christian religious materiality only in relation to the material and visual practices of devotees and expands the category to include the embodied materiality of the divine.

2.2 The Word Made Flesh and Blood

The art historian Leo Steinberg famously traced a provocative element of late medieval attention to Jesus' humanity in his book *The Sexuality of Christ* (1983), in which he brought together dozens of examples of art which depicted Jesus' (sometimes erect) penis. Shortly after his work was published, Bynum (1991a) countered Steinberg's thesis that Jesus' fleshliness was most strenuously asserted through his genital masculinity. While Steinberg had collected a number of scenes to support his thesis, Bynum pointed out that far more medieval artwork focused on Jesus' bleeding flesh than on his phenotypical maleness. Indeed, circumcision, while about the genitalia, was frequently subsumed into Passion-centred devotions as the first example of blood that Jesus shed for humanity (termed the Proleptic Passion). Unlike the penis, blood is common to human bodies regardless of their gender. However, given that women's bodies menstruate monthly and that it was a commonplace in the medieval medical world view that maternal milk is a purified form of menstrual blood (Cadden 1993; Van der Lugt 2004), medieval thinkers associated bodies that leak blood more with the feminine than the

masculine. Thus, Bynum (1991a) argues, medieval devotion established Jesus' fully human nature through his feminized blood far more often than through his male sex organs.⁴

The Bynum-Steinberg debate over whether Jesus' body was enfleshed in the medieval imagination as masculine or feminine, however, focused on physiology only in terms of gender. Groeneveld (2003) posits instead that medieval devotional vocabulary was more often taken from phlebotomy (bloodletting) treatises than from medical discussions of menstruation. Taking the phlebotomy treatises as a cue, I argue that attention to the medieval materiality of the incarnate body of Christ must begin with attention to the basic biological functioning of his fully human body as natural matter.⁵ Scholastic theologians believed that close attention to the biological and physiological bases of God's creation provided useful insights into both God and humanity, and arguments generated by this approach were classified as 'natural theology' (Grant 2001). In this view, the incarnate body of Christ had to assume all the conditions of humanity, i.e. follow the basic scientific principles of a healthy body. It thus behooves us to review the basic assumption of medieval medicine that would have applied to Christ's physiology.

Medieval science, named in honour of its primary articulator, Galen (second century), was transmitted to the medieval West principally through the writings of Avicenna (eleventh century). Galenic theory proposed that all matter was made from the four elements, earth, water, air, and fire, and was affected by four 'qualities', heat, cold, moistness, and dryness.⁶ Further, all humans were composed of four 'humours' (fluids), i.e. blood, phlegm, red bile, and black bile, which were understood both as fundamental characteristics of the type of human and as being in constant flux in each particular human. To wit, a person's personality type or existential attitude was rooted in their balance of humours; in medieval terms, the four possible 'complexions' each had one humour predominant and were named, respectively, sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic. In this physiological system, blood was the most important of the humours and its complexion, sanguine, was the most balanced and successful of personalities (Siraisi 1990).

These complexions, though innate, had to be kept in balance by proper production of all four humours in the body over time through ingesting food. In a body whose qualities were in balance, food would be digested into blood and thence flesh, but otherwise the food would turn into one of the other, less perfect humours (McVaugh 1974, p. 260). As Bynum (2007) points out, blood was central to physiology both because it was the humour from which flesh was formed, and also because it could flow – be in some sense alive – outside the body (p. 172). Bildhauer (2006) argues further that, for medieval devotees, blood helped define the body's internal/external division; blood that stayed in the body gave health, blood that poured out of (Christ's) body could save.

The tensions in the theological explanations of Christ's humanity as fully human versus a humanity shaped by its divinity can be clearly seen in natural theology debates over the blood of the incarnate God. Jesus' conception – was his flesh made from Mary's menstrual blood? His agony in the garden – was his bloody sweat natural or miraculous? Jesus' torture – how much did he bleed, and from what type of wounds? His resurrected body – was any blood left behind to serve as bodily relics and Eucharistic proof, or was it all gathered into heaven on Easter Sunday? In what follows, we will trace Jesus' blood

trail from his birth to his resurrection, with attention along the way as to how his flesh was extended beyond itself by means of other objects, such as instruments of torture. Jesus' materialized physiology ultimately modelled numerous fully material manners for medieval believers to practise embodied devotion.

2.2.1 *Shaping Body*

If the Annunciation by Gabriel to Mary brought about Jesus' conception, how, physiologically, could this have occurred? Many medieval theologians agreed that '[t]he conception of Christ...is miraculous *quantum ad agens* [as regards the agent] but natural *quantum ad materiam* [as regards the matter], because the matter furnished by Mary is equivalent to the matter furnished by ordinary mothers' (Van der Lugt 2004, p. 388, my translation). Yet exactly how Mary could provide matter just like other mothers was a subject of intense debate, revolving around the role of Mary's menstrual blood in generating Jesus.

Both of the principal gynaecological theories of conception posed problems for understanding Jesus' conception as fully human in terms of matter (Cadden 1993). According to Aristotle, the mother's menstrual blood provided the foetal body and the male sperm animated it, giving it form. Yet in the case of Jesus' conception, in which there was apparently no male semen, did the form come from Mary as well – and did that make her both father and mother of the child, as argued by Roland de Crémone (thirteenth century) (Van der Lugt 2004, p. 420)? On the other hand, according to Galen, both male and female semen (the fluid produced during intercourse) blended to make the foetus, but both types of semen were only produced as a result of coital pleasure. In this case, the physiological implications of the incarnation threatened popular belief in Mary's immaculacy, i.e. her own chaste conception and lifelong avoidance of physical pleasure (Van der Lugt 2004, pp. 421–423; Ziegler 2012, p. 584). Matter arose from matter; pure matter had to arise from pure matter.

Theologians as various as Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century) and John of Capistrano (fifteenth century) proposed a resolution to these quandaries, positing Mary's menstrual blood as the source for Jesus' body given the natural process for producing menstrual blood (Van der Lugt 2004, p. 424; Bynum 2007, pp. 118–119). In this view, drawn from Galenic theory, blood goes through a purifying process before it gives matter to the embryo and the impurities shed in this process form the menstrual fluid. In other words, the embryo produced out of blood is far purer than blood itself, yet in normal conceptions, the purified blood becomes tainted through intercourse. Theologians believed Mary to be a perpetual virgin to the point of never experiencing sexual desire; if the Virgin felt no carnal pleasure when impregnated by the Holy Spirit, the blood-based embryo that produced Jesus would have remained pure. In this fashion, the normal physiological process was preserved in the creation of Jesus' body even though the agency of the Holy Spirit was far from typical.

It is worth noting that, in medieval medical texts, *materia* was periodically used as a synonym for women's menstrual blood, indicating that at times blood was equivalent to the

category of matter (Bildhauer 2006, pp. 37–38). Consequently, if Jesus was generated from Mary's menstrual blood alone instead of a mix of male semen and female blood, then he was perhaps the most material person ever to live. That *materia* could remain pure through natural processes rather than miraculous ones seemed only to confirm this possibility.

2.2.2 *Sweating Blood*

Jesus' experience in Gethsemane while praying to God to 'remove this chalice from [him]' reached its maximum agony when Jesus' 'sweat became as drops of blood'.⁷ This intensification caught the eye of medieval theologians and devotees, particularly those trained in medieval medicine, who questioned how Jesus as fully human could agonize in a way that seemed unique. Was it not outside the bounds of being human to react in such a way? Not to mention that, medically speaking, sweating itself was considered to be a defect of the body, and since Augustine, defects and illness were understood to be a result of sin (Langum 2013, p. 147). For most theologians, then, Jesus as fully human yet fully divine could only be the picture of health, making his bloody sweat particularly problematic. While the pre-scholastics were content with deeming the experience miraculous (a sign of divinity rather than gory humanity), scholastic theologians reading Aristotle learned of his identification of bloody sweat as a possible physiological experience and his diagnosis that it was a possible symptom of a bad humoral complexion. In other words, Jesus' apparently unique experience in the garden was not just a known medical condition, but could only have been produced by a body out of humoral balance (Resnick 2013, pp. 170–172).

Albert the Great (thirteenth century), the father of scholastic theology who had thorough training in medieval medical theory, reflected extensively on the problem of ascribing an episode to Jesus that would indicate that Jesus, the ideal human, was not in full health. He proposed two possibilities. In the first, he recognized sweat as a water by-product of all four humours; cases of bloody sweat indicated that blood had been overheated and lost its extraneous water. Another possibility was that a build-up of blood in the veins could prevent the blood from receiving enough heat to keep flowing, and the pressure would cause water the by-product to be exuded as sweat (Resnick 2013, pp. 173–174). What united these two apparently opposed theories was a question of heat. Heat was one of the four qualities that had to be kept in balance for good health, not to mention that 'innate heat' was the definition of life: to lose your heat was to die (McVaugh 1974, pp. 266–267). For Albert the Great, then, Jesus' bodily experience made physiological sense.

Nor was this 'natural' approach limited to the scholastics. In the early sixteenth century, a well-known Castilian physician, Bernardino de Laredo, wrote a vernacular mystical treatise in which his meditation on Jesus' bloody sweat was based on the Avicennian theory of the four sub-humours of blood. That which is called 'blood' is the immediate product of food digestion, is the densest, and collects around the heart and in the veins. It must be purified in order to flow through the capillaries in a sub-humour called 'dewy moisture', which in Laredo's view was the liquid that actually poured off Jesus' brow (Boon 2012, p. 103).

These various theories, however, could not be ascribed to Jesus' experience with ease, because they still assumed a body out of balance. As Mowbray (2009) has shown, scholastic theologians developed a medical vocabulary for pain (later adopted by medical

practitioners, rather than the inverse) to describe a continuum between body and soul in which the illness and pain that affected the body would affect the soul, and vice versa (pp. 21–38; also Trembinski 2008). If mental agony manifested physically, there could be a physiological justification of Jesus' experience in Gethsemane, for, unlike sweat or illness, sadness was not classified as a result of original sin. John Pecham (thirteenth century) went so far as to posit that the physiological impact of such heightened sensitivity to sadness led Jesus' blood to collect around his grieving heart, where the organ's warmth caused the blood to start flowing quickly out and thence out of the pores of the body (Resnick 2013, pp. 178, 187).

Theologians and devotional writers in the fourteenth century proposed yet another explanation that revolved around the role of emotions in physical experience. Since fear tended to drive blood inward but love heated it and pushed it out, Jesus' grave concern in the garden collected the blood internally but then his great love drove it out through his very pores (Mossman 2010, pp. 56–66). In all these theories, Jesus' agony, understood as both physically and emotionally wrenching, was inscribed in full on his body, somatizing even his mental responses to the events leading up to his death.

2.2.3 *Wounded Body*

In the art and texts of the late Middle Ages, Jesus' body was insistently presented to the physical and spiritual eyes of devotees: emaciated, wounded, bruised, dripping and spurting gore, with broken bones, torn beard, tattered clothes, and blood-matted hair (Figure 2.1). Bridget of Sweden reported a visionary experience in which Mary relayed to Bridget that Jesus had endured 5475 wounds on his body (Breeze 1985), and many forms of meditation and religious art seemed intent on representing every wound and every drop of blood. Such gruesome images have re-emerged in the contemporary imagination principally through the popularity of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, but it is notable that many of the most striking scenes in the movie were drawn from early modern Catholic mystical texts, which in turn were inspired by late medieval meditation manuals that taught believers to imaginatively meditate on every moment of Jesus' life and every inch of his wounded body.⁸

Some medieval writers suggested that the nearly-innumerable wounds led Jesus to exsanguinate as though experiencing the medical process of bloodletting. Yet they identified the process as unique both because the blood was drawn from every vein rather than just one and because it was drawn for the health of humanity rather than his own (Osuna 2004/1528, p. 242; Groeneveld 2003). Nor was the state of Jesus' blood during the tortures purely the subject of theological speculation; Julian of Norwich (fourteenth century) had a visionary experience that showed Jesus' blood as viscous yet flowing copiously.

The great drops of blood fell from beneath the crown [of Jesus' head] like pellets, looking as if they came from the veins, and as they issued there were a brownish red, for the blood was very thick, and as they spread they turned bright red... The drops were round like pellets as the blood issued, they were round like herring's scales as they spread ... so many that they could not be counted. (Julian of Norwich 1978, "Long Text," ch 7, pp. 187–188)



Figure 2.1 Christ as the Man of Sorrows, sixteenth-century hand-coloured engraving, Netherlands. Source: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Behind this wide-ranging medieval interest in gore lay the question as to whether blood, especially Jesus' blood, was living or inert. Medieval physicians and theologians equated flowing blood that appeared to be bright red with the essence of life, both life-giving and itself alive. Superfluous blood can dry up and decay; blood that never coagulates is deemed essential because it *lives* (Bynum 2007, pp. 122, 168). Thus, medieval images of Jesus' body showed his body gushing blood not solely in order to disgust the viewers or to make them feel guilt because their sins were responsible for what they viewed, but to prove that the divine offered eternal life through the sacrifice of his *living* blood.

Over the last three decades, scholars examining the popularity of somatic spirituality in the late Middle Ages have analysed the Passion devotions principally under the rubric of 'body', publishing numerous works in the fields of literature, art history, history, and religion (Beckwith 1993; Fulton 2002; McNamer 2010, in addition to others cited here). But to present such a body at the very least evoked – and more usually included a visual catalogue of – the materials that scourged it, whipped it, broke it down. Medieval images of the *arma Christi* (weapons of Christ) and the wounds they created were not only central to images of and meditations on the flagellation, crucifixion, and deposition, but often stood in for Jesus' body (Hollywood 2005). This shift to focusing on the parts of the body – some devotional images showed only disembodied hands and feet with nailholes, and a side wound – would have had a particularly strong impact on medieval viewers, as splitting the body was viewed with particular horror. Torture that rent the body apart was forbidden except in cases of treason or heresy, while lepers were isolated from society due to the fear precipitated by the disintegration of their skin throughout the course of the disease (Bynum 1991b, pp. 271–280). As a result, devotional images of the five wounds added fragmentation to the horrors that Christ experienced as a result of human sin.

In addition, torture implements and their fleshly impact were key to the materializing of the body of Christ to late medieval devotees, whose bodily person was fully and sufficiently present not only in the body fragmented into its wounds but also into the weapons which inflicted them. Scarry (1985) posits that pain defies and denies language, as the suffering person cannot convey the reality of pain itself and most often has recourse to describing the pain in terms of what type of weapon could inflict the particular experience ('it feels like a nail is being hammered into my foot', pp. 41–48). The omnipresence of medieval *arma Christi* images featuring the nails, cross, column, ropes, whips, cat-o-nine tails, and sometimes even the hands that punched Jesus and plucked his beard (see the torture instruments behind the seated body in Figure 2.1), points to an important implication of Bynum's reframing of body as materiality: all the elements that a contemporary reader might consider to be 'objects' or 'things' that happen to be used by or in relation to a particular body are also part of the definition of that body (echoing Latour's 'networks' or Deleuze's 'assemblages', for discussion see Bennett 2009, pp. 23–24; Vásquez 2012, pp. 664–665). The clothing and accoutrements used by humans in part define them, but, I argue, so do the material bodies (other humans, wood, blood) with which they come into (violent) contact and by which they are defined.⁹

Even as Jesus' body became fragmented into its wounds, some of those wounds retained particular significance due in part to their physical form. The side wound

was often shown separately from the body and greatly magnified. Its pointed ovoid shape when enlarged seemed to parallel the opening of a woman's vulva, and many devotees (of both genders) described entering the side wound and nestling there to take comfort from direct contact with Christ's flesh. Other ramifications of elevating the side wound as the principal wound included equating the blood that poured out of Christ's side with the milk given forth from Mary's breast (Hollywood 2005). This detail was all the more potent because breast milk was understood to be purified blood; thus Christ and Mary both nourished the world. For that matter, some texts compared Jesus' crucifixion to the experience of pregnancy, suggesting that his veins burst with the intensity of birthing salvation through sacrifice (Bynum 2007, p. 160). The blood Jesus shed out of each and every wound elevated his violated flesh in ways that were both palpably incarnate yet so excessive as to extend past common gender binaries, rendering him as the embodiment of all embodiments (a 'hyperbody', according to Lévy's reading of Deleuze, 1998).¹⁰

2.2.4 *Blood After Death*

Devotional focus on Jesus' body as formed from blood and emitting blood did not end with Jesus' death, even though to contemporary minds death would seem to mark the end of the relevance of blood to Jesus' physiology. Medieval debates over bodily resurrection, both that of Jesus after three days and of all human bodies at the Last Judgement, included significant attention as to whether the particles of matter (earth and water, particularly) assembled into the resurrected body had to be the same as those which composed it in its lifetime (Bynum 1995). Many devotees were particularly concerned about what state the body would be resurrected to: would someone missing a limb have it restored, would someone who died at 80 be raised at that age or at a more agile one, would gender be retained in the afterlife?

Discussions of Christ's resurrection in medieval theological texts were simplified by the belief that he had died in perfect health and the rationale that after the three days between death and resurrection, the same bits of matter would not yet have become part of another person's body. However, given the extremity of torture that medieval devotees imagined had been applied to his body, an even greater concern was whether Jesus had been reunited with all the drops of blood spilt throughout Holy Week. While the motivation behind this dispute was to discern whether popular blood relics were proper cultic objects (bloody earth from the ground under the crucifix, Veronica's cloth with which Jesus reputedly wiped his face after falling with the cross on the way to Calvary), it also has significance for understanding the medical reality of Christ's own body.

The issue rests on whether blood humour formed from digested food is central to human identity, or merely nutritive (Bynum 2007, p. 39). If some particles of blood are not part of the truth of identity, then the superfluous blood is not part of Jesus' consubstantial nature and could have been left behind. While some theologians accepted this, suggesting that some of the blood from Jesus' torture could have poured out as extraneous, others such as Aquinas believed that Jesus died at the perfect age, defined as a moment when no iota of his bodily matter was superfluous. Thus, all the blood poured

out was not only salvific, but also consubstantial, and no blood relic of it could have remained (Bynum 2007, pp. 101–102). This physiological point was intended to constrain material practice: if Jesus' blood was entirely taken up into heaven, it could not have left any physical trace in the world of its transcendent materiality, obviating a number of popular late medieval cults.

Even if Jesus' body had been fully assumed into heaven, it nevertheless remained accessible to devotees as body and life-giving blood in the Eucharist. In the Mass, the elements (specifically chosen to resemble bodily substances) were not symbols but transubstantiated as fully flesh and blood. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Eucharist as body not symbol was proven repeatedly by miraculous hosts that bled when stabbed (indicating that the blood was present in the element representing the body) and in visionary experiences during Mass in which Jesus himself (as child, as man, or as wounded flesh) was visible in the host (Marcus 1973; Rubin 1991; Elliot 2002). Jesus' body was not only available on a regular basis to devotees, but it was proven to *be* body by its effusion of living blood.

2.3 Conclusion

For late medieval devotees, matter was the locus of much anxiety and much speculation. The paradoxical nature of the transcendent divine as bodily material provided access to God for humans who could engage the material in order to ascend beyond it... but never fully.

[M]ateria was understood to be that which, by definition, comes to be, generates what is other than itself, and passes away. How, then, was it to manifest the eternal changelessness of God...a creator whose nature (eternal, immutable, and unknowable) is the opposite of matter. (Bynum 2011, p. 285)

Bynum's point is echoed in Daniel Miller's statement in his study of contemporary materiality that religion, philosophy, and finance 'all rest upon the same paradox: that immateriality can only be expressed through materiality' (Miller 2005, p. 28; see also Orsi 2005, pp. 73–74; Keane 2008, pp. 123–124).

Robertson (2008) in her overview article on the study of medieval material culture likewise suggests that the living/non-living divide is differently placed in the premodern than in the modern, critiquing the tendencies both by contemporary theorists to focus on commodity exchange (Appadurai 1986; Miller 1987) and by Renaissance scholars (de Grazia et al. 1996) to reify the 'things' they study (1071–1072). As quoted earlier, Bynum (2011) puts this medievalist challenge to studies of material religion very directly when she claims that contemporary theories of materiality have a tendency to 'freeze objects into stuff' (p. 282).

Bynum's castigation of contemporary theorists for the binary at the heart of their model is perhaps too sweeping, overlooking the recent work of Tim Ingold (2007) drawing on Marcel Mauss to argue for understanding matter as alive (pp. 11–12),¹¹ and the work of material feminists such as Karen Barad and Claire Colebrook who define nature

and body as dynamic and changeable (discussed in Vásquez 2011, pp. 156–166). For example, Barad (2003) argues:

All bodies, not merely 'human' bodies, come to matter through the world's iterative intra-activity – its performativity. This is true not only of the surface or contours of the body but also of the body in the fullness of its physicality, including the very 'atoms' of its being. Bodies are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties; they are material-discursive phenomena. (p. 823)

Bynum's project is different from that of the material feminists insofar as she claims to be describing a historical scenario (how medieval thinkers understood the world and its matter), rather than making a philosophical claim (how matter *is*). Yet if both late medieval Christianity and twenty-first century material feminism both understand matter as *living*, then theorists of materiality ought to examine for every case study whether that religion, era, etc. presumes matter to be inert or living, consumable or transformative. Further, if matter is alive according to the case study, then divine matter is as well, necessitating attention to the biological and physiological functioning of divine bodies.

To return to the case study of medieval theology, 'concomitance' theory identified the possibility that part could stand in for whole; while most often discussed in terms of the Eucharist to justify that the host itself stood in for Jesus' full humanity, concomitance likewise applied to many of the devotional concerns described in this chapter. If Jesus' wounds could stand in for the entirety of his injured body, or the weapons could stand in for the wounds that stand in for body, then Jesus' body is materialized in ways that challenge the traditional parameters of the study of embodiment, which tends towards assuming a whole body and then studying that body's gender, race, health, sexuality, etc. Placing body as central to a broader category of the material permits a study of the humanity of Christ that on the one hand corporealizes Jesus in the full ramification of medical detail, but on the other hand fragments Jesus into his body parts and the materials that extend those parts. In particular, Jesus' blood circulates in veins and pours down the wood of the cross towards his loving devotees, carrying matter towards matter.

To fully enflesh the divine as living matter does not constitute a grave departure from studies of materiality that focus on human practices, however, as it was to Jesus' bloody physiological humanity that many late medieval devotees responded corporeally. Medieval visionaries such as Hadewijch of Antwerp (thirteenth century) and Rupert of Deutz (eleventh century) reported experiencing the crucified deity as stepping off his cross and coming towards them, pressing his wounded body fully against theirs or kissing them intensely (Lochrie 1997). I suggest that Jesus' body could function as a human who enfolded the devotee in his corporeal, bleeding arms precisely because it was flesh pulsing with blood, a body whose blood had originally been generated from the *materia* of menstrual fluid, a body that had not lost its incarnate corporeality after death because it had been fully resurrected down to its every drop of blood.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to Elizabeth Williamson and Sarah J. Bloesch for reading early drafts of this article, as well as to the editors of this volume for their helpful comments on connections between late medieval Christian devotion and contemporary theory.

Notes

- 1 Various articles and books address medieval to contemporary Catholic devotion as particularly material and visual, including several that discuss Catholic focus on Jesus' suffering and death (Morgan 1998; King 2010; Morgan 2012a), and several medievalists have published on somatic spirituality in the journal *Material Religion* (Stevenson 2006; Clark 2007). All focus on practitioners' responses to images, rather than considering the ways that devotees responded to the material body of Jesus based on their cultural and historical constructions of embodiment.
- 2 While Bynum refers briefly to the 'sociology of Bruno Latour' (280), presumably his actor-network theory, she engages those who utilize his work, such as Daston (2007), far more directly. For a discussion that draws on Bynum to extend Latour, see Vásquez (2012, pp. 664–665).
- 3 The article Bildhauer (2013) also traces medieval views on blood, particularly that of Christ, but as a contribution to anthropological discourses rather than the study of material religious culture.
- 4 It must be noted, contra Bynum, that medieval physicians considered semen a purified form of the humour blood, which also occasionally leaks (Bildhauer 2006, pp. 91–92). Medieval theologians considered menstrual blood to be full of impurities (Van der Lugt 2004, p. 424). Blood's purifying power was thus aligned with men, its nutritive power with women.
- 5 This approach, which I model in Boon (2012), is in line both with Bynum (2011) and Barad (2003).
- 6 Note that this is another way that bodies, wood, and stars are all defined in common under the umbrella of matter. The contemporary equivalent would be atoms and molecules, the substratum of both living and non-living matter.
- 7 Citing the Douay-Rheims translation of the medieval Latin Bible, Luke 22: 42, 44. Contemporary scholarly editions note that verses 43–44 are missing in some early manuscripts, but the phrase was a cornerstone of the Agony in the Garden scene in medieval devotion.
- 8 Mel Gibson drew on the writings of María de Ágreda (seventeenth century, Spain) and Catherine Emmerich (eighteenth century, Germany), see V. Miller (2006, p. 46). While many in the academy were stunned by the popular appeal of Gibson's movie, medievalists saw a certain parallel between the common experience of drastic penal violence in late medieval culture and the normalizing of pervasive violence due to the television and film culture of the late twentieth century (e.g. Carlson 2010).
- 9 This point was inspired by a different theoretical context, e.g. Salamon's (2010) use of queer theory, particularly Butler, to consider how transgender bodies perform gender through the material accessories available in clothing, hats, ties, walking sticks, etc.
- 10 My thanks to Vasudha Narayanan for the reference.
- 11 It is worth noting that Bynum's proof is far more extensive than that of Ingold, with hundreds of examples of living matter over several centuries instead of Ingold's single piece of art made from driftwood.

Works Cited

- Appadurai, A. (1986). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barad, K.M. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs* 28 (3): 801–831.
- Beckwith, S. (1993). *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings*. London: Routledge.
- Bennett, J. (2009). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bestul, T.H. (1996). *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bildhauer, B. (2006). *Medieval Blood*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Bildhauer, B. (2013). Medieval European conceptions of blood: truth and human integrity. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (Supplemental): S57–S76.
- Boon, J.A. (2012). *The Mystical Science of the Soul: Medieval Cognition in Bernardino de Laredo's Recollection Mysticism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Breeze, A. (1985). The number of Christ's wounds. *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 32: 84–91.
- Brown, B. (2001). Thing theory. *Critical Inquiry* 28 (1): 1–22.
- Bynum, C.W. (1991a). The body of Christ in the later middle ages: a reply to Leo Steinberg'. In: *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (ed. P.D. Diehl), 79–119. New York: Zone Books.
- Bynum, C.W. (1991b). Material continuity, personal survival, and the resurrection of the body: a scholastic discussion in its medieval and modern contexts. In: *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (ed. P.D. Diehl), 239–298. New York: Zone Books.
- Bynum, C.W. (1995). *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bynum, C.W. (2007). *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bynum, C.W. (2011). *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*. New York: Zone Books.
- Cadden, J. (1993). *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carlson, M. (2010). *Performing Bodies in Pain: Medieval and Post-Modern Martyrs, Mystics, and Artists*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chadwick, H. (1967). *The Early Church*. London: Penguin Press.
- Clark, A.L. (2007). Venerating the Veronica: varieties of passion piety in the later middle ages. *Material Religion* 3 (2): 164–189.
- Daston, L.J. (2007). Speechless. In: *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (ed. L.J. Daston), 9–26. New York: Zone Books.
- de Osuna, F. (1528). *Primer abecedario espiritual* (ed. J.J.M. Pérez). Madrid: Editorial Cisneros. 2004
- Derbes, A. (1996). *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Elliot, D. (2002). True presence/false Christ: the antinomies of embodiment in medieval spirituality. *Mediaeval Studies* 64: 241–265.
- Engelke, M. (2012). Material religion. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (ed. R.A. Orsi), 209–229. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Fulton, R. (2002). *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Grant, E. (2001). *God and Reason in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Groeneveld, L. (2003). Letting or leaking blood? Christ's wounded masculinity. *Tessera* 33–34: 136–151.
- Hollywood, A. (2005). That glorious slit: Irigaray and the medieval devotion to Christ's side wound. In: *Luce Irigaray and Premodern Culture: Thresholds of History* (eds. T. Krier and E.D. Harvey), 105–125. New York: Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2007). Materials against materiality. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1): 1–16.
- Jansen, W. and Dresen, G. (2012). Fluid matters: gendering holy blood and holy Milk. In: *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality* (eds. D. Houtman and B. Meyer), 215–231. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Julian of Norwich (1978). *Showings*. (trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh). Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Keane, W. (2008). The evidence of the senses and the materiality of religion. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14 (1): 110–127.
- King, E.F. (2010). *Material Religion and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Langum, V. (2013). Discerning skin: complexion, surgery, and language in medieval confession. In: *Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture* (ed. K.L. Walter), 141–160. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lévy, P. (1998). *Becoming Virtual: Reality in the Digital Age*. New York: Plenum Trade.
- Lochrie, K. (1997). Mystical acts, queer tendencies. In: *Constructing Medieval Sexuality* (eds. K. Lochrie, P. McCracken and J.A. Schultz), 180–200. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marcus, L.S. (1973). The Christ child as sacrifice: a medieval tradition and the Corpus Christi plays. *Speculum* 48 (3): 491–509.
- McNamer, S. (2010). *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.
- McVaugh, M.R. (1974). The “Humidum Radicale” in thirteenth-century medicine. *Traditio* 30: 259–283.
- Miller, D. (1987). *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, D. (2005). Materiality: an introduction. In: *Materiality* (ed. D. Miller), 1–50. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Miller, V.J. (2006). Contexts: theology, devotion, and culture. In: *Mel Gibson's Bible: Religion, Popular Culture, and “The Passion of the Christ”* (eds. T.K. Beal and T. Linafelt), 39–50. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Morgan, D. (1998). *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Morgan, D. (2010). Introduction: the matter of belief. In: *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (ed. D. Morgan), 1–18. London: Routledge.
- Morgan, D. (2012a). The look of the sacred. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (ed. R.A. Orsi), 296–318. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morgan, D. (2012b). Rhetoric of the heart: figuring the body in devotion to the sacred heart of Jesus. In: *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality* (eds. D. Houtman and B. Meyer), 90–111. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Mossman, S. (2010). *Marquard von Lindau and the Challenges of Religious Life in Late Medieval Germany: The Passion, the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mowbray, D. (2009). *Pain and Suffering in Medieval Theology: Academic Debates at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth Century*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

- Orsi, R.A. (2005). *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Resnick, I. (2013). Luke 22:44 and sweating blood: Jesus and medieval natural philosophers. *Viator* 44 (1): 169–188.
- Robertson, K. (2008). Medieval things: materiality, historicism, and the premodern object. *Literature Compass* 5 (6): 1060–1080.
- Rubin, M. (1991). *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salamon, G. (2010). *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Steinberg, L. (1983). *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Scarry, E. (1985). *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Siraisi, N. (1990). *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Stevenson, J. (2006). The material bodies of medieval religious performance in England'. *Material Religion* 2 (2) 204–34.
- Trembinski, D. (2008). [Pro]passio doloris: early Dominican conceptions of Christ's physical pain. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 59 (4): 630–656.
- Van der Lugt, M. (2004). *Le ver, le demon, et la vierge: Les theories médiévales de la génération extraordinaire*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Vásquez, M.A. (2011). *More than Belief: Towards a Materialist Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vásquez, M.A. (2012). On the value of genealogy, materiality, and networks: a response. *Religion* 42 (4): 649–670.
- Winston-Allen, A. (1997). *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Ziegler, J. (2012). The sciences of the body around 1300 as a locus of theological and spiritual thought. In: *The Medieval Paradigm: Religious Thought and Philosophy* (ed. G. D'Onofrio), 577–592. Turnhout: Brepols.

CHAPTER 3

Perspectives on Rabbinic Constructions of Gendered Bodies

Gwynn Kessler

3.1 Introduction

Over 20 years have passed since Howard Eilberg-Schwartz reminded his readers that in addition to being a ‘people of the book’ Jews are also a ‘people of the body’ (Eilberg-Schwartz 1992). Around the same time, Daniel Boyarin turned the patristic critique of Jews as the ‘carnal Israel’ on its head, not only affirming the carnality of talmudic culture, but valorizing it (Boyarin 1993). It was the early 1990s, the second and third volumes of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* had been published the decade before, gender was ‘troubled’ – or ‘queered’ – and bodies ‘mattered’ (Butler 1990, 1993). Both Eilberg-Schwartz’s edited volume *The People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* and Boyarin’s monograph *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, as well as others of the time period and following, brought these recent discussions about gender and ‘the body’ to bear on their own examinations of the centrality of ‘the body’ and constructions of gender in Judaism.¹

This growing scholarship on the body, gender, sexuality, and reproduction in Jewish texts and cultures is not only a product of its time when ‘the body’ was being resurrected as a prime subject of inquiry, but it also, as some authors have noted, reflects a major concern clearly evident within canonical Jewish textual traditions themselves. For example, Naomi Seidman points out that in the Bible and Talmud ‘discussions of the body occupy the well-perused center of the canon rather than its obscure margins’ (1994, p. 117). And Eilberg-Schwartz writes, ‘these books talk at length and in rich detail about matters such as bodily emissions, skin diseases, circumcision, proper positions for sexual intercourse, how to urinate, how to empty one’s bowels, and so forth’ (Eilberg-Schwartz 1992, p. 2). More recently, Jonathan Schofer has written, ‘rabbis are highly concerned with the body as porous, with what their bodies consume, excrete,

cry, ejaculate, and sweat' (2005, p. 198). If the attempt to disembody and 'spiritualize' Jews and Judaism was a specific Enlightenment or *modern* attempt 'to make Judaism palatable to Christian and rationalist tastes, which Jews had made their own' (Eilberg-Schwartz 1992, p. 4), then a *postmodern*, 'material turn' with a focus on 'the body' in the context of the study – and embodied practices – of Judaism might be better conceived of as a return to at least some of its earlier emphases.

This chapter examines what emerges at the intersections of postmodern conceptions of 'the body', gender, materiality, and late ancient Jewish textual traditions. The 'matter' of bodies here is, of course, delivered via textual records with their concomitant ideological and rhetorical as well as idealistic and hypothetical discourses. My primary sources are textual traditions from rabbinic literature dating from the third through seventh centuries of the Common Era; they differ not only chronologically and geographically, but also in terms of genre, encompassing halakhic ('legal') and aggadic (narrative) sources (e.g. *Mishnah*, *Tosefta*, *Babylonian Talmud*, *Genesis Rabbah*). Although these sources should not be mistaken as normative for all or even most Jews during this time period, they became formative, meriting study for their representations of gendered bodies in Late Antiquity as well as for the lasting impact they still exert on Jews and Judaism today.

Rabbinic texts are not single-authored, univocal, or consistent records; they, like biblical traditions, contain contradictions, dominant and minority voices, and counter-discourses, all of which hold out the possibility of reading for traces or echoes of points of conflict, ambiguity, confusion, and difference. Still, those remnants, traces, or echoes they might reveal represent but fragments of bodies of a distant past.

The body itself is simultaneously a changing, elusive, and often fragmented construct. David Harvey writes, 'the body is an unfinished project, historically and geographically malleable in certain ways' (2000, p. 98). He continues, 'the body is not a closed and sealed entity, but a relational "thing" that is created, bounded, sustained and ultimately dissolved in a spatiotemporal flux of multiple processes' (p. 98). Just as individual bodies change over time, so too collective – and historically and culturally specific – conceptions of 'the body'. Eilberg-Schwartz writes, 'the current fascination with 'the body' is in danger of reifying an entity that is in reality constructed piecemeal, organ by organ' (1992, p. 12). The Hebrew Bible makes reference to isolated parts of bodies far more often than it mentions "the body" as a whole.² When God creates *adam* in Genesis, the text isolates some of *adam*'s constituent parts. For example, according to Genesis 2:7, God breathes into *adam*'s nose and *adam* becomes 'a living being' (*nefesh chaya*). Then, God removes *adam*'s rib (Gen. 2:21), builds a woman (*isha*) (Gen. 2 : 22), and *adam* proclaims this is bone (*etzem*) and flesh (*basar*) (Gen. 2:23). The Hebrew Bible refers to multiple parts of humans' (and God's) bodies, for example, the hands, arms, mouth, womb, insides, heart, etc., repeatedly fragmenting, or at least representing fragmented parts, of 'the body'.³ Eilberg-Schwartz further writes, "'the body" is itself a reification which hides the fact there is no single body but many different kinds of Jewish bodies' (1992, p. 9). A primary focus of this chapter is on precisely the different types of gendered Jewish bodies contained within rabbinic textual traditions.

After some brief preliminary remarks about the Hebrew word *adam*, which connotes, in different contexts, the 'earth-creature' of Gen. 1–3, an individual person, or a body,

this chapter proceeds to explore rabbinic traditions about the *androgynos*, a person who has both male and female genitalia. Much of the chapter focuses on the construction of the *androgynos* as *sui generis* and the implications that this has on rabbinic constructions of gender and gendered bodies more broadly. In brief, I suggest that taking seriously the construction of the *androgynos* as *sui generis* offers an alternative to the rabbinic construction of gender along the lines of a rigid gender duality of male:female. I then examine rabbinic traditions that do forefront a male:female gender duality, but I highlight the instability of such a construction, especially insofar as the sources emphasize gender as ‘doing’ as opposed to gender as ‘being’. The next section examines the construction of physical bodies and physiological processes, and here too I draw attention to traditions that demonstrate somatic malleability and fluidity. In the last section, I circle back to the *androgynos*, seeking to situate the midrashic tradition about the primal androgyne within the context of other rabbinic traditions about the *androgynos*.

3.2 The Rabbinic ‘Body’: Adam

Although rabbinic literature at times uses the Hebrew word ‘*ha-guf*’ for ‘the body’, rabbinic sources are replete with uses of the Hebrew word ‘*adam*’ to mean the human body as well. Mira Balberg, investigating conceptions of purity and impurity in the Mishnah writes, “The word *adam* is most commonly used to denote a human agent as a legal subject...but it can also be used to denote a human body to which things happen without any will or deliberation on the person’s end” (Balberg 2014, p. 50).

One example of the Mishnah’s use of the word *adam* to refer to ‘the body’ with the latter connotation appears in *m. Ohalot* 1:8, which delineates the parts of a human (male) body in the context of a discussion about the transmission of impurity resulting from proximity to a corpse.⁴ *Mishnah Ohalot* 1:8 begins, “There are 248 parts (*averim*) in the body (*ba-adam*).” The text continues to work its way through the different parts of the body, spanning head to toe. A later text from the *Babylonian Talmud* (*b. Bekhorot* 45a), asserts that women have four additional parts, ‘two doors and two hinges’, apparently alluding to female reproductive organs (see Fonrobert 2000, pp. 58–59). Whether or not *m. Ohalot* 1:8 already presumes that *adam* refers specifically to a male body, the *Bavli*’s subsequent discussion seems to indicate that *adam* is an ‘unmarked’, male body that serves as the normative body from which others deviate.

Similarly, a tradition from *Genesis Rabbah*, a fifth-century midrashic compilation of Palestinian provenance, interprets Genesis 2:22, *And The Lord God built the rib that he had taken from the adam into a woman (l’isha) and He took her to the adam*. The text states, ‘Rav Hisda said, “God built in her more compartments than the man (*ish*) making her wide below and narrow above so that she could receive foetuses”’ (Theodor and Albeck 1965, p. 163; see Baskin 2002, pp. 21, 54).

Although *Gen. Rab.* 18:3 and *b. Bekh.* 45a work to equate the word *adam* with normative maleness and portray femaleness as differentiated from such a category by virtue of an interior excess, *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 renders the first *adam* (‘earth-creature’) as simultaneously less than stable and bursting with external excess. *Genesis Rab.* 8:1 interprets Gen. 1:26, *And God said, Let us make adam in our image after our likeness*. One of

the interpretations given states, 'R. Jeremiah b. Leazar said, "When the Holy Blessed One created the first *adam*, he created him *androgynos*." As scripture states, *male (zakhar) and female (nekevah) he created them* (Gen. 5:2)' (Theodor and Albeck 1965, p. 55).

This statement and the larger passage from which it is taken have been examined in light of its relationship to other myths about the 'primal androgyne' in Late Antiquity.⁵ For example, Boyarin has suggested that this passage, with its insistence on the creation of an originally 'two-sexed' physical being, signals rabbinic resistance to the spiritualized, non-corporeal, primal androgyne traditions found in non-rabbinic sources (1993 and 1998). My use of this excerpt at this juncture is to introduce the *androgynos* into the discussion of rabbinic constructions of gendered bodies. I will return to the passage at the end of this chapter to contextualize its depiction of the primal androgyne in relation to other places *within* rabbinic sources that the *androgynos* appears.

3.3 Rabbinic Bodies: The *Androgynos* (and the *Tumtum*)

The *androgynos* appears most prominently in *halakhic* sources, beginning in the tannaitic period (c. first to third centuries CE). The word *androgynos* is borrowed from the Greek language, where it is a combination of *andr* (man) and *gyne* (woman); it appears in rabbinic sources as a 'loan word' transliterated into Hebrew.⁶

Most often, the *androgynos* appears in *halakhic* sources accompanied by other categories of people in various lists. For example, *m. Bikkurim* 1:5 states, 'A guardian (*apotropos*), an agent, a slave, a woman, a *tumtum*, and an *androgynos* bring [first fruits] but do not recite [the declaration] since they cannot say, *Which you God have given to me*' (Deut. 26:10). And *m. Hagigah* 1:1 states, 'All are obligated to appear [at the temple], except for the deaf-mute, the intellectually disabled,⁷ the minor, the *tumtum*, the *androgynos*, women, slaves who have not been set free, the lame, the blind, the sick, the old, and anyone who is not able to ascend upon his feet.'⁸

In these passages, an *androgynos* is not defined, beyond the literal meaning 'man-woman', that the name obviously carries. In other words, in contrast to *Genesis Rabbah* 8:1, there is neither a citation of a biblical verse that mentions 'male and female' nor an explicit definition that an *androgynos* is a 'doubly sexed' person. As Charlotte Fonrobert points out, 'the Mishnah does not provide an explicit morphological description' of the *androgynos* (Fonrobert, 2007, p. 280).

That the sources reflect a person who has both genitalia emerges in part from the fact that the *androgynos* is often paired with the *tumtum*, a person whose genitalia are hidden or covered. For example, *m. Yevamot* 8:6 discusses a *tumtum* who has been operated on and found to be (presumably) male and then moves on to discuss an *androgynos* person. Furthermore, that the *androgynos* is a person who has both genitalia emerges from the teachings and rulings concerning the *androgynos*. *Mishnah Yevamot* 8:6 states, 'An *androgynos* may marry but may not be married'. In other words, an *androgynos* may take a wife but may not be taken as a wife. This statement implies that part of the issue is the *androgynos*' ability both to penetrate with a penis and be penetrated vaginally.⁹

This ruling about an *androgynos* taking a wife, which here seems to construct the *androgynos* as male, or better, aligns the *androgynos* with maleness, should not be

understood as the final word on the 'default' gender of the *androgynos* (see Satlow 1994, p. 18; Levinson 2000, p. 127; see also Fonrobert 2006, p. 100). Other rabbinic passages complicate such a facile conclusion. Indeed, some passages will more closely align the *androgynos* person with men and some with women – the latter, as I will demonstrate, is far more common. Yet other passages, indeed the majority of rabbinic sources, will exclude the *androgynos* from the categories of man/male and woman/female.

The text with the most concentrated discussion of the *androgynos* appears, with some variations, in both *Tosefta Bikkurim* 2:3–7 and *Mishnah Bikkurim* 4.¹⁰ The text begins with the assertion of the *varied* relationships – along an axis of *halakhic* (statutory) similarity and difference – between the *androgynos* and men and women: 'An *androgynos*. There are ways in which he [masc. singular] is similar to men and there are ways in which he is similar to women, and there are ways in which he is similar to [both] men and women, and there are ways in which he is not similar to [both] men and women' (*t. Bik.* 2:3). The text proceeds to ask in what ways the *androgynos* is similar to men (*t. Bik.* 2:4) and in what ways is the *androgynos* similar to women (*t. Bik.* 2:5). The responses to these questions set forth certain *halakhic* standards through which men and women are distinguished.

Thus *t. Bik.* 2:4 likens the *androgynos* to men insofar as the *androgynos* becomes impure by a white genital discharge, may take a wife but not be taken as a wife, should not be alone with women, does not receive maintenance along with daughters, does not dress and have a haircut in ways women do, should not become impure by the dead, and is obligated to keep the commandments not to 'round the corners of the hair of your head' and 'mar the corners of your beard' (Lev. 19:27). *Tosefta Bik.* 2:4 ends by asserting that the *androgynos* 'is obligated to all of the *mitzvot* stated in the Torah – like men'. The text continues, with *t. Bik.* 2:5 likening the *androgynos* to women insofar as the *androgynos* becomes impure by a red genital discharge, should not be alone with men, is not subject to levirate marriage, does not share in the inheritance with sons, does not receive a share of the holiest sacrifices, is disqualified from giving testimony, and is invalidated from the priesthood by marriage for transgressive sexual intercourse.

The next two sections of *t. Bik.* 2 delineate the ways in which the *androgynos* is similar to both men and women (2:6) and then dissimilar from both men and women (2:7). First, the ways in which the *androgynos* is similar to both men and women: people are culpable for any damage done to the *androgynos*, one who kills the *androgynos* intentionally is sentenced to death, one who kills the *androgynos* accidentally flees to cities of refuge, the *androgynos*' mother sits out her days of the blood of purity and brings a sacrifice to the Temple on behalf of the *androgynos*, the *androgynos* inherits all inheritance, and the *androgynos* partakes of consecrated food outside the Temple border. The section ends with a statement concerning someone taking a nazirite vow, 'If one said, "Behold I am a *nazir* if this one [the *androgynos*] is [both] a man and a woman" then he [the person taking the vow] is indeed a *nazir*' (*t. Bik.* 2:6).¹¹ The next section specifies the ways in which the *androgynos* is dissimilar to both men and women: people are not liable on account of an *androgynos*' [ritual] impurity, they do not burn the heave offering on account of an *androgynos*' impurity, the monetary worth [as a payment to the Temple] of the *androgynos* cannot be evaluated, and the *androgynos* cannot be sold as a Hebrew slave. This section, like the previous one, culminates with a statement concerning someone

taking a nazirite vow: ‘If one said, “Behold I am a *nazir* if this one [the *androgynos*] is neither a man nor a woman” then he [the person taking the vow] is indeed a *nazir*’ (*t. Bik.* 2:7).

Although the text continues, it is worth pausing at this point to assess some of the apparent difficulties and points of interest thus far. Amongst the apparent contradictions in the combined passages is that according to *t. Bik.* 2:5, one of the ways the *androgynos* is likened to women is that the *androgynos* is not obligated to levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5–6). However, according to *t. Bik.* 2:4, one of the ways in which the *androgynos* is likened to men is that ‘he’ is obligated to all the commandments stated in the Torah.¹² The two texts, then, contradict each other. A similar difficulty arises insofar as *t. Bik.* 2:5 excludes the *androgynos* from giving testimony even though presumably the *androgynos*, like men, would be obligated to do so (Lev. 5:1–6).

On both a broader structural and conceptual level, the very acknowledgement, indeed the assertion, that the *androgynos* is in some ways similar to men and in some ways similar to women (*t. Bik.* 2:4–5) removes the *androgynos* from the categorization of man or woman. Indeed, the statement in *t. Bik.* 2:6, where one’s nazirite vow is deemed valid upon seeing an *androgynos* person and acknowledging, assessing, or calling into being this person as both man and woman concretizes the *androgynos* as beyond man or woman. Further, the assertions that there are ways in which the *androgynos* may not only be similar to but also differ from men and women (*t. Bik.* 2:6–7) seems to indicate that the *androgynos* is indeed something other than man and woman – outside the categorization or classification of this binary. Again, this is rendered manifest when, according to *t. Bik.* 2:7, one’s nazirite vow based on the assertion – or assessment – of an *androgynos* person as neither man nor woman is deemed valid.

Tosefta Bikkurim 2:3–7, even thus far, does not offer a static or stable gender binary. The *androgynos* is made to move – the *androgynos* is not a subject imbued with agency in this text – between and beyond the binary of male and female. That the text itself gives voice to the possibility that the *androgynos* defies this binary classification in its continuation should, then, come as no surprise. *Tosefta Bik.* 2:7 continues, ‘R. Yosi says, “The *androgynos* is *sui generis* [*b’riah lifnay atzmo*/a created being unto *himself*], and the sages could not decide about him whether he is a man or whether s/he¹³ is a woman”.’

R. Yosi’s statement, which explicitly classifies the *androgynos* as something other than man and/or woman, is typically taken as an individual opinion, which runs counter to that which has come before it in the text.¹⁴ In my reading, R. Yosi’s comment, which as we recall also states, ‘the sages could not decide about him whether he is a man or whether s/he is a woman’, serves as an apt summary – not a lone counter-voice – of *t. Bik.* 2:3–7 as a whole;¹⁵ the entire passage seems to construct the *androgynos* as *sui generis*. Before discussing the relevance of the construction of the *androgynos* as *sui generis* for rabbinic constructions of gendered bodies, I consider some other traditions from the *Tosefta*, *Mishnah*, and tannaitic midrashim, exegetical commentaries roughly coterminous with these compilations, that lend further support to the rabbinic classification of the *androgynos* as *sui generis*.

Tosefta Megillah 2:7 also classifies the *androgynos* as *sui generis*, albeit using the language of ‘his own kind’ (*mino*) instead of *b’riah lifnay atzmo*.¹⁶ The text begins with a list of people who are both obligated to fulfil the commandment of reading the scroll (*megillah*)

of Esther on the holiday of Purim. This first list includes those who are both obligated themselves and who can fulfil the obligation of reading the scroll for others in the community. The text then states, 'A *tumtum* and an *androgynos* are obligated [to read the scroll] but they do not fulfil the obligation for others. An *androgynos* fulfils the obligation for "his" kind but does not fulfil the obligation for those who are not "his" kind. A *tumtum* does not fulfil the obligation either for "his" kind or those that are not "his" kind. Women, slaves, and minors are exempt, and they do not fulfil the obligation of others' (Lieberman 1992, pp. 349–350). Similar passages appear concerning the obligations for sounding the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* (*t. Rosh Hash.* 2:5) and saying grace after meals (*t. Ber.* 5:14).¹⁷ In all of these, the *androgynos* is able to fulfil the obligation only for another *androgynos*.¹⁸ The *androgynos* is neither classed amongst those who are obligated and can fulfil the obligation of others (men), nor is the *androgynos* exempted as women are – indicating that the *androgynos* is *sui generis*.¹⁹

Tannaitic midrashic compilations (*Mekhilta of R. Ishmael*, *Sifra*, *Sifre*) further support that the *androgynos* is constructed as *sui generis* in rabbinic sources beyond *t. Bik.* 2:7. Although these sources do not use the same language to describe the *androgynos* as found in the statement attributed to R. Yosi in *t. Bik.* 2:7 (*b'riah lifne atzmo*), a number of traditions in the tannaitic midrashim categorize the *androgynos* (and *tumtum*) in precisely such a way – as outside of, or other than, male and female (see also Lev 2010, p. 222). In these traditions, the *androgynos* is consistently *excluded* from the categories 'man' and 'woman' – as well as the related terms 'son/boy' and 'daughter/girl'. However, in the majority of cases, the *androgynos* is nevertheless *included* in the biblical commandments that address men and women; the biblical commandments are simply interpreted in such a way that they are expanded to include the *androgynos*.²⁰ Both in the instances where the *androgynos* is included in and excluded from biblical commandments, the *androgynos* is constructed as outside the categories of 'man' and 'woman', or in other words, as *sui generis*.

One example of a text that constructs the *androgynos* as *sui generis* but includes the *androgynos* in the biblical commandment being discussed appears in the *Mekhilta of R. Ishmael*, a tannaitic midrash on the latter portions of the biblical book of Exodus. This text interprets Ex. 21:31, *If it [an ox] gores a boy or girl, [the owner] shall be dealt with according to the same rule.* *Mekhilta of R. Ishmael Mishpatim* 11 states:

I know only [if the ox gores] a complete boy (*ben gamor*) or a complete girl (*bat gamora*) [the owner should be put to death]. From where do I know this concerning [if an ox gores] a *tumtum* and *androgynos*? Scripture states, *Or boy or girl* – in all cases (i.e., including the *tumtum* and *androgynos*)”

This text first asserts that the words *ben* and *bat* mean a full or complete boy or girl, thus excluding the *androgynos*. The text then moves to include the *androgynos* as one who nevertheless is covered under the law regarding what happens when an ox gores someone by virtue of the biblical text's use of the word 'or'. In other words, had Ex. 21:31 stated, 'If an ox gores a boy *and* a girl', the 'and' would have excluded the *androgynos*, but the *androgynos* is included by the biblical text's use of 'or boy or girl'. Although the text makes room for the *androgynos*, incorporating the *androgynos* under the rubric of the

biblical law, the *androgynos* does not fit into the categories of '(complete) boy', i.e. male, and '(complete) girl', i.e. female.

The *Sifra*, a tannaitic midrashic compilation on the biblical book of Leviticus, also treats the *androgynos* as distinct from the categories of 'man' and 'woman'. Commenting on Lev. 13:29, *If a man or a woman has an affection on the head or in the beard*, the *Sifra* states, 'Had scripture stated "man and woman" I would only [know that] man and woman [are subject to these laws]. From where do I know that a *tumtum* and *androgynos* are included? Scripture states, *a man or a woman* (*Sifra Tazria Parshata* 5).' Likewise, the biblical use of 'or' in Lev. 20:27, *A man also or woman that is a medium or a wizard, shall surely be put to death*, is interpreted to include the *tumtum* and *androgynos* (*Sifra Kedoshim Perek* 9). Again, had scripture stated 'man and woman', the *androgynos* would not have been included because the *androgynos* does not fit into the categories of 'man' and 'woman'.

Lest we elevate this expansive interpretation of the word 'or' to a universal principle, a tradition from *Sifre Numbers*, a tannaitic midrash on the biblical book of Numbers, warns against this. The text interprets Num. 5:6, *And The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that people (adam) commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person (ha-nefesh ha-hee) be guilty [he shall confess the wrong that he has done]*. Interpreting the phrase *and that person be guilty (ha-nefesh ha-hee)*, the *Sifre* states, '*That person be guilty (ha-nefesh ha-hee)*. Why is this said? Because scripture states *man or woman*, I only know man or woman. From where do I know [that this applies to the] *tumtum* and *androgynos*? Scripture states, *that person* – to indicate everyone [is included]' (*Sifre Numbers, Naso Piska* 2).

In the above passage from *Sifre Numbers*, instead of including the *androgynos* by the scriptural use of the word 'or', the *androgynos* (and *tumtum*) is included because scripture states 'that person'. The apparent discrepancy or simply the redundancy between the verse's mention of 'man or woman' and then 'that person' provides the opening to include those who do not fall into the categories of man and/or woman.²¹

The above examples, while constructing the *androgynos* as outside the categories of 'man' and 'woman', still include the *androgynos* in the biblical laws being interpreted. The following text, however, excludes the *androgynos* from the biblical commandment of 'valuation', where one vows to donate the equivalent of their own or someone else's monetary worth to the Temple (Lev. 27:1–8). Leviticus 27:2–4 states, *When a man shall clearly utter a vow of persons (nafshot) unto The Lord, according to your evaluation, then your valuation shall be for the male from 20 years old to 60 years old, even your valuation shall be 50 shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary. And if it be a female, then your valuation shall be 30 shekels*. At the end of a relatively lengthy discussion of these verses, the *Sifra* focuses on the mention of 'male' (*zakhkar*) and 'female' (*nekevah*) in Lev. 27:3 and 27:4, respectively. *Sifra Behuqotai Parsha* 3:9 states:

Male (Lev. 27:3) – and not a *tumtum* and *androgynos*. Is it possible that the *tumtum* and *androgynos* are not included in the general category of man (*ish*) but are included in the general category of woman (*isha*)? [No.] Scripture states *and if it be a female* (Lev. 27:4). A certain male (*zakhkar vadai*) and a certain female (*nekevah vadait*), and not a *tumtum* and *androgynos*.²²

Here, as in the previous texts but spelled out explicitly, the *androgynos* emerges as excluded from, thus outside of, the categories of 'man/male' and 'woman/female'.

By way of ostensibly clarifying the position that the *androgynos* and *tumtum* are excluded from the categories of male and female, in other words they are *sui generis*,²³ this text introduces the language of 'certain' maleness and 'certain' femaleness;²⁴ the text also refers to the 'general categories' of man and woman. Further study is needed to uncover the valences that this phrasing, as well as the phrasing of 'complete boy' (*ben gamor*) and 'complete girl' (*bat gamora*) used above, connote vis-à-vis the 'general' categories of man/male and woman/female. My focus here, however, is simply that this text, similar to all the others presented thus far, excludes the *androgynos* from the categories of 'man' and 'woman'.

Thus, tannaitic sources, beyond *t. Bik.* 2:7, consistently attest to the rabbinic construction of the *androgynos* as *sui generis*. The statement attributed to R. Yosi in *t. Bik.* 2:7 should not be read as a minority, individual voice in rabbinic sources. Throughout tannaitic sources the *androgynos* emerges as outside of the categories of 'man' and 'woman'. Amoraic sources further support this. The *Babylonian Talmud* (*Bavli*) asserts that the *androgynos* is *sui generis* in two passages, using language very similar to *t. Bik.* 2:7 (*b. Hag.* 4a and *b. Yev.* 100a).²⁵ In these passages, the assertion that the *androgynos* is *sui generis* is made as if the opinion were normative; it is stated anonymously (thus not as an individual opinion) and remains unchallenged in these contexts.²⁶ Instead, what emerges as exceptional in *t. Bik.* 2, which will become clearer below, is the likening of the *androgynos* to men (*t. Bik.* 2:4). In the following section, I discuss the implications of the *androgynos* as *sui generis* for rabbinic constructions of gendered bodies.

3.4 Rabbinic Constructions of Gender: A Provisional Spectrum

Stated most succinctly, the consistent depiction of the *androgynos* as *sui generis* challenges the notion of rabbinic constructions of gender as a rigid, static binary consisting of male and female and only male and female. The sources simply do not adhere to, construct, or reflect, a simple division of all bodies into two distinct genders.

The repeated categorization of the *androgynos* as *sui generis* alerts us to the rabbinic construction of gender beyond a binary framework. The *androgynos* does not fit within that binary framework; the *androgynos* exceeds these boundaries, depicted instead as something other than male or female. We search in vain for (the gender of) the *androgynos* to sit stably and comfortably within the binary of male and female because rabbinic attempts to locate the *androgynos* fully in the either/or categories of man and woman repeatedly 'fail'.

An examination of two rabbinic passages in the *Babylonian Talmud* (*Bavli*) that align, but do not equate, the *androgynos* with males demonstrate the rabbinic refusal to fix the gender of the *androgynos* as male.²⁷ First, *Bavli Yevamot* 83a, in the *Talmud*'s only explicit citation of R. Yosi's statement that 'an *androgynos* is *sui generis* and the sages could not decide whether he was male (*zakhar*) or female (*nekevah*)' attempts to reconcile this statement with another statement attributed to R. Yosi.²⁸ In *m. Yev.* 8:6, R. Yosi, along with R. Shimon, state 'an *androgynos* priest who married a daughter of

Israel entitles her to eat *terumah*'. The two opinions attributed to R. Yosi seem to contradict each other in that the citation of *t. Bik.* 2:7 suggests that R. Yosi thinks that the *androgynos* is *sui generis* and thus not male, but *m. Yev.* 8:6 suggests that R. Yosi thinks that the *androgynos* is considered male – at least insofar as he enables his wife to eat of the heave offering.²⁹ After considerable debate, R. Yosi's opinion as recorded in *m. Yev.* 8:6 is upheld; the *androgynos* is male, or male enough, to affect his wife's ability to eat of the heave offering. However, the same talmudic passage revisits the question of the *androgynos*' maleness again, when commenting on the last section of *m. Yev.* 8:6: 'R. Eliezer says [a man who has sexual intercourse with an] *androgynos* is liable to stoning as with a male.' In the context of its discussion of this statement, the Talmud states, 'Rav Shizvi said in the name of Rav Chisda, Not for all matters did R. Eliezer say that an *androgynos* is considered a valid/full male (*zakhar ma'alyah*)' (*b. Yev.* 83b). The Talmud proceeds to bring examples of where the *androgynos* is *not* categorized as male. Thus, the *androgynos* emerges as either sometimes male or sometimes fully male or sometimes less than male or sometimes less than fully male; the matter is unclear. What is clear is that 'male(ness)' – along with the *androgynos* – emerges as a less than unified, stable category.

Likewise, *b. Shabbat* 136b–137a, in its discussion of the minority opinion attributed to R. Yehudah that the circumcision of an *androgynos* suspends Sabbath prohibitions of work, limits even R. Yehudah's classification of the *androgynos* as male. According to *m. Shab.* 19:3, the majority opinion maintains that one does not circumcise an *androgynos* child on the Sabbath; R. Yehudah, however, maintains that one is permitted to do so.³⁰ Although the implications of the different opinions vis-à-vis the connection between the *androgynos* and males are not spelled out in this *mishnah*, *b. Shab.* 136b explores them. In the end, even in the case of the minority opinion of R. Yehudah, who aligns the *androgynos* with maleness insofar as he permits the circumcision of an eight-day-old *androgynos* to be performed on the Sabbath, the passage proceeds to see this alignment of the *androgynos* with maleness as an exception. *B. Shabbat* 136b states, 'Rav Shizvi said in the name of Rav Chisda, Not for all matters did R. Yehudah say that the *androgynos* is (a) male'. This is the same statement that appears in the passage above concerning R. Eliezer (*b. Yev.* 83b). *Bavli Shabbat* 136b continues to bring the example found in the *Sifra* concerning 'valuation' discussed above, which excludes the *androgynos* from the classification of both the 'general category' male and 'certain' male. Since according to rabbinic tradition the anonymous portions of the *Sifra* are attributed to R. Yehudah, this demonstrates that R. Yehudah does not consider the *androgynos* male in other instances. The Talmud then brings another example (*m. Parah* 5:4) where R. Yehudah excludes the *androgynos*, and women, as further proof that he does not consider the *androgynos* male in other cases. Then the text asks, 'Why is the case of circumcision different?' The answer is because it is written, *Circumcise all your males* (*kol zakhar*) in Gen. 17:10, with an emphasis on the word 'all' serving to include the *androgynos*.³¹

In these two talmudic traditions (*b. Yev.* 83a–b and *b. Shab.* 136b–137a), we see the texts grapple with the *androgynos* in relation to maleness. And yet, at best we have an unstable, provisional construction the *androgynos*, who is either sometimes considered male (enough) and sometimes not, or less than fully male. What emerges is an unstable

construction of *maleness* itself, which becomes subject to gradations and divided upon itself (e.g. certain male, complete male, general category of male, male).

Furthermore, the gender of the *androgynos* is not collapsed with femaleness, and as seen above, femaleness itself, similar to maleness, emerges as subject to gradations and divided upon itself (e.g. certain female, complete female, general category of female, female). We have already seen above that the *androgynos* is distinguished from women insofar as the *androgynos* is obligated to perform the *mitzvot* of reading the *megillah* (t. *Meg.* 2:7), sounding the *shofar* (t. *Rosh Hash.* 2:4), and saying grace after meals (t. *Ber.* 5:15), whereas women are not obligated.³² We have also seen the *androgynos* excluded from the category of 'woman' in tannaitic midrashim discussed above. Nevertheless, rabbinic sources juxtapose the *androgynos* with women, and other classes of people, with enough frequency that we should examine the ramifications of this juxtaposition for rabbinic constructions of gender.

For example, the tannaitic midrashic compilation the *Mekhilta* of R. Ishmael interprets Exodus 12:3–4, *Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, On the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man (ish) a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for the house: and if the household be too little for a lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of souls (b'miksat nafshot).* *Mekhilta* of R. Ishmael *Parasha Bo* 3 states:

According to the number of souls (Ex. 12:4). Why is this said? Because it has been said every man/ish (Ex. 12:3), from which I know only that a man may be enrolled as a partner in the paschal lamb. How do I know this concerning a woman, a tumtum and an androgynos? Scripture states, according to the number of souls to include [a woman, tumtum, and androgynos].

Thus, if scripture only mentioned 'man' (*ish*), then a woman, *tumtum*, and *androgynos* would have been excluded from partaking in the paschal offering. 'Man', accordingly, means not woman, *androgynos*, or *tumtum*. A relatively large number of tannaitic sources similarly exclude the woman, *tumtum*, and *androgynos*, as well as others, from the category of 'man'.³³

The significance of the consistent juxtaposition of the *androgynos*, woman, *tumtum*, and others, in opposition to 'man', is that it further substantiates that rabbinic constructions of gender operate beyond a male:female duality. The more prevalent binary in these instances, if we must have our binaries, reveals itself as male:not male. And gender is located across a spectrum appearing something more along the lines of: certain male, complete male, general category of male, *androgynos*, *tumtum*, general category of female, complete female, certain female. This listing is both provisional and partial. The categories could be differently ordered and those included could be expanded. Most relevant in this context, the *androgynos*, by virtue of being obligated to certain *mitzvot* that women are not obligated to do, is here placed centrally. However, the *androgynos* could easily be moved outside of the centre because the *androgynos* is *sui generis*. Finally, in terms of expanding the list, one could include slaves, minors, blind people, intellectually disabled people, sick people, and the elderly, etc., allowing for the ways gender interacts and intersects with these categories to be acknowledged and theorized.

3.5 Doing Rabbinic Gender: Male and Female Performative Acts

In the previous section I suggested, based on examining traditions that mention the *androgynos*, that the categories of maleness and femaleness are themselves not monolithic. They are both further divided and distinguished among certain, complete, and general categories of each gender(s) in ways that destabilize, subvert, and even challenge, gender duality. In this section, I examine two tannaitic traditions that forefront a simpler male:female gender duality in order to explore the destabilizing elements and possibilities for subversion that inhere even in rabbinic texts that seem to represent a more rigid gender duality. These texts, both of which are from the *Mishnah*, distinguish between men and women on the basis of the different performative acts and *halakhic* obligations ascribed to men and women. In other words, in these traditions gender emerges not as something one has, but as something one does. Or, as Judith Butler writes, ‘...gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort’ (1990, p. 112).

The first text is *m. Sotah* 3:8, which asks, ‘What are the differences between a man and a woman?’³⁴ The text then posits multiple ways in which men and women are distinguished, ranging from different embodied performances if leprosy is contracted to different practices in the case of capital punishment, as well as delineating some differences between men’s and women’s ability to act on behalf of their relatives. Thus, a man can sell his daughter but a woman cannot, and a man can pledge his son as a nazirite but a woman cannot pledge her son.

At this point I single out the last specific example given, concerning the assertion that a woman cannot make a nazirite vow for her son, but I will return to some further reflections about the broader implications of distinguishing among genders by performative acts below. In contrast to the *Mishnah*’s ruling that a woman cannot pledge her son as a nazirite, the biblical book of First Samuel presents Hannah, Samuel’s mother, as making just such a vow (I Sam. 1 : 11).³⁵ I suggest that such a contradiction between a biblical text and a *mishnaic* teaching, obvious to the sages who made it, destabilizes the constructing of gender along a seemingly apparent rigid, stable duality at the very moment such a duality of difference is being articulated in this text.

The second text is *Mishnah Kiddushin* 1:7, which differentiates between men and women in terms of the commandments (*mitzvot*) they are obligated to fulfil. For example, according to *Mishnah Kiddushin* 1:7, all of the *mitzvot* that a man is obligated to do for his son, women are exempt from, but all the commandments a son is obligated to do for his father, women are obligated to do. Further, although men are obligated to fulfil all time-bound positive *mitzvot*, women are exempt from them, but both women and men are obligated to fulfil all non-time-bound positive *mitzvot*.³⁶ One of the obligations a man is obligated to do for his son, according to other traditions, is to circumcise him.³⁷ Again, however, a biblical text stands in contrast to this normative ruling; Zipporah, Moses’ wife, circumcises her son in Ex. 4:24–26 (see Kessler 2005).

More significant than this biblical exception, contradictions and exceptions abound to the ruling that women are exempted from time-bound positive *mitzvot*; women are obligated to a number of time-bound, positive commandments (e.g. eating *matzah* and

drinking four cups of wine at Passover, lighting the candles of Hanukah, saying *Kiddush* on the Sabbath, etc.) (see Alexander 2013, pp. 119–133; see also Kraemer 1996, pp. 86–108). There are also non-time-bound positive *mitzvot* from which women are excluded, even though *m. Kid.* 1:7 states that women are obligated to perform all of them (e.g. Torah study, procreation, etc.).³⁸

Of course, exceptions sometimes prove the rules. In these cases, however, I suggest that they nevertheless lend a sense of instability to the very constructing of gender and rigid gender duality in these passages. As Elizabeth Alexander has pointed out, one need look no further than *m. Kid.* 1:7 itself for a contradiction regarding the distinction between men and women vis-à-vis the commandments presented there. She writes, ‘The rule that women are exempt from father-to-son commandments encompasses the stipulation that they are exempt from Torah study. This ritual, however, is *not* time-bound, and therefore this stipulation directly contradicts the second line of the rule about time-bound commandments, which states that women are *obligated* to perform all non-time-bound, positive commandments’ (2013, p. 49).

There are also contradictory traditions about specific *mitzvot*. For example, according to *t. Meg.* 2:7, women (slaves, and minors) are not obligated to read the scroll of Esther on Purim, but according to *b. Meg.* 4a, and possibly *m. Meg.* 2:4, women are obligated.³⁹ Similarly, *t. Ber.* 5:18 exempts women (slaves, and minors) from saying grace after meals, but *m. Ber.* 3:3 obligates them to do so.⁴⁰ Such contradictions, both within and beyond *m. Kid.* 1:7, further destabilize gender duality at the same time that the texts work to construct it.

Indeed, Alexander cautions against reading *m. Kid.* 1:7 as a prescriptive statement about male–female difference in rabbinic sources. According to Alexander, interpreters have erred in seeing this text as the key to rabbinic gender without understanding its development in the sources. For my purposes, neither *m. Sot.* 3:8 nor *m. Kid.* 1:7, with their focus on male–female gender duality, should remain the only places we look to examine rabbinic constructions of gender. These texts, which do reflect gender duality – although less stably than one might assume – must be placed alongside the traditions discussed above that include the *androgynos*, the *tumtum*, and others thus constructing gender beyond a male–female duality. In other words, until we read statements such as ‘All are obligated to appear [at the temple], except for the deaf-mute, the intellectually disabled, the minor, the *tumtum*, the *androgynos*, women, slaves who have not been set free, the lame, the blind, the sick, the old, and anyone who is not able to ascend upon his feet’ (*m. Hag.* 1:1), or ‘A guardian (*apotropos*), an agent, a slave, a woman, a *tumtum*, and an *androgynos* bring [first fruits] but do not recite [the declaration] since they cannot say, *Which you God have given to me*’ (*m. Bik.* 1:5), or the many places in tannaitic midrashic sources that ask, ‘from where do I know this concerning (the woman), the *tumtum*, and the *androgynos*’, we fail to grasp the more complete, and more complex, ways in which gender is constructed in rabbinic sources.

Thus far, I have examined rabbinic sources that offer constructions of gender that are not based in male–female gender duality; there, the primary gender distinction made is male: not male. Further, maleness and femaleness are not themselves stable categories, but subject to more distinctions among males and among females (complete, certain, general category). I have also discussed some rabbinic sources that do focus

explicitly and exclusively on gender distinctions between men and women. However, these traditions, due to numerous exceptions, inherent contradictions, and conflicting sources, also construct gender as less than stable or fixed.

One further observation should be made about the rabbinic constructing of gender evident in these sources. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, especially evident in the traditions that list the differences between men and women but also apparent in many of the traditions that include the *tumtum*, *androgynos*, and others, gender is defined by performative acts, by doing as opposed to being. When asking what the differences are between men and women, or according to other sources when distinguishing men from those people who are not men, the sources forefront what one does over who one is.⁴¹ For example, men appear before God three times a year (*m. Hag.* 1:1), or men bring the first fruits to the Temple and declare that God has given them the land (*m. Bik.* 1:6), or the *androgynos* says grace after meals (*t. Ber.* 5:16), or women do not say grace after meals (*t. Ber.* 5:18), or women say grace after meals (*m. Ber.* 3:3), etc. Indeed, circling back to the *Tosefta Bikkurim* text discussed earlier that articulates who – or what – constitutes an *androgynos*, a similar emphasis on actions and *halakhic* obligations also emerges.

This conceiving of gender through performative acts (*mitzvot*), might just emerge as the most destabilizing aspect of rabbinic constructions of gender, with a reach far beyond any exceptions or contradictions already presented. Judith Butler writes, ‘gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts’ (1998, p. 519). By defining gender differences by the acts one performs, by locating gender in what one does with their bodies as opposed to what one is (male, female, *androgynos*, etc.), these traditions consistently reveal the (potential) instability of gender. What happens, when a mother circumcises her son, or pledges her son to be a nazirite, or studies Torah, etc.? Is not her gender affected, or effectively altered? Defining gender as what one does as opposed to what one has or is, holds the potential to destabilize gender at every turn. Again, Butler writes, ‘If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style’ (1998, p. 520).

Mishnah Kiddushin 1:7 especially, with part of its focus squarely on gender distinctions constituted in time and instituted through a stylized repetition of acts (*mitzvot*), but other traditions as well that construct and divide genders along the lines of performative acts, expose rabbinic gender as less than stable. When asked what are the differences between men and women or among genders, none of these traditions makes appeals to or takes refuge in the physical differences between or among gendered bodies. If, as I have suggested, this construction of gender as what one does as opposed to what one is lends further evidence to rabbinic gender, and gender duality, as a less than stable construct, do rabbinic traditions that do make appeals to the body as the site of sex/gender difference offer an alternative, wherein gender emerges, at last, as fixed, innate, and natural?

3.6 Rabbinic Bodies

In the previous section, I shifted my focus from the *androgynos* and its challenge to a rigid male:female gender duality to traditions that construct gender and male:female gender difference by way of actions, by what one does with one's body. In both cases – and there is considerable overlap between them insofar as the *androgynos* is often categorized by way of their actions and the categories of male/men and female/women are physically embodied sites – rabbinic traditions challenge a stable, rigid male:female gender binary. In other words, a stable binary construction of gender is subverted both through bodies that 'matter' and the 'discourse(s)' of gender – even when presented with the language of gender duality – that surrounds, enlivens, and animates them.

Although presented in separate sections for heuristic purposes, rabbinic traditions that demonstrate the instability, variability, and malleability of physical bodies work together with rabbinic traditions that construct gender and gender differences through performative acts in ways that not only challenge a rigid male:female gender binary but also challenge a rigid binary between materiality and discourse. One of the gains, I hope, in moving back and forth between traditions apparently more focused on physical bodies that challenge a rigid male: female gender binary (*t. Bik.* 2:4–7 and other traditions about the *androgynos*) and traditions that seem to work within an apparent apparatus of male:female always already embodied gender duality (*m. Sotah* 3:5 and *m. Kid.* 1:7) and now circling back, in this section, to additional rabbinic traditions that focus on somatic variability and malleability is that it helps to expose the interconnectedness, even the 'intra-activity',⁴² of matter and discourse in rabbinic traditions about gender and the body. I return to the larger question about the relationship between materiality and discourse in rabbinic traditions about gender and the body in the conclusion of this chapter, but for the rest of this section I present some additional rabbinic traditions that appeal to the external markings of physical bodies and other physiological processes in their representations of gender and gender difference.

A tradition in *t. Shabbat* 15:9 locates male/female gender difference at the site of 'procreation', i.e. the genitalia. The text asks, from where is it known that circumcision is [performed] at the place of procreation? The text answers, 'From the place where it is known that the child is male or female, there they circumcise him.'⁴³ Although this text seems to divide bodies, by way of their genitalia, into two kinds consisting of only male and female, we have already seen above that the questions surrounding the circumcision of an *androgynos* infant seek to account for instances where the genitalia are unable to allow for the determination of male or female (*m. Shab.* 19:3 and *b. Shab.* 136b–137a). In other words, the ambiguity, or excess, of the genitalia of the *androgynos* complicates the distinction between male and female based solely on their genitalia. *Mishnah Niddah* 3:5 also attests to the variety of bodies with its consideration of miscarried fetuses that are seen as male, female, *androgynos*, or *tumtum*. Bodies do not always reveal themselves as only or either male or female. The gender duality appealed to in *t. Shab.* 15:9 is an incomplete, partial, representation of gendered bodies in rabbinic sources; the gender duality of this text is offset by the many traditions that mention the *androgynos* and construct gender beyond a rigid duality.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the body itself is not a stable construct; it develops and changes throughout a lifespan. Charlotte Fonrobert has suggested that the rabbinic *saris* (congenital eunuch/infertile man) and *aylonit* (infertile woman) are not best characterized as representing additional genders in rabbinic sources (2006, pp. 86–94).⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the texts wherein they are discussed testify to the ways in which bodies develop, develop differently, and reflect somatic variability, such that even the bodies of those categorized as men and women are not uniform.

The emphasis in these sources appears to be on what are often called ‘secondary sexual characteristics’: the development or lack of pubic hair, breasts, facial hair, as well as the relative depth or highness of one’s voice. Thus, a *saris hamah* (congenital ‘eunuch’), according to *t. Yevamot* 10:6, is any man who turns 20 and has not produced two pubic hairs. Additional signs that indicate he is a *saris* include smooth flesh and no beard, the inability of his urine to produce foam, the inability to make an arch when urinating, and a thin voice that cannot be distinguished from a woman’s voice (*t. Yev.* 10:6). Furthermore, some say that another identifying sign is that upon immersing in water during the rainy season no vapour arises from his flesh (*t. yev.* 10:6). These signs seem to indicate a lack of ‘manliness’, particularly virility, of the *saris*, the latter one consistent with Greco-Roman sources that assume men have more heat than women.⁴⁵

The next section of this passage sets out the signs of the *aylonit*. These include the lack of two pubic hairs at age 20, the lack of breasts, thin hair, becoming stiff during intercourse, lack of a pronounced lower abdomen like women, and a thick voice that is indistinguishable from a man’s (*t. Yev.* 10:7).⁴⁶ It is interesting that neither *t. Yev.* 10:6 nor *t. Yev.* 10:7 explicitly assert that these people are infertile. This might be obvious for the *saris* as castrate. However, regarding the *aylonit* as an infertile woman, *b. Yev.* 64b states, ‘Our matriarch, Sarah, was an *aylonit*.’ Based on a midrashic reading of Gen. 11:30, and *Sarai was barren, she had no child*, the passage’s apparently redundant mention that she was barren and had no child indicates that ‘she lacked even a uterus’.⁴⁷ Thus *b. Yev.* 64b portrays the *aylonit* as one who is infertile, but here, Sarah is not said to display any of the signs of an *aylonit* that are mentioned in *t. Yev.* 10:7.⁴⁸

This discussion of the *saris* and *aylonit* must here remain incomplete. For my purposes in this context, it simply serves to demonstrate that in rabbinic traditions bodies are not represented as uniform without awareness of somatic variability. Some (men’s) bodies have a penis and two testicles and some do not; some (women’s) bodies have uteruses and some do not. Some (women’s) bodies have clearly pronounced female secondary sex characteristics and some do not. Similarly, with some (men’s) bodies and male secondary sex characteristics. Some men’s bodies appear, and sound, more female and some women’s bodies more male. Even if infertility is the primary concern of these sources, the *saris* and the *aylonit* do appear to represent a rabbinic configuration of masculine women and feminine men – by way of somatic differences or variability. The texts might work within the confines of male and female gender duality, but these bodies and their gendered meanings emerge as less than fixed or stable and appear to blur masculine/male and feminine/female gender boundaries.

The next two traditions presented move us from rabbinic instances of somatic variability to the somatic malleability of some rabbinic bodies.⁴⁹ An *aggadic* tradition in the *Bavli* discusses a man who, by way of a miracle, produces breast milk in order to nurse

his son: 'Our Rabbis taught: "It once happened that a man's wife died and she left him a son to nurse, but he didn't have money to give to a wet-nurse. And a miracle was done for him and his breasts opened up like the two breasts of a woman and he nursed his son"' (*b. Shabbat* 53b). Similarly, in a tradition from *Genesis Rabbah*, Mordechai is said to have nursed Esther: 'R Yudan said: "One time he [Mordechai] went to all the wet nurses but could not find one for Esther, and thus he nursed her." R. Berekiah and R. Abbahu in R. Eleazar's name said: "Milk came to him and he nursed her [always]"' (*Gen. Rab.* 30 : 8). The text itself notes the possibility of disbelief opened by the assertion that men might develop breasts that lactate. The continuation of the text addresses this by stating, 'When R. Abbahu expounded this publicly, the congregation laughed. He said to them, "Is this not a *mishnah*?" R. Simeon b. Eleazar said, "The milk of a male is clean"' (*Gen. Rab.* 30 : 8).

Such somatic malleability, which blurs but does not eclipse the distinction between male and female physiological processes here, is supported by the *mishnaic* statement found in *m. Makshirin* 6:7 which asserts that the milk of a male is clean. The malleability, and the fluidity, of the body is not an exegetical flourish, divorced from *halakhah*, rather men's breast milk is placed squarely within the field of *halakhic* discourse.⁵⁰

Neither the midrashic sources about the men who lactate nor the statement in *m. Makshirin* 6:7 about the purity of male breast milk are connected to any discussions about the *androgynos* in rabbinic sources. I have yet to find a tradition that discusses breasts, or breast milk, within the explicit discourse about the *androgynos*. Nor have I located much about the secondary sex characteristics of the *androgynos*, with the exception being *t. Bik.* 2:4, which considers the *androgynos* obligated to the prohibition of shaving the corners of the beard.⁵¹ However, *t. Bik.* 2 mentions the genital discharges of the *androgynos*, in ways that mark the *androgynos* as both similar to men and similar to women, and yet different from them as well. An examination of the genital fluids of the *androgynos*, the last topic to be examined in this section, further demonstrates that the physiology of the human body does not always reflect, construct, or support a rigid gender duality; such an examination might also further demonstrate that the *androgynos* is *sui generis*.

In a recent article, Charlotte Fonrobert has suggested we pay more attention to the mention of genital discharges in *t. Bik.* 2:4–5, which states that the *androgynos* is made impure by white [discharge] like men (2:4) and made impure by red [discharge] like women (2:5). She notes that the use of the words 'white' (*loven*) and 'red' (*odem*) differ from the 'normative and normativizing rhetoric of the earlier compilations', which typically use the words 'flow' (*zov*) and 'blood' (*dam*).⁵²

The same use of 'red' and 'white' also appears in *t. Zav.* 2:2, which states, 'A *tumtum* and *androgynos* who saw either white [discharge] or red [discharge], they do not burn the heave-offering on their account, and they are not liable on their account for the impurity of the temple and its holy things.'⁵³ *Tosefta Zav.* 2:2 is thus consistent with *t. Bik.* 2:7, which includes, among its list of ways in which the *androgynos*⁵⁴ differs from both men and women, that the heave offering is not burned if it comes into contact with the 'white' or 'red' of the *androgynos*.⁵⁵ In contrast, if the heave offering comes into contact with the blood of women, either menstrual blood or flux, or the 'white' of men, either *zov* or semen, the heave offering would be burned.

The *androgynos*' difference from both men and women is thus reflected in the terminology used in *t. Bik.* 2:4 and 2:5 for their genital discharges, even while the text likens, but does not equate, them with men and women (*c'anashim/c'nashim*). The use of 'red' and 'white', in contrast to *zov* and *dam* is significant; it distinguishes the *androgynos*' interior physiology as much as having a penis and a vagina distinguishes the *androgynos*' exterior morphology.⁵⁶ Such difference is rendered manifest both by the language of 'red' and 'white' and in the disparate consequences that such fluids have on the heave offering. If, as Fonrobert so aptly writes, 'it is the fluids that position a person on the gender map of purity laws', then it is time for new, or at least, additional maps. The genital fluids of the *androgynos* simply do not match up with those of men and women; 'red' and 'white' are not equal to *dam* or *zov* (or *shikhvat zera/semen*).⁵⁷

3.7 The Primal Androgyne and the Androgynos

In the context of the talmudic discussion of *t. Zav.* 2 : 2, which as mentioned in the previous section discusses the ramifications of the *androgynos*' genital discharges, *b. Niddah* 28a–b discusses whether the *androgynos* and *tumtum* are excluded from the scriptural mentions of male and female.⁵⁸ In the end, this passage concludes that they are excluded.⁵⁹ This appears consistent with the tannaitic exclusion of the *androgynos* from the categories 'man' and 'woman' discussed earlier in this chapter. Consistently, then, the *androgynos* is constructed as outside the classification of male/man and female/woman.

The *Bavli*'s explicit exclusion of the *androgynos* from the biblical mentions of male and female might appear odd if we recall that earlier in this chapter I cited *Genesis Rabbah* 8:1 in order to introduce the *androgynos*. In commenting on Gen. 1:26, *And God said, Let us make adam in our image after our likeness*, the text states, 'R. Jeremiah b. Leazar said, "When the Holy Blessed One created the first *adam*, he created him *androgynos*." As scripture states, *male (zakhar) and female (nekevah) he created them* (Gen. 5:2).'

One could of course appeal to a categorical difference between *halakhic* ('legal') and *aggadic* (narrative) sources and posit that they simply reflect differing opinions about the *androgynos* and the relationship between the *androgynos* and the categories of man/male and woman/female.⁶⁰ However, the only place that I have found the mention of *androgynos* in *aggadic* sources is in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 and its parallel in *Lev. Rab.* 14:1. There is, therefore, not enough data to posit an *aggadic* view about the *androgynos* divorced from the *androgynos* in *halakhic* sources. Furthermore, the tradition about the primal androgyne is amoraic, and thus it is reasonable to assume that it knows the earlier, tannaitic traditions about the *androgynos*. The construction of the *androgynos* as not man/male and not woman/female, moreover, is consistent enough throughout rabbinic sources that the description of *androgynos* as *male and female* in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 warrants some attention.

While others have examined the tradition(s) about the primal androgyne in the context of its larger Greco-Roman and now 'Indo-European' parallels,⁶¹ some of the clearest intertexts for the *androgynos* in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 appear to be the *halakhic* sources themselves. If, as Daniel Boyarin suggested, *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 with its primal androgyne who is both male and female 'resists' the non-rabbinic Jewish and Greco-Roman duality

between spirit/mind and matter/body, then might *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 also ‘resist’ the internal rabbinic exclusion of the *androgynos* from the categories of male and female? Might the image of *adam* as *androgynos*, moreover, resist gender duality at the purported site of its ‘creation’ – a point to which I will return at the end of this section. Or, if as Shai Secunda has argued, the primal androgyne tradition does not so much ‘resist’ but participate in the construction of this myth in Late Antiquity, might the tradition even in its *aggadic* context participate in such a construction by incorporating the *halakhic* materials as well as external parallels? In my reading, I wish not to cut off *Gen. Rab.* 8:1’s depiction of the primal androgyne from the rest of rabbinic sources about the *androgynos*; I posit that even as the *Gen. Rab.* tradition apparently differs, it remains in dialogue with, and I think consistent with, the *halakhic* sources and that these sources are carried into the midrash, ‘haunting’ its depiction of the primal androgyne.

When the rabbinic primal androgyne traditions are compared, some differences between the midrashic and talmudic versions become sharper. The *Bavli* discusses the creation of *adam ha-rishon* (primal *adam*) in three passages (*b. Ber.* 61a; *b. Eir.* 18a; *b. Ket.* 8a).⁶² None of these sources uses the word *androgynos* to describe *adam*. The first two talmudic sources use the phrase *du partzufin* (two-faced),⁶³ which appears, in addition to the use of *androgynos*, in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 (and *Lev. Rab.* 14:1).⁶⁴ While the *Bavli* sources retain the citation of *Gen.* 5:2, *male and female he created them*, they ultimately point out the contradiction between this verse and another scriptural verse, for example, the part of *Gen.* 1:27 that states, *in the image of God he created him* (masc. sing.).⁶⁵ The talmudic passages then assert, based on such contradictory verses, that at first God planned to create two beings, male and female, but in the end God only created one *adam*, who was male.⁶⁶

Genesis Rab. 8:1, however, does not posit any such difference between what God had planned and what God had executed in the creation of *adam*.⁶⁷ It offers multiple interpretations, the first of them being that *adam* was created as *androgynos*, meaning one body with both male and female genitalia. Another interpretation is that *adam* was created *di prosopon*, two-sided, and those two bodies are originally connected and then separated to form male and female. And yet another interpretation is that *adam* was created as a *golem*, a gigantic, world-spanning, undifferentiated body.⁶⁸

Instead of, or at least along with, flattening the rabbinic traditions about the primal androgyne in pursuit of external parallels, we must also examine the discrepancies between the primal androgyne traditions within rabbinic sources themselves. In this context, I mention one final difference between the primal androgyne tradition as it appears in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 and the traditions as they appear in the *Bavli*. This difference is most pronounced in *b. Ber.* 61a, where the scriptural basis for the discussion of the primal androgyne is the doubling of the Hebrew letter *yod* in the word *vayyitzer* in *Gen.* 2:7, *and God formed the adam*.⁶⁹ In contrast, the scriptural basis in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 is *Gen.* 1:26, *Let us make adam [in our image after our likeness]*. Taking into consideration the exegetical framing of the different traditions alerts us to the different scopes of the traditions in their respective textual or literary contexts. *Genesis Rab.* 8:1 works on both the anthropological and theological planes.⁷⁰ That which it asserts about *adam*, is always already consonant with what it asserts about God. Not only does *adam* emerge as *androgynos*, here defined as *male and female*, but God does as well (see Aaron 1995, pp. 8–9).

An examination of the material, gendered, bodies of God in rabbinic sources, though a worthy endeavour, would bring me too far afield for this chapter. Remaining focused on gendered human bodies, I suggest, in closing, that *Gen. Rab.* 8:1's use of the word *androgynos* to describe the first *adam* – and God – further illustrates that the *androgynos* is constructed as *sui generis*. The primal androgyne as male and female defies the classification of either male or female. The primal androgyne only upholds, or instantiates, a rigid gender duality if this text is removed from all other rabbinic traditions about the *androgynos*, which construct the *androgynos* as *sui generis*. In the reading I am proposing here, the *androgynos* as outside the classification of male or female as evident throughout the *halakhic* sources, 'haunts' *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 and thus the *androgynos* appears here, as elsewhere, as *sui generis*. As I suggested above with my reading of *t. Bik.* 2:3–7, a being who is (in some ways likened to) both male/man and female/woman is *sui generis* – neither male nor female.

In my reading of *adam* as *androgynos* in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1, we glimpse the apparatus of binary gender creation, or production, and its undoing. The use of *androgynos* here calls attention to the incompleteness of binary gender. It signals that male and/or female entails other genders that are curtailed. Although this passage has been read as supporting the creation of binary gender, it need not be subject to such a limiting reading. The interpretation of *adam ha-rishon* as *androgynos* precedes the interpretation of *adam* as a 'two-sided' being who is then separated into two distinct beings, one male and one female. For a textual moment, *androgynos*, male, and female appear together, challenging – not, or not only reifying – binary gender.

Butler writes, 'To assume that gender always and exclusively means the matrix of the "masculine" and "feminine" is precisely to miss the critical point that the production of that coherent binary is contingent, that it comes at a cost, and that those permutations of gender which do not fit the binary are as much a part of gender as its most normative instance' (2004, p. 42).⁷¹ *Genesis Rab.* 8:1 invites us to see the *androgynos* as much a part of rabbinic gender as male and female. Butler continues, 'Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized. Indeed, it may be that the very apparatus that seeks to install the norm also works to undermine that very installation, that the installation is, as it were, definitionally incomplete' (2004, p. 42). In *Gen. Rab.* 8:1, we see the installation of a norm of binary gender as male and female; we also see this norm undermined, we glimpse its incompleteness, through the text's insistence of the (*sui generis*) *androgynos* along with – not, or not only as – male and female.

3.8 Conclusion: Perspectival Gender, Where and How We Look Matters

When *Genesis Rabbah* turns from interpreting *Gen.* 1:26 to interpret *Gen.* 1:27, *male and female God created them*, there is little trace of the primal androgyne or the female.⁷² *Gen. Rab.* 8:11 states, '*male and female he created them* (*Gen.* 5:2) – male and his apertures/openings (*nekovav*) he created'.⁷³ As soon as we catch a glimpse of *adam* as *androgynos*, that vision fades.⁷⁴ A similar occlusion happens when we dismiss R. Yosi's statement

in *t. Bik.* 2:7 that the *androgynos* is *sui generis* as a minority, marginalized view in rabbinic sources.⁷⁵ However, by re-examining *t. Bik.* 2:2–7 and by examining rabbinic traditions about the *androgynos* beyond this text, we discover a vision of rabbinic gender being constructed beyond a rigid male:female binary frame. Where we look matters. The *Bavli* asserts twice that the *androgynos* is *sui generis*, without contesting this ‘marginal’ view, and rather consistently throughout tannaitic sources, the *androgynos* emerges as outside the classification of male/man and female/woman. The inclusion of the *androgynos*, *tumtum*, and a host of others in rabbinic lists in opposition to ‘man’, alerts us to a construction of rabbinic gender that does not operate along the lines of male:female duality. Moreover, the categories of male and female, man and woman, are revealed as less than unified or stable; they collapse unto themselves, divided into ‘complete’, ‘full’, ‘certain’ maleness or ‘complete’, ‘full’, ‘certain’ femaleness.

Looking beneath a surface reading of *m. Sotah* 3:8 and *m. Kid.* 1:7, both of which delineate gender and gender duality via performative acts – by doing gender as opposed to being gendered – rabbinic gender is exposed as contingent, imbued with a pervasive potential slippage that lurks or hovers, destabilizing a presumably unbreachable binary gender divide. Looking beneath the skin of the *androgynos*, examining the *androgynos*’ ‘whiteness’, and ‘redness’, demonstrates that the external physicality of the *androgynos*, which marks them as *sui generis*, is matched by an internal physiology that is also unique. How deeply we look matters.

When rabbinic sources narrate the examination of miscarried fetuses for the purposes of determining whether they are male, female, *androgynos*, or *tumtum* (*m. Nid.* 3:5), they acknowledge that gender extends beyond a male:female binary frame. When they deliberate about the *androgynos*, or they construct male breast milk as ritually pure and write about men nursing their infants, or discuss the gender variance of the *saris*’ and *aylonit*’s bodies and voices, they acknowledge that bodies differ and these differences matter. ‘The body’ as a singular, stable site of fixed meaning does not exist in these sources any more than it exists today.

This chapter has foregrounded some of the places in rabbinic literature where gender and ‘the body’ – and gendered bodies – challenge notions of a rigid, stable male:female binary construction of rabbinic gender. The sites upon which we look and how deeply we examine such Late Antique artefacts, certainly impacts what we might discover. Still, one may only wonder about the extent to which such literary artefacts, such fragments and fragmentary evidence, help us uncover gendered bodies as they lived in, and beneath, their skin in their Late Antique settings.

However, asserting that the body is not a singular, stable, site of fixed meaning and questioning the degree to which we may access real lived bodies via textual remnants from long ago both differ from claiming that, according to the rabbis, bodies are purely or even primarily discursive constructs. As the texts about the *androgynos*, as well as the overall rabbinic propensity for conceiving gender (and ‘Jewishness’) as performative, encourage us to see rabbinic gender (and bodies) in ways that move beyond a stable male:female binary, so too, they encourage us to attend to a concomitant resistance to the very binary of discourse and materiality

Bodies, in rabbinic sources, surely exist, they matter, and their materiality – from their external morphology and likely even beyond their skin all the way to their internal,

fluid substances – matters. Bodies have affects. In many ways, as previous authors mentioned at the beginning of this chapter have noted, bodies are central in rabbinic Judaism. I would elaborate and make further explicit that bodies are essential to ‘doing’ and affecting what defines, and who and what constitutes, rabbinic Israel. When *m. Sotah* 3:8 and *m. Kid.* 1:7 inquire after the differences between men and women, they are simultaneously delineating certain practices that define what it means to be Israel, many of which are done with bodies. Similarly, when the *androgynos* body is juxtaposed with male and female bodies, the sources are not only theorizing gender and the body, but the body(s) and boundaries of rabbinic Israel.

Language, or discourse, also matters in rabbinic sources; it too affects things. With language, the world was created. In a remarkable concretization, or materialization, of language, a rabbinic midrash asks why was the world created with the letter *bet* – the first letter that appears in the first word (*bereishit*) of the Torah (Gen. Rab. 1:10). The world is created by, through, and with animated – and animating – language, or to be truer to the theological dimensions of the text, God creates the world by, through, and with such language.

In our efforts, fraught and frustrated as they must be, to understand rabbinic bodies from a materialist perspective, we do best to acknowledge the materiality of language that infuses, enlivens, and animates bodies (and worlds), the discourse surrounding bodies that forms, moulds, and reshapes them, and the shifting and (re)producing bodies themselves through which the discourse about what it means to be Israel takes shape and takes hold. The contours of the bodies of Israel – with all their variety – interact with the ‘doing’ of being Israel – with all its potential subversions – in such a way that the materiality of discourse and the discourse about bodies that matter cannot be seen, or grasped, apart from each other. To inquire after the body in Late Antique rabbinic literature always already challenges the far more modern binary of materiality and discourse as much as, in my readings, an inquiry into rabbinic constructions of genders and bodies expose both as beyond a rigid male:female binary.

Notes

- 1 See Naomi Seidman (1994) for a review essay of five books published during the early 1990s on Judaism and gender. In addition to reviewing Boyar in’s *Carnal Israel* and Eilberg-Schwartz’s *People of the Body*, she reviews Sander Gilman’s *The Jew’s Body*, David Biale’s *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America*, and Eilberg-Schwartz’s *God’s Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*.
- 2 1 Samuel 31:10, 12 use the word *giviah* for body and I Chronicles 10:12 uses *guf*, but in both contexts the words refer to the dead bodies of Saul and his sons.
- 3 On the bodies of God see Sommers (2009).
- 4 See Charlotte Fonrobert (2006, 2007). These two articles, as well as the proofs for another article that Fonrobert sent to me before its publication (2014), have been instrumental to my own work. My debt to her scholarship, as well as my departures from it, will be apparent throughout this chapter.
- 5 See, e.g.: Aaron (1995), Baskin (2002, pp. 61–64), Boyarin (1993, pp. 37–46) and Boyarin 1998, Meeks (1974), Niditch (1984). More recently, Shai Secunda (2012) has examined this tradition in its possible Iranian context.

- 6 See Fonrobert (2006, 2007) for a discussion of the similarities and differences between rabbinic traditions about the *androgynos* and Greco-Roman sources as well as further remarks about the etymology of the term.
- 7 Following the translation of Belser (2011), which discusses rabbinic bodies and disability in the context of the growing field of Disability Studies.
- 8 See also *m. Zav.* 2:1, which also mentions the *androgynos* in the context of a larger list (see below).
- 9 *Mishnah Yev.* 8:6 continues, 'R. Eliezer says, "[He who has sexual intercourse with an] *androgynos* is liable to stoning as with a male"'. Cf. *t. Yev.* 10:2. See Fonrobert (2007, pp. 281–282).
- 10 For detailed discussions of this text see Fonrobert (2006, 2007, 2014).
- 11 Cf. *t. Naz.* 3:19; *t. Bik.* 2:2, and *m. Naz.* 5:7.
- 12 The parallel in *m. Bik.* 4:4 (Naples manuscript) obligates the *androgynos* to levirate marriage in the list of ways the *androgynos* is likened to men, and does not mention that the *androgynos*, when likened to women in *m. Bik.* 4:5 is not obligated to levirate marriage.
- 13 Lieberman's printed text uses 'she', but there is a manuscript variant that uses the 'he'.
- 14 Fonrobert suggests that this opinion is marginalized in the tannaitic corpus (2006, p. 100). See also Fonrobert (2007, p. 282). Kukla also classifies this statement as a minority opinion (2009, p. 194). Lev notes that this is a 'minority opinion', but she consistently refers to the *androgynos* in ways that are consonant with the reading of the *androgynos* as *sui generis*, meaning 'neither male nor female', and as having 'very explicit sex/gender crossing characteristics' (2010, pp. 219–222, 235). Schleicher reads R. Yosi's statement as summarizing *t. Bik.* 2:7, but not connected to *t. Bik.* 2:3–7 as a whole (2011, p. 427). I discuss the one place R. Yosi's statement, with slight variation, is discussed and attributed to him on *b. Yev.* 83a below. The assertion that the *androgynos* is *sui generis* appears unattributed to R. Yosi, and uncontested, in *b. Hag.* 4a and *b. Yev.* 100a (see below).
- 15 Lev suggests that the last statement concerning the *saris hamah* in *t. Yev.* 10:5, which is also presented as an individual opinion, 'presents the key to understanding the *barayta* as a whole' (2010, p. 215). She further points out that 'the redactional choice to place his statement at the end of the description positions sex/gender crossing in the text as a possible summary statement of the description, or at the very least, leaves the reader with the image of the gender-crossing *seris hammah* as the final image' (2010, p. 216). I am making a similar suggestion in this context; the final statement attributed to R. Yosi provides the key to understanding the passage, summarizes what has preceded it (broadened to include *t. Bik.* 2:3–7 as a whole however not just *t. Bik.* 2:7), and leaves the reader with the image of the *androgynos* as *sui generis*.
- 16 Cf. *Yer. Bik.* 2:8, 10b for another phrasing that seems to indicate a unique being in reference, however, to the *koi*. A *koi*, in rabbinic traditions, is a non-human animal occupying a similar place and embedded in a similar discourse about categorization – in this case between that of a domesticated or non-domesticated animal – as the *androgynos*. Although excluded from my discussion here, I believe the relationship between the *koi* and *androgynos* is a worthy undertaking, which I hope to examine in the future. In addition to *y. Bik.* 2:8; 10a–b, see *m. Bik.* 2; *t. Bik.* 4:1–3.
- 17 According to *m. Ber.* 3:3, however, women are obligated to say grace after meals.
- 18 *T. Ber.* 5:14 and *t. Rosh Hash.* 2:5 also state, 'one who is half slave and have free does not fulfil the obligation either for his own kind or those who are not his own kind'. This also appears in the *editio princeps* and ms. London for *t. Meg.* 2:7. Perhaps the *androgynos* is here considered

part, or half, male and part, or half, female (see next note). The language of 'own kind', in any case, seems enough to establish the *androgynos* as *sui generis*; effectively, the *halakhah* here creates a category for, or accommodates, one who is not (fully) male and not (fully) female, and it might follow, for one who is part male and part female, i.e. both male and female. Either scenario seems to indicate that the *androgynos* is *sui generis*.

- 19 The passage distinguishes between the *tumtum*, who cannot fulfil the obligation for 'his own kind', and the *androgynos*, who can fulfil the obligation for 'his own kind'. The *tumtum* is here understood as inevitably either male or female, but it is not known which; if the *tumtum* is discovered to be female, but another *tumtum* is discovered to be male, then a woman cannot fulfil the obligation for a male who is obligated because the woman is not herself obligated (cf. *b. Rosh Hashana* 29a). Concerning the *androgynos*, I see things as a bit more complicated. His own kind does not necessarily mean 'he' is inevitably to be considered either male or female, and thus if male, he can fulfil the obligation for another male since he is obligated himself but if 'he' is female then is not obligated and so cannot fulfil the obligation for another who is. This is the interpretation given by Rashi (*b. Rosh. Hash.* 29a). However, when Rashi comments on the slave who is half free and half not free, he understands the problem to be that the person is both slave and free, and the slave part cannot fulfil the obligation for another, since he is not obligated himself. It could follow then, that the *androgynos* is considered part male and part female, i.e. both, if the same reading is applied in this case. Rashi, here, and elsewhere, seems reluctant to see the *androgynos* as *sui generis*, but that does not mean that tannaitic rabbis were (see Rashi on *b. Yev.* 83b and see also Lev 2010, p. 222).
- 20 Exceptions to this gesture towards inclusion are in sources concerned with land inheritance, appearing before God three times a year (Ex. 23:17; Deut. 16:16), and the biblical commandment of 'valuation' (Lev. 27:1–8).
- 21 See also *Mekhilta of R. Ishmael Mishpatim* 2 where the *androgynos* is included by the phrase 'her children' but excluded from 'sons or daughters' in Ex. 21:4.
- 22 Cf. *m. Arakhin* 1:1.
- 23 Although *t. Bik.* 2:7 contrasts the *tumtum* with the *androgynos*, only constructing the latter as *sui generis*, *b. Yev.* 100a states that both of them are *sui generis* (see below).
- 24 This distinction is made in *m. Arakhin* 1:1 regarding people; cf. *Sifra Vayikra Dibura Denedavah Parashah* 6:5 where the distinction is made regarding sacrificial animals.
- 25 On *b. Yev.* 100a, both the *tumtum* and the *androgynos* are considered *sui generis*. According to the conclusion of *t. Bik.* 2:7, however, the *tumtum* and the *androgynos* are contrasted in this regard; there, the *tumtum* is not seen as *sui generis*.
- 26 The one passage in the *Bavli* that challenges this opinion (*b. Yev.* 83a) will be discussed below.
- 27 My switch here from 'man' to 'male' reflects a difference in *b. Yev.* 83b and *t. Bik.* 2:7. In contrast to *t. Bik.* 2:3–7, where the passage consistently uses the words 'man' and 'woman', R. Yosi's statement is altered in the *Bavli* to 'male' and 'female'. It is unclear why, but it seems consistent in the passage; perhaps it is due to some of the scriptural verses quoted there; further study is needed to determine if this is a common difference between *Bavli* and tannaitic sources.
- 28 *B. Yev.* 83a isolates R. Yosi's statement, either reading is as a counter-opinion to the rest of the passage cited in *t. Bik.* 2:3–7 or, perhaps, only knowing the statement in isolation.
- 29 Rashi (*b. Yev.* 83a) glosses R. Yosi's statement in *t. Bik.* 2:7 as meaning the *androgynos* is of doubtful maleness instead of *sui generis*. This might be accurate in the context of the Talmudic passage, but it differs from the *toseftan* passage.
- 30 Cf. *Sifra Tazria Perek* 1. Note the difference between R. Yehudah permitting (but possibly not requiring) the circumcision of an eight-day-old *androgynos* on the Sabbath in *m. Shab.* 19:3

- and *Sifra Tazria Perek* 1 apparent obligation to do so. This text from the *Sifra* is the only tradition from tannaitic midrashic sources that seems to even entertain a connection between the *androgynos* and maleness; all other traditions explicitly maintain that the *androgynos* is *not* male (see below). Contrast, *Sifre Deut* 215, which explicitly excludes the *androgynos* and *tumtum* from the category of male: 'And if the first-born son (*Deut.* 21:15) – not a *tumtum* or *androgynos*'.
- 31 The *Mekhilta of R. Ishmael Mishpatim* 20, however, excludes the *androgynos*, *tumtum*, and woman from those obligated to appear three times a year before God at the Temple based on the interpretation of the phrase 'all your males' in *Ex.* 23:17. See also *b. Hag.* 4a.
 - 32 As noted above, however, according to *m. Ber.* 3 : 3 women are obligated to say grace after meals.
 - 33 See, for example, *Mekhilta of R. Ishmael (MRI) Bahodesh* 8, *MRI Mishpatim* 5, *MRI Mishpatim* 14, *MRI Mishpatim* 20; *Sifra Kedoshim Perek* 9, *Sifra Kedoshim Perek* 10, *Sifre Numbers Korah*, *Sifre Numbers Pinhas*, *Sifre Deut.* 215 and *Sifre Deut.* 301. See also, e.g. *m. Bik.* 1:5, *m. Hag.* 1:1, *m. Arak.* 1:1, *m. Naz.* 2:7; *t. Ber.* 5:16, *t. Meg.* 2:7; and *t. Rosh Hash.* 2:4.
 - 34 Cf. *t. Sotah* 2:7–9. See Rosen-Zvi (2005, pp. 148–149), Fonrobert (2006, pp. 80–81), and Elizabeth Shanks Alexander (2013, pp. 47–60).
 - 35 *I Sam* 1 : 11 states, *And she vowed a vow, and said: 'O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Your handmaid, but will give unto Your handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.*
 - 36 For an in-depth examination of this passage and its development in rabbinic sources see Alexander (2013).
 - 37 See, e.g., *t. Kid.* 1:11.
 - 38 See *b. Kid.* 34a.
 - 39 See *m. Meg.* 2 : 4, which excludes deaf people, intellectually disabled people, and minors but makes no mention of women. There is also a minority opinion regarding minors in both *m. Meg.* 2:4 and *t. Meg.* 2:7.
 - 40 These contradictory teachings further substantiate Alexander's claims that the rule concerning timebound, positive commandments was not prescriptive in tannaitic sources.
 - 41 Fonrobert writes, 'When the Mishnah raises the question of what the difference between a man and a woman is, as it does once explicitly (*M. Sotah* 3:8), it answers with a list of the distinct legal capacities attributed to both, not with an abstract determination of biological or anthropological differences' (2007, pp. 245–275). Alexander also writes, 'The list is not compiled by contemplating the matter of male–female difference as a theoretical issue, but by surveying existing legal sources and extracting those rulings that treat men differently from women' (2013, p. 57).
 - 42 The notion of 'intra-activity' as opposed to interactivity is taken from Karen Barad (2003). She writes, 'The notion of *intra-action* (in contrast to the usual "interaction," which presumes the prior existence of independent entities/relata) represents a profound conceptual shift' (2003, p. 815). She further writes, 'Discursive practices and material phenomena do not stand in a relationship of externality to one another; rather, the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity...Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other' (2003, p. 822).
 - 43 Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 46 : 5 and 46:13. In the latter tradition, the question of how one knows that circumcision takes place on the penis is contextualized by the mention of other body parts

- that are referred to as circumcised in the biblical text (ear, heart, and mouth). The tradition likely reflects both the need to account for these other biblical mentions of circumcision and to stress the rabbinic importance of circumcision for Jewish men in contrast to Christian and non-Jewish men who are not circumcised. See Fonrobert (2006, p. 84 and 2007, p. 274) for contextualization amongst Roman sources.
- 44 This does not mean, however, that they are not gendered in ways that challenge or broaden rabbinic constructions of maleness and femaleness. See Dahan Kalev and Ferber Tzurel, 'Sarah was a butch: sexual identity, gender practices, and Sarah's place as mother in the Jewish national pantheon' (2012). It should be noted that *b. Yev.* 64a uses the word *akor* to describe the biblical patriarchs Isaac and Abraham's infertility; thus if Fonrobert is correct that the *saris* simply means 'infertile man', one should still inquire after the relationship between the different words used. In other words, since one can be infertile without being a *saris*, the term *saris* likely has some further meaning. The lack of 'manliness', or the more effeminate character of the *saris* beyond his infertility, supports the understanding of the *saris* as challenging constructions of rabbinic masculinity. See Lev (2010) and Balberg (2014, pp. 140–147).
 - 45 Fonrobert (2006) contextualizes this tradition among Greco-Roman sources. See also Levinson (2000), Lev (2007, 2010), and Balberg (2014, pp. 140–147).
 - 46 For a close reading of this tradition, see Lev (2007).
 - 47 Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 53:5.
 - 48 *B. Yev.* 64b, shortly preceding this passage, asserts that *Sarah* (and Abraham) were *tumtumin*. See Kessler (2006) and Schleicher (2011). *B. Baba Batra* 58a discusses Sarah's (presumably feminine) beauty; *Gen. Rab.* 53:9 depicts Sarah's breasts gushing with milk.
 - 49 For a more detailed discussion and additional sources, see Kessler (2006 and 2005).
 - 50 See *m. Bekhorot* 7:5, which does not mention lactation, but disqualifies a man from serving as a priest in the Temple if 'his breasts are hanging like those of a woman'. See Fonrobert (2007, p. 281) and Rosen-Zvi (2005).
 - 51 Further study is needed, but here I mention the apparent focus on the secondary sex traits of the *saris* and *aylonit* in contrast to the relatively fixed focus on the genitalia of the *androgynos*.
 - 52 Fonrobert (2014, n.p.). In the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta*, the word 'white' (*loven*) is only used, to my knowledge, in connection with the *androgynos* and *tumtum*; in *Sifra Zavim Perek 1*, 'white' is used in the context of *zavim* and there contrasted to *dam* (blood) not *odem* (red).
 - 53 The text continues, 'If they saw white [discharge] and red [discharge] at the same time [such that they overlap] they do burn the heave-offering on their account, and they are not liable on their account for the impurity of the temple and its holy things'. Cf. *m. Zav* 2:1 and *Sifra Zavim Perek 1*, the latter of which does not mention the *androgynos* or *tumtum*. Both *m. Zav.* 2:1 and *Sifra Zavim Perek 1* juxtapose 'white' (*loven*) discharge and blood (*dam*), not 'red' (*odem*); In contrast, *t. Zav* 2:2 and *t. Bik.* 2:4 and 2:5 only use 'white' and 'red'. For further discussion within the rabbinic corpus, see *b. Nid.* 28a–b. Cf. *m. Zav.* 2:1.
 - 54 Although *t. Zav.* 2:2 groups both the *tumtum* and the *androgynos* together, *t. Bik.* 2:7 distinguishes between them.
 - 55 *M. Zav* 2 : 1 appears to differ here: 'Tumtum and *androgynos*, they place upon them the stringencies of men and the stringencies of women. They become impure by blood (*dam*) like a woman and with white (*loven*) like a man and their impurity is [in the category of] doubtful [impurity]'. If the *tumtum* and *androgynos* are here placed under the stringencies of men and women, and if the stringency in this case would be that the heave offering is burned on their account (personal communication with Mira Balberg), then *m. Zav.* 2:1 appears at odds with

- t. Bik.* 2:7. I note that *m. Bik.* 4:7 does not list, among its list of ways in which the *androgynos* differs from both men and women, that they do not burn the heave-offering on account of the *androgynos*.
- 56 I have not found any sources that mention semen (*shikhvat zera*) or menstrual blood in connection with the *androgynos*. Rashi, in his comments to the talmudic discussion of *t. Zav.* 2:2 on *b. Nid.* 28a explains 'loven' as likened to a non-procreative seminal emission (*domay l'keri*) and 'odem' as likened to menstrual blood (*domay l'dam middot*), but this is a juxtaposition of similarity not sameness.
- 57 Of course I realize that other rabbinic passages (perhaps *m. Zav.* 2:1), subsequent rabbinic passages (e.g. *b. Nid.* 28a–29a), Tosafists (e.g. *b. Yev.* 83b), and even later interpreters to this day attempt to 'map' the *androgynos* onto an existing *halakhic* system organized along male–female gender duality. Thus it is asserted that the issue here is that the *androgynos* is either male or female, and since the *androgynos*' gender remains unknown, certain consequences follow. In the context of *t. Bik.* 2:3–7 (and *t. Zav.* 2:2), and drawing from other passages discussed throughout this chapter, I do not think that it is correct to assert that the *androgynos*' gender can be made to fit squarely into either the category of male/man or female/woman.
- 58 From the context it appears that what is meant by male and female is not the specific mention of "male and female/*zakhar and nekevah*) as an exact phrase that appears in *Gen.* 1:27, 5:2, etc. Rather, a biblical passage that contains the mention of both male and/or female (e.g. *Lev.* 15:33, *Lev.* 27:2–4; *Num.* 5:3). Cf. *Sifra Vayikra Diburā Denedabāh Parashah* 6, which discusses the exclusion of an *androgynos* or *tumtum* animal in the context of animals fit for sacrifice. See also *b. Yev.* 83b–84a.
- 59 At one point the text states, 'Does every place in scripture that states *from male to female* (*Num.* 5:3) come to exclude a *tumtum* and *androgynos*' (*b. Nid.* 28b). There is a degree of irony here, since *Numbers* 5:3 is the only place where scripture states 'from male to female'. The passage, however, understands this more generally, as 'male and female' not as 'from male to female'.
- 60 This seems to be the implicit strategy of previously published works that either treat the 'primal androgyne' or the *androgynos* but do not bring the two into direct contact.
- 61 See note 5 above for some of the more recent relevant bibliography.
- 62 For a discussion of these traditions and a feminist critique of them, see Judith Baskin (2002, pp. 44–64).
- 63 *B. Eir.* uses *diu partzuf panim*. *B. Ket.* 8a refers to 'two creations', using neither *du partzufin* nor *androgynos*.
- 64 There the phrase used is *di prosopon*. *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 and *Lev. Rab.* 14:1 also interpret the *adam* as a *golem*, an unfinished form. See Kessler (2006). The *Bavli* traditions do not include any mention of *adam* as a *golem*.
- 65 *B. Eir.* 18a uses the second half of *Gen.* 1:27; *b. Ber.* 61a uses *Gen.* 9:6; *b. Ket.* 8a uses the first half of *Gen.* 1:27.
- 66 This is more accurately the reading of *b. Ber.* 61a and *b. Eir.* 18a. Rashi and the Tosafists offer differing readings of the creation of *adam* in the passage in *b. Ket.* 8a. However, in the former two talmudic passages, the opinion might not be definitive; the discussions seem to remain somewhat unresolved.
- 67 Baskin correctly points out that *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 with its simultaneous creation of male and female is exceptional even in *Genesis Rabbah* (2002, pp. 60–61).
- 68 The *Bavli* sources debate whether *adam ha-rishon* was created as 'two-sided' or whether the woman was created from an appendage/tail (*zanav*) of *adam*.
- 69 *Gen.* 2:7 as the basis for *b. Ber.* 61a seems to stack the deck in favour of what appears to be their trend in maintaining the creation of an original male *adam*.

- 70 It might be that the *Bavli* sources work on both levels as well, but I think in a far less explicit way. At this point, however, I do think the *Bavli* focuses almost exclusively on the creation of *adam*, without consciously connecting *adam* to a God who is *androgynos*. In the places where either Gen. 1:27 or 9:6 are cited, it seems that they are cited to prove a male *adam* created in God's (male) image. I have focused my discussion here on the version of the primal androgyne midrash in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 and its comparison with *Bavli* traditions. *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 and *Lev. Rab.* 14:1 have some differences. Notably, in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1, as opposed to *Lev. Rab.* 14:1, the *adam* as *androgynos* is not cut into two. For the theological dimensions of *Lev. Rab.* 14:1, see Kessler (2009, pp. 91–92).
- 71 Although Butler seems to be writing about 'masculine' and 'feminine' and I am focusing on 'male' and 'female' here, she soon after writes, 'The conflation of gender with masculine/feminine, man/woman, male/female, thus performs the very naturalization that the notion of gender is meant to forestall' (2004, p. 43).
- 72 In fact, Gen. 1:27 is itself, strictly speaking, vanished from the text since *Gen. Rab.* 8:11, like *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 above, both cite Gen. 5:2 instead. See Theodor's notes (Theodor and Albeck 1965, pp. 55 and 64).
- 73 Cf. *b. Meg.* 9a. Baskin provides ample evidence to demonstrate that the creation of *adam* as *androgynos* is not the dominant view in rabbinic sources (2002, pp. 44–64).
- 74 Already in *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 the interpretation of *adam* as *androgynos* is followed by different interpretations (*di prosopon, golem*).
- 75 See note 14 for examples of such marginalization in contemporary scholarship.

Works Cited

- Aaron, D. (1995). Imagery of the divine and the human: on the mythology of genesis Rabba 8:1. *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 5: 1–62.
- Alexander, E. (2013). *Gender and Timebound Commandments in Judaism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: toward and understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 (3): 801–831.
- Baskin, J. (2002). *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press.
- Balberg, M. (2014). *Purity, Body, and Self in Early Rabbinic Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Belser, J.W. (2011). Reading Talmudic bodies: disability, narrative and the gaze in rabbinic Judaism. In: *Disability in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Sacred Texts, Historical Traditions, and Social Analysis* (eds. D. Schumm and M. Stoltzfus), 5–27. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Boyarin, D. (1993). *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Boyarin, D. (1998). Gender. In: *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. M.C. Taylor), 117–135. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1998). Performative acts and gender constitution: an essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre Journal* 40 (4): 519–531.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- Eilberg-Schwartz, H. (1992). *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Fonrobert, C. (2000). *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Fonrobert, C. (2006). Semiotics of the sexed body in early halakhic discourse. In: *How Should Rabbinic Literature Be Read in the Modern World?* (ed. M. Kraus), 79–105. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Fonrobert, C. (2007). Regulating the human body: rabbinic legal discourse and the making of Jewish gender. In: *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (eds. C. Fonrobert and M.S. Jaffee), 270–294. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fonrobert, C. (2014). Making of Jewish Gender). Gender duality and its subversions in rabbinic law. In: *Gender in Judaism and Islam: Common Lives, Uncommon Heritage* (eds. F. Kashani-Sabet and B. Wenger), 106–126. New York: New York University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2000). *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kalev, H.D. and Tzurel, F. (2012). Sarah was a butch: sexual identity, gender practices, and Sarah's place as mother in the Jewish national pantheon. *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 16: 220–237.
- Kessler, G. (2005). Let's cross that body when we get to it: gender and ethnicity in rabbinic literature. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73: 329–359.
- Kessler, G. (2006). Bodies in motion: preliminary notes on queer theory and rabbinic literature. In: *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (eds. T. Penner and C.V. Stichele), 389–409. Leiden: Brill.
- Kessler, G. (2009). *Conceiving Israel: The Fetus in Rabbinic Narratives*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kraemer, D. (1996). *Reading the Rabbis: The Talmud as Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kukla, E. (2009). "Created by the hand of heaven": sex, love and the androgynous. In: *The Passionate Torah* (ed. D. Ruttenberg). New York: New York University Press.
- Lev, S. (2007). How the Aylonit got her sex. *AJS Review* 31 (2): 297–316.
- Lev, S. (2010). They treat him as a man and see him as a woman: the Tannaitic understanding of the congenital eunuch. *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 17 (3): 213–243.
- Levinson, J. (2000). Cultural androgyny in rabbinic literature. In: *From Athens to Jerusalem: Medicine in Hellenized Jewish Lore and Early Christian Literature* (eds. S. Kotttek, J. Levinson, M. Hortsmanhoff and G. Ferngren), 119–140. Rotterdam: Erasmus.
- Lieberman, S. (1992). *Tosefta Kifshuta [Hebrew]*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary Press.
- Meeks, W.A. (1974). The image of the androgyne: some uses of a symbol in earliest Christianity. *Journal of the History of Religions* 13 (3): 165–208.
- Niditch, S. (1984). A cosmic Adam: man as mediator in rabbinic literature. *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35 (2): 137–147.
- Rosen-Zvi, I. (2005). The temple of the body: the list of priestly blemishes in the Mishnah and the place of the temple in the Tannaitic house of study. *Mad'ei Yahadut* 43: 49–85.
- Satlow, M. (1994). "They abused him like a woman": homoeroticism, gender blurring, and the rabbis in Late Antiquity. *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 (1): 1–25.
- Schleicher, M. (2011). Constructions of sex and gender: attending to Androgynes and Tumtumim through Jewish scriptural use. *Literature and Theology* 25 (4): 422–435.
- Schofer, J. (2005). *Confronting Vulnerability: The Body and the Divine in Rabbinic Ethics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Secunda, S. (2012). The construction, composition, and idealization of the female body in rabbinic literature and parallel Iranian texts: three excursions. *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 23: 60–86.
- Seidman, N. (1994). Carnal knowledge: sex and the body in Jewish studies. *Jewish Social Studies, New Series* 1 (1): 115–146.
- Sommer, B.D. (2009). *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Theodor, J. and Albeck, C. (1965). *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*. Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books.

CHAPTER 4

The One and the Many

Ancestors and Sorcerers in Hohodene Worldview

Robin M. Wright

I am *Kuwai*, you [pointing to step-son] are *Kuwai*, you [pointing to me, the researcher] are *Kuwai*. (José Cornelio 1976)

The research on which this chapter is based has been conducted over a period of three decades among the Hohodene peoples of the Aiary River in the Northwest Amazon. An Arawak-speaking people, the Hohodene are one of several phratries that comprise a hypothetical 'people' called by outsiders the 'Baniwa'. This name is not an ethnonym though it has been used by outsiders since early colonization in the eighteenth century and today is accepted by the native people as their ethnic identity.

The Northwest Amazon region has been compared to a 'Tower of Babel' because of its linguistic diversity. The more than 22 ethnic groups who consider themselves as distinct socio-political units are grouped by linguists into three major language families: northern Arawak, eastern Tukano, and Maku. Despite their linguistic diversity, all peoples share in a number of cultural patterns and institutions, among them the sacred rites of passage involving the ancestral flutes and trumpets which are considered to be the Body of the first ancestral being from which came all human ancestors. These flutes and trumpets are considered extremely sacred, for which reason they are generally hidden, wrapped in leaf bundles and buried along the riverbanks in places that only the adult men know.

There is a large bibliography of works by anthropologists, scientific travellers, missionaries, and government officials about the sacred flutes in the Northwest Amazon (see, for example, Hugh-Jones 1979; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996; Wright 1998). Much of this literature tends to be sensationalistic and distorted by the authors' own biases. Catholic and evangelical missionaries, for example, have for over a century hunted and persecuted native beliefs in the sacred flutes and masks which they labelled as demonic,

'Satan'. For that reason, many communities no longer celebrate the rites of their ancestors, having lost all beliefs that at one time played a major role in their inter-tribal relations, as well as intra-tribal identities.

One of the features of the sacredness embodied in the ancestral flutes and trumpets is the strong prohibition of women and the uninitiated from seeing them, or knowing what they look like. In contemplating the strong taboo which still exists in traditionalist communities, I have come to the conclusion that much of what has been said regarding male dominance and symbolic violence is misguided. Consequently, outsiders who constantly try to break the secrecy are doing tremendous harm to the identity of the various sibs/phratries¹ when they insist on revealing the flutes and trumpets to those who cannot see them by virtue of the 'law' and traditions of the tribes. This can be demonstrated by the close links perceived between the creation cycles and the prohibition itself.

Among northern Arawakan societies, 'phratric exogamy' is imperative to social inter-relationships; i.e. women marry out of the phratry into which they were born and into a phratry with whom their families wish to establish or continue alliances. The taboo on outsider women seeing the sacred ancestral flutes of their husbands' phratry has little if anything to do with a supposed dread of 'incest' (which does not exist in Baniwa mythic narratives) and more with the potential dangers of an 'external Other' becoming an 'insider', and discovering the source of the phratry's ancestral power. This represents a great risk expressed in the mythic cycles of the primordial world, in which the Creator and his kin are always opposed to the 'other peoples', non-kin, affines, animal tribes, generally the enemy tree animals who are portrayed as the primordial sorcerers.

In the very first cycle of creation narratives, the animal tribes steal poison from the Creator and with it, they kill the Creator's younger brother. Thus, death entered the world, eliminating definitively the possibility of humans retaining their primordial immortality. The ensuing struggle over sorcery in the narratives is constant and without resolution; it is the equivalent in present-day society of the struggles between the jaguar shamans/prophets vs the sorcerers (who have animal-like features attributed to them by shamans). The implications of this struggle are that women who come from other tribes marrying in to a phratry bring with them the potential threat of destruction. They are, for that reason, prohibited from knowing the 'secrets of the flutes and trumpets'. It is clear, however, that women of *the same* sib and phratry do know of their primal ancestry, what the name of the flute ancestor is. *But* they are prohibited from speaking about them – as are the initiated boys who actually see the flutes and trumpets.

The women are intermediaries with the outside world just as shamans are intermediaries with the Other World of the great spirits. Both therefore are locked in a kind of complementary opposition that is the moving force or dynamic of reciprocity and exchange, implying both marriage and sorcery. Ancestral power embodied in the flutes and trumpets thus distinguishes one phratry's collective identity from another. Since the law of exogamy (marital exchange) is a centrifugal force through which the external world (in-marrying women, non-indigenous peoples) penetrates the internal world of the sib/phratry, there is an extreme taboo on showing the flutes to the women, which we interpret to be an adaptive mechanism to preserve intact the internal continuity of

phratic identity against the threatening powers which outsiders represent. This assertion underlies statements made by important shamans about not giving up the traditions, for then the enemy will take over and the people will be ruined. (Wright 2013¹) One hopes that the pioneering protection of the 'Yurupary'² established by UNESCO through the Colombian government will be extended to Brazil and Venezuelan peoples who still observe the traditions.

4.1 'With Shame He Comes': The Hidden Anomaly

In the sacred narrative of *Kuwai*, as soon as the child was born, the men hustled him away and hid him in the forest because of its strange appearance and extremely violent acts – jaguar teeth, a placenta that had the form of a stingray, the child's uncontrollable thirst for milk. His body is totally different from human bodies today, for it was completely perforated and, from the multiple holes, sounds and melodies associated with multiple animals, birds, and fish were produced. The Sun father was astonished that his child had such a strange form. The child was so 'ashamed' of his strange appearance, it is said, he violently sucked dry the breast of a sloth 'wetnurse'. Fearing that his child would wreak havoc in the world, the Creator sent him away to live hidden for a long time. *Kuwai* was his child, the 'soul of his father the Sun', with all the shamanic knowledge and power of his father but also was the incarnation of sorcery and sickness.

One 98-year old jaguar shaman narrated the birth of *Kuwai* as follows:

...At *Kuwai*'s birth, he was hidden away. *Kuwai* was taken to *Kuwai ifakahrukaan*. (place where he was nursed by a sloth mother) The men showed *Amaru* a stingray, called, '*nia-maru*', saying that the only thing that was born was just placenta. Before *Kuwai* was born, his mother *Amaru* went looking for a place to give birth. She went to the Uaupés, later the Içana – the place called *Tsépan* – and she lay down there. Later, *Puwedali*, on the *Ucaiali* (Uaupés), and went to lie down there. Later, Uapui, and she stayed there. After *Kuwai* was born, he was hidden from her at a place downriver below.

The child's real mother 'knew' that the men had taken her child away, and she *wanted* her child back. Throughout the story, the men deceive the women fearing that they would take the dangerous powers embodied in *Kuwai* away, which would leave them helpless to defend their phratic identities from outsiders. This dread of being without an identity and inability to do anything at all is also used as a justification for the secrecy.

In the following discussion, I seek to show systematically how the body of *Kuwai* was transformed into all the sacred flutes and trumpets. For each instrument, I ask: what cultural categories are being highlighted? What view of 'the world' is communicated through the body and sounds that *Kuwai* makes? By combining all the features of the individual instruments together, we come to a deeper understanding of Hohodene 'worldview'. For, it seems, *Kuwai* embodies both a concept of multiple beings-in-One, and the One being-in-multiplicity that is the universe.

4.2 Inside and Outside, Open and Closed: Duality in Kuwai's Body

To begin, the principal Hohodene drawing of what *Kuwai* looks like was made by a Hohodene jaguar shaman Luiz Gomes, a distant cousin of Manuel da Silva, the subject of my book (2013). The anthropologist/linguist Dr Omar González-Ñáñez, who has worked for four decades among northern Arawak-speaking peoples, requested that Luiz draw *Kuwai*, also known as *Kuwai-ka-Wamundana*, the 'Guardian of Sorcery and Sickness', a sacred name referring to *Kuwai*'s principal animal soul identity as 'the black sloth shadow-soul' (see Figure 4.4).

All Baniwa ancestral flutes and trumpets are considered to be parts of the body of *Kuwai*.³ His Body is totally different from human bodies today, for it consisted of multiple parts, each being an ancestral form of an animal, bird, or fish. Most of the flutes come in pairs, replicating the long bones of *Kuwai*'s body. The exceptions are the single flute called *Mulitu*, said to be his penis; and the triple flutes called *Waliadoa*, 'Young Sister initiate' corresponding to the three claws on one of its paws. Each pair of flutes has a sacred name corresponding to a primordial, ancestral being, whose body had the shape of a long flute or trumpet. Several of these ancestral beings had appendages – wings, legs and arms, added to the long bones, claws, and appendages of 'Kuwai's Body'. Considered altogether, the graphic representations of these primordial beings, chiselled in the boulders of many rapids in the Northwest Amazon, comprise a cultural memory of the primordial world, how it came into being, and the events that made the contemporary world the way it is (González-Ñáñez 2007; Xavier Leal 2008; Wright 2013). This *cultural memory* is, I hope to show, also a *social history*. For, the elements comprising *Kuwai*'s body orient the Hohodene today as to who their kin and allies, as well as their affines and enemies, are.

The body of *Kuwai* in the drawing below consists: first, of a complex combination of sicknesses and remedies concentrated in both a central internal axis and the external covering his body; and second, numerous holes in his body through which a variety of animal sounds and melodies are made that, following *Kuwai*'s 'death' in a world-transforming fire, became material ancestral flutes and trumpets of existing phratries, as well as the defining features of Hohodene Personhood. To understand this, I shall analyse the elements of sickness and sorcery in *Kuwai*'s Body first, followed then by the notion of ancestrality.

The body parts of *Kuwai* considered to be sources of both sicknesses and remedies are: (i) the crown of his head (*Kuwai ithipale*), (ii) throat (*liweda*), (iii) the heart (*ikaale*), and (iv) the umbilicus (*hliepuhle*). All of these are key points of soul passage from the crown of the head down to the umbilicus. These critical points link *Kuwai* to the knowledge and powers of the sorcerer and the shaman, as well as to the principal points of entry and exit of all souls at birth, coming-of-age, sickness, and death. Though not shown in this drawing, two other points of soul passage are the eyes and the mouth.

Around the crown are clustered various icons of sicknesses that shamans attribute to *Kuwai*: hair, said to be tucum fibre, from the moriche palm (*Mauritia flexuosa*), also known as buriti,⁴ associated with sicknesses produced by a sorcerer's poison; *manhene*, a white stone 'that gives headaches'; a snake that produces a painful sickness called *hiuiathi*.

The 'heart/soul' concentrates in the form of darts, four major sicknesses that the shaman must learn how to cure first during his/her apprenticeship: the *yoopinai*, spirits of the environment; the *walama*, darts that come from shamans, whether human or not;⁵ the *haikuuta*, pieces of wood; and sicknesses of the blood, such as haemorrhaging.

Finally, the umbilicus which is said to contain the most powerful remedy (*tápe*) against sorcerers' poison – 'our umbilicus', the connection between the first ancestors of the phratries and all their descendants. The umbilical cord constitutes the very first 'soul' of every person which enters a body in This World at birth. It is also the first of several souls to leave a person at death and return to the Other World, where all the souls of the deceased from the beginning of time are located. For the shaman Luiz, it is from the umbilicus of *Kuwai* that the shaman takes out medicine for *ifiukali*, a grave sickness of the digestive tract that makes one thin, anaemic, wasted away. This sickness, like all others mentioned, has its origins in the stories.⁶

The internal axis of sickness and health,¹ as we might call it, in *Kuwai*'s body consists of the major sources of sicknesses, which are nevertheless the sources of remedies that shamans can use to cure the same sickness. This double-sided feature of the powers contained in *Kuwai*'s body is as essential to understand as it is to know how each type of sickness and remedy came into being, by whom, and why.

As one elderly shaman narrator explained,

...After *Kuwai* had gone away, *Nhiaperikuli* filled a pot of *manhene* (poison) and then, a friend of his drank the plant poisons called *hfero*, *lixupana*. He began to have diarrhoea. *Nhiaperikuli* took the ceramic pot to his house and left it there in order to keep it from others wanting it. He ordered his people the *Kuwaikere*⁷ to make sure that no other people could come and take away the poison. The *Eenunai*, however, succeeded in tricking them and stole the poison *Eenunai iketsuali ikurumanhene*. (Matteo 1998)

The hair (*Kuwai liidzu*) of his body is considered one of the most potent types of poison which a true shaman must obtain from *Kuwai* in order to cure a patient in This World. *Kuwai*'s body was covered by hair or fur, which seems like a paradoxical mixing/merging of the features 'open' and 'closed' used to describe his body and, as we shall see, the universe. Similar to the sloth's (*wamu*) body, which harbours innumerable kinds of fungus that live symbiotically in its pelt, *Kuwai*'s fur was full of poison. Similar also to the sloth's habits, *Kuwai* was most of the time 'closed', with great control over his digestive orifices, which is appropriate for the fasting period he imposed on initiates. When his body 'opens', it is either to emit creative sounds, or to allow fluids to fall like rain on the earth. It is important to understand how these sound emissions are modulated throughout the narrative (e.g. a melody sung in harmony vs a chaotic bellowing of sounds).⁸

4.3 Viscera, Body Fluids, and their Significance

Kuwai's viscera (specifically, his liver) contained poison that was absorbed by certain plants after his death; these plants have the shape of a liver.⁹ Larvae associated with rotten wood are said to be the 'bile of *Kuwai*' (*lidanhe*), part of his poisonous animal-form

associated with rot. Or, better stated, in the perspective of *Kuwai*, the larvae are 'his heart-soul', while to humans, they are the bile that spoils the meat of a freshly-killed animal.

One of the most important fluids of *Kuwai*'s body is his blood which is identified by the shamans as '*parikā*' (*dzaato*), the psychoactive that shamans inhale in its dried out form as snuff in order to 'die' and return to the Other World of the deities and spirits. This 'blood' nourishes the shaman's own heart/soul, *ikaale*, which means both the material organ and the spiritual source of life-supporting energy in the blood that can be vital to cures.

Kuwai's saliva, *liahnuma*, can be both a creative, seminal fluid which regenerates the physical world, but can also be used in sorcery. One example of *liahnuma* in the normal world is the life-giving sap that drops from the trees as though, Hohodene say, a larger tree is feeding its young saplings. The 'other side' of *liahnuma* is used in sorcery, where a sorcerer will cast a spell embodied in his spittle left along the trail where the victim will walk. Sorcery produces a condition of physical, spiritual 'openness' in its victims in which an excess of fluids is involuntarily expelled from the body (i.e. vomiting and diarrhoea).

An excessive loss of this life – giving fluid, however, is one feature of the most dreaded ailments an initiate could get, a wasting away sickness, *purakali*, characterized by constant dribbling of saliva, the transformation of the initiate's body parts into animal, or plant parts. It is the dissolution of the person into a grotesque assemblage of deformed plant and animal parts.¹⁰ *Purakali* is a form of Other-becoming that occurs at seasonal changes, for example, from dry to wet, or the result of not obeying restrictions at these critical moments of time. When this occurs, a powerful reaction from the 'Owner of Sicknesses' can be expected against the initiate, just as happened in primordial times.

Besides the animal, bird, and fish parts of his body, *Kuwai* can transform into various spirit-Others who are considered to be powerful and dangerous 'enemies', (*-puunda*): *Inyaime*,¹¹ an extremely dangerous, cannibalistic ogre, a transformative spirit of death, is known as the 'Other *Kuwai*' (that is, *Kuwai* can transform into an 'Other', demonic being); *Yoopinai*, sickness-transmitting spirits of the forest, rivers, and riverbanks; the White Man, *yalanawinai*, who, it is believed, was generated from grubs of a rotten, slain enemy Anaconda.

The kind of spirit called *inyaime* is said to become embodied in a living sorcerer's 'heart-soul', for a sorcerer by definition is someone who has transformed from a cultural 'person' into an 'enemy other'. The kind of spirits called *yoopinai* are embodied in almost any plant, bush, or shrub, as well as the countless kinds of insects, bugs, and spiders which can be invoked to give sickness and pain to humans. These came into being ('were born') from *Kuwai*'s ashes at the moment of his spirit's departure from This World. Most importantly, at the moment of his burning in fire, he lets loose from his body all of these spirits which then spread throughout the world. *Kuwai* embodied all sickness and sorcery; he is their 'owner'. His fur, it is said, 'ran and entered the body of the black sloth', *Kuwai*'s shadow-soul today (*Kuwai idanamini wamu*) and the avatar of sorcery.

If an initiate breaks the restrictions imposed on all who are participating in the *Kuwai* rites, it is believed that a catastrophe will ensue. For, the other *Kuwai* has the power to destroy life, through violence, chaotic and loud sounds like the crashing of thunder, and by unleashing sickness and sorcery which take on numerous forms throughout the world.

4.4 *Kuwai* and Growth: The Ancestral Heart/Soul (*ikaale*) of the Sun Father

The story of *Kuwai* tells of how he came into the world and develops through an entire life-cycle: conception, pre-birth, baby/infant, adult, old man, and post-mortem body/soul. During the story, an initiate is instructed on the multiplex relations between humans and Other beings. *Kuwai* was eventually 'killed' at the end of the first initiation rite when his father pushed him into an enormous fire and, following the fiery transformation, his body became ancestral trumpets/flutes. Precisely at the same place where *Kuwai* was born, *Hipana*, a gigantic paxiuba palmtree, shot out from the ground, connecting This World and the Other World where *Kuwai* lives eternally. The paxiuba palmtree (which is naturally hollowed out) was the materialized form of all the apertures and long bones of *Kuwai*'s body. It was the source of all the sacred flutes and trumpets. Recalling that *Hipana* is considered the 'World Centre', the 'celestial umbilical cord', the sacred flutes and trumpets are therefore the material umbilical connection between primordial ancestors and all their descendants.

These are the ancestors of the Hohodene phratry. Their names are remembered for the events and processes that occurred in primordial times and that are significant to the social reproduction of the phratry, as well as of the Baniwa/Kuripako-speaking peoples as a whole. Thus, we may say that the knowledge embodied in *Kuwai* consists of the cultural memory of the phratry, all of the life phases and transitions that people will pass through, as well as the principal characters in the drama of cosmic history.

As in the story, the sounds of the flutes and trumpets played in initiation rites today are what make initiates and fruit-bearing palm trees today grow, along with the whips that were part of *Kuwai*'s body. The sounds plus the whips break open the initiates' skin and penetrate the initiates' heart/soul. With these sounds, in sum, there is growth and expansion; with *Kuwai*'s whips, plus the 'fire' of sacred pepper, the initiates 'dry out', that is, they become immune to the potentially harmful ancestral spirits (*Kuwainai*).¹² Initiates are taught to control bodily needs by fasting and to become fully cultural beings by recognizing and experiencing the music of the sacred.

When *Kuwai*'s melodies are played, today as in the beginning, they are accompanied by the sounds of whips slashing the bodies of the participants. In resisting the pain of the whips (not demonstrating pain through crying or even flinching), all life grows 'with force' (quickly) and strength. This is why the men play the flutes and trumpets during the time of the ripening of the forest-fruits, at the base of the fruit-trees – in order to make them grow in abundance, as food for the initiates and whoever is 'seeing *Kuwai*' (Hugh-Jones 1979; Maia 2009; Vútova 2011).

4.5 Sacred Sounds and Growth

The apertures, 'holes', in *Kuwai*'s body were externalized and materialized after his sacrifice in the Great Fire. The sacred flutes were then measured and cut from the paxiuba tree. Once the tree was broken into pieces and fell to the ground, the Creator fashioned them in such a way as to replicate the melodic sounds of the original body of *Kuwai*. After he finished producing all of the instruments, the Creator declared that they, the 'people can take these, and play them'.

Following this, narrators may continue by telling how each of the phratry's ancestral flutes and trumpets 'were born', emerging from the holes in the Rapids of Hipana, the Centre of the World. Each emerged and was sent to live on a specific piece of river-front land, as though the One single source had multiplied in order to be dispersed in multiple communities over a large geographical area.

The sounds of these flutes and trumpets penetrate and 'open up' initiates' bodies today making them grow into mature, 'ripe' adults. *Kuwai*'s thorax became the great trumpets that bellow out the 'Jaguar Bone' song that 'opened up' the world, making it expand like a balloon to its present-day size. With these sounds, there is physical growth. The sounds are always accompanied by *Kuwai*'s whips, an integral part of the 'body of *Kuwai*' that, according to Hohodene elders, stimulate growth and demonstrate resistance to the stinging pain.¹³

The shaman's drawing below positions the apertures in *Kuwai*'s body in such a way as to indicate an order, on both sides of the body, of named flutes and trumpets (each stick or oblong shape representing a long flute). From the meanings attributed to each of the flutes, we come to understand (i) what features or attributes of primordial ancestry are considered central to Hohodene worldview, (ii) the meaning of the ancestral world and its powers which were transmitted to all future generations, (iii) the Hohodene understanding of their Creator's reproduction of their cultural memory.

By 'reproduction', I mean not merely biological reproduction, nor the physical 'body' in the narrow sense which Reichel-Dolmatoff gives to the flutes (1989, 1996). For, besides their being parts of *Kuwai*'s primordial body, the flutes and trumpets represent the nature and qualities of the person, as understood culturally, of collectivities or the collective 'Self' (sibs and phratries), and of collective 'Others' or alterity.

Ancestral powers of fertility, reproduction, and growth, coupled with the catastrophic powers of sickness and sorcery, are embodied in the sacred flutes and trumpets. In this world as a whole also, for, everywhere there are ancestral souls (*Kuwainai*), there will also be spirits of enemies, sickness, and sorcery. In other words, the 'world' like *Kuwai*, is imbued with paradoxical powers.

4.5.1 *Kuwai-ka Wamundana: By Parts*

I shall now show how each of the pairs of sacred flutes and trumpets refers to an attribute of cultural personhood, in both individual and collective senses of ancestry, as well as attributes of alterity. The inter-relations of the parts are articulated

through transformative processes of 'becoming Other'. This becoming Other is effected by externalizing and materializing that which is internal and powerful, or by internalizing powerful meanings that are imbued in materially external forms.

Kuwai's body may be divided into four parts: left and right sides, upper and lower parts. Internal and external parts of the body constitute the linkages embodied in *Kuwai* between collective self-identity of the phratry with attributes of alterity.

We begin with the left side where the following figures (holes, ancestral flutes) are situated:

1. **Maaliawa:** The drawing below (Figure 4.1) comes from a petroglyph which displays the bodies of two flutes in the shape of two triangles connected together at their mouths, with a pair of 'wings' and stick shapes that are the appendages of the 'White Heron', *Maali*. The entire shape corresponds to the body of the ancestral being *Maaliawali*, 'Young White Heron', which corresponds to the first two fingers of *Kuwai's* paw and is always the first pair of sacred flutes that dance in the initiation ritual procession:

The name *Maaliawali* recalls the primordial initiates of the story, for they are named *Maalinali-ienipe*. The first pair of long flutes *Maaliawali* mimics the sound of a rattle being shaken followed by a high-pitched song of a white heron in flight (*Tsatsatsa, Tseytsemtseytsem*).

2. **Waliadoa:** a group of three long flutes meaning 'Young Sister'. In the story, *Waliadoa* is the first daughter initiated by the first woman *Amaru*. 'Young Sister' is the female partner of *Maaliawa*, corresponding to the ritual relations of *kamaratakan*, 'like a marriage' the Hohodene say. For, evidently the meaning of the first two pairs is related to the category of 'marital relations', conceived of as an exchange.

The body of *Waliadoa* is drawn in the petroglyphs at *Ejnipan* (Jandu Rapids) where it is believed the first initiation rite took place, showing a complex form (Figure 4.2). The body of *Waliadoa* is sectioned in three parts, corresponding to three long flutes, each of which is marked distinctively, perhaps corresponding to the parts of each material flute: the first on the left is sectioned in three, while on the right is in two, and the middle in four parts. The head portions of each flute comprise a single head with sockets for two eyes and two ears.

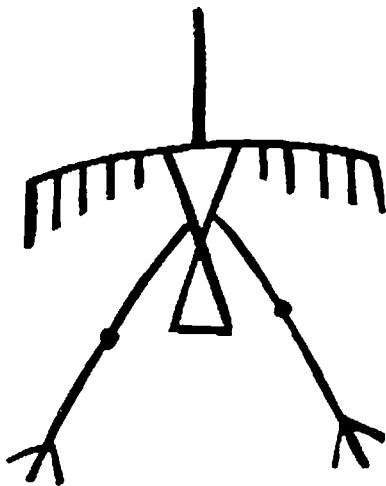


Figure 4.1 *Maaliawali*.

The three ancestral flutes of *Waliadoa* correspond to the thumb, index finger, and middle finger of *Kuwai's* left hand. They sing a sad melody which consists of three distinct phrases; '*Eeteytumdeeee Nupita'mta'mdeee Nupita'mta'mdeee*', sung in such a way as to equalize or balance the couplet – rising at the end of the first, and descending at the end of the second. The word '*nupita*' may signify 'I weep, I



Figure 4.2 *Waliadoa* (petroglyph at Ejnipan, Içana River).



Figure 4.3 *Mulitu* (frog).

weep'. *Kuwai's* tears are said to be the rains, the time for scheduling the initiation rites.

It is said that, when *Kuwai* came into the world, he wept at his own grotesque shape: with the teeth of a jaguar, with holes all over his body, consisting of multiple parts all somehow integrated into one being. He was ashamed (*-paymaka*) and his father was astonished at the strangeness of his body. His father sent him away to the forest and then to the sky. He (*Kuwai*) was not wanted except by his mother whom the men tricked into thinking that nothing had been born except a stingray placenta.

Kuwai became an outsider because of his dangerous powers, but the idea behind the Creator bringing him into being was to be able to transmit all the knowledge he had about shamans, sorcery, and how the world is.

3. **Mulitu**, the Frog: The small figure in the centre of the petroglyphs at *Ejnipan* (Jandu Rapids) is the frog *Mulitu*, said to be *Kuwai's* penis, which is the only flute played singly (Figure 4.3). The single toot '*Muu*' mimics the song of the frog.¹⁴ It is said that this single short-flute responds to women's questions about the sex of their yet-to-be-born babies.
4. **White Monkey, Halu and the Eenunai**: The fourth song is of 'White Monkey', *Halu* (*Cebus gracilis Spix*), a pair of long flutes coinciding with *Kuwai's* arms. The White Monkey is one of several tree-living animals whose sounds are parts of *Kuwai's* body. The White Monkey's song is a high-pitched '*Wa wa wa wa wa wa wa wa*' followed by the low flute refrain '*te'm te'm*', like a musical dialogue between the

two flutes. There are several other furry tree animals that comprise the body of *Kuwai-ka Wamundana*: '*Tchichi*' (*Acary*, *Pithecia Ouakary*) and '*ipeku*' (night monkey, or owl monkey), both of which are considered as very powerful omens of impending death. In one of the stories, the *Dzawikwapa* was the original ancestor and primary chief of all the tree-living animals. These all belonged to different 'Houses' of tribes called collectively the '*Eenunai*' (*Eenu* = sky, thunder). Today, they exist no more as tribes with a single chief.

They were primordial sorcerers, among the Creator's principal enemies. The Night Monkey *ipeku* especially is considered a descendant of the *Dzawikwapa*, a harbinger of death, an omen if the monkey appears at dusk singing in the trees or sitting on the ground at the outskirts of a village. *Kuwai's* animal avatar (*-ndana*, 'shadow') is the 'Black Sloth', *Wamu*, which is the primal animal 'guardian of sorcery' (*manhene iminali*). The furry coats of the Black Sloth and its 'helper', *Tchitamali*, the 'White Sloth' are filled with poison, *manhene*, which came directly from *Kuwai's* fur as it burned in the Great Fire that 'killed' (i.e. marked the end of) *Kuwai's* passage from This World. As one elderly narrator and jaguar shaman, Matteo, recounted:

Tchitamali is *Kuwai's* pet (*ipira*). *Uamu* is *Kuwai's* pet (*ipira*). In the story of *Mawirikuli*, *linupa* (the stench of the dead that brings on sickness) began. In the end, *Mawirikuli* went to "Paradise." The dead arises, is beautiful, for his/her place, *lidzakalekwa*, in Paradise has already been prepared, in the city of the dead. His/her body has become all White. *Nhiäpirikuli* wrapped up the *manhene* that he recovered in a leaf bundle, and threw it on top of a range of hills in Venezuela to keep it guarded. (Fieldnotes 01/2001)

The *Eenunai* lost their overall primordial unity, after the 'death' of one of their chiefs, *Withäferi*, who lived inside a manioc sieve and was carried around by two land 'animal'-helpers, the anteater and the *paca*, a rodent (see illustration below). As the stories tell, the *Eenunai* and *Itchirinai* (mostly ground animals such as Tapir, Anteater), and the *Umawalinai* (aquatic spirits which came into existence with the killing of the primordial Anaconda) were affines and enemies of the Creator who constantly plotted to 'kill and eat' him by predatory sorcery.

The Creator outsmarted them for the most part by spying on them, preparing superior traps, undergoing transformations, and other artifices; but they caused enough damage as to have killed one of his younger brothers, and almost 'killed off' all of the Creator's people, forcing the Creator to burn the entire world and then flood it, which made the enemy spirits flee to the mountaintops and the deep, interior of the forest and rivers.

5. **Jaguar Bone.** *Dzauinaapa* is the thorax of *Kuwai*, or ribcage, *iwarudali*, the longest and most powerful of the trumpets (*botutos*) that propitiate transformation in whomever or whatever the Jaguar Bone song is intended to change. The song of the celestial jaguar-shaman that *Kuwai* becomes, always consists of several prolonged bass notes: '*Heeeeeee Heeeeeee*' like the jaguar. These trumpets are extremely secret and hidden, as they are the secret power of growth in the world. In the narrative

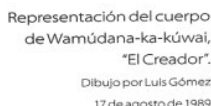
and the drawing of *Kuwai-ka-Wamundana* reproduced below, the two trumpets are contrasted with the wasp sound (*Aini*), produced by play instruments made by the first children initiates, and which were considered to be a 'false *Kuwai*, nonsense'. *Kuwai* himself contrasted these buzzing wasp flute imitations of the children with the truly powerful sound of Jaguar Bone that made the world grow and culture be reproduced.

6. **Phratric Ancestors: Hohodene and Walipere-dakenai:** Among the more powerful pairs of trumpets are the first ancestors of two major phratries of the Baniwa peoples. One pair, *Thuwiri*, the *japu* bird, is said to be the Hohodene first ancestor; the other pair, whose name is almost a homonym (*Thuwu*) is the first animal ancestor of the Walipere-dakenai phratry, whose name refers to a 'wood-pecker'. These phratric *bird* ancestral trumpets are as prominent in the initiation ritual processions as the 'Jaguar Bone' trumpets, and may even take its place. Both are important parts of *Kuwai's* body (the chest and leg).¹⁵

These two phratries have maintained affinal (marital) relations since at least the nineteenth century as oral traditions relate (Wright 2005). In Hohodene drawings of the cosmos (in Wright 1998, 2013), the ancestral deities who raised the two phratries' ancestors out of the emergence hole at *Hipana* were related as 'brothers'. In the historical relations of the two phratries, after a long period of warfare which led to near-extinction, they came to be united through marriage, trade, and alliance. Affinal relations, however, are marked by competition, treachery, and duplicity, unlike agnatic sibling relations or kin of common descent. Sorcery by poisoning is a formidable characteristic of affinal relations, setting them apart in spite of the agnatic ancestry that ideally brings them together.

Since the drawing discussed in this chapter (Figure 4.4: The Body of *Kuwai-ka-Wamundana*) was informed by an Hohodene shaman's point of view, several instruments shown are directly related to Hohodene identity more than to any other phratry. Each phratry in Baniwa society consists of a number of sibs, that is, a group of communities who consider themselves to be agnatic siblings, descendants of the same primordial and the same historical ancestor, whether they can actually trace descent or not. In the case of the Hohodene phratry, there are five sib-ancestors represented in the drawing:

- *Aini*, the wasp, ancestor of the *Hipatanene* sib;
- *Mami*, wild chicken;
- *Bubule*, a sentinel bird, which represents *Kuwai's* 'kneecap', ancestor of the Hohodene;
- *Atine*, the jacamim, a ground bird;
- The *Dzathe* (toucan) trumpet, *Kuwai's* thigh, is said to be the bird ancestor of the Piapoco peoples who today live in Venezuela but were, a long time ago, co-residents of the Aiary River with the Hohodene (see Vidal 1987). Again, history is embodied in the ancestral flutes and trumpets. Despite historical dislocations and migrations, ancestral connections continue to be embodied in the cultural memory *Kuwai* represents.



Two other categories of animal avatars are present in the collection of ancestors: the ancestral fish and land animals. One large fish embodied in the trumpets is *Iniri*, the traïra, an enemy of the Creator, which consumed the Creator's younger brother. Before being devoured, the younger brother prepared to defend himself with various shamanic items, using these as he sat inside the serpent's belly until reaching the mouth of the river where, with the help of the birds, they killed and opened the belly of the serpent. The man, practically dead from the poison of the fish, made a long return journey home during which, with the remedies of the bee-spirits (called *Kuwainyai*) and nectar of the fruits, he was able to revive, 'exchanging his life for another'. Here, the fish ancestor is a predator of humans but was defeated, and pieces of his body became a wide variety of aquatic animals (turtles,



Figure 4.5 Author's composition of the great spirits and deities of the Baniwa cosmos. The drawings were made on separate sheets of paper by a jaguar shaman's apprentice. Beginning from lower left to lower right, upper right, upper left, and in-between, these are: *Dzuliferi*, the 'Spirit of shamanic power'; *Nhiaperikuli*, the Creator at his island home of *Warukwa* (Ig. Uarana); *Kuwai-ka-Wamundana*, the great spirit guardian of sorcery and the ancestral powers; *Amaru*, the First Woman, whose spirit today lives at the 'edge of the world'; three of the forest spirits: 'Long Arm'; the 'chief of the animals'; the half-furry/half-smooth-skinned deer); and the Spirit of Death, *Mawerikuli*, the first person to die at the hands of the tree-living *Eenunai*.

various kinds of fish). This story is the basis for a very powerful shamanic chant to 'bring back the heart/souls' of those who have suffered some terrible accident and are unconscious. Sometimes the chant is used as a defence against the White Man's sicknesses (Hill 1993). Another chant, considered more powerful and secret, acts against the sicknesses coming from the original female ancestress, mother of *Kuwai*, who, after the women lost their power over the sacred flutes, was sent by the Creator on mission to the outside world where she married and became Mother of the Whites. Historical consciousness is deeply embedded in these shamanic chants which work to keep updated the ancient forms.

Kuwai's body, in short, in life consisted of a multitude of specific animal, bird, and fish avatars, whose namesakes the flutes and trumpets bear today, altogether as one collective being. At critical moments in the narrative, *Kuwai's* body manifests itself as distinct animals or different forms of others: the White Man, the demonic *Inyaimé*, the big-bellied guariba monkey (known for its appetite for certain kinds of tree-fruit and nuts).

4.6 Body Adornments

Unfortunately, space limitations prevent us from discussing in detail two other aspects of *Kuwai's* being that merit attention: the adornments attached to each flute or trumpet that identify the instrument with distinctive '*maka*', 'skin covering' in the forms of the fur, feathers, or fish scales of the ancestral entity. Adornments complete their personhood; while each is distinctive, all nevertheless share in the essence and powers of their unique source. The coloration, texture, or other outstanding characteristics of these adornments are the basis for their 'spirit-names' (see Hill 1993; Wright (1993/4)). *Makkim* is the concept of the external layer of the body that is 'like a shirt', the Hohodene said. Ornaments then are spirit-coverings derived from different sources: caraiuru (red vegetal dye, body paint), feather crowns (the owl-feather crown, *pupuli-pe*, is or was used in funeral rituals). These spirit-names are invoked by the elder chanters at the pepper blessing, the most significant phases of the initiation rite.

4.7 Connections to Sacred Geography

The second important aspect mentioned only in passing here is the connections of the sacred flutes and trumpets with places, sacred spaces in the 'mythscape' (Wright 2013) of *Kuwai*. Elsewhere, I have shown how specific geographical features (e.g. a hill, cave, or riverbed) are poetically invoked with metaphoric references to the body of *Kuwai* (Wright 1993/4). The chants sung at the pepper blessing during initiation re-member the body which is spread out over an enormous territory in the Northwest Amazon, corresponding to the area of northern Arawak-language speakers.

Furthermore, key places mentioned in the narrative of *Kuwai* are generally sites with numerous, extraordinary petroglyphs, the placement of boulders which must not be disturbed, and other features of the ecology that re-member the details of the story. Each 'sacred site' is 'blessed' by chanters to protect newly initiated adults from any potential sickness or harm associated with that place. Ancestral flutes belonging to specific sibs are kept hidden in a stream near the village site (often a site of historical settlements by the ancestors). This confirms the indelible link between the body of *Kuwai* and a notion of ancestral territory that the phratry must guard against any outside intrusions.

4.8 Conclusion

After the entire process of reproducing his son's body is complete, the Creator then declares, 'people [meaning the new generations] can take these, ...and play them'. In other words, the key notion of the continuity of *Kuwai's* body is made a concrete, material reality. The makers of the body, satisfied with their work, entrust the result to future generations (*walimanai*) to care for, remember in rites, and teach to new generations until the end of time.

In this interpretation of *Kuwai*'s body, we have brought to light numerous key meanings based entirely on exegeses the elders made to explain the ancestral power embodied in the 'heart/soul' of the Sun Father, Creator of Baniwa society. Bearing in mind that the same icon or entity may have double-meanings, *Kuwai*'s body is both the symbolic representation and material source of:

1. Sickneses, Sorcery, and Remedies: sorcerer animals vs shamanic bird sentinels; paradoxical duplicity of shamanic power and knowledge;
2. Growth, Fertility, Resistance to Pain: the Whips teach resistance; one or more trumpets are transformative agents of growth and reproduction;
3. Agnatic sibling ties, transmission of values between Ancestors and Descendants; bird ancestral flutes and trumpets include all sib-members of a phratry;
4. Sacred geographies, place-marking; ancestral instruments connect sacred flute bodies of ancestors with actual territory, or part of riverfront lands;
5. Exogamy, historical relations of alliance between phratries; opposed by the treachery of affinal 'other peoples';
6. Other-becoming: transformations occur by internalizing the Other, externalizing the Self;
7. Cultural Memory and Social History: ancestral instruments symbolize historically-formed relations of marriage and political alliances;
8. Replicability of Ancestral Identity, the 'heart/soul' of the Sun Father, a key to the meaning of *Kuwai*'s life;
9. Categories of person, Sib, Phratry, and 'People' are intertwined with categories of birds, tree animals, land animals, fish, and those in-between species that are combined (e.g. open/closed features). *Kuwai* is the totality of these categories, a basis for his secrecy, unwillingness to show himself in public, and highly dangerous qualities.

As such, *Kuwai*'s body demonstrates the complex, interconnected, dynamic, and holistic ontology of the Baniwa. He embodies simultaneously the multiplicity and unicity of the universe, expressing how the material and spiritual body is one with the plethora of living entities.

Notes

- 1 Sib: a set of communities who consider themselves to be agnatic siblings and descendants of one common *Kuwai* ancestor, and one common 'historical' ancestor. 'Phratry' is a set of sibs ranked according to the order of emergence of primordial ancestors from the holes of the (now) rapids of *Hipana* on the Aiary River.
- 2 A *lingua geral* (trade language of the area) term to refer to the ancestral being whose body gave rise to the sacred flutes and trumpets. Each ethnic group has a different name for this spirit, so missionaries since the eighteenth century reduced this cultural diversity to a single battle against the 'Yurupary', which actually is a Tupian demiurge of the forest.
- 3 The numbers of pairs vary with the knowledge of the narrators; Luiz Gomes named 16 pairs, most other narrators named fewer.
- 4 Shamans say that in *Kuwai*'s village in the Other World, there is a plantation of buriti palm trees the greatest of which is the 'Jaguar Kumale', which is covered with thorns.

- 5 The *Yoopinai* spirits have their own shaman, a declared enemy of humans, whose material bodily form is the lizard (*dopo*).
- 6 An anaconda impregnates the Creator's wife who betrayed him by having sexual relations with the anaconda; the resulting chaotic situation was the origin of the sickness *ifiukali*, which people today get from eating raw or rotten fish/meat.
- 7 *Kuwaikere* is one of several names referring to the spirit people with whom he lived. There are also *Kuwainyai*, bee-spirit keepers of potent medicine, their honey that helps 'bring back the soul' of an unconscious person.
- 8 How can a body covered by fur be full of holes at the same time? If we look at photos of a sloth's fur, there are numerous places of discoloration as a result of the fungus, white spots that – from a distance – could very well be seen as 'holes'. It is plausible that these spots are perceived as the 'holes' in *Kuwai*'s body fur.
- 9 These plants are used in Brazilian popular culture to ward off evil spirits ('Espada de São Jorge', for example).
- 10 See Wright (1993/4) for a further discussion of this condition.
- 11 The name *Inyaimé* literally means: negative other (*Inyai*, other; *me*, neg.).
- 12 Just as an unripe fruit is difficult to open because its shell is still 'wet', so the initiates have to be the right age for the opening of their skin to occur.
- 13 In the rituals when the sacred flutes and trumpets are played, the adult men and women whip each other often with such force in their strokes that they leave red welts on the back or chest. When it is an initiation ritual, the elders whip the initiates three times, then immediately step down on the initiates' feet while stretching the initiates' torsos by lifting up their arms at their bent elbows. This is to 'make the initiates grow quickly', the elders say.
- 14 See Hill (1993) for a discussion of this flute and correlation with ecological cycles.
- 15 Omar González-Náñez (personal communication, 2011) has conducted research on an island named *Tuwimirrin* where there are also important sacred petroglyphs. Besides photos of *Tuwimirrin*, there is a study based on González-Náñez's research along the Guainia but which was signed by the Colombian anthropologist Francisco Ortiz.

Works Cited

- González-Náñez, O. (2007). *Las literaturas indígenas maipure-arawakas de los pueblos kurripako, warekena y baniva del estado Amazonas*. Fundación editorial el perro y la rana: Caracas.
- Hill, J.D. (1993). *Keepers of the Sacred Chants*. Champaign: University of Illinois.
- Hugh-Jones, S. (1979). *The Palm and the Pleiades*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maia, P. (2009). Desequilibrando o convencional: estética e ritual com os baré do Alto Rio Negro. Ph.D. dissertation. PPGAS/ Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.
- Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1989). Biological and social aspects of the Yurupari complex of the Vaupes territory. *Journal of Latin American Lore* 15 (1): 95–135.
- Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1996). *Yurupary*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vidal Silvia, O. (1987). El modelo del proceso migratorio prehispánico de los piapoco: hipótesis y evidencias. Master's dissertation. Centro de Estudios Avanzados, Instituto de Investigaciones Científicas, Caracas.
- Vútova, M. (2011). Cuerpos enfermos, cuerpos humanos. La enfermedad como necesidad entre los arawak del Río Atabo en el Amazonas venezolano. *Nuevo Mundo*

- Mundos Nuevos, Debates*, puesto en línea el 31 marzo 2011, <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/61224> (accessed 30 October 2018) <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.61224>.
- Wright, R.M. (1993/4). Pursuing the spirit. Semantic construction in Hohodene *Kalidzamai* chants for initiation. *Amerindia* 18: 17–40.
- Wright, R.M. (1998). *Cosmos, Self and History in Baniwa Religion*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Wright, R.M. (2005). *História indígena e do indigenismo no Alto Rio Negro*. Campinas: Mercado de Letras.
- Wright, R.M. (2013). *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Xavier Leal, C. (2008). A cidade grande de Napirikoli e os petroglifos do Içana – uma etnografia de signos baniwa. Master's dissertation. Museu Nacional. Rio de Janeiro.

CHAPTER 5

Cognitive Science, Embodiment, and Materiality

Nathaniel F. Barrett

5.1 Introduction

Embodiment and materiality seem to be caught in a similar predicament. Despite recent waves of scholarly interest, both have remained curiously hard to define. In the latter case, the anthropologist Timothy Ingold has argued that the term *materiality* itself is the culprit: 'The abstract concept of materiality...has actually hindered the proper understanding of materials' (2011, p. 16). Even worse, Ingold complains, materials have 'gone missing' from the literature in anthropology and archaeology that deals with material culture, leading him to wonder: 'What academic perversion leads us to speak not of *materials and their properties* but of *the materiality of objects*?' (p. 20).

Much the same could be said about the literature of embodied cognitive science, which turns out to have little to say about particular bodies. Moreover, it is widely observed that after more than 20 years of discussion the import of embodiment for cognitive science is still unclear (Johnson and Rohrer 2007; Ziemke and Frank 2007; Di Paolo et al. 2010, pp. 33–34). In 1999, the philosopher Andy Clark, himself one of the leading interpreters of embodied mind, observed that 'there is clearly a shift in thinking [in cognitive science] but the nature and importance of the shift is surprisingly hard to pin down' (p. 345). A decade later, the hubbub about embodied mind continues unabated, but Clark still finds that 'beneath the glamour and glitz lies a still-murky vision' (2012, p. 274). However, while Ingold complains about the lack of attention paid to particular materials, Clark suggests the opposite problem, that the most 'radical' proponents of embodied cognition overemphasize the body, upholding a 'new-wave body-centrism' that sounds cutting-edge but does little explanatory work (2008).

This is the perplexing context in which we must take up the question at hand: *What can embodied cognitive science contribute to our understanding of religious materiality?*

Perhaps we should begin by defining religious materiality. According to a summary by the editors of the journal, *Material Religion*, religious materiality encompasses at least four interrelated spheres of interest: bodies, things, places, and practices (Meyer et al. 2010, p. 209). Such a wide range seems only to make our task harder, as this notion of materiality includes embodiment and a whole lot more. However, it is important to note that studies of religious materiality aim to provide more than just 'thick descriptions' of particular religious materials and whatnot: they are especially interested in the lives or careers of religious objects and practices, that is, the way in which they are dynamically re-constituted within various contexts (Keane 2008; Meyer et al. 2010; Vásquez 2011).

Let us hold on to this dynamical emphasis and see if leads to greater clarity. Perhaps the reason why materiality and embodiment are so hard to define is that the entities with which they are concerned are complex, context-sensitive, and constantly in flux. Accordingly, while studies of religious materiality *do* require careful attention to concrete things such as particular bodies and materials, to capture the changing roles of these concrete things in different settings they must also engage simultaneously with at least two other levels of description: the things that constitute them and the things in which they participate. So, for instance, a minimum of three levels might be required to understand how a (i) religious object is dynamically constituted by (ii) certain materials within (iii) the context of a particular religious activity.

If this kind of complex and dynamic interplay of levels is indeed at the heart of the 'material turn' in religious studies, it is possible to register Ingold's critique and yet retain a place for theoretical discussions, even abstract ideas, of materiality. For Ingold is primarily interested in the dynamic constitution of things, and as his own descriptions show, for processes of dynamic constitution there is no single, privileged level of material description. Therefore, we need ideas and theories that help to guide inquiries across multiple levels of description and through multiple phases of historical development: perhaps this is how abstract terms like *materiality* are best used.

Now, with this understanding of religious materiality in mind, what can we say about the contributions of embodied cognitive science? As the study of religious materiality includes embodiment within its purview, several scholars have already indicated the importance of bringing embodied cognitive science into the conversation (Verrips 2010; Vásquez 2011; Meyer 2012). However, the success of interdisciplinary collaboration between the humanities and the sciences depends on establishing a common conceptual framework, and as of yet, no such framework exists for the study of embodiment.

Moreover, it does not seem as if the available frameworks of cognitive science of religion (CSR) are especially friendly to the interests of religious materiality. As noted by several critiques (Roth 2008; Barrett 2010; Geertz 2010b; Vásquez 2011), CSR epitomizes the kind of mentalistic approach for which the material turn is intended as a corrective. CSR is evolving, however, and recently has shown signs of increased attention to embodiment and materiality (Geertz 2010a, 2010b). Yet an embodied approach to CSR may simply mean that the heretofore dominant basic explanatory strategy, the search for universal structures and mechanisms underlying recurrent patterns of religious belief (Xygalatas 2014), is extended beyond the brain. And, in fact, among recent

theories of the embodied cognitive basis of religion, one finds that embodiment is viewed principally in terms of fixed, culture-independent, species-universal constraints on religious belief and experience (Slingerland 2008a, 2008b; Taves 2009). When religious experience is viewed in such reductive, body-bound terms, it reinforces the tendency to disregard the constitutive role of material culture.

The seemingly reductive orientation of cognitive science may explain the fact that, despite wide and long-standing scholarly interest in religious embodiment, relatively few scholars have ventured deeply into the scientific disciplines that bear upon our understanding of the 'physical body' (Verrips 2010, p. 36). Yet, as Armin Geertz has argued, 'Just because the standard cognitive science of religion is too mentalistic, computational, scientific, ahistorical, and culture-blind does not mean that we should give it up' (2010b, p. 25). Perhaps more religious -studies scholars would be encouraged to take a more active, collaborative role in scientific research if they had a better idea of the diversity of scientific approaches that are currently available (Barrett 2010). Not all cognitive theories are ahistorical and culture-blind. Indeed, a number of scholars of religion have used cutting-edge, non-reductive perspectives from cognitive science to develop sophisticated theories of the bodily dimension of religious practice (e.g. Norris 2005; Wildman 2009; Harrington 2010; Vásquez 2011). However, to my knowledge, these theories have not yet been implemented in scientific research programs. And so, while we may have an increasing number of scientifically informed theories of religious embodiment, we cannot yet speak of a cognitive science of religious embodiment and materiality, at least not in the full sense of these terms as described above.

Therefore, at the risk of being overly partisan, this chapter advocates for increased attention to a number of so-called 'radical' varieties of embodied cognitive science, in the hope that they might yield a more productive partnership for the study of religious embodiment and materiality. Towards this end, however, it is necessary to explain why standard interpretations of embodiment within cognitive science remain trapped within a mentalistic framework that, if applied to religion, severely limits the role of materials in the production of religious experience. As argued here, the main reason is that much of what goes by the name of embodied cognitive science remains under the sway of functionalism, which establishes a sharp cut-off between functional properties and the so-called 'details' of embodiment and materiality. Insofar as proponents of embodied cognition remain attached to functionalism, this cut-off leads them to discount the explanatory value of bodies and materials alike. This attachment to functionalism is behind Andy Clark's dismissal of 'new-wave body-centrism', and, as we will see, it is carried over into Michael Wheeler's analysis of materiality. The sticking point is the ubiquitous phenomenon of multiple realizability, which seems to demonstrate beyond a doubt that the particularities of bodily and material instantiation can have only limited relevance for cognitive processes.

5.2 The Problematic Meaning of Embodied Cognitive Science

The goal of this section is to clarify how the embodied turn in cognitive science constitutes, or *could* constitute, not just a shift of focus, but something much more 'radical' (Clark 1999; Thompson and Varela 2001; Chemero 2009), perhaps even, as some have

claimed, a 'paradigm shift' (Stewart et al. 2010). This is not an unbiased account, and it should be admitted that the nature of the embodied turn is still very much a live issue. The preference shown here for the more 'radical' versions of embodied mind is justified by their special connection to issues at the core of religious materiality: as we will see, they are more concerned with the dynamic constitution of mental processes than with the so-called 'details' of embodiment.

Fifteen years ago, in what has since become a widely cited review of the field, Michael Anderson described the embodied turn in cognitive science as a 're-thinking of the nature of cognition':

Instead of emphasizing formal operations on abstract symbols, this new approach focuses attention on the fact that most real-world thinking occurs in very particular (and often very complex) environments, is employed for very practical ends, and exploits the possibility of interaction with and manipulation of external props. It thereby foregrounds the fact that cognition is a highly *embodied* or *situated activity* – emphasis intentionally on all three – and suggests that thinking beings ought therefore be considered first and foremost as acting beings. (Anderson 2003, p. 91)

There is much to unpack from this description. But the first thing to note is that embodied cognition encompasses more than just the body. In fact, the flesh-and-bone materials of cognition hardly figure at all in this description, nor do they take centre stage in the research and writing that best exemplify the embodied turn in cognitive science (e.g. Brooks 1991; Varela et al. 1991). Indeed, it would be a mistake to characterize the embodied turn simply as increased attention to the concrete apparatus of thought, because such attention need not be accompanied by any 're-thinking of the nature of cognition'. As a case in point, consider the roughly contemporary turn towards neurobiology enacted by proponents of computational neuroscience: this turn was presented as a much-needed constraint on computational theory of mind that deliberately left the premises of that theory untouched (Churchland et al. 1990). More than 25 years later, the concept of mind as embodied computation remains the most common approach within cognitive science.

The second thing to note about Anderson's description of embodied mind is how commonsensical it is. Where is the radicalism? Where is the controversy? Without any knowledge of the history of cognitive science, it is hard to understand how cognitive theory could be anything *but* embodied. Thus, it is helpful to begin – as most treatments of embodied cognitive science do – by describing what embodied cognitive science is *not*, referring to some characterization of 'classic' or 'first-generation' cognitive science (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), also known as the 'cognitivist' model (Varela et al. 1991).

Ever since its origins in the so-called 'cognitive revolution' (Gardner 1985), the driving metaphor of cognitivist theory has been the picture of the mind as a computer. The computational metaphor has become so dominant, in fact, that it has become surprisingly difficult to formulate the computational 'core hypothesis' of the cognitivist program, let alone the broader computational program that includes connectionist rivals to cognitivist theory (cf. Piccinini and Scarantino 2011). Rather than attempt to define

computation, a better approach is to examine the notion of cognition as problem solving that lies in the background of the computational approach:

When one approaches some system from a computational perspective, one is concerned with what function the system is trying to compute, in what format the problem input is specified, in what output format the answer is required, how the relevant features of the problem are to be represented, by what algorithms these representations are to be transformed, and how the performance of these algorithms scales with problem size. (Beer 2007, pp. 12–13)

Now, with regard to this problem-solving orientation, the crucial point to keep in mind is that most manmade computational systems do not specify the problems that they solve. For instance, the problem solving done by calculators depends on us, the human users. Once a problem has been well defined, computers are perhaps unrivalled as problem-solvers: think of IBM's Deep Blue and its mastery of chess. But who defines the problems? Most of the time, computers solve problems that have been specified for them by their human implementers. In the wild, however, it is assumed that problems of animal cognition are specified by the animal's own computational systems, presumably with the aid of genetic 'programming'. But this issue of problem specification – variations of which are known as the 'framing problem' or the 'grounding problem' – constitutes a major challenge for the computational approach, as well as one of the main motivations for the embodied turn (see Brooks 1991; Anderson 2003).

Let us consider the grounding problem, then, as our angle on cognitive embodiment. As just introduced, the grounding problem reflects the need to ensure that problem-solving capacities of the mind are relevant to the demands of a complex and changing world. Also, conversely, it has to do with picking out just those features of the world that are most relevant to problems defined by the cognitive agent. Thus, the main import of Anderson's description of embodied mind is that putting action first constitutes a fundamentally different strategy with regard to defining relevance. If the strategy of most computational approaches depends to a large degree on a priori specifications of relevance, in contrast, we can define an embodied approach as one that looks to the *dynamic* grounding of mind in situated activity with the aim of understanding how features relevant to cognition *emerge* from that activity. Embodiment in a broad sense refers to this activity-based emergence of relevant features in both body and environment, while embodiment in a narrow sense focuses on the role of bodily structures and processes.

Note that this definition of embodied mind implicitly challenges the notion of cognition as problem solving. Minds do engage in problem solving, of course, but this activity only gets underway once relevant features have been selected – that is, once a problem has been specified. But if this more basic mental activity is not problem solving, what is it? This is a question so basic that it is easily overlooked, but unless we are to revert back to the problem-solving model, it demands closer attention.

Also, note that the turn to embodied, situated activity is a strategy for handling the grounding problem, not a solution. The activity of organisms in their environment is not presumed to be a straightforward basis or 'ground' of cognition. On the contrary, as pointed out by Rodney Brooks, if we look at the history of life, we see that 'higher'

problem-solving capacities evolved rather quickly in comparison with the billions of years it took for 'lower' capacities of animate being to evolve:

This suggests that problem solving behavior, language, expert knowledge and application, and reason, are all pretty simple once the essence of being and reacting are available. That essence is the ability to move around in a dynamic environment, sensing the surroundings to a degree sufficient to achieve the necessary maintenance of life and reproduction. This part of intelligence is where evolution has concentrated its time – it is much harder. (1991, p. 140)

Still, even just as a strategy, the embodied turn has important implications. For one, it implies that the irrelevant features or 'details' of embodiment – in the broad or narrow sense – are perspectival and contingent, as their relegation to the background of cognition, just like the selection of relevant features, depends on a context of situational activity. Indeed, the key question is not *what* the relevant features are but *how* they emerge out of the background. If the details of embodiment are defined as whatever bodily features are not relevant to cognition within a particular context of situated activity, it seems that the contrast between relevant features and background detail is constantly shifting. This is a simple point, but the difference between embodiment as the *dynamic grounding* of cognition and embodiment as the *fixed ground* of cognition is lost in many discussions of embodied mind. As we will see, this distinction may lie at the heart of disputes over the meaning of embodiment.

Turning back to cognitivism, we see that while computational processes might be instantiated in any number of ways, in principle they can be described as rule-based transformations of information-bearing 'vehicles' (e.g. neuron firings) whose relevant features are strictly limited to those properties on which the rules of computation operate (Piccinini and Scarantino 2011). This clear-cut definition of relevance is why classical computational approaches are so often characterized by extreme indifference to the details of bodily instantiation. It is also the basis of the well-known tenet of functionalism to which we will soon turn our attention: all that matters are the functionally operative properties of a system. But again, what is most important to notice is not the depth or scope of relevant features, but rather on their relatively clear-cut, fixed, and predetermined nature.

Now let us briefly survey the variety of projects that are associated with embodied cognition – especially the 'radical' kind – and then consider various ways of defining its elusive 'theoretical core'.

1. *Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics.* As indicated by Anderson's description, one of the main inspirations of the wider embodied turn in cognitive science has been the 'actionist' turn in the subfield of AI. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Rodney Brooks (1991) and others (e.g. Beer 1990) led a turn away from static problem solving and towards situated activity – that is, away from abstract symbol-processing models of complex reasoning (e.g. chess) towards the creation of biologically-inspired robots able to move about and explore their environments. The main goal of 'behaviour-based robotics' was to produce maximal behavioural complexity

with a minimum of computational programming. The frugality of this approach gave rise to some of the hallmarks of embodied cognition, such as replacing internal representations with direct sensorimotor interactions and taking advantage of the material and structural properties of bodies and environments to simplify tasks (Clark 1997).

2. *Ecological psychology.* Wherever the embodied turn has included a radically different understanding of the role of the environment in cognition, it has drawn on the work of experimental psychologist James J. Gibson (1904–1979). Long before the embodied turn in cognitive science, Gibson pioneered a non-computational alternative approach to visual perception (1979), taking the ‘ecology’ of dynamic interaction between organism and environment as the basis for all psychological processes. Within this framework, Gibson developed new ways of studying how environmental structures participate in the specification of agent-relative, action-oriented meanings (known as ‘affordances’). For example, depending on our size and bodily capabilities, we may perceive a ledge as affording different actions such as sitting or climbing. Also, Gibson made the controversial claim that perception is ‘direct’, meaning that it consists in the discrimination of meaningful variables that can be found in the flows of sensory stimulation produced by perceptually guided activity. For example, moving towards a textured surface produces ‘optical flow’, a radial expansion of detail within the field of vision, which directly specifies our direction of motion as well as the time to contact with the surface – in other words, these dynamical, relational meanings can be ‘picked up’ in the visual field and do not need to be calculated from more primitive pieces of information. Thus Gibson’s work also presents a distinctive phenomenological orientation towards what is available for perceptual engagement.
3. *The sensorimotor basis of perception and thought.* Similar to but independent from ecological psychology, an important project within embodied cognition focuses on the dependence of perception on knowledge of the specific ‘sensorimotor contingencies’ that result from our bodily experiences of movement and object manipulation (e.g. O’Regan and Noë 2001; Buhrmann et al. 2013). Various experiments have demonstrated that learning to perceive depends on a context of bodily interaction. For instance, in one classic study, two groups of kittens were raised in special conditions: members of the first group could move about normally, but members of the second group were confined to carriages that were harnessed to kittens in the first group. The point of this bizarre arrangement is that both groups had identical visual stimuli, but only for the first group was this stimulus correlated with developing motor skills. After a few weeks, the kittens were released, and members of the second group behaved as if they were blind (see also Noë 2004). Related to the sensorimotor basis of perception (though not entailed by it) is the view that higher cognition is based in sensorimotor experience. In their landmark book, *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that the basic ingredients of conceptual thought are metaphors of bodily experience (e.g. thinking of future time in terms of forward motion).
4. *Dynamical systems approach.* Another major strand of embodied cognition that pre-dates the embodied turn is the picturing of cognition as the ‘structural coupling’

(Smith 2005) of dynamical systems that span the brain, body, and environment (Chiel and Beer 1997). The dynamical systems approach encompasses a number of different methods, applications, and theories (Port and van Gelder 1995), the most basic of which is simply the use of particular mathematical tools – sets of nonlinear differential equations with interdependent variables – for modelling behaviour. If successful, such mathematical models not only describe the qualitative behaviour or ‘collective variables’ of targeted behaviours; they also make predictions about the way in which these behaviours change in relation to various ‘control parameters’. With this approach, we are able to understand how various patterns of complex behaviour – the different gaits of four-legged animals, for instance – can spontaneously self-organize without the guidance of specific instructions from pre-existing programs or schemas. This manner of spontaneous organization is sometimes called ‘soft assembly’, emphasizing its flexible and context-sensitive nature (Barrett 2011). The crucial point is that even the most ubiquitous and regular patterns of human behaviour may turn out to be ‘softly assembled’ by the interaction of various systems rather than rigidly pre-specified. The use of dynamical principles and concepts can also be applied to studies of emergent behaviours that are not readily captured by mathematics, as demonstrated by the dynamical approach to developmental psychology pioneered by Esther Thelen and Linda Smith (1996). The success of dynamical approaches has inspired the development of comprehensive dynamical theories of mind, usually in combination with ecological psychology (Chemero 2009) or enactive theory (Thompson 2007). But most importantly, the emergent phenomena of complex dynamical systems – especially ‘soft assembly’ – are at the very heart of the question of embodiment and materiality as defined here: the dynamic constitution of patterned behaviour.

5. *Enactive theory*. Among the various projects of embodied cognition, enactive theory stands out as the most self-consciously ambitious theoretical venture: a comprehensive alternative ‘paradigm’ (Stewart et al. 2011) for cognitive science that is rooted in embodied experience. Launched by the seminal work of Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (1991) – still one of the most important statements of the embodied approach – enactive theory draws extensively from philosophical sources, especially the European phenomenological tradition (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1962; Jonas 1966), and is rooted in a theory of life as self-organized process – called *autopoiesis* – developed by theoretical biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1980). Accordingly, among the hallmarks of the enactive approach are its adherence to a method of investigation that circles between phenomenological and scientific description and its emphasis on the continuity of mind and life (Thompson 2007). The term ‘enactive’ refers to the view that, as self-organizing processes, minds ‘enact’ or ‘bring forth’ a world of interaction rather than represent ‘pregiven’ objective features. Although this may sound like subjectivism or constructivism, enactive theorists insist that they tread a ‘middle path’ between subjectivism and objectivism, guided by the thesis that mind and world are mutually specifying.
6. *Neurodynamics*. Although the embodied turn does not seem to have been driven by any specific neurobiological theories or research (Sporns 2011), its more ‘radical’

proponents tend to associate closely with theories of neural function that view the self-organized patterns of large-scale neural dynamics as the primary vehicles of cognition. This neurobiological orientation is consistent with the non-computational cast of radical embodied cognition, as most computational approaches implicitly assume – or perhaps even require – that cognition is implemented by relatively stable networks with well-defined functional roles. A number of related scientific research programs contribute to the neurodynamic view, including the work of neuroscientists Gerald Edelman (Edelman and Tononi 2000), Walter J. Freeman (1999), and J.A. Scott Kelso (1995, 2008). The central idea of neurodynamics is that massive recurrent connectivity in the brain allows for transient and context-sensitive patterns of coordinated activity to emerge and dissolve continually, so that the functionally relevant states of neurobiological processes are best thought of as multifunctional and ‘metastable’ (Kelso 2012). Thus, the very same dynamical themes of embodiment and materiality outlined above can also apply to the study of the brain.

In light of this variety, it is easy to understand why the ‘theoretical core’ of embodied cognitive science has proved so hard to define (Clark 2012). Nevertheless, it is possible to discern a common thread: each of these research programs focuses in some way on the dynamic emergence of forms and functions relevant to cognition. Insofar as the body plays a necessary role in this emergence, it also comes to the fore, and thus we can talk of cognition as ‘radically embodied’. But again, the key question is the *nature* of this role: is the body the stable *ground* of cognition, in the sense of a relatively fixed basis, framework, or set of constraints, or is it a process of dynamic *grounding* in which the figure and ground of cognition are constantly shifting? In principle, these views of embodiment are both valid and even complimentary, but in practice it is easy to focus solely on the former at the expense of the latter.

The problem is that when embodiment is viewed solely as ground, hard questions about the nature and grounding of cognition are deflected or reformulated as more superficial questions. Perhaps the clearest example of this tendency is the recent fuss over the ‘extended mind’ hypothesis – the idea that the apparatus of cognition is not exclusively ‘internal’ but can be extended outside the body to the environment, as in the simple case of using pencil and paper to do arithmetic (Clark and Chalmers 1998). As pointed out by cognitive scientist Ezequiel Di Paolo, debates about extended mind tend to become preoccupied with questions about *where* cognition is while continuing to rely on old intuitions about *what* it is (2009, p. 10; cf. Day 2004). Indeed, all of the buzz words that have arisen in connection with embodiment – embodied, extended, situated, distributed, embedded, even enacted – can be defined variously, either challenging or reinforcing old biases about cognition (cf. Wilson 2002).

Similarly, attempts to define embodied mind in relation to two of the most important issues within cognitive science, representationalism and computationalism, tend to become bogged down in disputes over the nature of representation or computation, when perhaps the most important questions concern the origin and emergence of representational and computational features. That is, the deeper issue is not the precise functional nature of mental process – computational, representational, or otherwise – but

explaining how mental functionality of any kind comes into being, and doing so in a non-question-begging manner that is adequate to the remarkable flexibility of mind (not to mention its phenomenal character). Accordingly, perhaps the meaning of embodiment is most helpfully defined in relation to *function*, which leads to the issue of functionalism.

5.3 Functionalism, Embodiment, and Materiality

In its most general form, functionalism is the tenet that mental states are constituted solely by their functional role in relation to other mental states, sensory inputs, and behavioural outputs (Putnam 1994). Thus, functionalism entails that mental functions are effectively insulated from the particular details of their bodily instantiation at some level, thereby establishing a ‘bottom floor’ of physiological relevance. Historically, the tenet of functionalism is closely tied to the computational theory of mind, but functionalism in the broadest sense is simply the view that the particular details of how psychological processes are instantiated by the body do not matter beyond a certain point. However, you define the process of cognition, the functionalist argues that a cognitive system consists in a repertoire of functionally well-defined states whose relations with one another, as well as with sensory input and behavioural output, are sufficient for purposes of psychological explanation. The ‘bottom floor’ of physiological relevance comes from the widely held view that these functional states, however they are physically instantiated in fact, are ‘multiply realizable’ – that is, realizable by diverse kinds of physical structures and processes – and therefore their functional identity is indifferent to more specific bodily properties.

There are at least two different ways to define embodiment in relation to functionalism: one accepts the latter’s terms and remains within its sway, and the other does not. The first way defines embodiment as a matter of degree, moving along a continuum of bodily relevance: at one end, the body is completely trivial, and at the other end, even the minutest bodily details matter (cf. Ziemke and Frank 2007, pp. 2–3). If we go by this definition, it seems that the most sensible position is a compromise that falls somewhere between extreme body-indifference and extreme body-centrism. This seems to be the position of many prominent cognitive scientists and philosophers, including Andy Clark (2008, 2012) and Michael Wheeler (2010, 2011), two proponents of embodied cognition who are sceptical of ‘radical’ approaches that seem to embrace body-centrism. Because of strong evidence for multiple realizability, such extreme body-centrism seems untenable (more on this below). On the other hand, the failures of classical cognitive science indicate that some ‘details’ of embodiment are needed as constraints on cognitive theory.

However, as I have argued above, the so-called ‘radical’ kinds of embodied cognitive science (such as dynamical systems theory, ecological psychology, and enactive theory) are not well characterized as extreme body-centrism. Instead, they are primarily concerned with the context-sensitive, dynamic emergence (or ‘soft assembly’) of cognitive processes over the course of development and in the midst of situated activity. Insofar as this concern leads to increased attention to specific bodily details, body-centrism is actually

a side effect, not a core principle, of embodied cognitive science. Thus these 'radical' approaches appear to take up an extreme position that somehow denies multiple realizability, when in fact they are doing something entirely different, turning multiple realizability on its head and calling attention to the *multi-functionality* of bodily structures and processes. This is the second way of defining embodiment in relation to functionalism.

Before we go into more detail, let us trace some of the implications of these different ways of understanding embodiment. When defined in the first way, embodied cognition tends to be 'constrained' by whatever structures of human physiology and sensorimotor experience are common to the species as a whole. For this approach, then, the import of the embodied turn is its promise not only to ground cognition, but also to provide us with a set of species-universal constraints that we can use to describe patterns of human cognition and behaviour. Thus, one of the main projects of embodied cognitive science becomes the discovery and description of these constraints.

As mentioned in the introduction, this understanding of cognitive embodiment as the bodily constraints or basis of human cognition is perhaps the most prominent interpretation within religious studies today. For example, it informs Edward Slingerland's argument for the 'vertical integration' of cognitive science and the humanities (2008a, 2008b), as well as Ann Taves' 'building block' theory of religious experience (2009). For this interpretation, an embodied CSR seeks to uncover the relatively fixed and universal 'lower-level' features of physiology and sensorimotor experience that serve as species-general, cultural-independent constraints on 'higher-level' religious phenomena. Following the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Slingerland has argued that a basic set of metaphors rooted in our bodily experience (e.g. time as forward motion) can be used as a 'universal decoding key' for the interpretation of religious texts such as the *Mengzi* (2008b). Needless to say, this approach assumes a relatively fixed, ahistorical and culturally invariant understanding of bodily experience as the species-general ground of diverse religious cultures. Meanwhile, to account for the apparent discovery of value in religious practice, Taves develops a two-tier model of religious experience that draws a fairly sharp distinction between 'top-down', socio-cultural sources and 'bottom-up', bodily sources of religious meaning (2009, p. 98). For this model, a lower layer of unconscious mechanisms is responsible for manufacturing the basic qualities of experience, including the qualities of 'specialness' that lead us to deem certain experiences religious. The assumption that such mechanisms are beyond the reach of cultural influence and conscious control is essential to this model, as it allows Taves to account for the appearance of discovery (pp. 40–41).

It is important to recognize that investigations of universal bodily constraints are well worth undertaking, and to acknowledge the possibility of turning up important patterns of religious embodiment that extend across cultures. For instance, anomalous experiences are an important (but by no means necessary) ingredient of religious experience, and studies of these experiences seem to show less cultural variation than one would expect, given the seemingly relative nature of 'anomalous' (Wildman 2009, p. 134). In general, the empirical study of recurrent patterns of human religiosity should not be hindered by religious scholars for fear that these patterns will be reduced to a set of universal bodily mechanisms. The crucial matter is not whether such patterns

exist – they clearly do exist, at least to some extent – but rather how to account for them. And for this it is essential to be critically aware of the deeply entrenched tendency to pit biology against culture, and the methodological and theoretical consequences of this sharp divide.

By treating bodily constraints as biological givens over and against cultural variability, Slingerland and Taves tightly circumscribe the role that the wider environment plays in the formation and development of religious experience. The result is an implied trade-off between the roles of embodiment and materiality, such that the contributions attributed to one must come at the expense of the other. We see this trade-off in Slingerland's conclusion that the 'culturally specific component of an individual's worldview would thus seem to be a rather thin and malleable wafer riding on a deep, massive, and mostly invariant set of universals' (2008b, p. 212). We also find it in Taves' two-tier model of religious experience and its methodological implications: materials and other environmental factors are conspicuously absent from her list of relevant data (2009, p. 69).

This trade-off between body and culture is predicated on the common assumption that bodies and environments are dual sources of the various forms that make up human life, which is just the sort of dichotomous thinking that Susan Oyama so brilliantly critiques in her classic analysis of the nature–nurture debate (2000). Oyama's analysis shows that when we think about the origins of organic forms we have a tendency to revert to causal schemes for which these forms are predefined by discrete sources or channels of information coming from inside and/or outside the body (e.g. genes as 'codes'). The hidden assumption of predefined forms is what gives rise to the trade-off between bodies and environments; when the origin of form is taken for granted, the antagonistic mindset of the nature–nurture debate persists even as both sides claim to have moved past it. Likewise, to view our embodiment as a source of constraints on religiosity is not entirely wrong, but when such constraints are introduced as fixed and predetermined sources of form, we have once again turned away from questions about of how the constraints of human religiosity are themselves dynamically and relationally constituted.

Again, this is not to say that investigations of the body's role in various religious practices are not worth undertaking. There is much to be learned, for example, about the ways in which body postures can help to induce moods and emotions (Barsalou et al. 2005; Norris 2005; Geertz 2010a). Just as forcing the face into a smile (e.g. by holding a pencil between the teeth) can positively influence mood, the mere act of kneeling may help to induce feelings of humility, submission, and reverence (Barsalou et al. 2005, pp. 43–44) or to evoke religious images associated with that posture (Norris 2005, pp. 190–191). However, for this approach there is a tendency to reduce bodies to tools for the physical manipulation of emotional and mental states (Geertz 2010a, p. 307), suggesting a picture of the human body as a set of levers or buttons that are pushed by religious culture. We should not leave out the possibility that basic bodily structures and experiences can be remade within particular cultural contexts and activities (Norris 2005, p. 185), and that these bodily experiences can be sources of new meanings that, in turn, feed back into the wider culture.

In fact, a number of religious disciplines, such as Daoist disciplines of *neigong*, seem to aim precisely at remaking the body. Let us briefly consider a related example that indicates the complex interplay of body and culture. In *qi*-focused martial arts such as *taijiquan*, a novice spends years learning to re-feel the body in basic postures, and the most basic of these is standing still. The exercise of standing still, when first attempted, is often excruciating, as the body's habitual way of maintaining the posture soon causes muscles to tense up. After many hours of practice, the standing position can be maintained indefinitely, but not because muscles have strengthened: rather, the practitioner has learned to prevent the build-up of bodily tension, at least in part by redistributing the workload through a different configuration of muscles. Thus, while observers assume that the slow-motion exercises of *taijiquan* are just a form of meditation or very low-impact exercise, it would be more accurate to describe these exercises, when properly applied, as techniques for the relearning of embodiment. How have body-based meanings changed for an expert practitioner of *taijiquan* after many years of practice? Whatever answer we give to such questions, it should be clear that neither biological determinism nor 'blank slate' constructivism will do. Moreover, as a marital art, the example of *taijiquan* reminds us that we should not think of such bodily transformations in isolation from the wider environment: learning to re-feel one's own body entails and is entailed by learning to re-feel the bodies of others – perhaps even learning to re-feel the wider world.

This leads to another important point: perhaps the greatest risk of defining embodiment as the 'ground' of human religiosity is that it obscures the role of materials outside the skin in the interactive production of religious experience, that is, their role in what one might call the 'ecology' of religious experience. For an ecological approach (Gibson 1979), all meaning arises from the intentional interactions of bodies and environments. Thus, the exploration of meaning is always a two-sided affair, and the techniques by which religious experiences of meaning are cultivated can focus on the body, the environment, or both. Yet even when no particular theory of religious embodiment is presumed, there is a tendency to presume that bodies do most if not all of the work in the production of religious meaning, while events and materials in the environment merely function as 'triggers'.

Take, for example, the role of music in religious experience. It is commonly assumed that, beyond serving as a 'trigger' of culturally conditioned emotions and other mental states, musical sounds play a limited role in the production of religious meaning (cf. Becker 2004, pp. 25–44). Accordingly, anthropologists who study the 'problem of presence' in the midst of religious rituals that make heavy use of music (Engelke 2007; Luhrmann 2012) do not seem to consider the possibility that certain patterns of musical sound might actually signify presence. Yet, according to the empirical musicologist Eric Clarke and others, musical sounds can and do specify a wide variety of meanings related to 'virtual' presence: virtual activities, agents, and even whole environments can be specified by musical sounds (Watt and Ash 1998; Clarke 2005). If this is the case, many studies of religious practice have neglected an important dimension of material participation in the experience of religious meaning. However, to pick up on the ecological role of materials and events in the production of religious meaning, it is not sufficient merely to pay more attention to what is going on in the environment of

the religious practitioner. The relevant religious meanings are not simply 'out there', waiting to be heard, touched, smelled, or seen. Figuring out what to look for and how to find it requires an ecological theory of the dynamic interaction of bodies and materials in the production of perceptual or perceptual-like experiences (Barrett 2013).

The crucial connection between dynamic embodiment and materiality is brought into focus by means of a distinction recently coined by the philosopher Michael Wheeler (2010, 2011). Like Andy Clark, Wheeler favours a functionalist interpretation of the meaning of cognitive embodiment. But what is especially interesting is that Wheeler – responding to the work of archaeologist Lambros Malafouris (2004) – also understands the issue of materiality in terms of functionalism. So, just as Clark draws a distinction between functionalist or 'simple' embodiment and non-functionalist or 'radical' embodiment (1999, 2008, 2012), Wheeler draws a parallel distinction between 'implementational' and 'vital' materiality (2010).

Broadly construed, implementational materiality is functional materiality: it refers to the properties of things outside the body that serve a particular function or purpose – for example, the properties of materials that make them usable for etching. On this reading, then, vital materiality refers to whatever properties are left over, and can thus be relegated to the background of a thing's functional materiality. It would seem that this distinction puts advocates for increased attention to materiality in a bind, as it forces them to define the bulk of the properties that interest them as functionally irrelevant. It is as if the study of materiality were motivated by the question, 'What is the importance of the non-functional features of things?'

To uncover the problem with Wheeler's distinction, let us return to the underlying issue of multiple realizability. To be sure, the issue is not whether multiple realizability obtains in nature; instances are ubiquitous. Within biology, the use of analogous body parts (bug wings and bird wings) for the same function (flying) is just one typical example. In the context of cognitive science, the typical way of framing the issue of multiple realizability is to ask whether mental states, functionally defined, are multiply realizable by neural states, and it seems that indeed they are. It is not especially important how we define the relevant mental and neural states or what we mean by 'functional'. There is plenty of evidence that for every plausible way of defining a functionally relevant state of the brain, that state will turn out to be multiply realizable, and this, in turn, seems to make functionalism inevitable. Thus, Wheeler's argument implies that just as multiple realizability 'within the skin' points towards functionalist embodiment, multiple realizability 'beyond the skin' points to functionalist or implementational materiality.

Yet, there are deep problems with functionalism 'within the skin'. For one, a functionalist approach necessarily regards the qualitative character of experience as epiphenomenal – that is, functionally meaningless. The apparent inevitability of functionalism in philosophy of mind is therefore one of the reasons for the stubborn persistence of the 'Hard Problem': how to relate first-person subjective experience to third-person descriptions of brain function (Block et al. 1997). More directly related to the concerns of this volume, when extended 'beyond the skin', functionalism lends itself to a kind of truncated, 'mentalized' view of our engagement with the world: material things matter to our experience only insofar as their functional properties are selectively engaged by corresponding functional properties of mind. This dual, functionalist limitation of embodiment

and materiality excludes more than just qualitative phenomena; it constitutes an arbitrary barrier to engagement, establishing a 'bottom floor' of relevance that extends across the body-world interface. The problem of functionalism for both embodiment and materiality, then, is that it circumscribes these interacting realities in a way that makes it impossible to make sense of the seemingly infinite variety and explorability of human experience.

Fortunately, the false premises of functionalism are easy to expose: it assumes that the distinction between function and bodily or material substrate is more stable than it really is, and it does so because it assumes that functionality is a stable and finitely describable property of a system. Here is where materiality can be of assistance to embodiment, because the fluidity of the former is easier to point out. The functionality of any given material is always changing, depending on the interests, history, and skill of the agent who is interacting with it. For instance, the colour of a piece of wood might be irrelevant in one context, and yet fully 'implementational' in another. Especially if we abandon the artificial constraints of specific problem-solving activities and consider the limitless variety of human interactions with materials, it is easy to see that 'implementational materiality' is a rather fluid and fuzzy category. Indeed, it does not even encompass the entirety of material relevance, as it leaves out the many activities in which materials are enjoyed for their own sake.

The much harder part is characterizing the complementary fluidity of our embodiment. To say that embodiment is 'fluid' does not mean that it is formless or without regular tendencies or patterns. Indeed, a radical embodied approach does not rule out the possibility that many regular forms of human life – body, mind, and behaviour – may be, for all practical purposes, species-universal. But the reason for this widespread constancy, from a dynamical perspective, is not that they are dictated by a genetic program or other set of 'biological constraints', but rather that such forms are reliably reassembled within typical contexts of human life. Regular forms of life are the convergent patterns of living systems within regularly recurring environmental conditions. The constraints that drive this convergence cannot be attributed to particular structures of either the individual system or the environment alone; constraints are relational features or 'interaction effects' between systems and their environments.

Ironically, this dynamic view is already implied by multiple realizability, the very phenomenon that is presumed by functionalists to keep embodiment and materiality in check. One could even say that functionalism is the result of a one-sided and artificially constrained view of what multiple realizability means. Because of the context-dependence of functionality, multiple realizability actually entails a two-way 'slippage' between structure and function, not just a many-to-one relationship, and if we look at this slippage from another angle, we get something very different: multi-functionality. Multi-functionality refers to the way in which structures and systems can play multiple functional roles, depending on their context and interactive couplings, and it is an increasingly well-documented feature of our bodies (Anderson et al. 2012; Anderson 2014).

What is important for current discussion is that multi-functionality gives the lie to functionalism insofar as it shows that non-functional properties *do* matter – and not only that, they matter *functionally* – but only if we loosen the constraints of context in

which functions are defined as such. The reasoning is simple: given a certain function, even if we grant that two materials are functionally equivalent with respect to *that* function, we cannot assume that they are functionally equivalent for all the *other* functions that they might have in various contexts. For example, just because a metal table and a wooden table are functionally equivalent for the purpose of dining does not mean that they are functionally equivalent as a makeshift shield in a gunfight. The implications of multi-functionality for embodiment and materiality are thus very different from those of multiple realizability, and yet the former is just as ubiquitous in nature – indeed, they are intimately related. Once the constraints of functionalism have been broken, it becomes apparent that the multi-functionality of our bodies and the multi-functionality of the materials we encounter in the world are complementary aspects of cognition: they emerge together through processes of mutual specification, and this is the key to the variety and depth of experience.

5.4 Conclusion

Such technical discussions of functionalism and multiple realizability seems to have carried us a long way from religious materiality. As indicated above, however, these issues are behind the apparent inhospitableness of cognitive science towards religious embodiment and materiality. From a functionalist standpoint, both embodiment and materiality are often characterized, and sometimes dismissed, as pertaining to the ‘details’ of instantiation, but this way of defining them misses the deeper issue. Rather, what the most innovative and illuminating theories of embodiment and materiality do is call attention to the dynamical constitution of things (Ingold 2011). A dynamical, longitudinal understanding of a religious phenomenon as it evolves in different contexts depends on the details in a way that a more temporally and situationally circumscribed understanding does not, but that does not mean that it is *only* about the details. Studies of embodiment and materiality can also be concerned with shared properties like function and meaning – the trick is to understand how such properties arise and change.

For the pursuit of such understanding, an important clue is that the phenomenologies of embodiment and materiality are intimately related: enhanced appreciation of our particular embodiment typically correlates with enhanced appreciation and skilful use of particular materials, and vice versa. In short, our embodiment is inextricably involved with the materiality of our environments, suggesting a ‘fundamental circularity’ (Varela et al. 1991), within which a proper understanding of both embodiment and materiality must be grounded. This circularity implies that theories and studies of religious embodiment and religious materiality are best developed in tandem.

Accordingly, my argument has been that the call for greater attention to religious materiality has put a special demand on embodied cognitive science that only the more ‘radical’ or dynamic approaches to embodiment seem prepared to meet. As of this writing, I do not know of any dynamic embodied cognitive research programs devoted to the study of religious phenomena, but the time is certainly ripe for them to emerge. How might this happen? The development of such programs requires the active collaboration

of religious studies scholars for the reasons just stated: a dynamic understanding of religious embodiment and materiality depends in part on knowledge of the 'details' of religious practice, and thus requires a much richer set of data than CSR currently admits. For instance, investigations of the ecological conditions of religious experience as constituted by a particular practice would depend on a close partnership between ethnographic studies of that practice and theoretical models of the relevant environmental 'interactants'. We cannot know at this point where such collaborations would lead, but the promise of developing a non-mentalistic CSR – one that gives embodiment and materiality their due – should be motivation enough to give them a try.

Works Cited

- Anderson, M.L. (2003). Embodied cognition: a field guide. *Artificial Intelligence* 149: 91–130. [https://doi.org/10.11016/S0004-3702\(03\)00054-7](https://doi.org/10.11016/S0004-3702(03)00054-7).
- Anderson, M.L. (2014). *After Phrenology: Neural Reuse and the Interactive Brain*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Anderson, M.L., Richardson, M.J., and Chemero, A. (2012). Eroding the boundaries of cognition: implications of embodiment. *Topics in Cognitive Science*: 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-8765.2012.01211.x>.
- Barrett, L. (2011). *Beyond the Brain: How Body and Environment Shape Animal and Human Minds*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Barrett, N.F. (2010). Toward an alternative evolutionary theory of religion: looking past computational evolutionary psychology to a wider field of possibilities. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (3): 583–621. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfq019>.
- Barrett, N.F. (2013). The perception of religious meaning and value: an ecological approach. *Religion, Brain, & Behavior* (article published online). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2153599X.2013.816339>.
- Barsalou, L.W., Barbey, A.K., Kyle Simmons, W., and Santos, A. (2005). Embodiment in religious knowledge. *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 5: 14–57.
- Becker, J. (2004). *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Beer, R. (1990). *Intelligence as Adaptive Behavior: An Experiment in Computational Neuroethology*. Boston, MA: Academic Press.
- Beer, R. (2007). Dynamical systems and embedded cognition'. Unpublished chapter draft to appear. In: *The Cambridge Handbook of Artificial Intelligence* (eds. K. Frankish and W. Ramsey), 128–148. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press <http://mypage.iu.edu/~rdbeer/Papers/AIHandbookChapter.pdf> (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Block, N., Flanagan, O., and Güzelde, G. (eds.) (1997). *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Brooks, R. (1991). Intelligence without representation. *Artificial Intelligence* 47: 139–159.
- Buhrmann, T., Di Paolo, E.A., and Barandiaran, X. (2013). A dynamical systems account of sensorimotor contingencies. *Frontiers in Psychology* 4: 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00285>.
- Chemero, A. (2009). *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chiel, H. and Beer, R. (1997). The brain has a body: adaptive behavior emerges from

- interactions of nervous system, body, and environment. *Trends in Neurosciences* 20: 553–557.
- Churchland, P.S., Koch, C., and Sejnowski, T.J. (1990). What is computational neuroscience? In: *Computational Neuroscience* (ed. E.L. Schwartz), 46–55. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Clark, A. (1997). *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Clark, A. (1999). An embodied cognitive science? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 3 (9): 345–351.
- Clark, A. (2008). Pressing the flesh: a tension in the study of embodied, embedded mind? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 76 (1): 37–59.
- Clark, A. (2012). Embodied, embedded, and extended cognition. In: *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science* (eds. K. Frankish and W.M. Ramsey), 275–291. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, A. and Chalmers, D. (1998). The extended mind. *Analysis* 58: 7–19.
- Clarke, E. (2005). *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Day, M. (2004). Religion, off-line cognition and the extended mind. *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 4 (1): 101–121.
- Di Paolo, E.A. (2009). Extended life. *Topoi* 28: 9–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-008-9042-3>.
- Di Paolo, E.A., Rohde, M., and De Jaegher, H. (2010). Horizons for the enactive mind: values, social interaction, and play. In: *Enaction: Towards a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science* (eds. J. Stewart, O. Gapenne and E. Di Paolo), 33–88. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Edelman, G.M. and Tononi, G. (2000). *A Universe of Consciousness: How Matter Becomes Imagination*. New York: Basic Books.
- Engelke, M. (2007). *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Freeman, W.J. (1999). *How Brains Make Up their Minds*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- Gardner, H. (1985). *The Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, A. (2010a). Brain, body and culture: a biocultural theory of religion. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 22: 304–321. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006810X531094>.
- Geertz, A. (2010b). Too much mind and not enough brain, body, and culture: on what needs to be done in the cognitive science of religion. *Historia Religionum* 2: 21–38.
- Gibson, J.J. (1979). *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Harrington, L. (2010). The feeling of Buddhahood, or guess who's coming to dinner? Body, belief, and the practice of Chod. In: *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (ed. D. Morgan), 97–112. New York: Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2011). *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge.
- Johnson, M. and Rohrer, T. (2007). We are live creatures: embodiment, American pragmatism, and the cognitive organism. In: *Body, Language, and Mind: Volume 1: Embodiment* (eds. T. Ziemke, J. Zlatev and R.M. Frank), 17–54. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Jonas, H. (1966). *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Keane, W. (2008). The evidences of the senses and the materiality of religion. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 14: S110–S127.
- Kelso, J.A.S. (1995). *Dynamic Patterns: The Self-Organization of Brain and Behavior*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Kelso, J.A.S. (ed.) (2008). An essay on understanding the mind. *Ecological Psychology* 20: 180–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10407410801949297>.
- Kelso, J.A.S. (2012). Multistability and metastability: understanding dynamic coordination in the brain. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 367: 907–918. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2011.0351>.
- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Luhmann, T.M. (2012). *When God Talks Back: Understanding the Evangelical Relationship with God*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Malafouris, L. (2004). The cognitive basis of material engagement: where brain, body, and culture conflate. In: *Rethinking Materiality: The Engagement of Mind with the Material World* (eds. E. DeMarrais, C. Gosden and C. Renfrew), 53–61. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.
- Maturana, H. and Varela, F. (1980). *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*. Boston, MA: Reidel.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*, (trans. Colin Smith). New York: Routledge.
- Meyer, B. (2012). Mediation and the genesis of presence: towards a material approach to religion. Lecture presented at the University of Utrecht, Utrecht (also published online): <http://www.uu.nl/hum/staff/bmeyer> (accessed 30 October 2018).
- Meyer, B., Morgan, D., Paine, C., and Plate, S.B. (2010). The origin and mission of material religion. *Religion* 40: 207–211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.religion.2010.01.010>.
- Noë, A. (2004). *Action in Perception*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Norris, R.S. (2005). Examining the structure and role of emotion: contributions of neurobiology to the study of embodied religious experience. *Zygon* 40 (1): 181–199.
- O'Regan, J. and Noë, A. (2001). A sensorimotor account of vision and visual consciousness. *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 24: 939–1031. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X01000115>.
- Oyama, S. (2000). *The Ontogeny of Information: Developmental Systems and Evolution*, 2e. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Piccinini, G. and Scarantino, A. (2011). Information processing, computation, and cognition. *Journal of Biological Physics* 37: 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10867-010-9195-3>.
- Port, R.F. (1995). *Mind as Motion: Explorations in the Dynamics of Cognition* (ed. T. van Gelder). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Putnam, H. (1994). Putnam, Hilary. In: *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind* (ed. S. Guttenplan), 507–513. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Roth, H.D. (2008). Against cognitive imperialism: a call for a non-ethnocentric approach to cognitive science and religious studies. *Religion East & West* 8: 1–26.
- Slingerland, E.G. (2008a). Who's afraid of reductionism? The study of religion in the age of cognitive science. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76: 375–411.
- Slingerland, E.G. (2008b). *What Science Offers the Humanities: Integrating Body and Culture*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, L.B. (2005). Cognition as a dynamic system: principles from embodiment. *Developmental Review* 25: 278–298.
- Sporns, O. (2011). *Networks of the Brain*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Stewart, J., Gapenne, O., and Di Paolo, E. (eds.) (2010). *Enaction: Towards a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Taves, A. (2009). *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Thelen, E. and Smith, L.B. (1996). *A Dynamic Systems Approach to the Development of Cognition and Action*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Thompson, E. (2007). *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Thompson, E. and Varela, F.J. (2001). Radical embodiment: neural dynamics and consciousness. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 5 (10): 418–425.
- Varela, F.J., Thompson, E., and Rosch, E. (1991). *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Vásquez, M.A. (2011). *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Verrips, J. (2010). Body and mind: material for a never-ending intellectual journey. In: *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (ed. D. Morgan), 21–39. New York: Routledge.
- Watt, R.J. and Ash, R.L. (1998). A psychological investigation of meaning in music. *Musicae Scientiae* 2: 33–54.
- Wheeler, M. (2010). Minds, things, and materiality'. In: *The Cognitive Life of Things. Recasting the Boundaries of the Mind* (eds. C. Renfrew and L. Malafouris), 29–38. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research Publications.
- Wheeler, M. (2011). Embodied cognition and the extended mind. In: *The Continuum Companion to Philosophy of Mind* (ed. J. Garvey), 220–238. London and New York: Continuum.
- Wildman, W. (2009). *Science and Religious Anthropology: A Spiritually Evocative Naturalist Interpretation of Human Life*. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Wilson, M. (2002). Six views of embodied cognition. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 9 (4): 625–636.
- Xygalatas, D. (2014). Cognitive science of religion. In: *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, 2e (ed. D.A. Leeming), 343–347. London: Springer.
- Ziemke, T. and Frank, R.M. (2007). Introduction: the body electric. In: *Body, Language, and Mind: Volume 1: Embodiment* (eds. T. Ziemke, J. Zlatev and R.M. Frank), 1–13. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Section II

Practices and Performances

CHAPTER 6

From Bells to *Bottus*

Analysing the Body and Materiality of Indian Dance in an American University Context

Harshita Mruthinti Kamath and Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger

Swaths¹ of cloth in brightly coloured hues – bright orange, turmeric yellow, parrot green, and royal blue – covered the women's dressing room in the basement of Emory University's Schwartz Center for Performing Arts. Painstakingly ironed to belie the deep creases of transcontinental travel from Chennai a month beforehand, the smells of India still lingered in the fabric. Female college students filled the dressing room with their noisy chatter in nervous anticipation of the upcoming performance as they waited to be draped in six yards of fabric by expert hands (Figure 6.1). The process was slow; the length of the sari was folded over to adjust to the correct length, knee-length pleats were made using the thumb and forefinger, additional pleats covered the chest, the long *pallu* was wrapped around and tucked into the waist, and safety pins secured the garment in place. The finished product resulted in a material transformation of ironed fabric into pleated costume, a transformation that mirrored the shift in the young women themselves; just as pleated fabric became a dance costume, college students became Kuchipudi dancers.

Dance scholar Priya Srinivasan describes the materiality of the sari in her examination of bodily labour in transnational Indian dance practice. Attentive to the labour of the dancing body, particularly the female dancing body, Srinivasan writes: 'The illusion that dance is effortlessness is undone through the bodily juices seeping and creeping onto the sari, and the sari becomes a part of the Indian dancing body' (2011, p. xi). It is not only sweat, but also blood, that reveal the telltale traces of bodily labour; when analysing the *arangetram* (debut recital), of Madhavi, an Indian American dancer from Orange County, California, Srinivasan focuses on the leakage of this betraying substance from Madhavi's foot onto a beautiful deep pink sari with a purple border (2011, pp. 153–154). Bodily fluids reveal the labour practices inherent to Indian dance on the



Figure 6.1 Sasikala Penumarthi pins a sari on an Emory student. Source: Photo credit: Anandi Silva Knuppel.

American stage, illustrating Srinivasan's overarching goal of understanding 'Indian women dancers as transnational laborers on the global stage' (2011, p. 8).

What about the noisy group of college students in the basement of the Schwartz Center? Can their dance be conceived of as labour in the same way as the transnational dancers that are the focus of Srinivasan's research? The group of women described in the opening of this chapter are students from 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge in the Indian Context', a unique theory-practice course on Indian aesthetics, Western performance theory, and the history of Indian classical dance. As an integral component of the course, the students, both female and male, perform a short item featuring the Hindu deity Krishna in the South Indian dance style of Kuchipudi. For many female dancers in this class, the donning of the sari is a first experience; the swaths of brightly coloured cloth, the elaborate process of wrapping, pleating, and pinning, and the lingering traces of Indian smells are new sensory encounters. Additional elements of costuming, such as wearing the circular *bottu* on the forehead and tying bells on the ankles, add layers of meaning to these sensory experiences. The labour of these dancers is not evident in blood and sweat, but rather in the very process of adornment; folded cloth becomes pleated sari, empty forehead becomes centrally marked, bare feet become laden with sound.

In this chapter, we focus on the materiality of both the body itself and the clothing and ornamentation on the bodies of students participating in 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge' at Emory University, Middlebury College, and UNC-Chapel Hill (see note 1). Our attentiveness to materiality and the body suggests that it is not only the movements and labour of the body, but also adornment and ornamentation that construct the dancing body in Indian classical dance, particularly in the American context.

6.1 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge': Conceptualizing the Course (jbf)

Indian American Hindu college students are often frustrated with their parents' seeming inability to explain to them 'why we do what we do' and what various ritual actions and materials 'mean'. I often ask these students whether their parents perform the ritual of *puja* (offerings) to Hindu deities; the answer is invariably 'yes'. I suggest, then, that their parents do know something – through their bodies and their manipulation of physical objects – even if they cannot always explain discursively what they know.

These interactions led me to think about ways to learn and teach about how knowledge is created and expressed through the body. More specifically, I looked for a body practice that we could incorporate into a theory-practice class in order to address the issue of 'how and what bodies know'. My assumption was that students would learn how their own bodies carry and learn new forms of knowledge if they actively engaged in a specific body practice. Since world-renown dance guru Sasikala Penumarthy was already teaching Kuchipudi dance in Emory's Dance Department, I chose the body practice of Indian classical dance (specifically, Kuchipudi) to incorporate into a class titled 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge in the Indian Context'. What I unexpectedly learned was the significance of the materiality (beyond the body) associated with Indian dance and the knowledge that this materiality created.

The class is structured to meet three times a week – with one day dedicated to Kuchipudi dance instruction and practice and two days to lectures and discussion. For the latter, we begin the course by reading Hindu mythologies of the dancing deities Shiva and Krishna, asking what happens (or is created) when a god dances and the significance of gods' dancing bodies. We analyse these stories for the indigenous perspectives they offer on narrative performance and the significance of the body more generally and dance, specifically. In this section of the course, we also look at paintings, lithographs, and sculptures of Krishna and Shiva dancing and ask what each mode of physical visualization creates differently from both the narrative and choreographed dances of the same narratives (including different theologies). We also discuss the ways bodies are used and reflected in other Hindu devotional (*bhakti*) poetic and dance traditions; the use of the body in the Indian aesthetic theory of *rasa* (aesthetic emotion); the ways the dancing body became a site of contestation and identity in colonial and postcolonial India; and the ways in which Indian dance in diasporic contexts creates identities in different ways than it does in India (see Katrak 2004; Meduri 2004; Srinivasan 2011; Devarajan 2012; Zubko 2014).

In the dance-practice classes, we first learn basic Kuchipudi foot movements and hand gestures before moving on to learn the Krishna dance item of *Narayaniyam*. Throughout the semester, we reflect on what we learn and experience about Krishna through our own (unique) dancing bodies in a university classroom context. Significantly, *Narayaniyam* is a description of the body and beauty of the god and becomes a performed commentary on the significance of the body and materiality in Hindu traditions.

6.2 Nakha Sikha: Descriptions of the Body from Toe to Head (hmk)

Indian literary texts, written both in Sanskrit and vernacular languages, include a descriptive trope referred to as *padadi kesa varanam*, in which the various features of a divine figure or human being are described either from head to toe (*sikha nakha*) or toe to head (*nakha sikha*). In the fourteenth-century Tamil text *Koyir-puranam*, for example, we find one such description of the deity Shiva, as he embarks into the pine forest disguised as a beautiful mendicant:

Then he, the noble lord (*nāyakan*), beautified his body: wooden sandals on his feet, his enticing waist visible above a white loin-cloth, triple thread, hairs curling right (above his navel), one auspicious line marking his breast, shoulders higher than mountains, a beggar's [mendicant's] pouch, a drum (*tamarukam*), a bowl for alms. His neck was particularly splendid; a smile played on his bright red lips. He had long ears and a certain gleam in his eyes. Beads of sweat glistened on his forehead, just above his delicious eyebrows; his face was flushed like an open lotus. He had the dot on his forehead and tangled dark hair thick with honey and buzzing with bees. His entire body, in short, was more luminous than red coral, so beautiful that women who saw him would slide unconscious to the ground while their silk sarees [*sic*] slipped from their waists. (Handelman and Shulman 2004, p. 69)

This description of Shiva as a mendicant describes the figure of the god from toe to head (*nakha sikha*), beginning with the wooden sandals on his feet and ends with the 'tangled dark hair' on his head. The reader's eyes visually move up the body of the deity through the detailed description of his physical attributes. The reader figuratively takes *darshan* (sight) of the deity, in this case Shiva, through the descriptive trope of *nakha sikha*, which mirrors the experience of lifting one's eyes to the face of the deity after prostrating before their feet.

The dance piece *Narayaniyam* reflects this slow movement from *nakha* (toe or toenail) to *sikha* (head). The dancer begins the piece onstage prostrating on the ground, knees bended, arms stretched out overhead, and palms joined in *namaskaram* (embodied salutation). As the Carnatic vocalist softly sings the invocatory phrase '*Om Namo Narayana*', the dancer slowly raises up from the floor, forming the radius of an arch with their body. By the third repetition of the phrase, the dancer is sitting upright, arms stretched overhead, with palms joined pointing to the sky. Just as *nakha* meets *sikha* in Indian literary sources, earth meets sky in the opening moments of *Narayaniyam*.²

In this chapter, we draw on the trope of *nakha sikha* to describe the dancing bodies and *alankara* (ornamentation) and dress associated with each part of the bodies of students in the 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge' classroom. We begin our analysis with feet, specifically focusing on the bare feet of the dancers and the bells tied around their ankles. We then move up the body of the dancers to describe the seated posture of *sau-stavam* and *araimandi*, the draping cloth of the sari (or scarf) around the waist, the expressive gestures of the hands (*mudras*), and finally, the adornment and expressions of the face.

6.3 Dancing Feet (jbf)

6.3.1 Bare Feet

The first thing to notice about dancing feet in the context of Indian classical dance is that they are bare feet. While Indian American students and dancers familiar with modern Western dance forms take their shoes off automatically, for some non-dancers, to take off socks and shoes before they enter the dance studio is their first step towards an awareness of how their bodies have been conditioned to 'know'. Bare feet in many American cultural contexts signals informality, and for some students who were not dancers prior to this class, it was difficult to take off socks and shoes in a university classroom. One student told us that her carefully chosen, colourful, patterned socks were a part of her identity; she wondered if she really had to take them off. Using as a prompt Nadia Seremetakis's essay (1994) on everyday embodied knowledge and memory in Greece (specifically, coffee-drinking rituals, women's embroidery, and picking wild greens), another Emory student who had grown up in rural India until the age of 11 wrote a paper reflecting on what he had learned by walking through his village with bare feet. He described the ways the bare feet of his childhood quite literally absorbed the terrain upon which he walked: the heat and cold of the seasons, the mud of the Monsoons, both the rocky paths and paved roads of his village, and the coolness of interior rooms of his home.

Bare feet enable a dancer to feel the 'earth' beneath them (although, of course, a university dance studio with vinyl marley flooring isn't literally the earth). The *namaskaram* to Bhū Devi (goddess of earth) with which every classical Indian dance practice and performance begins increases awareness of the dancer's relationship to the earth. One dance major wrote in a response paper that the further she got into the course and the faster we danced, the more she appreciated the support of the earth under her feet; she wrote that she had gained a new awareness of her body in relationship to the ground (applicable to her other dance classes as well), and realized in her body why we thank the earth for holding/bearing us. A Middlebury student was struck by the different ways in which one engages with the feet in Kuchipudi dance. This new experience motivated the student to explore the ways in which feet engage both with dance but also the religious traditions and stories of the gods, namely Vishnu and Shiva. In her reflections, she proposed the idea that 'the feet of the gods indicate their power along with their ability to dance and are worshipped accordingly in the myths and dances of the Hindu religious tradition'. Feet, for this student, were not only limited to the dancer, but important elements for Hindu religious devotion to deities, as well.

Bare feet in the dance studio and sitting on the floor during rests or verbal-teaching interludes in dance practices also give a context in which students learn the protocols of sitting so as not to point their feet towards the guru or deity and the disrespect the bottom of one's feet embodies. The resulting cross-legged pose causes many students to become aware of their flexibility or lack thereof, some complaining of the discomfort and even pain of sitting cross-legged for more than a few minutes. The students of the Middlebury course embodied the experience of sitting cross-legged on the floor for

a two-hour performance by Sasikala Penumarthi and two of her students in October 2013. Rather than focusing on the sense of discomfort, in a paper analysing the performance, one student highlighted his connectivity with the *dancers'* feet while sitting cross-legged:

Sitting in the front row, cross-legged and upright, I felt every *samam*, *udghattitam* and *kunchitam* [names of specific foot positions] radiate up through my ribs. Recent trends in luxury entertainment have shifted towards providing multisensory stimulus in the hopes of creating a more immersive experience. Live performance has been accomplishing this feat for thousands of years. There is something about physical sensation which captures the emotional imagination more powerfully than words or images alone ever could. The constant beat of the performance running through my ribs gave me a focal point for my emotional and intellectual attention.

Sitting cross-legged, for this student, was not only a way to embody Indian understandings of respect, but a way to connect with the moving feet of the performers themselves.

Finally, many dancers with experience in ballet, in particular, had, through years of practice, embodied 'dance feet are pointed feet'. It was difficult for them to relearn foot positions that stamped the earth with the full bottom of their feet. An Emory ballet dancer wrote, 'I was surprised by the downward-directed channelling of our energy. I am learning that the *pada bhedas* [foot movements], especially, direct energy loudly into the floor. Classical ballet is quite the opposite of this, emphasizing lightness of foot with an upward-directed energy'. Similarly, a Middlebury student commented that in Kuchipudi, 'the foot is often held flat, to be stomped, tapped and patted into the floor, creating a rhythm synonymous to a drum. Whereas in ballet the toes are pointed, integrated into the leg and meant to disappear gracefully, in the Hindu religious dance tradition, the foot is flexed so it becomes more prominent'.

6.3.2 Bells

We put dancing bells around our ankles only several weeks into the course, when students have a basic feel for the foot movements, so as to avoid a cacophony of mistimed sounds. The dance bells are sewn onto a wide strip of leather, and the students learn the protocol of putting them on the right foot first (and the significance of the auspicious right side versus the left). We also use the first-bells occasion to describe the significant ritual of receiving one's first dance bells from the guru (accepting them with the right hand only) and to explain the purity of the bells that shouldn't be worn into the rest room. Only when one set of bells was missing and a student offered to give her set to another student did we learn that once a dancer puts on her/his bells, they should not be taken off until s/he has danced – this custom was more important in this context than generosity.

Many students commented that wearing the bells raised awareness of what their feet were doing, highlighting the rhythm of the dance, in particular. The sound itself, they

noticed, helped them keep rhythm; and the unified rhythm of many belled feet created a new, palpable energy in the room and a new sense of community. For a senior Religious Studies major at UNC-Chapel Hill, the act of putting on the bells was an experience of *ananda*, or pure joy; she writes in her dance journal:

The bells were an absolute joy to incarnate...Although I did not necessarily have a 'religious' experience while dancing this semester, we may have all experienced a little *ananda* when we performed our piece with the bells yesterday. According to Haberman (and according to Abhinavagupta), *ananda* can be achieved when the performer rises above personal attitudes and concerns and experiences a form of 'impersonal joy' (*Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 17). We may not have all experienced *ananda* at the same time, but I know when I looked around the room at my classmates, I felt joy for each individual that has made it this far.

The wearing of the dance bells created a different momentum by adding power to the embodied movements and a sense of communal joy, *ananda*, to the dance studio classroom (Figure 6.2).

6.4 Bent Knees and Straight Back (hmk)

Aramaindi, the half-seated position that is a mainstay of Bharata Natyam in the postcolonial period has seeped into Kuchipudi classrooms as well, particularly for dancers trained under dance guru Vempati Chinna Satyam. Adopting the practices of the Bharata Natyam scene around him in Madras, Chinna Satyam increasingly stressed the importance of the deep bend of the knees to attain an ideal half-seated posture for his students trained in the Kuchipudi Art Academy (founded in 1963). Students of Chinna



Figure 6.2 Emory students wearing bells in the dance studio. Source: Photo credit: Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger.

Satyam's, including my teachers in the United States and India, emphasize *araimandi* in the classroom today, particularly by encouraging their students to sit, using either the English or Telugu imperative ('Sit, *kuchol*'). Encouraged by this imperative, dancers are reminded to bend their knees further to attain the correct body proportions required of *araimandi* (Srinivasan 2011, p. x).

In addition to *araimandi*, the second aspect integral to Chinna Satyam's form of Kuchipudi dance is *saustavam*, or correct posture. The English imperative for *saustavam* that is often employed, 'Back straight!', does not accurately capture the ideal position of the body prescribed for *saustavam*. Rather than maintaining a straight elongated posture, in the manner of Western traditions of ballet, *saustavam* requires the back to be arched, with the chest sticking out, shoulders curved back and the torso bending slightly forward. The imperative 'Back curved!' is, in fact, more accurate in describing the ideal posture required to embody *saustavam*.

Aware of the difficulties of *araimandi* and *saustavam*, especially for the neophyte Kuchipudi student, I decided to experiment with a contemplative approach at embodying these two postures in my own dance classroom. When I taught the dance portions of 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge' at Emory, Middlebury, and UNC-Chapel Hill, I had my students practise *saustavam* and *araimandi*, each individually for 30-second intervals. The students were then asked to combine both postures, while also extending out the arms on either side of the body to align with the plane of the shoulders. These were quiet moments in my classroom, in which students waited, often uncomfortably, until the 30 seconds were over. As the semester progressed, and *araimandi* and *saustavam* slowly became engrained in their bodies, I asked students lower their bodies an inch more, and hold the deeper bend for an additional 30 seconds.

For the first half of the course, I began each class with these moments of embodied contemplation. The goal of these moments was reflective; they were opportunities for students to begin dance practice in silence and to consider the muscles that require the continued maintenance of such postures. The materiality of these moments was not present in the tangible, but rather the temporal and corporeal. As seconds passed on, the corporeal body physically experienced the feelings, often uncomfortable or even painful, of maintaining both *araimandi* and *saustavam*.

I do not suggest that my students fully embodied these two elements of Kuchipudi dance practice, especially as we shifted to learning more complex hand and foot movements through the course of the semester. In fact, the very process of embodiment was a complicated one for students, who struggled to make sense of the wide range of movements through the medium of bodily expression. A Middlebury student trained in ballet wrote about the difficulties of maintaining the correct posture in Kuchipudi given her prior dance training:

The first, and possibly the most obvious, difference between Kuchipudi and ballet is posture. In ballet the body must be upright and lifted, making an almost straight line with the spine. Ballet teachers will often preach about the need for shoulders to be over hips and hips to be over ankles. In Kuchipudi, however, the spine is supposed to be curved with the tail and sternum sticking out. Even in modern dance, which is often viewed as 'deconstructed ballet', the tail is hardly ever meant to be sticking out. When I practice the Kuchipudi posture it feels

a bit like I am throwing my technique out the window. I have been criticized by many of my dance teachers for unintentionally sticking my tail out during exercises involving pliés (the legs bending), which is exactly what you are taught to do in Kuchipudi. It is strange to see something that I have been taught is 'wrong' in the dance forms that I have practiced my whole life turn out to be 'right' in another form.

Akin to these observations are those of another student, who summarized her reflections from her weekly dance journal about the processes of embodiment:

Week One of my dance journal reads, 'It was quite frustrating to tell my legs to do one thing and tell my arms to do another and try to combine the motion. Apparently I have rather poor control over my limbs'. I struggled to perform the movements even when straining my mind to think through each position; embodiment was a far-fetched dream. Despite my best efforts through the subsequent weeks, my movements still felt foreign and somewhat comical during practices. My thoughts centered around forcing the muscles in my fingers to curve into shapes, while I simultaneously struggled to think through the foot patterns.

As evident in these student reflections, embodied knowledge, despite the course title, was not a self-evident fact for many students. Rather, it was a gradual process that was rarely fully achieved. Aware of the limits of embodied knowledge, particularly for a semester-long course in Kuchipudi dance, my goal in focusing on *araimandi* and *saustavam* was more contemplative than concrete. By reflecting on these postures, I hoped it would give the students the opportunity to dwell in silence, and *reflect* on the practice of embodiment through physical practice. *Aramaindi* and *saustavam*, therefore, were not just prescriptions for bent knees and straight back, but rather material postures of contemplation on embodied knowledge.

6.5 *Mudras*: Expressive Hands (hmk)

In the world of Indian dance, hand gestures not only mirror movements of everyday life, but are stylistic postures that are charged with meaning. As Sasikala explains when introducing the students to these stylized expressive hand gestures (*mudras*), the same gesture can be utilized to convey a range of meanings. *Pataka*, the first *mudra* often learned by students of Kuchipudi dance, is fashioned by holding the palm flat, with all of the fingers adjoining. *Pataka*, both within the stylized Kuchipudi performance context as well as in daily life, can indicate an emphatic 'Stop!' when held up to the face of an opponent. When combined with a flick of the wrist away from the body, it can connote dismissal or disapproval. In the stylized world of Kuchipudi dance, *pataka* formed by both hands that are moving in a wave-like motion from the left of the chest to the right can be used to indicate flowing water, such as the water of the cosmic ocean that the Hindu deity Vishnu rests on.

The range of connotative possibilities of *pataka* is comparable to other Kuchipudi *mudras*, which are generally characterized as *asamyuta hasta* (single-hand) or *samyuta hasta* (double-hand). While the students of the 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge' course

do not learn all of the 24 single-hand gestures or 13 double-hand gestures outlined in other Kuchipudi dance classrooms, they do learn the *mudras* that arise in the performance piece *Narayaniyam*.

In preparation for learning this item, students study the visual imagery of the Hindu deity Vishnu holding the conch and discus; while learning the descriptive portions of the piece, they embody this imagery by learning to form the shape of the conch and discus with their hands, an experience that can be new for students who may not know the religious significance of Vishnu's *shanka* (conch) and *cakra* (discus). Later in the song, when the line '*Mada-sikhi-pinca*' is repeated, the students visually describe the peacock feather adorning Krishna's curly locks by positioning the left hand in the *mudra mayura* over their heads, with the fingers of the right hand radiating out behind it in the manner of a peacock's tail. Krishna's flute is also visually represented in the end of the piece by placing both hands in the *mudra hamsa-paksha* (lit. wing of a goose). These combination of hand movements are coded with dual layers of significance; the students not only learn how to fashion a peacock's feather and flute with their hands, but they also learn Krishna's visual imagery. *Mudras* not only express meaning, but create narrative knowledge for these students (Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.3 Middlebury dancers portray Krishna and his *gopi*. Dancers: Jeremy Read (left) and Elise Biette (right). Source: Photo credit: Harshita Mruthinti Kamath.

6.6 Face, Eyes, and Hair (jbf)

In our *nakha sikha* description, we now reach the head and face of our dancing students. Students with experience in ballet and modern dance were surprised at the emphasis Sasikala placed on showing emotion through their eyes and lips. She often exhorted the students to smile and to make their eyes sparkle as they were dancing – even in rather pedantic repetitions of foot movements and *mudras*. Some students commented that even when they came into the dance studio at the end of the week exhausted, adhering to Sasikala's exhortations, putting a smile on their faces, brought a lightness to their movements and a new energy. Through practice, they interiorized the knowledge that 'mechanical' shifting facial expressions had the potential to create shifting moods (*bhavas*), both for themselves and their audience/s (Schechner 2001). As Phillip Zarrilli has demonstrated in his work with Kathakali dancers, this exterior facial expression results in an internal transformation that allows the performer to become the character; the corporeal transforms the experiential in Indian dance performance (Zarrilli 2000, pp. 88–90).

The experiences of showing emotion on the face in dance-practice sessions helps the students to understand elements of the Indian aesthetic theory of *rasa* (aesthetic emotion), particularly the creative power of *vibhavas* (stimuli), *anubhavas* (involuntary reactions), and *vyabhichari bhavas* (transitory moods) that are crucial to creating particular *rasas*. Students learn that according to *rasa* theory, wide-open eyes not only reflect fear, but also have the potential to create the emotion; similarly, shedding of tears is an *anubhava* of compassion and furled brows of anger. This leads us to examine the debate about where *rasa* is created, in the dancer and/or the audience (Zarrilli 2000) and Western theories of emotion and facial expressions discussed by Paul Eckman.³

Our dance guru Sasikala and Harshita insist that female students pull their hair back in a ponytail when dancing. Dancers with ballet experience are used to this, and non-dancers quickly learn that flying, loose hair can be distracting to noticing facial expressions of the dancer. Sasikala's prescriptions bring up broader scholarly analyses of hair in the South Asian context and their relevance to dancers' hair. Alf Hildebeitel, in his study on the uses of hair in the Tamil cults of Draupadi, states that in both Sanskrit and Tamil texts: 'Loose hair or dishevelment is for widows and menstruating women; the triple braid (*triveni*) and chignon (Tamil *kuntal* or *kontai*) are for auspicious married women; the "single braid" (*ekaveni*), a kind of ponytail, is for women separated from their husbands (*virahinis*)' (1998, p. 144). There appears to be a dichotomous analogy when interpreting Indian women's hair: bound hair is to the auspicious married woman as loose hair is to the sexually unrestrained woman.

6.7 Vesham: Materiality of Clothing and Ornamentation

We now move from the materiality of the dancing body itself to the materiality of what the dancer wears. *Vesham* is an Indian-language term that refers to any article of clothing, but more often specifically refers to clothing that guises or disguises its wearer, thus

emphasizing the transformative potential of material clothing and ornaments. We introduce the term to our dance classes as an analytic term that emphasizes the assumption in Indian traditions that clothing and ornaments are not only reflective of identity, but that they *create* something and 'cause things to happen'. That is, specific clothing and ornaments help to *create* the dancing body and the identity of dancer.

6.7.1 Practice Vesham

The dress code for the dance-practice sessions is comfortable stretch pants or leggings – specifically, no shorts – and a non-sleeveless, comfortable top (usually a t-shirt). This dress code is a rather dramatic difference from the practice saris (tied to be shorter than everyday saris, to just below the knee, with the *palu* tied tightly around the waist) and *salwar-chemise* that classical dancers wear in traditional contexts of classical Indian dance studios. Ballet and Western-modern dancers are accustomed to practising and performing in tight, sleeveless, or spaghetti-strap tops, and the difference in dress code alone signals for them a new dance form and protocol. Our dance guru Sasikala Penumarthi does not explicitly explain the reason for no-sleeveless tops or shorts; but students gradually embody and internalize an Indian sense of modesty that the adapted dress code creates, in much the same way Saba Mahmood describes Egyptian women who are part of the mosque movement saying that wearing the veil not only reflects, but creates modesty (2005, pp. 157–159). (Some students found it interesting that while bare shoulders are considered immodest, an exposed stomach between end of sari blouse and the waistband into which the sari is tucked is not considered to be immodest.) When, several weeks into the semester, an Emory female student came to class directly from another dance class wearing shorts, she was chagrined when she looked around the room and realized her faux-pas of shorts. She asked if she should actually dance, indicating that she had embodied an Indian modesty for this context.

When Harshita taught the dance class at both Emory and Middlebury, she added the requirement of a scarf tied tightly around the waist, creating support and correct (for Indian classical dance) posture. Several students commented that the simple addition of a scarf shifted their expectations and energy, signalling a transition from the meaning of everyday leggings or sweat pants to a framed and heightened awareness of performance (Bauman 1992; Bell 1998).

6.7.2 Vesham in Performance

For the end-of-semester dance performance of the piece that we have been learning throughout the semester, female students wear practice saris, with stretch pants underneath. Male students wear a traditional *dhoti* (three-yard piece of material wrapped around their waists and between their legs) and a white t-shirt. In the opening vignette of this chapter, we have described the excitement that these *veshams* created for the students as they got ready for one of our performances. When Harshita taught the class at Middlebury College, she asked the students iron their own six-yard saris and *dhotis*

and taught them how to fold and hang them on hangers before their performance; they learned the embodiment of the culture of sari and *dhoti*-care. Because they had several performances (two dress rehearsals and two staged performances), they also learned to put on their own saris or *dhotis*, and how to fold the pleats and where to secure their safety pins (*all* students, male and female, learned the importance of the material object of safety pins and the security they create). Students were asked to help each other in ironing, securing safety pins, and ensuring that pleats were of the correct length; this collaborative process of dress contributed to their embodied understanding of *vesham* as a collective experience of ornamentation.

Sasikala is very particular to tell female students that, for our final performances, their hair should be tied up in a bun, and that they should wear earrings, a necklace, and bangles – ‘so you look pretty’. However, ornaments in Indian contexts are worn for more than beauty or display of wealth and in the discussion class prior to the performance, students learn more about the culture of ornamentation in India. One Indian-language word for ornamentation is *alankara*, literally, ‘to make adequate or complete’. A performing dancer is not complete without ornaments; the ornaments *make* her auspicious. They are also believed to protect their wearers, specifically against the evil eye that may be cast on a beautiful (dancing) body.

As the dancers walk out onto the dance floor for the final performances, the saris help to frame the performance as ‘Indian’, creating audience expectations for the performance of a dance form that, for many, was a new experience, but surely beautiful. Several students observed that the beautiful, colourful saris gave them a new sense of confidence, created adrenaline and energy, helped them to remember the dance choreography, and hid from many non-specialist audience members any mistakes that they made. One student, looking into the mirror after her sari had been tied, exclaimed, ‘Now I am a dancer!’ Finally, several students observed that the saris and ornaments in and of themselves created for them the joy that Sasikala constantly implored them in practices to embody and show on their faces. The final step in readying for the dance performance is applying a *bottu* (forehead marking) – in this case a dark red, round ‘sticker’. In many Hindu worship contexts, a vermilion-powder forehead marking signals completion of worship, received as a blessing from the deity. But for these students, the *bottu* signalled a beginning; they were now fully ready to ‘ascend the stage’ (Schwartz 2004, pp. 87–88) (Figure 6.4).

6.8 Materiality in Motion: The Full Dancing Body

The dancing body is not only its parts (feet, legs, waist, arms, face and combination thereof) or what it wears (*vesham* and ornaments); it is first and foremost a moving body. As mentioned earlier, students with dance experience learn new ways of moving their body, particularly in relationship to the earth. What quickly becomes apparent in dance classes in which there are both trained dancers and students who have no classical dance experience is that experienced dancers are able to learn movements more quickly than non-dancers; they have been trained in an embodied way of learning, learning with their muscles rather than just their minds.



Figure 6.4 Final performance at Emory University. Dancers Hina Purohit (left), Mayur Patel (center), Nandita Balakrishnan (right). Source: Photo credit: Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger.

While body memory is difficult for some former non-dancers, they, too, experience their bodies in new ways in space. One male ‘non-dancer’ at Emory was the captain of the water polo team. He astutely observed (written in his final exam) that dancing created for him a new awareness of his body in ‘everyday’ space:

There is a strong physical correlation between body awareness in dance and in sports such as water polo. I have found myself becoming much more aware of where I sit in the water and correcting my athletic posture in a similar manner to correcting my dance posture in class. ... I find myself using these techniques in my analysis of normal activities. Similar to performance theory, once you are aware to look for these aspects, it is easily applied across a wide array of situations. I spent this afternoon running the girls’ water polo tournament at Emory and using this understanding of body awareness to help teach beginning players the fundamentals of water polo.

I have greatly enjoyed stepping out of my comfort zone this semester. What will leave its mark as I leave Indian culture classes for med school pursuits is the performative aspects and awareness that Kuchipudi has taught me. I am much more aware of my body in day-to-day life and what certain postures (much like *mudras*) convey to others around me. I am sure this is something I will carry throughout the rest of my life as embodied knowledge.

Similarly, a Middlebury student described the difficulties of embodiment by stating simply: ‘The embodiment of knowledge can be messy. The information which is desired

is never found in isolation. The fatigued muscles, the blistered heels, these too are embodied, often to the detriment of the dance itself. More problematic still, embodied knowledge is subject to the same temporal limitations of any biological structure. Humans forget. Knowledge is lost. Practice, as I realized, is paramount'.

The students enrolled in the course experienced various forms of symbolic and material capital exhibited in the *arangetram*. *Arangetram* is a Sanskrit term that denotes the moment an Indian classical dancer 'takes the stage' for her first solo public presentation (Schwartz 2004, p. 88). Today, *arangetrams* are important rites of passage for young Indian women, particularly in the North American context, and they mark a culmination of years of dance training. As Arthi Devarajan has argued in her work on Indian dance communities in the United States (Ascending Capital n.d., p. 5), the *arangetram* is a display of both symbolic and material capital: a dancer showcases her symbolic capital by performing five to six pieces for approximately two hours before an audience of her peers and family; she displays her material capital through her expensive costumes, hand tailored from India, elaborate stage decorations, and other forms of material wealth. In addition to symbolic and material capital, the *arangetram* also displays the capital of embodied knowledge, that is the embodied forms of knowing a dancer learns through the rigorous training process leading up to her final performance. A dancer signals her embodied knowledge to an audience when her movements become second nature, so inscribed in her body that she cannot extricate herself from her dance.

The final performance of 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge', could be likened to a mini-*arangetram* itself. They exhibited material capital through their costumes, bells, and flowers, which were all purchased from India exclusively for this performance. Their capital of embodied knowledge, however, was not quite so evident. In the final performance, students were not always coordinated, and some forgot the sequence of the movements, while others could not execute them as well as their peers. Given these students' limited exposure and training in Kuchipudi dance, their apparent lack of technical mastery belies the embodied forms of knowing that went into their final performance. Rather than looking at their overall presentation, we must focus on smaller, more subtle forms of movement, such as their ability to fashion their fingers into Kuchipudi *mudras* while simultaneously moving their feet in sync with the music. As evidence of this micro-form of embodied knowledge, one student wrote in her dance journal:

It was quite frustrating to tell my legs to do one thing and tell my arms to do another and try to combine the motion. Apparently I have rather poor control over my limbs...Despite my best efforts through the subsequent weeks, my movements still felt foreign and somewhat comical during practices. My thoughts centered around forcing the muscles in my fingers to curve into shapes, while I simultaneously struggled to think through the foot patterns...embodiment was a far-fetched dream.

This student, however, did learn how to force the muscles of her fingers to curve into *mudras*, or shapes as she calls them. She and her fellow students learned through the

course of the semester to manipulate their hands to symbolically represent the Hindu deity Vishnu/Krishna through his various attributes, such as his conch, his discus, and his flute.

Deidre Sklar refers to this encounter as *kinesthetic empathy*, or ‘the capacity to participate with another’s movement or another’s sensory experience of movement’ (1994, p. 15). The students in the class, especially those who are not versed in Indian classical dance forms or Hindu religious narratives engage in their own form of kinaesthetic empathy through the course of the semester, culminating in the final performance. It is our assertion that students more fully learned about Krishna by dancing him than they would have simply reading about his mythologies. Their weekly struggle to fashion their fingers into the curves of Krishna’s conch or discus enabled these students to encounter Krishna not only through myth and image, but also through the medium of their bodies. Their embodied knowledge of Krishna is evident in the final performance, in which the students displayed his *mudras* with ease; through the course of a semester, Krishna’s conch had become part of their embodied repertoire.

6.9 Carrying Indian Embodied Dance Knowledge into New Contexts

When Harshita co-taught the Emory course as the dance instructor, she introduced an option, instead of writing the final exam, of choreographing a dance item using Kuchipudi foot movements and *mudras*, an option both of us kept when teaching independently. The first semester that this option was made, an Emory dance major choreographed Kurt Vonnegut’s short story ‘Harrison Bergeron’ (see video available on website for *Practical Matters* Vol. 6; Flueckiger and Kamath 2013). She wrote in her reflective essay about her choreographic decisions:

The story tells of a time when everyone is equal because the United States government has handicapped anyone that stands out for being exceptional in any way. The world has become a bleak place. Even dancers cannot perform any better than anybody else because they are heavily burdened with weights. I was interested by the idea of depicting this mundane equality, in which no one is talented, through an art form that requires talent. I wanted to create a contrast between reality and the story that would emphasize the importance of art in life. I also wanted to demonstrate the qualities of Kuchipudi that I have learned, while incorporating imagery relevant to a contemporary American audience. I tried to achieve this goal through the movement, sound, and character development, while keeping in mind the various themes of performance theory, *rasa* theory and the *Natyasastra*.

Two Middlebury students utilized this final creative piece to bring Kuchipudi in conversation with a dance style they were already familiar with, swing. The students created a fusion Kuchipudi-swing piece set to a fast-paced swing song, ‘The Invisible Girl’. Rather than alternating back and forth between Kuchipudi and swing, the students purposefully integrated rhythmic Kuchipudi foot movements

and the tinkling sounds of ankle bells with the sprightly steps of swing. One of the student choreographers wrote:

In order to choreograph, we typically began by listening to the song and improvising, either as individuals or together. We would see what felt, sounded, or looked good and then elaborated upon those movements. As we discovered through our choreography, there were several distinct sections of the song with different moods that inspired us. For instance, we took advantage of a quieter portion of the song to create interesting rhythmic patterns with the ankle bells and incorporated up-beat Charleston moves into high-energy sections. Throughout the song, we strived to blend the two dances together, a process which was difficult because many patterns of movement seemed incompatible at first. Sometimes we choreographed sections by starting with a Kuchipudi movement that gradually morphed into swing dance or vice-versa. At other times, we would directly mix the two by layering swing dance footwork with Kuchipudi hand gestures, using lag time in swing dance moves to insert Kuchipudi, or by fusing movements that were similar in swing and Kuchipudi.

The creative process of the purposeful integration of Kuchipudi with swing dance moves or a Kurt Vonnegut short story indicates a new level of embodied knowledge for these students. After spending a semester learning the technical aspects and historical processes of Kuchipudi dance, some students enrolled in this course move beyond embodied mastery to a level of experimentation and innovation. While students of Kuchipudi dance in the Indian context are also encouraged to innovate (for example, the Kuchipudi Masters syllabus for the University of Hyderabad requires a semester spent on choreography), this course demonstrates new opportunities for the dance style within the American university classroom. Because many of the students who participate in 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge' are not familiar with the dance style prior to enrolling in the course, they bring a unique perspective to the Kuchipudi dance classroom. They are faced with the challenging task of embodying a new dance tradition in the course of a semester, while analysing the broader significance of its performative context through studies on *rasa*, the construction of 'classical' dance in the colonial and postcolonial contexts, and Western theories on performance.

Many students may not overcome this challenging circumstance to feel comfortable with the new forms of embodiment; as one student reminds us: 'The embodiment of knowledge can be messy...Humans forget. Knowledge is lost. Practice, as I realized, is paramount'. Embodied knowledge is a messy process, but can also be generative, as the creative pieces of Kurt Vonnegut and swing demonstrate. Our goal in this course is not to reach an ideal level of 'embodied knowledge', but rather, for students to experience the *process* of embodying knowledge, including all of the messiness, frustrations, and creativity it may entail. The materiality of embodied knowledge, spanning from bells to *bottus*, is central to this process; embodied knowledge is not just about learning steps or generating new movements, but also about the sensory experiences of ironing and donning the sari, wearing the bells on the ankles, and adorning the face with the *bottu*. Embodied knowledge, as we hope our *nakha sikha* descriptions indicate, is a material experience.

Notes

- 1 Joyce Flueckiger, Emory University, first conceptualized the 'Dance and Embodied Knowledge in the Indian Context' class that will be discussed in this chapter. Harshita Kamath participated in the class as an undergraduate student at Emory University, as a graduate student was a teaching assistant and then co-taught the class with Flueckiger, and then taught a version of the class at Middlebury College and UNC-Chapel Hill. This chapter draws on our shared experiences. In sections that we highlight our individual experiences in teaching this course, we have indicated our initials following the section title.
- 2 I discuss the performance of this piece in the conclusion of my book; see Kamath 2019, pp. 164–67.
- 3 To highlight what dance creates, in most iterations of this class, we have included one week focusing on yoga, including yoga practice of beginning *asanas* (taught by a professional yoga instructor) and ask the questions: what are the differences in the goals of Kuchipudi dance and yoga; what does each body practice create differently for its practitioners; and can yoga be considered a performance and if so, who is the audience. In the introduction to her translation of the Yoga Sutras, Barbara Stoler Miller writes that the goal of yoga 'to eliminate control that material nature exerts over the human spirit ... to break habitual ways of thinking and acting that bind one to corruptions of everyday life' (1996, p. 1). Of course, in a few classes, this goal is not achieved by our students, but we analyse the differences in the use of the body and for what goals between dance and yoga. We then shift to discussions of yoga classes in a performance study model: although there is technically no 'audience', practitioners do watch each other and ultimately the practitioner is her/his own audience, training oneself to be aware of what is happening to the body. Further, we discuss the various kinds of contexts in which yoga is practised and the effects of these contexts on what is being created through the body practice. One significant difference (as stated by Stoler Miller above) is that yoga practitioners are urged to break habitual ways of thinking and 'being' in the body, whereas dance depends on these memory traces to create *rasa* through recognition of various *vibhavas* (stimuli) and *anubhavas*, (involuntary reactions).

Works Cited

- Bauman, R. (1992). Performance. In: *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments* (ed. R. Bauman), 41–49. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bell, C. (1992). Performance. In: *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. M. Taylor), 205–222. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Devarajan, A. (2011). Dancing Krishna in the suburbs: kinaesthetics in the south Asian diaspora. *Studies in South Asian Film and Media* 4 (2): 167–177.
- Devarajan, A. (n.d.). Ascending capital, ascending the stage: the economy of performance at the *arangetram*. Indian Classical Dance Debut, unpublished manuscript.
- Flueckiger, J.B. and Kamath, H.M. (2013). Dance and embodied knowledge in the Indian context. *Practical Matters* 6 <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/issue/6/teaching-matters/dance-and-embodied-knowledge-in-the-indian-context> (accessed 12 March 2014).
- Handelman, D. and Shulman, D. (2004). *Shiva in the Pine Forest: An Essay on Sorcery and Self-Knowledge*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Hiltebeitel, A. (1998). Hair like snakes and mustached brides: crossed gender in an Indian folk cult. In: *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures* (eds. A. Hiltebeitel and B. Miller), 143–176. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Kamath, H.M. (2019). *Impersonations: The Artifice of Brahmin Masculinity in South Indian Dance*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Katrak, K. (2004). Cultural translation of Bharata Natyam into “contemporary Indian dance”: second-generation South Asian Americans and cultural politics in diasporic locations. *South Asian Popular Culture* 2 (2): 79–102.
- Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Meduri, A. (2004). Bharatanatyam as a global dance: some issues in research, teaching and practice. *Dance Research Journal* 36 (2): 11–29.
- Schwartz, S.L. (2004). *Rasa: Performing the Divine in India*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Schechner, R. (2001). Rasaesthetics. *The Drama Review* 45 (3): 27–50.
- Seremetakis, C.N. (ed.) (1994). The memory of the senses, part I: marks of the transitory. In: *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, 1–19. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Sklar, D. (1994). Can bodylore be brought to its senses? *The Journal of American Folklore* 107 (423): 9–22.
- Srinivasan, P. (2011). *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Stoler Miller, B. transl. (1996). Introduction. In: *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom – The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zarrilli, P.B. (ed.) (2000). What does it mean “To become the character?” *Kathakali* actor training and characterization. In: *Kathakali Dance-Drama: Where Gods and Demons Come to Play*, 65–97. London: Routledge.
- Zubko, K. (2014). *Dancing Bodies of Devotion: Fluid Gestures in Bharata Natyam*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

CHAPTER 7

Spirit Incorporation in Candomblé

Paul Christopher Johnson

It is conventional for religionists of various disciplinary stripes to describe spirit incorporation, often given the generic classification, 'spirit possession', as an inward transformation outwardly manifested in expressive movement. Call this approach the Spirit Possession Two-Step. Its advocates understand a spirit as arriving from elsewhere (Step 1) – from Africa, or a Yoruba otherworld (*orun*), or Bahia, or the place of ancestors – and then revealing itself, mounted on its human 'horse' (Step 2).

The approach has the simultaneous virtue and liability of echoing Candomblé and other religious practitioners' own discourses. These describe an experiential shift – the spirits' 'descent' – followed by outward material and bodily acts through which spirits (in Candomblé called *orixás*, *voduns*, or *inquices* depending on a given liturgy's putative African 'nation' or origin understood variously as Yoruba, Dahomey, Angola, or Caboclo – in this latter case also including Brazilian Amerindians as sources) become perceptible to others. These outward marks of spirit incorporation include bending at the waist accompanied by trembling shoulders; verbal cries that announce a given deity or spirit; stylized dance steps demonstrating the gods' character or natural domain; shifts in voice register, accent, and cadence, should the gods be invited to speak (a regular event in Umbanda, relatively rare in Candomblé); superhuman tolerance of pain or alcohol; and the donning of special vestments borne with regal bearing or another demeanour befitting the character of the spirit or god embodied.

Since etic and emic hermeneuts alike dance the Spirit Possession Two-Step with such graceful symmetry, it is easy to keep repeating this familiar jig across the worn parquet. Too easy. To initiate a critique, note how words like 'incorporation', 'possession', or 'descent' materialize and spatialize ephemeral terms like *spirit* or *god*. The words point towards bodies and things. 'Incorporation' and other such rubrics ground the experiences and interpretations gathered under the rubric, 'spirits', and localize them in flesh.

Religious practitioners' descriptors for the arrivals of gods or ancestors further connote their dependence on the physical: The gods 'manifest' or 'descend', and those possessed are described as 'being turned', 'rolled', 'mounted', or 'leaned on'. All these metaphors of weight, force, and directionality offer cues that spirits cannot be rendered present to consciousness except through shifts registered in material 'transductions' (Keane 2012). Any ethnographic study of spirit incorporation must begin with the materials to which those metaphors emphatically point; with the bodies, things, and spaces through which spirits become recognizable, perceptible, and efficacious.

To be sure, anthropologists have long argued for the cultural contextualization of spirit possession. To quote Michael Lambek, 'The appearance of trance is mediated by the cultural model, by its social reality; the collective representations of trance precede its incidence' (1989, p. 38). But even collective representations and cultural models risk becoming as elusive and abstract as more theologically inflected phrases like the one Roger Bastide applied to both French Catholicism and Brazilian Candomblé, 'mystical trance' (1953). This chapter seeks to bring spirits down to earth and explore trance in Candomblé as a form of 'ordinary knowledge' (Wafer 1991, p. 106). Spirit incorporation begins with a repertory of material and sensory signs. When these are executed competently, and with sufficient ritual force, spirit possession is the resulting expression. To put this very schematically: *Instead of bodies, senses and materials expressing spirit possession, spirit possession is the ritual expression of competent material and bodily work.*

At the end of the chapter, having reversed the order of the Spirit Incorporation Two-Step, I propose a further and more radical revision that refuses any strict division between spirits and matter, or gods and human bodies, instead seeing these as parallel but intersecting congeries or entanglements of power, action, and potentiality (Ingold 2006; Bennet 2010; Latour 2010; Ochoa 2010; Espirito Santo and Blanes 2014).

7.1 Precedents

This basic inversion should not surprise, since it is an extension of at least three intertwined theoretical genealogies: performance studies; psychological and cognitive studies of religion; and semiotics. From the first, we can take the cue that spirit incorporation is performative: that is, a social event usually undertaken before a participating audience, as Karen McCarthy Brown's (1991) phrase, 'possession performances', memorably captured (see also Leiris 1958; Métraux 1958; Drewal 1992; Stoller 1995; Lambek 2002). Spirit incorporation requires an audience since, at least in Brazilian Candomblé and comparable Afro-descendant religions, the possessed person is not conscious of the being s/he performs – or at least the *claim* of the lack of subjective consciousness while incorporating a spirit is an important ideological rule (Van de Port 2011, p. 201). With no subject 'there' to register the event as the embodied presence of a given entity, it cannot be interpreted as spirit incorporation. Spirit incorporation is therefore best seen as an interaction between (i) a performed action, (ii) the sensory perception of that performance, and (iii) its interpretation and classification by observers.

The approach of performativity helps to reframe spirit incorporation as in part a learned response to a specific material context and the social expectations of a given religious group. It also pushes us to attend to the ways in which every spirit incorporation event is at once a repetition and a revision of earlier editions (Drewal 1992), since even 'the same' spirit or gods performance is slightly altered with every appearance. Every possession performance is constitutive of a genre but also a specific event, because contingent on a given material context and temporal moment of a spirit's staging or, perhaps better, appearance or *coming into being*.

Second, a new take on psychology. A long tradition from Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto through William James took religious feelings or experiences as the origin of religious practices and social forms. We now know this to be at the very least incomplete. Rather, certain kinds of human practice give rise to experiences, which may be then attributed to transcendent powers and contextualized as 'religious'. This reversal – actions generate experience – emerged from so-called practice theories (see, inter alia, Bourdieu 1979; Mauss 1979; Ortner 1984; Bell 1992; Mahmood 2004). It also arose from the rethinking of religious psychology, from Wayne Proudfoot's *Religious Experience* (1985), to cognitive approaches applied to spirit incorporation in Candomblé (Cohen 2007).

Third, semiotics, including a focused attention on the body, the senses, the visual, and, more recently, materiality; or, more radically, the agency of things (Miller 1987, 2005, 2009; Latour 1993; Gell 1998 (in terms of materiality and Afro-Atlantic religions, see Holbraad 2007; Johnson 2014; Palmié 2014]). The import of this scholarly turn for the study of spirit incorporation is that it enjoins us to consider how material repertoires and spaces of performance present constraints and affordances that structure the ways spirit possession works; indeed, even the kinds of spirits that may appear in a given site and time (Johnson 2007, 2018). Semiotics points us to the perceptive regimes through which spirits become legible for a given community. For example, Kristina Wirtz (2014) coined the phrase, 'aesthetics of sensibility', referring to the ways practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions develop techniques of discernment and skills of perception, beginning with bodily sensations like shivers or prickling on the skin, and ascending to full-blown sensations of possession. She calls this developed skill, *perspicience*. 'To discern spirits', Wirtz shows, 'requires being inculcated into a culturally-specific phenomenology in which the material effects of immaterial agencies become sensible experiences' (2014, p. 100).

Spirits and the techne of their appearance are, then, chronotopes – markers and anchors of a given time–space juncture. Spirit incorporations contain histories, indeed can be considered a genre of history-making (Stoller 1995; Chakrabarty 2000; Shaw 2002; Lambek 2003). Yet because spirit presences are contingent on material sites of appearance, the histories that spirits help to compose and, when incorporated, dramatize and stage, are necessarily malleable and shifting. Spirits present new potential identifications and horizons of historical memory (Johnson 2007; Price 2007) though, like many parts of ritual practice, they are authorized through claims of unchanging tradition. The more 'tradition' is discursively emphasized as part of the ritual cultivation of spirit incorporation, the more attentive we should be to change, and the anxieties produced by transformations within a given community.

Taken together, these genealogies lay the groundwork for an inversion of the Spirit Incorporation Two-Step. When incorporation or ‘possession’ occurs, it is entangled with more banal forms of everyday work, accrued over hours of ritual practice. Incorporation or possession, one might say, is the name of an interwoven sensory load that is named, when done according to code, a god, ancestor, or spirit. So, materials and bodies in action (Step 1), then so-called spirit presence (Step 2). The material repertoires of ritual practice help to assemble the very energy called *axé* (in the Yoruba (Nagô) nation of Candomblé, as well as in Cuban Santería) that, in its corporeal manifestations, adepts revere as a special presence, a god, experienced as appearing solely in and of its own agency. At least for some practitioners, this is not misrecognition, as a narrowly anthropocentric critical perspective might suppose, but rather something like a collective bringing into being of *axé*. Just as the gods make humans and help to shape their destinies, human beings help to ‘make’ gods by cooking, drumming, and dancing them into being (e.g. Barber 1981).

7.2 Materializing Spirit Incorporation in Candomblé

Candomblé is an Afro-descendant religion in Brazil, one of several religions that rely on the craft and technology of spirit possession as a key part of their work. It is shaped within a broader interreligious field of spirit incorporation religions of Brazil, including Spiritism, Umbanda, and an array of fast-growing Pentecostal sects. Like these traditions, Candomblé works to improve its adherents’ basic pragmatic needs – financial prosperity, health, love, and fecundity – against forces of anomie, sickness, death, and consumption. All these traditions forge identifications in part through ‘boundary-work’, in comparison and contrast other Brazilian religions (Hess 1991, p. 6). Candomblé distinguishes itself from rivals in the competitive religious field of urban Brazil in several ways: by valorizing and calling attention to West- or Central-West African origins, through the labour of elaborate and secretive initiations, and by giving effort to forging a tight-knit community of practice based in fictive kin relations called the ‘family of saint’ (*família de santo*).

For example, Candomblé initiates in the largest (Nagô) ‘nation’ seek to expand transformative power called *axé* through the ritual work of maintaining proper reciprocal relations with deities called *orixás*. These gods form a pantheon derived from the indigenous Yoruba deities of West Africa, and were carried along with other African traditions to Brazil in the memories and bodily repertoires of enslaved Africans during the roughly three centuries of slave-shipping to Brazil.

In one sense *orixás* and, in the Jeje nation of Candomblé, *voduns*, can be viewed as great ancestors later divinized (Bascom 1944; Verger 1957). For example, Ogun, the *orixá* of iron, technology, and war, may in the distant past have been an actual warrior-king or leader of a blacksmith guild. Xangô, the male *orixá* of thunder, justice, and sudden passions, is remembered as the fourth king of the Yoruba-speaking city-state of Oyo, which rose to be a preeminent dynasty and military power from about 1500–1800. Obaluaie (in Brazil also called Omolu), the *orixá* of smallpox and other diseases, may have been a feared sorcerer. From this perspective, ancestral powers of select family

lineages were elevated and canonized with the creation of large city-states such as Ife, Oyo, and Dahomey. In the West African context, the Orishas expressed and helped to constitute regional, dynastic, and ancestral affiliations, such that the different gods were part and parcel of the political lineages of rival powers (Apter 1992). Slaves' arrival in the New World, and the confusion of lineages, languages, and regions caused a reconceptualization of the African gods. The photographer and ethnographer Pierre Verger wrote, 'When the African was transported to Brazil, the orixá took on an individual character linked to the luck of the slave, now separated from his group of family origin' (1981, p. 33). In the early nineteenth century, individual and family-based practices were formalized and codified, and the first temples of Candomblé, called *terreiros*, were founded, appearing in print by 1807 (Harding 2000).

Some of the Yoruba, Dahomean, and Angolan gods were lost in Brazil. Some suffered ignominy even in Africa – as the patron deities of relatively weak city-states, they were conquered, absorbed, or destroyed by more powerful neighbours and ceased to exist in the memories of followers. Deities with few devotees could not be sustained in the New World. Others became irrelevant in the context of a slave colony, since their powers and authority were yoked to features of material or social life that no longer obtained under conditions of chattel slavery. Without the materials or bodies to engender their appearance, these gods 'died', so to say; they were no longer remembered, revered, or incorporated. In Brazil, unlike in Haiti, for example, no deity of agriculture remained prominent in the Candomblé pantheon, because the religious liturgies were reconstructed in urban contexts far from the fields, which were in any case the property of the master class. In the incipient Afro-Brazilian religious sodalities as in Cuba, the African religions were recreated in urban spaces, usually in Catholic brotherhoods (*irmandades*). In urban communities with at least some free persons, and in the relatively protected shadow of Catholic sodalities devoted to a given saint – St. Benedict, St. Anthony – the orixás were gathered in a single physical place and ritualized by the same community. Possibly this ritual technique of gathering previously separate gods and spirits into the same site and celebration was learned by observing Catholic assemblies of multiple saints in the same churches (Reis 2003).¹ Unlike in Africa, in Brazil the orixás were honoured as an integrated set, and many would even descend to mount their human horses simultaneously.

Today most *terreiros* (Candomblé temples) invoke, remember, incorporate, and 'feed' between 12 and 22 orixás in large-scale ritual events involving both sacrifice and spirit possession. Along with those already mentioned, there is Exú the messenger and trickster, a 'hot' orixá of the street associated with the colours red and black;² Oxalá, 'cool' orixá of sky and creation; Oxum, the female orixá of fresh waters; Iansã, a goddess with the sudden force of a windy tempest; Oxôssi the agile orixá of the forest and the hunt, a companion there to Ogun, the heavy-limbed god of iron, and many others. Each has well-defined myths, temperaments, and tendencies, as well as preferred foods, colours, days of the week, natural domains, and material symbols. Moreover, these gods of West Africa are now global entities. They are known, imagined, and incorporated by ritualized bodies (Bell 1992) at events in Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, the United States, and Europe, and transmitted by new technologies and material conduits like the waves and conduits of the World Wide Web (Beliso-De Jesús 2015).

Still, as one Brazilian priestess often repeated to me, Candomblé is for most initiates a religion 'of the hand'. 'This [the terreiro] is a factory', she said. What she meant is that all action is part of the assembly of axé. Food production is to feed the orixás so that they will in turn circulate axé; drum techniques and rhythms are practised to master the tones to which the orixás will respond, and descend; clothing is sewn for initiates to wear when they incarnate the gods in their bodies; and the terreiro house has offerings built literally into the foundation. All of this work constitutes axé, even as axé is the life-force that enables and animates human work. But axé is circulated most dramatically using the technology of spirit incorporation.

Few are prepared to serve as legitimate horses of the orixás. One must be initiated to the craft as part of the family of the saint. Joining the *família de santo* requires extensive initiations during which the aspiring possession priestess, initially called the 'bride of the orixá' (*iaô*), learns the songs, dances, and food preferences of the orixá s/he will host. As she learns to incarnate her orixá, she also remakes herself. As Roger Sansi writes, 'Candomblé people "construct" their saints as autonomous agents, at the same time that they build themselves as persons. "Making the saint" is a dialectical process of continuously constructing the person, in relation to the spirits that she embodies and to the "other body" of these spirits, the shrines' (2007, p. 22).

Part of this transformation happens by moving through increasingly guarded sacred spaces within the terreiro. Over weeks and months, the *iaô* gains access to previously hidden or restricted rooms where axé can be accessed and drawn to the surface in especially concentrated ways. As she gains confidence and is accepted in these spaces and practices, she begins to acquire 'foundation' (*fundamento*) in her role as a child of the saint (*filha de santo*). To have foundation is to have legitimate access to those secret places, and a body securely 'closed' through initiation against whatever dangers might emerge.

A child of the saint must be reborn in initiation, as a new kind of body able to properly incorporate an orixá. This entails the 'making of the head' (*fazendo cabeça*), where the god will permanently reside, in order to take control of the body when invited with the proper ritual cues – the correct drum rhythms, clothing, foods, herbal baths, and dance. The initiation is the most crucial part of learning to incorporate an orixá. Having one's head made such that it can receive a god is a graphic and thoroughly corporeal procedure. Once the initiate's body has been fortified with axé, acquired adequate foundation, and passed a sufficient length of time being 'cooled' in the terreiro, the priest or priestess takes her into the restricted room of initiation. There she shaves the initiate's head with a simple razor. Then she opens an incision in the scalp where she will 'seat the saint', that is, the orixá. The incision is to 'open a space' (*abrir um espaço*), one priestess told me. The aim is to clear space in her conscious personhood and allow an additional entity to there make its home. I participated in several such initiations, and adapt the following description from an earlier work (Johnson 2002):

At the crucial moment, Mother B. produced a new razor and shaved the crown of the *iaô*'s head, then the peak of her forehead, and finally the entire head. She worked carefully and deliberately, and the process continued for more than an hour. At the crown, the priestess made two small incisions, a *cura* (cure), using a new razor. This is the most crucial and dangerous moment of all, when the initiate is 'open' and vulnerable. The

priestess fed the open *cura* with the blood of a white goat poured over the cranium, a bath of *axé* (*sundidé*). Mother B. worked with her assistant, the 'little mother' (*iyakekere*). One drummer performed the songs and rhythms of Oxalá, lord of creation. Working quickly, Mother B. tamped the wound with a mixture of herbs particular to Oxalá (*atim*), and with ground white feathers and sacrificial blood. She moulded a cone of wax at the crown of the *iaô*'s head to contain the infusion and speed the healing of the wound. The cone is called an *adoxu*;³ thereafter the *iaô* will also be known as an *adoxu* initiate, one who 'had her head made', or who 'made the saint'. The priestess dabbed blood on the initiate's forehead and pressed a red feather to it. The *iaô*'s entire head was bound in a new white cloth to securely hold the cone in place.

Initiates trained to receive the gods are called *adoxu* initiates by virtue of the opening and then re-closing of the head undergone during initiation. On sacramental occasions they must take care that their bodies manifest only the desired entity when their time comes. They must remain covered on the head and across the heart, cautiously enter rooms backwards instead of forwards, and refrain from going out on the street after already bathed, dressed, and cooled. Only a closed body, free of foreign agents, is ready for ritual work, because only then is it assuredly the *orixá*'s, the *terreiro*'s, and the mother's. A closed body is a known and ritually trustworthy body. In this sense, spirit possession in Candomblé is a subset of broader material and spatial practices of containment, but also of principles of baroque aesthetic elaboration and immersion (Van de Port 2011, p. 191).

The initiate is still not quite ready to successfully maintain a long-term relationship with her *orixá* after leaving the *camarinha*, the small room where s/he was secluded. For, receiving the *orixá* requires seating the saint (*assentar o santo*) not only in the head, but also in still another material register. A sacred stone (*otá*) indexing the initiate's head (*ori*) is joined together with the material implements symbols of her *orixá*. These are bathed in water, honey, or palm oil, in accord with the specific *orixá*'s tendencies, and sealed in a closed vase (*igbá*) marked with the initiate's name or initials. They are left at the altar (*peji*) of the god, as a double of the consecrated initiate's body, and there fed and bathed at regular intervals by the priest or priestess. In this way, the initiate – this new 'horse' of the gods – is cared for, fortified, and protected even when he or she is not bodily present in the *terreiro*. The dual materializations of incorporating an *orixá* into the devotee's body – making the head, and seating the saint – produce a body now able to incorporate an *orixá* in a ritually fitting way.

7.3 Affordances and Constraints

Materials, spaces, and bodily regimes act on spirit incorporation. They shape it and help to determine its nature in particular sites. Consider a comparative example of Afro-descendant religion in the Americas: Garifuna (formerly the so-called 'Black Carib') emigrants from Honduras to New York are constrained to perform their ritual events in public schools, civic halls, and church basements, since the same open spaces available on the Caribbean shore cannot be found in the urban metropolis. In this new performance space, spirit incorporation is radically altered. It must take place more rapidly,

efficiently, and without the extensive use of tobacco and rum, which play a key part in Honduran Garifuna ritual events. Some ritual tools and procedures are elaborated; others are restricted, abandoned, or used in merely symbolic ways (to wit, the cigar that in New York is present as a sign, but not actively smoked or blown over the necks of those who will incorporate ancestors).

The nature of time in ritual participation is likewise altered. Garifuna must commute to the event via trains and buses, and many need to abruptly depart for work on night-shifts. The rented space may be available only until 11.00 p.m. or midnight. Fire alarms preclude the use of tobacco smoke to purify the ritual space. Other laws restrict the use of alcohol or live animals for the feast. Outsiders who live in the neighbourhood may wander in to observe, rendering the ritual event a 'cultural performance' as much as an encounter with their own ancestors. What is important to note is how these material affordances and constraints sow the seeds of new ideas; a new theology of the Garifuna ancestors, if you will. Specialists are pressed to consider why the ancestors appear differently when marshalled with the crafts and techne available in the Bronx, as compared with the Honduran coast. Why do they 'arrive' and incorporate more quickly, but with also leave in short order? Why do they not require the strong rum (*aguardiente*) or tobacco in this place like they would at home? Transformations of practice must be justified. This means that material constraints become important generators of second-order theological reflections. Or in other words, the material constraints and affordances play a crucial part in creating what ends up being called and solidified as 'the tradition', 'our culture', or 'Garifuna religion'.

Candomblé is likewise subject to material affordances and constraints. These are in turn contingent on its site of performance, whether in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia, or in Lisbon, Miami, or Berlin. How do materials act on spirit incorporation in Candomblé? Here I name just four ways – spirit incorporation is gendered and therefore defined through bodies; it is labour intensive and therefore highly selective; it is governed by state and other powers; it is infiltrated by the technologies of its own representations; and it is creatively adaptive, shifting identifications and histories. Each of these features of Candomblé are consequences of material repertory, but which then acquire theological value and constitute Candomblé as a 'religion'.

7.3.1 *Spirit Incorporation is Gendered*

Spirit incorporation in Candomblé, as in Santería and Vodou, is strongly intercalated with notions of gender and gendered bodies. Perspectives about male and female bodies, and their respective sexualities, powerfully structure how spirits are manifested. The opposition of 'male' and 'female' is ever-present in Candomblé, in its mythology, its social structure and its ritual practice. Myths tell of masculine exaggerations of sexual heat, creatively cooled for generative purposes: for example, the world's creation begins with (male) Obatala's crushing embrace of (female) Odudua, which she repels, thereby creating space. Xangô's unquenchable lust was only productively channelled through Oxum's cool beauty. The stories represent in mythic form a basic gendered structure of Candomblé that is also visible in practice: Women are considered 'cool', reproductive,

and contained – both in body and in the terreiro. This is one reason why spirit incorporation is gendered as female, and it is most often women who serve as mediums of the gods, those who receive the orixás. During initiation, they learn to submit to the orixá as ‘master of their head’ (*dono da cabeça*), even as they also learn to master – by enduring and controlling – the heat of the orixás’ spiritual penetration of the body during possession. The gendered language of an orixá’s mounting of an *iaô* is unmistakable, even if the horse is male and the orixá is female (Landes 1947; Birman 1995).⁴ Being possessed by an orixá is at least structurally a feminine, cool role. These symbols are not fully transposed between terreiro life and street life, such that all men who are possessed and dance as embodied orixás are openly gay, though this is often the case.

The outcome of ritual is that wild heat, unproductive because undirected, is tempered enough for religious reproduction to occur in the dual forms of *axé* and initiatory ‘children’. With more initiates come prestige, money and new working hands able to produce larger *festas*, and in turn more *axé*.

The terreiro’s metaphysical objective is to generate religious power, *axé*; its social objective, to produce ‘children’. *Axé* is most dramatically and perceptibly felt when the orixás descend and take over the bodies of ‘children’, initiates ritually made for the role.

There is, in short, a thoroughly sexual and bodily logic of the production of power in Candomblé. The slang, *comer*, links food and sex as kinds of consumption, but also as kinds of productive power, and this is replicated in Candomblé. To *comer* is to generate energy by eating and/or to form children – exactly the aims of the terreiro. The orixás descend in the terreiro to ‘eat’ in both senses of *comer*: replenishing their forces by gorging on the sacrifices at their altars, and then possessing their wives to pass *axé* to the gathered, who raise their hands and open their palms to receive as much as they can.

In short, there is no ‘meaning’ of spirit incorporation in Candomblé without its contextualization in terms of bodies, genders, consumption, and sexuality.

7.3.2 Spirit Incorporation is Labour Intensive

‘Spirits are for all, and everyone becomes a spirit’, wrote Malinowski (1948, p. 69). All ancestors are potential spirits, and potential representations of history that are available for activation by the living, with this florid multiplicity itself suggesting a kind of irony to possession performance not wholly unlike that of modern theatre proper (Lambek 2003, pp. 266–271).⁵ Yet in practice becoming a spirit is rare, the province of a restricted elite. Activating a spirit, making a piece of history move, dance, and speak, takes enormous work. It requires memory-work, but also aesthetic and even mechanical work. The intensity of labour and craft that spirit incorporation entails is such that the pantheon of possible spirits that can be rendered present is severely restricted. Many orixás are forgotten, fall into disuse, and disappear. This happens when they are not salient to the material context and everyday needs of the community that remembers and reanimates them. Above, I mentioned the relative absence of orixás of farming and agriculture in the Candomblé repertory, and how this occurred in consequence of the tradition’s formation by free persons of colour and mobile or so-called ‘profit slaves’ (*escravos de ganho*) in urban centres like Salvador and Rio de Janeiro.

What is more, spirit incorporation is expensive and cannot be separated from questions of money. Becoming an initiate capable of publically rendering a god present requires a large financial investment. For this reason, even those persons 'selected' by the orixás by their spontaneous experience of uncontrolled or 'raw' trance (*santo bruto*) often will not be able to refine the craft of incorporation even if they desire the role (Gonçalves da Silva 1995, p. 123). That is to say, spirit incorporation and the questions of who is eligible to fill this office, or which leaders can build the 'factory' that rendering the orixás requires, is inseparable from the money economy. The sacred economy and the money economy are closely tethered together in Candomblé.

7.3.3 Spirit Incorporation is Governed

Material and political contexts exert force on spirits' presence. This means we need to attend to the politics, the economies, and the governance of spirits, in order to understand the means of, and conditions of, and material mediations of spirits' presence. Spirits are never perennial or omnipresent, notwithstanding practitioners' claims to the contrary. There are always limits to their extension in space, and to their duration in time, even in religious practice itself. The rituals that broker spirit-appearances do not endure, after all; spirits arrive and leave, are present and then gone (Lambek 1989; Keane 2012), and both their arrival and departure depend on specific technologies of emergence and retreat, and legal and institutional affordances and restraints.

The question of regulating the conditions of spirits' appearances means, among many other things, that spirit possession in Candomblé has long been entwined with issues of governance. Spirit incorporation is material because it is political. During the colonial period, royal letters (*Cartas Régias*) from the Portuguese Crown to the colony expressed concern about practices suggestive of Candomblé. One from 1761 addressed the arrest of a 'black sorcerer', and another of 1785 gave instructions for the arrest of four Africans for promoting 'drumming, sorcery and superstitious actions' (Johnson 2002, p. 73). The records suggest that Brazilian elites were wary of African and Afro-Brazilian practices as a potential locus of resistance and rebellion, even before 1791 and the onset of the Haitian Revolution. After the Haitian Revolution, their fears were much worse. The long process of emancipation was, as a result, accompanied by ever more aggressive policing of the city streets. Slave Laws of 1822 specified the role of policemen who circulated Rio de Janeiro looking for *batuques*, a term for Candomblé drumming ceremonies, shutting them down and incarcerating participants. In Bahia, similarly, police inspections interrupted many Candomblé ceremonies during the 1850s and 1860s (Reis 1986; Harding 2000, pp. 142–146).

In 1890, after Emancipation (1888), new 'public health' laws passed in Brazil declared it illegal to 'captivate and subjugate the credulity of the public' (Article 157, in Maggie 1992). The new legal code at once announced 'freedom of religion' while it subjugated Afro-Brazilian practices, by classifying them as not 'religion' at all. In the 1930s, the state subjected spirit mediums to psychological screening and licensing procedures. Repressed under a long series of legal measures, Candomblé was not truly legal and free of police interference until the 1970s (Matory 2005, p. 174).

The effects of governance and policing on spirit incorporation rites were not unique to Brazil. Across the New World, Afro American possessions were perceived as having to be controlled by colonies and then states, and they were, everywhere from Surinam in the 1770s to Brazil and Cuba in the 1890s to Trinidad's prohibition against Shouters in 1916.

What this meant was that the rendering present of spirits was for centuries inflected with values of secrecy and the potential subversion of the public religious order. This was a thoroughly material consequence. It continues to bear effects in the present, as the values of secrecy are no longer needed and the problem of creating public material representations of the religion is more pressing, public and tangible representations would help grant Candomblé a monumental 'bricks-and-mortar' status as *Religion*. That is what is at stake today.

7.3.4 Spirit Incorporation is Itself Possessed

To crib from Jacques Derrida (1989), of what is 'possession' (materially) possessed? Here I suggest at least two vectors. Spirits mediate the history of slavery; and spirits mediate technologies. The inverse is clearly also the case: the history of slavery mediates spirit incorporation, and technologies like photography, telegraphy, 'magnetism', and psychiatry thoroughly penetrate the ways spirit incorporation works. We should think of spirit incorporation as dialectically forged in relation to its material environs.

In the African Americas, including Brazil, the history of slavery hovers over and chains together the tropes of spirit possession, material possessions, and possessable persons. That legacy may not completely determine contemporary ritual performance, but it is always present. The calibration between the history of slavery and the practices of spirit possession present a uniquely Afro-Atlantic religious ontology. For example, a Candomblé initiate whose head will be 'ruled' by a West African god is 'sold' at the end of the initiatory process, a mimesis of slave-auctions. Moreover, she must 'pay for the floor' she occupied during the ritual process, while acquiring a new 'owner' of her head. The tropes of body-as-property, expressed in the absenting of will and the economic value of that evacuation, inflect the initiation process throughout. To be possessed is in at least one sense to become a slave or contract labourer (Palmié 2002); or its inverse, a spirit's master (Capone 2010, p. 20).⁶ In Vodou, to take another contemporary example, the trope of the *zombi* is precisely a reprise of the slave, a body owned and occupied yet simultaneously empty and agent-less, movement minus will (McAlister 2002; Richman 2008). As an Umbanda priestess in Rio de Janeiro expressed it, 'I don't have my own life: I am a slave' (Hayes 2011, pp. 12, 145).⁷ If Afro-Brazilian religious practice presented resistance to enslavement – at least by posing the notion of the *slave at liberty* to engage in rituals that built allegiances more important than that of slave to master, and at least in that way a making of 'free bodies' (Harding 2000, p. 158), it was nevertheless a strange sort of regained autonomy, a Kantian autonomy: freedom as conformity to a rule. As the historian João Reis put it, in initiation to Candomblé, 'slaves had to learn to be slaves for a second time' (2003, p. 105).⁸

Spirit incorporation was and is also shot through with other material technologies of transmission (Stolow 2009, 2013; Palmié 2014; Johnson 2014). To wit, spirit corporation

photography has since the mid-nineteenth century been intertwined with the arts of bringing forth or making what was hidden, seen. Photography infiltrated spirit incorporation, and spirits infiltrated photography. Both were techniques of enlargement and extension of presence across space. Consider the words of a practitioner of Brazilian Umbanda residing in Portugal, as she detailed her experience of possession: 'All my friends in the terreiro that see my *pomba gira* [female spirit] tell me how nice and funny she is, and how she helps women getting over their ailments. I have even asked them to take a photo of her when she incorporates me, so that I can have an idea what she looks like. I know it is my body, but one does not know what happens: the *time-lapse of incorporation* is like a blank ...I just feel a little trembling and dizzy afterwards, but at the same time one has a great feeling of peace and having done something worthwhile, being incorporated by such important entities' (Ana, 24, university student) (Saraiva 2010, p. 275).

Pierre Verger offered another example: '...the *adosu* [new initiate of Candomblé] can be compared to a photographic plate. He holds within the latent image of the god, at the moment of initiation imprinted on a virgin spirit innocent of any other imprinting, and this image reveals itself and manifests itself when all the right conditions are reunited' (1998, p. 83; translation mine). The spirits are now rendered present and interpolated through the linguistic conventions of the photographic and filmic view, as photographic time-lapse, or as a plate or imprint. The examples point to ways the experience of spirits is intermediated with ideas and images derived from another technology of rendering present, photography. Other scholars have shown how spirits, or for neo-pentecostals the Holy Spirit, are imaged by actors through analogous electric, photographic, and televisual metaphors (Kramer 1987; Meyer 2010; Johnson 2014; Beliso-De Jesús 2015). Experiences of spirit incorporation are known in and through the frameworks and vocabulary of other technologies.

7.3.5 Spirit Incorporation can Shift Collective Identifications and Histories

The idea of spirit possession as a local, subaltern form history-making has been extraordinarily important. Still, not all ancestral or divine returns are about tradition, history, or the past at all. Sometimes they are assertions of cosmopolitanism, riffing on the image of the Other (Taussig 1992). The possession model is extraordinarily flexible towards this end, as the Angolan and Caboclo nations of Candomblé in Brazil affirm every day with their cast of cowboys, harlots, racing-car drivers, and 'turks' (e.g. Boyer 1999; Dianteill 2008), as do the Brazilian spiritists with their pantheon of impressionist painters, scientists, and presidents (Aubrée and Laplantine 1990; Hess 1991).⁹ Spirit incorporation is a technology of rendering present that is extremely flexible. In comparison to textual documentary forms, or other modes of ritual pageantry, spirit incorporation often presents sudden surprises and shifts in historical consciousness, when the 'ancestors' turn out to include personages formerly regarded as strangers. The stranger, and the mimetic appropriation of the stranger, is as important in spirit incorporation as the performance of the familiar and time-honoured (Taussig 1992; Romberg 2014). This openness to adopting

and adapting new entities as sources of power grants many spirit possession traditions a critical and creative edge. By incorporating different spirits, or ‘the same’ spirits in different ways, history is constantly reimagined and reworked.

7.4 An Exercise of Redescription

Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, the first ethnographer of Afro-Brazilian religions, asserted that in possession resides ‘the essence of all the religious practices of negros’ (2008 [1932], p. 215). Melville Herskovits (1941, pp. 125, 221, 246) and Roger Bastide (1953, p. 30) likewise characterized spirit possession as the key feature and fundamental link among the religions. I am against casting spirit incorporation as *the* central event of Candomblé or other Afro-Atlantic religions, not least because that characterization has levied grave historical consequences, in terms of rendering slaves as beings naturally possessable as person-things, while legally unable to possess property (Johnson 2011). Spirit incorporation would and should be dethroned as the centre of Candomblé, precisely by embedding it within the banal, quotidian material work of the terreiros where ‘possession’ is made. In this chapter, I have tried to offer cues for how to return spirit incorporation to the status of ordinary ritual work. Now let’s see how this might pay off. In this conclusion, I evaluate a classic description of spirit incorporation in Candomblé, proffered in an important ethnographic essay from 1953, by Roger Bastide. The game I propose is to rewrite selected passages from Bastide’s description, after the material turn. How would, or should, his description appear differently given what we now know?

I translate and cite Bastide’s passage at some length:

Every mystical trance is transformed into a party, and every party ends in mystical trance. Trance is the supreme moment of the religious festival, that to which everything leads from the sacrifice to Exú and the earliest songs of initiation... It is important to distinguish the different parts of the ceremony [that precede possession]: First is the preparation for the ritual. The ‘horse’ must be ‘clean’, that is, must have obeyed various taboos of his god, abstaining from sexual activity. His body is the temple in which the orixá will be able to descend. Second comes the calling of the gods. Accompanied by the deafening thunder of the drums, crossed with the ringing of the *agôgô* [a percussive two-tone bell], the faithful sing the songs of the orixá in a determined order, three songs for each one. Meanwhile the members of the fraternity, men and women – but many more women than men – dance the steps appropriate to each of the different songs. In the course of these songs and dances during a night of music in Bahia or Recife, a being suddenly stirs. The dancer’s shoulder-blades shake with convulsive tremors, the body shudders and may fall to the ground. The god has mounted his horse. Then the women assigned with caring for the ‘sons’ and ‘daughters’ of the saints, called *ekedi*... approach the possessed person and remove her shoes or sandals. The god must dance barefoot on the ground. If it is a male, they remove his hat and sportcoat; if it is a woman, they remove her jacket and headwrap, sometimes tying a cloth band around her bust. With another white cloth, they wipe away the sweat running down her face. The ‘father of saints’ puts his hand on the back of the neck of the possessed to calm the god. He helps her up if she has fallen to the ground, and sustains her

if her legs tremble... It sometimes happens that the ceremony lasts hours and hours without any gods at all mounting their 'horses'. In that case, they play a special song without lyrics, a rhythm called *adarrum* that has the property of calling all the gods at once, whereas the previous songs could only summon the god related to a particular song. The *adarrum* rhythm is fast, insistent, and violent, and usually met with many dancers falling into the state of being 'in the saint'.

...When a believer becomes possessed, she is taken into the *pegi*, a room where the altar of the orixá is found, or into another little room [used for initiations] called the *camarinha*. There the person is redressed in the liturgical garments of her god: red and white in the case of Xangô; all white in the case of Oxalá; cloth with straw headcovering for Omulú, god of smallpox who must hide his face...etc. There they also give him the symbolic objects of the possessing god – the double axe of Xangô, the mirror of Oxum, the flaming sword of Ogum... From then on, the possessed isn't an ordinary being, he has become the god itself... (1953, pp. 36–37)

Bastide was more attentive than most to the material and corporeal dimensions of the manifestation of the orixás. He included insightful observations on clothing, liturgical implements, drum rhythms, sweat, and the specific rooms used. In terms of the sensorium of possession, moreover, he called attention to the roles of sound, bodily movement, and touch. It is for the richness of his description that I have selected it for reinterpretation for, despite its focus on aesthetics, it nevertheless predated the material turn. Most strikingly, this antiquated language appears in the phrase, 'mystical trance', presented as though containing the seed of its own emergence. It unfolds like a flower, Bastide cryptically wrote. His notes on 'mystical trance' leave the reader curious but mystified. This makes it especially useful to attempt rewriting Bastide's passage, applying the lens of the material turn rehearsed here and in the other essays of this volume. For the exercise, I first cite a brief entry from Bastide's long description cited above, and then propose a way to rework the text. There are, of course, many ways to rewrite Bastide's words with a material turn, so I invite the reader to attempt the exercise on her own.

Bastide: *'Every mystical trance is transformed into a party [festa], and every party ends in mystical trance. Trance is the supreme moment of the religious festival, that to which everything leads, from the sacrifice to Exú and the songs of initiation...'*

Proposed redescription: Every *festa* leads to possession trance, because the *festa* is a series of bodily and material enactments that gesturally, visually, gastronomically, and sonically specify the physical qualities of the orixá. The sensory experience of spirit incorporation happens as the culmination of a long sequence of material transformations, from the sacrifice to Exú (which secures the ritual's efficacy in advance) to the songs that salute the god and sonically announce, and constitute, its presence. All of this material labour, expense, and craft generates expectation on the part of those congregated that the orixás will indeed be incorporated and rendered present, and this performative expectation is not insignificant.

Bastide: *'In the course of these songs and dances during a night of music in Bahia or Recife, a being suddenly stirs.'*

Proposed redescription: The songs and dances performed during a night of music in Bahia or Recife over time rhythmically shape dancers' movements towards forms recognizable as embodiments of the gods. Audience members cluster these sensory cues together and evaluate them. In conversation with each other, they arrive at a discursive consensus on if, and when, an orixá has in fact arrived in a given dancer's body.

Bastide: *'The god has mounted his horse.'*

Proposed redescription: A given dancer has competently and recognizably performed the gestures, steps, colours and sounds which, taken together, persuasively convey a sensibility that devotees name and experience as the orixá's presence.

Bastide: *'It sometimes happens that the ceremony lasts hours and hours without any gods at all mounting their "horses." In that case they play a special song without lyrics, a rhythm called adarrum that has the property of calling all the gods at once, whereas the previous songs could only summon the god related to a particular song. The adarrum rhythm is fast, insistent, and violent, and usually met with many dancers falling into the state of being "in the saint."'*

Proposed redescription: A ceremony may endure without competently or adequately presenting the layered material and sensory cues that persuasively communicate the gods' presence. A musical intervention called *adarrum* accelerates the drum rhythms to cause dancers movements to speed their pace and more nearly approximate the look of the mounted horse; often the experience of being mounted by the god follows. If even this does not succeed, the event could be called a ritual failure. This seldom occurs because (i) the proper material context has already been carefully built before the public festa begins, such that the orixá's incorporation is the outcome of accumulated material labour carried out over days of preparation, including the preparation of the right foods, the right decorations, the right clothing, and the right aural context, each of which themselves act on the dancer and the audience – whether through sound, smell, taste, physical solidity or permeability – shaping their thoughts, moods, potentialities, inclinations and movements. This assemblage of actants and modes of agency, interacting together with individual will, produce the field called *axé* and the incorporated orixás who serve to channel and perform its various material and historical manifestations – thunder, war, prosperity, beauty, water, soil, disease, political rule, kinship, technology, plants, wind...

Bastide: *'When a believer becomes possessed, she is taken into the pegi.'*

Proposed redescription: When an initiated dancer competently and persuasively presents the bodily signs and movements that enact a given deity, he or she is taken into the *pegi* (and there given the accoutrements that further amplify the presence of the deity).

Bastide: *'From then on, the possessed isn't an ordinary being, he has become the god itself.'*

Proposed redescription: From then on, the possessed isn't an ordinary person. He has so fully conformed his body to the sensory and corporeal discipline of representing the god that he experiences the god as in control of his body, as does the audience. And in fact his body has been acted upon and transformed. He remains known as the person he was previously, but now is perceived as having a dual nature – he is at once Rodrigo and the goddess Oxum; or better, he is Rodrigo's version of Oxum, distinct from that of Beatrice or Maria, since every edition of a god's incorporation

differs from all previous ones. The event called spirit incorporation is both a repetition and a revision, a process of 'seeing again'. Because the material context and bodily site of the god's appearance always changes, what Bastide called 'the god itself' must be seen as a shifting target, a thinly coherent cluster of features rather than as a durable identity.¹⁰

Yes, a person can become 'the god itself', but only through a much more complex series of material mediations than Bastide could have imagined.

Still, even after this redescription, we must ask what Bastide meant by the opaque phrase, become 'the god itself'? What is this spatio-temporal 'presence' activated in spirit incorporations, or possession performances? Until this point, I have roughly maintained a strict division between humans, things, and spirits, though reversing the order of the Spirit Incorporation Two-Step with which this chapter began. I have tried to show that spirits appear in human experience in and through bodies and things. The third step, once the Two-Step is exhausted, is to acknowledge how the materials mediating spirits' appearance themselves wield agency, and act. The bodies, places, and things through which spirits, gods, and ancestors appear, exert force and act recursively on those entities, shifting their very nature. In that sense, every tradition of ritual practice is in fact always changing, always in motion.

More radical thinkers of the material turn like Bruno Latour, Jane Bennett, Tim Ingold, and others press for this additional step beyond the Two-Step or its reversal. Latour (2010, p. 6) cites the example of a Candomblé initiation and the dialectic of 'making the head' / 'making the god'. Who is the agent in this scenario? Are humans making the god, or is the god making the human? Latour recommends leaving both possibilities in place, to see how they hold each other in place. For the trouble with simply inverting the Spirit Incorporation Two-Step is that it leaves the agency only with human beings who act on and through materials in order to remake themselves through ritual events. Humans are the sole 'actants'. In an age of unfolding planetary crisis and transformation, it seems clear this is not the case. Just as non-human animals and plants 'act' to extend their being, even things made of wood or metal are composed of unceasing atomic motion and force, exerting duration and textured presence in the world; thus a forest-fire rages to move forward and grow, to consume, to exist; a garbage dump seeps, boils and froths in torrid bio-chemical reaction, dripping into rivers, in drinking water, in human bodies where it acts to change biology, cognition, and potential human futures (Bennet 2010, pp. 5–6).

If we de-anthropomorphize our perspective, we can imagine spirits as kinds of force that engage human bodies and even human will in order to appear. But what kinds of force or presence are 'spirits'? Avoiding both the shoals of anthropomorphism and of theism, each of which distracts from a focus on the agency of things, we are pressed to ask what 'spirits' and their 'incorporation' seek to discern, and enact. According to Latour (2010, p. 51), at the very least, spirits and divinities name a special sort of human-to-non-human power relation. 'Incorporation' names, in this sense, a mode of paying attention to differences in power or force, and seeking to discern, and then align with them. Humans are entangled with impinging other-than-human powers both beneficent and hostile. To take a key example from many Afro-descendant traditions, our present life-conditions are expressions and extensions of, among many other

actants, those humans who lived before us and bequeathed to us from our language to our genes to our nationality and life-chances. These lively affordances and constraints were given to us by the dead, the ancestors, and they act on and in us, unrelenting, in every moment. As Todd Ochoa (2010) describes, by crafting a *prenda* or cauldron in Cuban Palo Monte as a container of the living dead, the formidable dead are not just remembered but become part of the marrow and muscle of the biologically alive ritualist. The palero 'makes' the muertos, even as these dead make the palero. The present rethinks the past; the past extends its powers into the present and future. Spirit incorporation assembles and activates the teguments linking multiple actants. It tries to gather them, make them thinkable and actionable and, in so doing, to heal.

Notes

- 1 But see Parés (2007), who sees multi-deity temples and rituals as a Dahomean practice originated in West Africa, and reproduced in the Jeje terreiros of Bahia.
- 2 As Stefania Capone details, Exu is a go-between and not exactly an orixá, though he may manifest *as* an orixá. Moreover, he rarely incorporates in humans, and when he does it is often problematic (2010, pp. 49–52).
- 3 From the Yoruba: 'dó' – 'stand up'; 'òsù' – tuft of hair left without cutting (Cacciatore 1977, pp. 39–40).
- 4 This is also true in many other contexts. Cf. Obeyesekere (1981), Boddy (1989), Keller (2002).
- 5 In his study of Sakalava possession in Madagascar, Lambek notes that the key part of the notion of spirit possession as theatre is not so much performance as irony, the fact of multiple voicings that together refute a singular idea of truth as self-evident (2003, p. 266).
- 6 In Candomblé, initiated spirit-holders are also understood to, in some sense, possess the tutelary deities seated in their head, as in 'Tom's Xangô', expressing the particularity and interdependency of every human-divine relationship (e.g. Capone 2010, p. 20).
- 7 Slavery appears elsewhere in Hayes' description as well: the exus are 'slaves' of the orixás, for example (253; Capone 2010, pp. 44–45). See also Landes (1947, p. 263): 'One priestess called him [Eshu] "slave" because he performs malicious errands in exchange for the offering of a few fractions of a cent, a little oil and sugar rum. On the other hand, she claimed, he is really of more value than the gods because he gets things done and has no vanity'. Analogously, Rosalind Shaw's work has shown how contemporary notions of sorcery, as the 'consumption' of people, is a direct legacy of the slave trade (2002).
- 8 Reis (2009, p. 106) documents a legal case arising in nineteenth-century Bahia, of an African-born priest of Candomblé, named Candéal, who allegedly tried to sell someone else's slave who was now under his *ritual* authority. Here, the slave–master relationship was contested, but not by any simple acquisition of free will or liberty of movement.
- 9 The scholarship on Candomblé has long cast Candomblé de Caboclo as inventive and personalized in relation to spirit possession and its cast of characters, compared to 'traditional' (i.e. *Nagô*) Candomblé, which is taken to be conservative, even tendentiously so (e.g. Carneiro 1961).
- 10 Just to make it clear that this exercise is worth undertaking even in relation to more contemporary texts, not only dated ones like Bastide's, here is a passage from a respected book in the 1990s, describing spirit incorporation among the Yoruba in Nigeria: 'In

masking rituals, trained specialists bring spectacles of cloth, dance, and music into the world from their otherworldly domain and send them away again to close the performance' (Drewal 1992, p. xiii). Following a material turn, this could be reframed as follows: 'Spectacles of cloth, dance and music, performed by trained specialists, build sensorial experiences of an "otherworldly domain" through materials in the world; and then send them away again.'

Works Cited

- Apter, A.H. (1992). *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Aubrée, M. and Laplantine, F. (1990). *La table, le livre et les esprits: naissance, évolution et actualité du mouvement social spirite entre France et Brésil*. Paris: J.C. Lattès.
- Barber, K. (1981). How man makes god in West Africa: Yoruba attitudes towards the Orisa. *Africa* 51 (3): 724–745.
- Bascom, W. (1944). The sociological role of the Yoruba cult group. *American Anthropologist* 63: 1–75.
- Bastide, R. (1953). Os cavalos dos santos. In: *Estudos Afro-Brasileiros, 3.a Serie*, 29–60. São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo.
- Bennet, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Birman, P. (1995). *Fazer estilo criando gêneros: posseção e diferenças de gênero em terreiros de umbanda e candomblé no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: EdUERJ.
- Beliso-De Jesús, A. (2015). *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bell, C. (1992). *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. London and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Boddy, J. (1989). *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boyer, V. (1999). O pajé e o caboclo: de homen a entidade. *Mana* 5 (1): 29–56.
- Brown, K.M.C. (1991). *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in New York*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cacciatore, O.G. (1977). *Dicionário de cultos afro-brasileiros: com a indicação da origem das palavras*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense-Universitária.
- Capone, S. (2010). *Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Carneiro, E. (1961). *Candomblés da Bahia*. Rio de Janeiro: Conquista.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, E. (2007). *The Mind Possessed: The Cognition of Spirit Possession in an Afro-Brazilian Religious Tradition*. New York and London: Oxford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1989). *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. (trans. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby). Chicago: University of Chicago Press'.
- Dianteill, E. (2008). Le caboclo surmoderne: Globalisation, possession et théâtre dans un temple d'umbanda à Fortaleza (Brésil). *Gradhiva* 7: 24–37.
- Drewal, M. (1992). *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Espirito Santo, D. and Blanes, R. (eds.) (2014). *The Social Lives of Spirits*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Gell, A. (1998). *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Gonçalves da Silva, V. (1995). *Orixás da metrópole*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Harding, R.E. (2000). *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Hayes, K.E. (2011). *Holy Harlots: Femininity, Sexuality, and Black Magic in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Herskovits, M. (1941). *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Hess, D.J. (1991). *Spirits and Scientists: Ideology, Spiritism and Brazilian Culture*. University Park, PN: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Holbraad, M. (2007). The power of powder: multiplicity and motion in the divinatory cosmology of Cuban Ifá (or Mana again). In: *Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically* (eds. A. Henare, M. Holbraad and S. Wastell), 189–225. London: Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2006). Rethinking the animate, re-animating thought. *Ethnos* 71 (1): 9–20.
- Johnson, P.C. (2002). *Secrets, Gossip and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, P.C. (2007). *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Johnson, P.C. (2011). An Atlantic genealogy of “spirit possession”. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53 (2): 393–425.
- Johnson, P.C. (2014). Objects of possession: spirits, photography and the entangled arts of appearance. In: *Sensational Religion: Sense and Contention in Material Practice* (ed. S. Promey), 25–46. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Johnson, P.C. (2018). The dead don’t come back like the migrant comes back: many returns in the Garifuna Dügü. In: *Passages and Afterworlds: Anthropological Perspectives on Death and Mortuary Rituals in the Caribbean* (eds. M. Forde and Y. Hume), 31–53. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Keane, W. (2012). On spirit writing: materialities of language and the religious work of transduction. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19: 1–17.
- Keller, M. (2002). *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power, and Spirit Possession*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kramer, F. (1987). *The Red Fez: Art and Spirit Possession in Africa*. London: Verso.
- Lambek, M. (1989). From disease to discourse: remarks on the conceptualization of trance and spirit possession. In: *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health* (ed. C.A. Ward), 36–61. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lambek, M. (2002). *The Weight of the Past: Living with History in Mahajanga, Madagascar*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lambek, M. (2003). From rheumatic irony: questions of agency and self-deception as re-fracted through the art of living with spirits. *Social Analysis* 47 (2): 40–61.
- Landes, R. (1947). *City of Women*. New York: Macmillan.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern* (trans. C. Porter). London: Prentice Hall.
- Latour, B. (2010). *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Leiris, M. (1958). *La possession et ses aspects théâtraux chez les éthiopiens de Gondar*. Paris: Librairie Plon.
- Maggie, Y. (1992). *Medo do feitiço: relações entre magia e poder no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional.
- Mahmood, S. (2004). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Mauss, M. (1979 [1950]). *Body techniques*. In: *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, 95–123. London: Kegan Paul.
- McAlister, E. (2002). *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and its Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Métraux, A. (1958). *Le Voudou haïtien*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Meyer, B. (2010). “There is a spirit in that image”: mass-produced Jesus pictures and Protestant-Pentecostal animation in Ghana. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52 (1): 100–130.
- Miller, D. (1987). *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Miller, D. (2005). Materiality: an introduction. In: *Materiality* (ed. D. Miller), 1–50. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
- Miller, D. (2009). *Stuff*. London: Polity Press.
- Malinowski, B. (1948). *Magic, Science and Religion, and Other Essays*. New York: The Free Press.
- Matory, J.L. (2005). *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Obeyesekere, G. (1981). *Medusa's Hair*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ochoa, T. (2010). *Society of the Dead: Quita Manaquita and Palo Praise in Cuba*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ortner, S.B. (1984). Theory in anthropology since the sixties. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 ((1): 126–166.
- Palmié, S. (2002). *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Palmié, S. (2014). The Ejamba of North Fairmount avenue, the wizard of Menlo Park, and the dialectics of Ensoniment: an episode in the history of an acoustic mask. In: *Spirited Things: The Work of 'Possession' in Afro-Atlantic Religions* (ed. P.C. Johnson), 47–78. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Parés, L.N. (2007). *A formação do candomblé: história e ritual da nação jeje na Bahia*. São Paulo: Editora Unicamp.
- Price, R. (2007). *Travels with Tooy: History, Memory and the African American Imagination*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Proudfoot, W. (1985). *Religious Experience*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Reis, J.J. (1986). Nas malhas do poder escravista: a invasão do candomblé do Accú na Bahia, 1829. *Religião e sociedade* 13 (3): 108–127.
- Reis, J.J. (2003). *Death Is a Festival: Funeral Rites and Rebellion in 19th Century Brazil*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Richman, K. (2008). *Migration and Vodou*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Romberg, R. (2014). Mimetic corporeality, discourse, and indeterminacy in spirit possession. In: *Spirited Things: The Work of 'Possession' in Afro-Atlantic Religions* (ed. P.C. Johnson), 225–256. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Sansi-Roca, R. (2007). *Fetishes and Monuments: Afro-Brazilian Art and Culture in the 20th Century*. London: Berghahn.
- Saraiva, C. (2010). Afro-Brazilian religions in Portugal: bruxos, priests and pais de santo. *Etnográfica* 14 (2): 265–288.
- Shaw, R. (2002). *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Stolow, J. (2009). Wired religion: spiritualism and telegraphic globalization in the nineteenth century. In: *Empires and Autonomy: Moments in the History of Globalization* (eds. S.M. Streeter, J.C. Weaver and W.D. Coleman), 79–92. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Stolow, J. (2013). *Deus in Machina: Religion, Technology, and the Things in Between*. New York: Fordham University Press.

- Stoller, P. (1995). *Embodying Colonial Memories: Spirit Possession, Power, and the Hauka in West Africa*. New York: Routledge.
- Taussig, M. (1992). *Mimesis and Alterity*. New York: Routledge.
- Van de Port, M. (2011). *Ecstatic Encounters: Bahian Candomblé and the Quest for the Really Real*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Verger, P. (1957). *Notes sur le culte des orisha et vodun*. Dakar: Mémoires de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire.
- Verger, P. (1998). *Notas sobre o culto aos orixás e voduns*. (trans. Carlos Eugênio Marcondes de Moura). São Paulo: Editora USP.
- Wafer, J. (1991). *The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomblé*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Wirtz, K. (2014). Spiritual agency, materiality, and knowledge in Cuba. In: *Spirited Things: The Work of 'Possession' in Afro-Atlantic Religions* (ed. P.C. Johnson), 99–130. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

CHAPTER 8

Spiritual Warfare in Pentecostalism

Metaphors and Materialities

Simon Coleman

In a sense, Christians have always been at war. Consider Paul's famous exhortation in Ephesians 6:10–12: 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' (KJV). Paul is writing as the citizen of an empire held together by highly efficient (and probably terrifying) Roman soldiers, but he is also developing a powerful metaphor that unites fundamental components of the Christian life: security in faith linked with constant vigilance against evil; distinctions between spirit and flesh; scepticism of the morality of those who rule in this world as opposed to those who will triumph in the next. Move away from the early Church, past the Crusades that marked so many bitter conflicts of the Middle Ages, past the Inquisition as well as the sacred violence committed against bodies and buildings in the name of the Protestant Reformation, and now consider the refrain of a hymn that I sang as a child growing up in the England of the 1960s and 1970s: 'Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before.' These words had originally been scribbled down in 1865 by a Victorian curate, Sabine Baring-Gould, to provide a processional hymn for children in his parish; but they became part of the taken-for-granted culture of British Anglicanism and beyond for the next century and a half.

So perhaps we can understand the claim made by Paul Rhodes Eddy and James Beilby that the 'topic of spiritual warfare never seems to grow old' (2012, p. 1). Sometimes, of course, the metaphor is transformed into action. Paul's 'armour' may be materialized (and weaponized) through words, spaces, maps, religious artefacts, and practices such as exorcism – whether practised in the privacy of a home or broadcast to a nation. Even the constant search by many believers for peace acknowledges that the precise opposite

of pacifism is a recurring theme in Christianity, whether warfare is perceived as a force to be resisted or as a metaphor that can bolster religious conviction.

This chapter is about the place of spiritual warfare within a specific branch of Christianity, Pentecostalism, though I shall also refer to evangelicalism.¹ My focus on just one section of Christianity should alert us to the fact that such warfare has taken on a particular character among Pentecostals. It is also an especially timely topic. Debate over the forms and uses of spiritual warfare has been especially intense over the past few decades, and has attracted criticism as well as praise from within as well as outside Pentecostal circles. I begin by tracing some of this recent history before highlighting three related issues that are raised with particular clarity by these developments: scale in the practice of religion; the construction of space and place; and the subjectivity and disciplining of believers. These form material components in the creation of a cosmology that is all-encompassing in its aims and yet allows for significant local variations on the ground; they also contribute to the concrete performances, objects, and mediatizations that afford contemporary varieties of Pentecostalism effective means of constituting religious practice and engagement through the medium of 'war'. The latter may not involve real guns and bullets; but the metaphor nonetheless takes physical forms – the stuff of everyday life beyond as well as within church walls, and sometimes extending into the more spectacular and politicized realm of the public sphere. As Birgit Meyer notes, such a sphere is composed not merely of abstract ideas, but also of material dimensions, including 'bodies, objects, pictures, sounds, spaces, and practices' (2015, p. 4). In some contexts, Pentecostal forms manifested through such media as architecture, sounds, mottos, and so on may become 'dominant features in the public environment that are virtually impossible to eschew because they partake in a particular political aesthetic of the "distribution of the sensible" that has a strong impact on all spheres of life, from individual subjecthood to politics' (2015, p. 11). A social imaginary is also and inevitably a *materialized* imaginary.

Spiritual warfare is not simply a fringe ideology, but can reach into mainstream and highly influential political debate in parts of the world ranging from the United States to Nigeria. It asks key questions about the role of Christians in the political realm, and ones that believers themselves may not have resolved. Do they ignore the secular world as the realm of Satan and let it go literally to hell, or do they try to improve it? And is their agency to be expressed through prayer or through more conventionally secular political action? Finally, we see how the specific target of spiritual warfare can shift according to era and circumstance: the catalyst of the secular Soviet enemy of the 1980s has been replaced for the time being by a new, religious foe in the early twenty-first century.

8.1 Spiritual Warfare: From Ideology to Strategy

Images of war, then, are nothing new in Christian history. However, with the development of Protestant mission abroad and revivalism at home in subsequent centuries we see the evangelical and, eventually, the Pentecostal message being packaged for, and projected out to, unknown others across far greater distances. Such efforts have involved both spreading the 'Good News' of salvation and acting in more apotropaic ways, adopting

Christianity as both shield and weapon, reinforcing the colonial, missionary message of condemning pagan faiths as well as the urban evangelists' indictment of the city as site of temptation.

The spiritual metaphor of militant action has been translated increasingly into missionizing method since the nineteenth century. Referring to the most recent development of spiritual warfare as an explicit object of reflection and action among evangelicals and Pentecostals, Joel Robbins (2012, p. 47) argues that it emerged from the 'church growth' movement, which from the 1960s aimed to apply specific techniques of research to evangelization. Thus, we see here a powerful linkage between tropes of conflict and growth, with encouragement of the former leading to measurable results in the latter.

The most prominent spokesperson for spiritual warfare as strategy has been Peter Wagner, co-founder of the Spiritual Warfare Network (SWN), and a PhD in social ethics. Judy Han (2010, p. 188) points out that the geopolitical tenor of Wagner's work, with its emphasis on expertise and planning, comes in the wake of the post-World War II global resurgence of Pentecostal and charismatic movements, but also of the rhetorics of both Cold War political analysis and the energetic 'Decade of Evangelism' of the 1990s. It aims at a self-consciously practical theology that combines deliverance (exorcism) with information-gathering techniques such as 'spiritual mapping' (discussed below).

In keeping with this approach, and with St. Paul as one of his inspirations, Wagner suggests that spiritual warfare occurs along three levels (DeBernardi 1999; Lowe 1998, p. 18): (i) ground-level, involving the casting out of demons and operating person-to-person; (ii) occult-level, dealing with evil powers that are organized and institutionalized, such as witchcraft, astrology, or shamanism; and (iii) strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW), which involves cosmic confrontation with high-ranking and specifically territorial spirits that prevent people from accepting the Gospel and rule over governments in harmful ways. Wagner combines *description* with *prescription*, gathering of 'data' with a call to action at different scales. His recommendations lead to supposedly rationally organized practices of conversion – 'informed intercession', as Greenwood calls it (Wagner and Greenwood 2012, p. 182) – and does so through formulating models that apparently can be learned and applied by believers anywhere around the globe.

Admittedly, controversy dogs spiritual warfare. For instance, in the same volume where Wagner and Greenwood lay out their current understandings of what it entails, Walter Wink and Michael Hardin argue against what they see as the indiscriminate lumping together of such varied spiritual practices as witchcraft, New Age, Eastern religions, and so on, as undifferentiated glorifications of Satan (Wink and Hardin 2012, p. 201). Nevertheless, spiritual warfare as model of action has proved popular among many believers. Robbins (2012, p. 54) states that from around 1990–2000 in particular, it diffused around the world with considerable speed, helping to form a movement of mobilized and motivated Christians. An early chronicler of this spread, Jean DeBernardi (1999), sees the rational in such contexts as constituting a challenge to be overcome by the charismatic, but I prefer to stress the potential power of the juxtaposition, even the conjunction, of the two as spiritual warfare moves from being metaphor, to being formed into strategy and model, to acting as medium of powerful religious experience. Note also that DeBernardi presents warfare as not simply opposing the spirituality of others, but also as articulating with such spirituality sufficiently well to demonstrate

the superiority of Christian belief and practice; other religions are not ignored, but acknowledged and then ritually and rhetorically 'conquered'. Or, as Virginia Garrard-Burnett (2007, pp. 228–229) puts it of proponents of spiritual warfare in Brazil, part of the appeal of the theology is that it 'does not negate the existence of these spiritual beings, who often loomed large in the existential realities of converts in former lives'. Similarly, in her ethnography of a neo-Pentecostal, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) congregation in Durban, South Africa, Ilana van Wyk (2014, p. 57) presents the church as creating a 'hierarchy of demons' that serves as a framework into which 'local problems, religious practitioners and traditions could be slotted without much local negotiation'.

The 'framework', then, is a kind of 'formula' that is replicable across the world; and yet both of these analytical terms are perhaps too rigid in their depictions of how such encompassment and articulation tend to be manifested. What Meyer calls the Pentecostal 'logic of diabolization' (2015, p. 16) works through what she sees as frequently loosely-knit, even experimental, sets of often mediatized imaginaries. In my terms, such Pentecostalism is 'semiotically promiscuous' in the ways in which it redefines local cultures, using such cultures instrumentally as its own medium of diffusion.² Garrard-Burnett (2007, p. 229) argues further that 'its discursive elements often directly reflect the most volatile cultural fault lines in a given society'. Thus, she continues, in Brazil the UCKG is especially concerned with the expulsion of the many gods of the African diaspora; in South Africa, witchcraft and ancestors are targeted; in the United States, the spirits that seem most urgently in need of exorcism are those that affect the urban poor. Apart from South America, West Africa has proved a particularly fertile context for imageries of spiritual warfare to flourish, and in both regions they have often resonated well with the expansionist and often politically ambitious plans of prosperity-oriented denominations such as the UCKG or the Nigerian Redeemed Church of God (RCCG).

Having broadly delineated the history and contours of spiritual warfare as strategy, framework, and experimental imaginary, I want to focus on key material areas where I see contemporary forms of spiritual warfare emerging out of contemporary forms of Pentecostalism. These can be summarized as scale, space, and self, as we see how warfare perceived as metaphor, deployed as method, and emergent as medium of religious experience, both challenges the non-Christian other and constructs the Pentecostal subject.

8.2 Scaling in Space and Time

A much-cited theological justification for aggressive missionizing is provided by Christ's 'Great Commission' to his disciples to evangelize the entire world: 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' (Matthew 28:19, KJV). The achievement of this aim has seemed ever more likely since the end of World War II, with advances in communications technology combining with growing financial and educational mobility of many Pentecostals in the United States and beyond (see also Diamond 1989, p. 113). Its completion is

regarded by some believers as the final act required by humans before the Second Coming can occur: global encompassment is assumed to enact temporal completion.³

Scaling activities and perspectives up and down in relation to global and dispensationalist frames has become an ever more feasible possibility. In such a process, specific media of representation have proved crucial in forming ambitious imaginaries. René Holvast (2009) points to the significance of cartography in relation to contemporary evangelicals in his discussion of the international spiritual mapping movement among evangelicals and neo-Pentecostals, which emerged in the 1980s in order to wage territorial spiritual war against unseen, non-human beings. The movement provided an interpretation of the Great Commission impelled by a conviction that it was necessary to provide both a 'natural' and a 'supernatural' map of reality, given that geopolitical units could be seen as housing seats of power of human but also non-human, often demonic, spiritual entities. Such cartography – with precedents in Christian history – has made the world both legible and accessible for moral action.

As Rebecca Greenwood argues, in a piece co-written with Wagner,⁴ such mapping (in both a literal, cartographic sense and a broader sense of knowledge-gathering) identifies the salient missionary conditions at work in a given community. Strategy and inspiration, materiality and spirit, thus come together:

By gathering objective information (including key historical facts such as foundational history, locations of bloodshed, idolatrous practices, key historical leaders, broken covenants, and sexual immorality) and combining it with spiritual impressions (prophecy, revelation, words of knowledge, dreams, and visions), believers can prayerfully combine all of this information and draw a map that identifies the open doors between the spirit world and the material world. (Wagner and Greenwood 2012, pp. 182–183)

Such spatial and scalar imagery has been concretized and reinforced since the late 1980s by the missionary trope of the so-called '10/40 Window'. This latter term refers to the vast area of land located between 10 and 40° north of the equator – a part of the globe regarded as the most economically vulnerable and least evangelized by Christians, which contains many Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and members of indigenous faiths.⁵ Description again becomes prescription: an original 'survey' of a given region indicates the justification for intervention by Christian missionaries as well as the sense of a planned framework for action. Christians are pitched into particular forms of moral and spatial orientation towards others, with strategic but also ritual consequences. Judy Han (2010, p. 184) refers to the 10/40 idea as a 'cartographic imperative that normalizes particular technologies of navigation and direction-setting', a certain kind of evangelical praxis in other words, and she captures this sense beautifully in the following observation of an ethnographic encounter in Korea (Han 2010, p. 184): 'The impassioned church Elder's finger, literally indexical, called my attention to a rectangular window on the map that compels people to take action by praying, fundraising and by participating in short-term mission trips.' The point here is not merely the call to action, but also the finger of the speaker, linking intimate, bodily space with the expanse of the map, and conveying the notion that the believer has huge areas of the globe under surveillance and control. Embodied geo-piety mixes with the geo-politics of mission. Both the map

and the gesture invoke spatial idioms that help to situate, and constitute, the self in relation to wider geographical scales and trajectories.

There are clear resonances here with Thomas Csordas's (2015) depiction of 'a geography of the Spirit' among Catholic charismatics, involving both practices of everyday life and the phenomenological transformation of geographical space created in transnationally-oriented activities. The Catholic charismatic networks he studies cultivate a global geographical consciousness through, among other things, the use of web-based interactive maps. Significantly, one community he has studied is called 'Sword of the Spirit' (SOS), echoing in its name St. Paul's armour of God and presenting itself precisely as a bulwark that can defend its people at a time of spiritual warfare. Intriguingly, Csordas also points out the gendered aspect of some of the imagery it deploys, with SOS cultivating a more masculinist, even macho, ethos than most other Catholic charismatic groups.

Close connections are also evident with my own fieldwork on Nigerian neo-Pentecostals – members of the RCCG in Nigeria and London, whose cultivation of what I call a 'cartographic sensibility' (Coleman and Maier 2016) illustrates how maps and mapping are not only present *within*, but are also productive *of*, morally charged space, place, and experience. For instance, the headquarters of the RCCG in London is Jesus House, a squat, square, purpose-built construction in a warehouse style located in an industrial zone of a suburb of northwest London, nestling under a busy elevated highway. These surroundings are deceptively unpromising if we read them through purely secular eyes. Yet, the very process of entering the building can become an exercise in a multi-layered perception of and encounter with Pentecostalized space, place, and time. Immediately to the left of the front door is a plaque with a map of London on it, while ahead in the main foyer is a large desk framed by a large map of the world (with Africa in the centre) and three clocks, telling the times in London, Beijing, and New York respectively. The main worship hall has a sign above its door containing a map of the world in white. The building is also a spatial exercise in biblical narrative and church history, containing the 'Hephzibah Room',⁶ the 'Peniel Meeting Room'⁷ and the 'John Knox Meeting Room'.

It is perhaps tempting to dismiss such details as trivial, but we see here an assemblage of spatial representations and affordances that take on considerable significance in the 'world' being constructed by these RCCG members, many of whom are both Christians and aspirant migrants with roots in southern Nigeria. Filtered through members' eyes, the proximity of the motorway might indicate not merely cheap land values but also a route that leads to the heart of London (Coleman and Vásquez 2017); the industrial zone is not merely a 'non-space' but also an expandable context (linked to transnational time) in which the Pentecostal labour of prayer and assembly is carried out relatively unchecked, and where a biblical landscape is internally recreated. The maps of London and the world do not merely indicate salient spaces of operation and overview for the Pentecostal gaze. They take on further significance from their very location in specific parts of the building: at its entrance, at the central space of greeting, in the worship hall. These material manifestations and depictions link to each other in a kind of spatial enchainment and encompassment that embodies the sliding scales of potential operation of Pentecostal practice and perspective, from the building, to the city, to the world, and ranging from biblical past to scripturally-endorsed future.

A further sense of the links – or enchainments – between space, ritual, and cartography is evident from Katrin Maier's and my fieldwork at the RCCG Festival of Life, an event staged twice a year in London. Co-ordinated in large part by staff at Jesus House, this is a spectacular exercise in 'upscaling', bringing together members from London, the UK, and Europe to an overnight conference/revival at the enormous ExCel Centre in the heart of the regenerated Docklands area of London. The event, regularly attended by perhaps 20–30 000 people, is a diasporic echo of the much larger Holy Ghost services staged monthly at the RCCG's Redemption Camp outside Lagos, and also brings the group's General Overseer, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, to address its congregation. On the occasion I describe here, from the night of 28 March 2008, the transnational reach was enhanced by the presence of Reinhard Bonnke, renowned evangelist and missionary within Africa and head of Christ for all Nations. Besides reminding his audience of his recent conversionary successes in Africa, Bonnke's message was calibrated to appeal to both local and transnational levels of activity. As he invited people to the front of the stage to pray with him, and as thousands of people ran towards the stage, Bonnke asked those present to lift up their hands as he prophesied: 'You will possess the land for Jesus' and in doing so 'you will cast out devils and demons'.⁸ Precisely which land, and which demons, did not need to be specified at this point.

Bonnke's appearance was followed by a representative from the Christian Alliance, who continued the territorial metaphors by proclaiming 'You are welcome to our land' – a phrase that could apply either to the distinguished visitors to the conference or to the West African migrants who had chosen to make their new lives in the UK – and 'You are standing on holy ground'. If the exact location of the holy ground was once more left ambiguous – did it mean the Excel Arena? London? the United Kingdom? the in-gathering of the RCCG at this place? – it was followed by an almost judderingly specific spatial reference in that context, with the speaker describing his implacable opposition to the mooted construction of the largest mosque in Europe, to be located in London. He finished his presentation by repeating 'You are welcome to this country' and was soon followed by a collection where, once again, spatial imagery played a resonant role. As participants pledged their contributions on specially provided forms, a large screen displayed a map – a silhouette of Britain with two spots marked in red, one in the south of England (presumably London) and the other in the north: both strategic spots appeared to be sending out wave-like signals into surrounding areas, as if covering the country and perhaps going further into Europe.

These are merely a few examples of ways in which spatial and scalar tropes became deeply salient at the Festival of Life: 'possession' of the land was invoked alongside the occupation of a convention centre at the heart of the capital city (rather more visible than Jesus House's headquarters in northwest London, though like the latter a post-industrial, warehouse-like space);⁹ the juxtaposition of 'giving' with cartographic imagery of the nation 'receiving' RCCG influence; the association of UK-based believers with preachers such as Bonnke and Adeboye who represented, by their very embodied presence, a globe-spanning mobility that had briefly come to rest at this particular event. In the midst of this performance of varieties of explicitly spatialized agency, spiritual warfare was not the only ritual orientation to be invoked, but it clearly played an important part in providing a moral justification for actions that might shift from uttering a prayer, to rushing towards

a globe-straddling preacher, to casting out demons and becoming motivated to oppose the building of a mosque.

'Possession' is in fact a multivalent term within this RCCG context: it may point to the negative effect that demonic forces can have on the spiritual life of a city or nation, but more positively it can express the high value placed by such migrant workers on the ownership of property and land. Indeed, spiritual and legal/economic spheres of activity are aligned in the sense that believers aspire for agency in both. The two congregations in which Katrin and I carried out our fieldwork took great pride in owning their buildings rather than renting them, and thus echoed sentiments evident among similar RCCG populations in Amsterdam (Knibbe 2009), for whom the imagery of becoming landlords as opposed to remaining tenants in urban space contributed to an inversion of implicit power-relationships between Africa and Europe.

Prayer, protest, possession of land, thus form a practical 'armoury', and while each of these tools may take on specific significance in the context of the RCCG, they also draw on a repertoire of practices recognizable to other Pentecostals. The creation of an enchanted, spiritually charged, version of Pentecostal and evangelical space relies on ideas of encompassment, discernment, and ambition, while the relatively undifferentiated character of such space is nonetheless marked by special spots on the moral map of the world: not only towns and regions possessed by spirits in need of strategic and planned expulsion, but also positive visions of places such as the Holy Land, centre-point of salvationary history, and indeed Jesus House itself – ugly warehouse from one perspective, but home to a complex spatio-temporal arena of aspiration on another.

A sense of rationality intimately combined with ritual is also strikingly embodied in the frequent use with spiritual warfare of 'perambulatory prayer', which may be applied to different spaces at different scales, ranging from neighbourhoods ('prayer-walks'), cities ('praise marches'), regions ('prayer expeditions'), and nations ('prayer journeys') (Lowe 1998, p. 19). One consequence of such action is the projection of Christian presence into the public, civic spheres of whichever context is invoked, as spiritual witness combines with spatial orientation and appropriation. Greenwood notes of perambulation: 'Every step becomes an acted prayer' (in Wagner and Greenwood 2012, p. 191). Among RCCG members whom we encountered in London, walking as a 'spiritual warrior' takes one's relationship to space literally and metaphorically into new dimensions, often as strategic action using a map is translated into the embodied witness of proceeding through such space in order to (re-)claim it for Christian purposes. One pastor described to us the process of combating 'satanic weapons' by moving around a poor housing estate in south London, along with members of his congregation:¹⁰ 'We begin to pray...walk around. We pray against attack, robbery, we pray against poverty, we pray against the breaking of homes.' When asked by Katrin if he prayed openly, he replied:

We don't pray aloud, we just walk around, we begin to speak in tongues, there, sometimes we can just stand and we stretch forth our hands towards the building and begin to pray. We don't disturb anybody, we begin to sing, we begin to walk. 'The church is marching on' [he sings in the interview]. We begin to sing that hymn around the estate.

For this pastor and his congregation, such action is not merely a form of prayerful action and witness, albeit carried out without 'disturbing' anybody (unlike, for instance, a public procession), it is also a means of assuming responsibility for one's immediate urban environment.

Kristine Krause (2015) develops a similar point in her tracing of the spatial practices of Ghanaian Pentecostal migrants to Europe, as their experience of diaspora is formed through their experience – and attempted shaping – of novel cultural and moral space. The context focused on by her is not a relatively obscure housing estate but an iconic urban symbol. She finds that the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, named after the pagan altar that it houses, is viewed by informants as the throne of Satan (referring to Revelation 2:12–14).¹¹ The economic, social, political, and moral problems of the city are attributed to the presence of the throne in its centre, and so some Christians place themselves directly in front of the museum to pray for removal of the altar.

These examples show believers engaged in on-going spiritual 'discernments' of the social and physical world surrounding them. Such discernments are conducted through both ocular and spiritual lenses, and at different scales. The absolute positionality and 'God's eye view' of the map are complemented and literally fleshed out by action on the ground. In its most extreme form, the resulting geo-piety implies that *no* place on earth is morally neutral, but must be recovered and protected for Christian purposes if it is to contribute to an overall project of salvation. Such Christians are also constructing specific forms of 'chronotopic' action, constructing intersections of time and space at different scales that conflate simple distinctions between what Tweed (2006) sees as the fundamental religious practices and orientations of 'crossing' and 'dwelling'. In the strategic planning of an RCCG pastor, a map is both a depiction of fixed space *and* a necessary call to action. A red spot on a map displayed to thousands of Festival of Life devotees does not merely indicate the location of a town or city: it forms a prompt for mission. Frequently, the absolute spatial positionality of the map is juxtaposed and intermingled with the relative placing of bodies in place: the pointing finger of an elder expresses an embodied bringing together of body and cartography, passion and strategy, inspiration and rationality; and, at Jesus House, we experience what it might mean not only to enter the building but actually to enter a service in the presence of a map that marks our threshold into worship.

I wish to take these points about scaling, orientation, and positionality in one further direction here: more explicitly towards mediatization itself. For illustrative purposes I refer to the recent work of Birgit Meyer (2015), which explicitly links use of media to themes associated with spiritual warfare. Meyer's book *Sensational Movies* traces the increased production and consumption of Pentecostal-inflected movies in Ghana in the context of a public sphere that is increasingly subject to neoliberalizing economic forces. She describes the deeply dualistic character of many of these films, as indigenous traditions are presented as demonic. A particular feature of films is their capacity as 'sensational forms' to 'picture things that are taken to be inaccessible to the naked eye, showing how spirits operate. To see in this sense is a participatory embodied act in which the beholder partakes in making something visible' (Meyer 2015, p. 23). Special effects are deployed to give witches, ghosts, and so on spectacular forms of appearance onscreen: vision, scale, and moralizing of the world therefore come together in powerful ways through the affordances

of film. As Meyer notes, here is a means through which Pentecostalism can 'go public' (Meyer 2015, p. 10), and reinforcing this trajectory is the elective affinity that

exists between Pentecostal attitudes of 'vision' and the use of audiovisual devices such as video cameras, which are embedded in the framework of religious 'revelation'. Pentecostals deploy a large-scale social imaginary that involves the globe as a whole and that is geared toward mobility (in space and socially upward). Imagining the world as a stage for the spiritual war between God and the devil. (Meyer 2015, p. 21)

Meyer is surely correct to argue that film allows iconographies of occult and evil forces to be made public on unprecedented scales (Meyer 2015, p. 198). Moreover, in the context of Ghana, these are iconographies that permeate wider, popular culture, and not merely the often ignored margins of cultural life occupied by, say, Nigerian Pentecostals in London. Where I differ with her slightly, however, is with the implication of her statement that 'the movies exemplify the perverse logic of Pentecostalism to constantly reproduce, in ever more sensational ways, what it rejects' (Meyer 2015, p. 291). My problem is not with her depiction of chronic reproduction, but with the distancing use of the adjective 'perverse'. For the implication of what I am arguing is that the semiotic and moral logic of much Pentecostal practice is precisely to work through that which it can both oppose and reshape. Such action may seem contradictory from the standpoint of a secular model of social order, but it is entirely in keeping with a 'promiscuous' and multi-scalar tendency to thrive through the metaphor and medium of spiritualized conflict.

8.3 Subjectivity and Discipline

If Pentecostalism works in part through its war against a variety of others, attention also focuses on the self as agent and patient of spiritual powers – whether good or evil. Aggressive prayer to 'take' regions for God is complemented by more defensive means of purifying the self, such as fasting, applying spiritually powerful substances to the body (anointing with oil), and casting out demons. In a well-known paper, Thomas Csordas (1990) describes group healing sessions conducted by charismatic evangelists in the United States. Of particular interest is his argument that these forms of 'deliverance' provide socially sanctioned ways of identifying problems. As he puts it (1990, p. 14): 'Persons do not perceive a demon inside themselves, they sense a particular thought, behavior, or emotion as outside their control. It is the healer, specialist in cultural objectification, who typically "discerns" whether a supplicant's problem is of demonic origin.' Here, then, is the compliment of spiritual warfare as outwardly-oriented and global strategy: such deliverance acts on and within personal experience, working on the internal space of the participant by identifying, naming, domesticating and ultimately expelling unwanted spiritual presences.

There is much more going on here than the exercise of a Manichean (dualist) view of the world. Efforts to depict the light and the dark aspects of the Christian message involve the development of reflexive strategies not only for the conversion of others but also the monitoring of the self – the latter coming close to a Foucaultian notion of disciplinary

power, according to which self-surveillance becomes a means of self-control – though as Csordas's example suggests, determining whether 'knowledge' about the self can be relied upon is a point of often uncomfortable ambiguity for many believers. The diabolical may enter one's life not merely through obvious problems, but also through apparent success. In other words, how can one ever be entirely sure that the agency one possesses, the good fortune one has suddenly gained, comes from God and not the devil?

The RCCG members with whom Katrin Maier and I discussed these topics provided us with numerous examples of how the apparently black-and-white character of moral action leaves believers wrestling with numerous fuzzy, grey zones in *interpreting* the potentially spiritually loaded signals they receive in the workings of everyday life. Thus, one young woman, Victoria, told us the story of a friend who wanted God to tell her whether she should marry a certain man. As Victoria noted, it is not always obvious whether one should even ask God for a sign, along the lines of the biblical figure of Gideon (see Judges 6:36): 'Actually, the devil knows how to play with that, too. It is dangerous to ask for a sign, because we can't be sure whether it was God or the devil who sent it.'¹² Or, as another young woman pithily remarked: 'The devil has his own posers, too.'¹³

A common trope in such accounts is that women may be especially vulnerable to diabolical attack on account of their emotionality; but, equally, the devil may choose to attack the spiritually powerful, as they represent the greatest threat to his intentions. If much of the previous section involved the idea of scaling up, as Christians expressed the desire for global encompassment, one of the features of practising discernment of the workings of evil is its imperative to be acutely self-aware on micro-levels of surveillance, as the intimate and domestic and not merely the public realm become key sites of moral encounter. Pastor Bankole, head of an RCCG congregation in London, made this point memorably in a sermon on the topic of why quarrels occur in marriages. His answer was:

The devil goes to a good home, because he is not interested in those already scattered. And he tries to scatter families over very small issues like a debate over how to squeeze the tooth-paste. He wears a cap that is red on one half and black on the other. Then he passes in between the couple. So that one only sees the red, the other sees the black side... We have to be able to say 'whatever colour the cap, devil go ye beyond me'.¹⁴

The banishing of diabolical influence may be achieved by performative utterances such as that suggested by Pastor Bankole, but the very practice of deploying language can also work in self-disciplinary ways. Among RCCG members, at least, learning how to use tongues becomes a technique not only of bypassing the limits of human reasoning, but also of reconstituting the self through divine power. One of our closest informants remarked matter-of-factly to Katrin:¹⁵ 'Some people like to pray in tongues a lot because it is a language that goes straight to God, because the devil doesn't understand it. You yourself also don't understand, but God does'. She went on to describe this process as a form of 'switching' from normal language to tongues whereby 'you have to surrender – then you can switch into a higher mode, the spiritual realm. Within that process you become less and less aware of what is going on around you'.

Krause's (2015) ethnography of Ghanaian migrants in Europe is again helpful here. She notes that charismatic practices help these Pentecostals create and evaluate complex moral geographies that reflect their experiences of diaspora, but also their capacities and faculties as Christians. In order to discern good from bad, the believer works to build up an *inner* space in which to receive guidance from God, with the Holy Spirit acting as main mediator and translator between the contexts encountered. Krause notes that this notion of the Holy Spirit is strangely dislocated if compared to the other spirits that are assumed to inhabit specific landscapes and territories: it is conceived to be everywhere and nowhere, and we might add that herein lies its power – its ability precisely to transcend the territorial limitations of demonic powers.

At the same time, such self-cultivation and protection can reach beyond domestic and intimate spheres and help to constitute believers as 'virtuous citizens' even in contexts where the secular law might, for instance, define them as illegal residents (compare Fumanti and Werbner 2010). The question of citizenship raises questions of how believers do not simply reject society but retain a moral stake in it, even as they construct personal identities legitimated by spiritual rather than governmental authorities. As Krause points out, such migrants re-appropriate traditional missionary discourse, asserting and thus constructing their own respectability while projecting the colonialist image of the 'dark continent' on to secular, morally lax, Europe, a place where evil and constant temptation exists in the midst of economic plenty.

Kevin O'Neill (2010, 2015) also raises the idea of responsible and virtuous citizenship and their links to disciplining the believer in his analysis of Guatemalan Pentecostals. The people he studies follow the lead of Harold Caballeros, both politician and founding pastor of a multinational neo-Pentecostal mega-church. Much of Caballeros's rhetoric advocates the practice of spiritual warfare in order to combat the demons that plague his conflict-ridden country. But the key point here relates to the chief activity through which such warfare is to be waged and responsible citizenship to be exercised: prayer. This is a form of cultural work that produces a powerful sense of self even as it looks towards wider, society-wide redemption and renewal. Individual states of mind are linked to the state of the nation, making fasts, prayers, and examinations of conscious acts of spiritual warfare (O'Neill 2010, p. 106). Prayer in these terms is Pentecostal politics. Or, to draw on the spatial imagery I have been using in this chapter, cultivation of the inner space of the self permits and justifies the exercise of authority over outer spaces of the city, the nation, or the globe. O'Neill's believers must both defend themselves and attempt to influence others, and prayer may combine with spiritually-charged prosthetics, as people for instance pray over rocks before placing them in strategic locations around Guatemala City (the airport, the national palace, the cathedral, and so on (O'Neill 2010, p. 108)). Whatever rituals are used, the ultimate moral logic is that Guatemala depends on the piety of *each* person. Warfare becomes an urgent dimension of the constitution and disciplining of the religious self, even as it challenges conventional liberal, secular ideals of what effective social action would be.¹⁶

In O'Neill's ethnography, experiences of warfare as metaphor and as physical reality are uncomfortably conjoined in a country physically ravaged by violent conflict. Other ethnography explores the formation of the Christian soldier through the precise and goal-oriented deployment of training drawn from explicitly military techniques.

Elizabeth McAlister's fieldwork in 'an intensive spiritual warfare boot camp' (2016, p. 114) focuses on Native Americans (many of them Vietnam veterans) who have founded a training base in Oklahoma dedicated to training recruits in the theology and practical strategy of spiritual warfare. Like RCCG members, or the Christians described by Krause and O'Neill, these believers assume a kind of moral authority and stewardship over the moral status of the nation, but accept that they must also be made worthy of taking on such responsibility. So it is that McAlister finds herself participating in predawn prayers followed by crash courses in military-style discipline, involving the wearing of uniforms, being subject to inspections, but also accepting 'orders' for exact memorization of quotations from the Bible (2016, p. 117). She notes that such prayer warriors feel they must 'school minds and senses so they are able to experience the supernatural in ways that give them more confidence that what their sacred books say is really true' (2016, p. 125). If the body is itself a medium for the exercise of spiritual warfare, the latter takes on 'sensational forms' not only in the public sphere of society, but in the very physical existence of the believer.

8.4 Concluding Remarks

I have presented spiritual warfare in at least two temporal contexts: first, the long history of Christianity itself, including early Pentecostalism – a history where metaphors of warfare and various competing dualisms (spirit and flesh, other- and this-world, God and Caesar) have been combined and recombined in numerous ways; and second, the much more proximate history of spiritual warfare as strategy, as index of the ambition, professionalism, and global diffusion of a contemporary Pentecostalism that is adapted 'promiscuously' to invade public, civil, social, cultural, economic, political, governmental spaces previously assumed to be secular in operation and design. This is the warfare of moral entrepreneurs such as Peter Wagner, who package a religious imagery that is already half-known and turn it into models that combine rationality and ritual, system and spirit. Its basic grammar, like that of Pentecostalism in general, engages local categories in powerful ways; and so the idealized imagery of warfare follows a certain path: name, articulate with, and then conquer your enemy. Repeat the process as necessary.

Spiritual warfare is a contemporary strategy, but one that has deep resonances with conservative Protestant culture in the Americas and beyond. It also links well with one of the key current tropes evident in anthropological studies of Pentecostalism: the expression of religious and wider forms of rupture (Coleman and Hackett 2015). Robbins (2004) argues that such Christianity globalizes precisely by pitting itself against aspects of 'local' culture while also accepting the reality and force of already existing spiritual forces. Thus (Robbins 2004, p. 129) 'even as it absorbs local content' it 'maintains its globally recognizable shape as a struggle between the divine and the demonic'. The point, however, is that rupture, like warfare, does not merely involve distancing and separation; it is also about the multi-scalar expression of points of *articulation* between Pentecostal and other forms of culture.

The public constitution of boundaries becomes a means of converting or at least articulating with others, but it is also a way of being and/or becoming Pentecostal, so

that warfare and rupture must be seen as both acting outwards to redefine the non-Christian world, but also to reinforce the committed religious subject. Indeed, inner and outer, spiritual and material, but also absolute and relative positionality, are inherently co-constitutive. Spiritual warfare plays on a rhetorical dualism of good versus evil, but also has a dual orientation in relation to the believer. Reaching out – through prayer, mission, deliverance, perambulation, and so on – is ostensibly a means of affecting the spiritual worlds of others; but it indexes and constitutes the spiritual agency of the self. At times, the metaphorical and ritual power of deliverance is directed towards the believer, whose own spiritual status may be ambiguous or not quite known. Thus, while the popularity of spiritual warfare in its current forms will probably pass, other ways of mobilizing religious boundaries are likely to arise within Pentecostalism. In doing so, they will continue to delineate and traverse a difficult and dangerous pathway, identifying and expelling forms of objectified evil that occupy spaces ranging from the borders of the nation to the boundaries of the self.

Notes

- 1 The believers I describe might be described variously as Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals, charismatics, and evangelicals. For a recent discussion of these terms see Coleman and Hackett (2015).
- 2 Marshall (2016, p. 94) also describes charismatic spiritual warfare as 'less a set of doctrines or dogmas than an ensemble of practices' and points to 'the dynamic and almost haphazard way charismatic Christianity grows and spreads' (Marshall 2016, p. 97).
- 3 Some Pentecostals have proposed a broadly 'premillennialist' position (positing that the world is in inevitable moral decline leading to Armageddon), and others a 'postmillennialist' one (suggesting that humans will first have some material influence over creating God's Kingdom through evangelization). Both positions draw on imageries of dispensationalism (belief in teleological historical progression) and of conflict and struggle that have been explored in popular works such as Hal Lindsay's *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (1970). A current best-selling author is Frank Peretti, whose works include *This Present Darkness* (1986) and *The Oath* (1995).
- 4 Their contributions are written separately but contained within the same chapter.
- 5 It was coined in the late 1980s by Luis Bush, a businessman and missionary who was born in Argentina, raised in Brazil, and partially educated in the United States.
- 6 The wife of Hezekiah and also a symbolic name of Zion.
- 7 Mentioned in Genesis 22, a place not far from Succoth.
- 8 Based on notes taken by Katrin Maier.
- 9 Krause (2015) notes that the big warehouse structures that Pentecostals like to convert to worship in many European cities may be seen as spiritually and socially empty, and thus ready to be filled with positive Pentecostal spirituality.
- 10 Interview, 21 November 2008.
- 11 For instance, in verse 13: 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is' (KJV).
- 12 Interview, 9 July 2008.
- 13 Interview, 6 May 2009.

- 14 A pseudonym. Interview, 29 August 2009.
- 15 Interview, 15 August 2009.
- 16 As Yannick Fer (2015) puts it in relation to Oceania, believers take on a personal commitment to stand against principalities of darkness, establishing links between individual experience, national identity, and globalization. He invokes what Raphaël Liogier (2009) calls the 'individuo-globalism' characteristic of contemporary spiritualities, whereby an ideology of individualism is combined with global consciousness (Liogier 2009).

Works Cited

- Coleman, S. and Hackett, R. (2015). Introduction: a new field? In: *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (eds. S. Coleman and R. Hackett), 1–37. New York: New York University Press.
- Coleman, S. and Maier, K. (2016). In, of and beyond diaspora? Mapping, migration and the production of space among Nigerian Pentecostals. *Diaspora* 19: 9–31.
- Coleman, S. and Vásquez, M. (2017). On the road: Pentecostal pathways through the mega-city. In: *Religion and the Global City* (eds. D. Garbin and A. Strhan), 27–46. London: Bloomsbury.
- Csordas, T. (1990). Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology. *Ethos* 18: 5–47.
- Csordas, T. (2015). Catholic charismatic communities: a global geography of the spirit. In: *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (eds. S. Coleman and R. Hackett), 129–143. New York: New York University Press.
- DeBernardi, J. (1999). Spiritual warfare and territorial spirits: the globalization and localisation of a “practical theology”. *Religious Studies and Theology* 18: 66–96.
- Diamond, S. (1989). *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Eddy, P.R. and Beilby, J.K. (2012). Introduction. In: *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views* (eds. J.K. Beilby and p. Rhodes), 1–45. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Fer, Y. (2015). Charismatic globalization, morality and politics in Polynesian Protestantism. In: *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (eds. S. Coleman and R. Hackett), 228–242. New York: New York University Press.
- Fumanti, M. and Werbner, p. (2010). The moral economy of the African diaspora: citizenship, networking and permeable ethnicity. *African Diaspora* 3: 3–12.
- Garrard-Burnett, V. (2007). Stop suffering? The Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios in the United States. In: *Conversion of a Continent: Contemporary Religious Change in Latin America* (eds. T. Steigenga and E. Cleary), 218–238. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Han, J. (2010). Reaching the unreached in the 10/40 window: the missionary geoscience of race, difference and distance. In: *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions* (eds. J. Dittmer and T. Sturm), 183–207. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Holvast, R. (2009). *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina, 1989–2005: A Geography of Fear*. Leiden: Brill.
- Knibbe, K. (2009). “We did not come here as tenants, but as landlords”: Nigerian Pentecostals and the power of maps. *African Diaspora* 2: 133–158.
- Krause, K. (2015). Moral geographies in Pentecostalism. In: *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (eds. S. Coleman and R. Hackett), 75–92. New York: New York University Press.

- Lindsay, H. and Carson, C. (1970). *The Late, Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Liogier, R. (2009). L'individuo-globalisme: nouvelle culture croyante des sociétés industrielles avancées. *Revue internationale de politique comparée* 16: 135–154.
- Lowe, C. (1998). *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation: A Biblical, Historical and Missiological Critique of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare*. Bristol: Christian Focus.
- Marshall, R. (2016). Destroying arguments and captivating thoughts: spiritual warfare prayer as global praxis. *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2 (1): 92–113.
- McAlister, E. (2016). The militarization of prayer in America: white and native American spiritual warfare. *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2 (1): 114–130.
- Meyer, B. (2015). *Sensational Movies: Video, Vision, and Christianity in Ghana*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- O'Neill, K. (2010). *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- O'Neill, K. (2015). Harold Caballeros goes to Washington: Christianity and the decriminalization of cocaine. In: *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (eds. S. Coleman and R. Hackett), 214–227. New York: New York University Press.
- Peretti, F. (1986). *This Present Darkness*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Peretti, F. (1995). *The Oath*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Robbins, J. (2004). The globalization of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33: 117–143.
- Robbins, J. (2012). On enchanting science and disenchanting nature: spiritual warfare in North America and Papua New Guinea. In: *Nature, Science, and Religion: Intersections Shaping Society and the Environment* (ed. C. Tucker), 45–64. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.
- Tweed, T. (2006). *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- van Wyk, I. (2014). *The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in South Africa: A Church of Strangers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wagner, p. and Greenwood, R. (2012). The strategic-level deliverance model. In: *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views* (eds. J. Beilby and P.R. Eddy), 173–198. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Wink, W. and Hardin, M. (2012). Response to C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood. In: *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views* (eds. J. Beilby and P.R. Eddy), 199–203. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

CHAPTER 9

Consider the Tourist

Thomas S. Bremer

In his essay 'Consider the Lobster', the late American writer David Foster Wallace, despite his own dislike of tourists and their pursuits, concedes, 'it probably really is good for the soul to be a tourist, even if it's only once in a while' (2005, p. 240, footnote 6). He explains, 'Not good for the soul in a refreshing or enlivening way, though, but rather in a grim, steely-eyed, let's-look-honestly-at-the-facts-and-find-some-way-to-deal-with-them way'. Wallace learned in his own travels around America 'that intranational tourism is radically constricting, and humbling in the hardest way – hostile to my fantasy of being a real individual, of living somehow outside and above it all'. This humbling realization concerning the pretence and self-deceit involved in regarding oneself as authentic, as smugly assuming a morally elevated position above the pervasive profanations of modern life, reveals itself in contemplating the implications of one's involvement in touristic practices. 'As a tourist', Wallace concludes, 'you become economically significant but existentially loathsome, an insect on a dead thing'.

Wallace's perspicuous ruminations on the loathsome nature of tourists gives pause to any claim that recreational travel is essentially fulfilling in a spiritual sense. The soulful implications of tourism in his estimation have little to do with spiritual rejuvenation and much to do with honest assessment of one's smug self-regard as an authentic person whose existence remains 'somehow outside and above it all'. In fact, the feeling of authenticity, the attempt to live in genuine relationship to oneself and others, relies on the 'fantasy of being a real individual' that is deeply embedded in the consumer logic of the marketplace capitalism that defines so much of contemporary society. Touristic travel offers an occasion for reflecting on this sobering realization that at some level most of us living cheerfully in the webs of consumerism are tourists all the time, 'economically significant but existentially loathsome'. Moreover, no amount of ancient wisdom or spiritual questing can loosen the bonds of the marketplace edifice; the most

that tourists and other consumers of the spiritual marketplace can hope for is a self-congratulatory deceit in feigning an authentic life.

Tourism as a practice of modernity exemplifies the existential conundrum of consumer-based capitalism; neither exceptional nor extraordinary, modern tourists follow the same logic that other modern subjects live by in a consumer-oriented society. Attention to the practices, narratives, and spaces of tourism offers a scholarly perspective on religion and spirituality that raises questions beyond the experiences of individuals engaged in recreational travel. The touristic dimensions of religion and the religious aspects of tourism suggest views of modern subjectivity and socio-economic life that have implications beyond tourists and religious adherents. In short, the existential contemplations of modern subjects, including those regarded as religious, are inextricably embedded in the practices of modern capitalism, an elusive truth that tourists make plain.

9.1 Economies of an Existential Phenomenology

For many people, the perceived existential value of recreational travel relies to some extent on the desire for authenticity. Most tourists, if not all recreational travellers at some level, desire some sort of authentic experience, or at least they want their travels to reveal their own potential for living an authentic life. Engaging in the conventions of tourism for many travellers involves a deliberate indulgence of Wallace's 'fantasy of being a real individual', one who enacts, or perhaps merely seeks to discover, a capability of genuine relationships – with environments, cultures, individuals far different from oneself, with the world in general, and perhaps most importantly, with oneself. This is not to ignore the vast array of motives, purposes, and interpretations that accompany the world's recreational travellers; their particular reasons for travelling and the personal meanings they may discover in their sojourns cannot be easily reduced to facile generalizations. Nevertheless, the desire for authenticity, for experiences of genuine relationships, remains endemic to the logic and structure of touristic practices. In fact, much of the billions of dollars spent each year on tourism involves the production and consumption of authenticity. Many tourists, it seems, want to become, if only for a brief time, their authentic selves.

The authenticity that tourists most often encounter though, is what the sociologist Dean MacCannell (1999, pp. 91–107) identifies as 'staged authenticity'. Modern social institutions, in MacCannell's structuralist estimation, rely on a division between what he calls a 'front region', which is 'the meeting place of hosts and guests or customers and service persons', and a 'back region' consisting of 'the place where members of the home team retire between performances to relax and to prepare'. The performances seen by outsiders, presented and enjoyed as authentic, involve a fabrication of reality supported by back regions where outsiders do not venture. 'In other words', explains MacCannell, 'sustaining a firm sense of social reality requires some *mystification*'. What tourists, and modern people more generally, take as authentic most always involves a mystifying performance of reality.

MacCannell's structuralist orientation is helpful in reminding us that claims of authenticity always invoke a binary of the authentic and the inauthentic; this binary

distinction underlies a great deal of the aesthetic discourse of tourism (as well as the aesthetic sensibilities of virtually all of modernity, MacCannell would argue). But MacCannell and scholars following his lead have tended to focus exclusively on the objects of tourists' desire, whether material objects or more ephemeral cultural performances. In doing so, they disregard the existential authenticity of subjective experience. As Ning Wang (1999, pp. 365–366) points out, in much of tourist activity, 'what tourists seek are their own authentic selves and intersubjective authenticity, and the issue of whether the toured objects are authentic is irrelevant or less relevant'. Indeed, regardless of whether the object of touristic experience is genuine in itself or a staged performance in an elaborate process of mystification, the tourist subject can still seek an existential authenticity found in recreational pursuits.

Regardless of how we regard authenticity – as inherent in cultural objects and performances themselves, as the existential experience of the tourist subject, or as constructed in the cultural rhetoric and discourses of modern society – the aesthetic claim it makes serves as a powerful force in tourist activities and institutions. Furthermore, claiming authenticity is profitable. The aesthetic value of authentic artefacts, performances, and experiences translate all too easily into economic value through processes of commodification that make cultural products available to tourist consumers.

Commodification, at least how it operates in the tourist economy, involves materializing aesthetic value. In other words, commodification involves processes by which the aesthetic desires of the consumer become manifest, if only in the consumer's imagination, in material objects, cultural performances, and a host of services that consumers utilize.¹ The historical emergence of touristic commodification epitomizes the history of tourism as it followed closely the changing nature of Western capitalist economies, arising to the level of mass travel in conjunction with the industrialized mass production of consumer goods in what some economic historians have called the era of 'Fordist mass consumption' (Urry 1990, p. 14). A key indicator of tourist interest in this period was the popularity of World's Fairs, which philosopher Walter Benjamin (1978, p. 151) recognized as integral to the creation of what he called 'the commodity universe' as they attracted consumers on pilgrimages to the commodity fetish. More recently, according to sociologist John Urry (1990, p. 14), we have entered a post-Fordist era that attenuates the mass production of consumer culture and puts more emphasis on the particular preferences and desires of individual consumers; these consumers assert their individual tastes, needs, and predilections in segmented markets responding to more volatile patterns of consumption. In this post-Fordist consumer universe that modern people inhabit, all things become commodity, or at least have commodity potential. This is especially true in tourism, where the unrelenting appetites of tourists turn everything that catches their interests into commodified forms: 'all things, all places, all experiences become potential commodities in the tourist economy' (Bremer 2004, p. 6). In short, the discourses and practices of recreational travellers translate their aesthetic desires into commodities for their consumption. And the more authentic it is, the higher the commodity value.

These processes of translation from the aesthetics of authenticity to the hard cash of economic value resonate well beyond the activities and discourses of tourism. In fact, touristic desire for authenticity and its subsequent commodification has profound

parallels in the scholarly practices of religious studies. Again, risking a misleading generalization, a good deal of the academic study of religions, especially in its phenomenological modes, seeks an authentic understanding of religion. Indeed, as Russell McCutcheon (2003, p. 186) reminds us, the twentieth-century German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno's notion of the 'jargon of authenticity' remains fundamental to the discipline of religious studies; McCutcheon concludes that religious studies 'exists by chasing after the authentic'. This pursuit of authenticity is abundantly evident in the works of foundational thinkers as varied as Friedrich Schleiermacher, William James, Rudolf Otto, Carl Jung, Mircea Eliade, Ninian Smart, and Huston Smith, where an emphasis on personal mystical experiences as the core of authentic religiosity has defined dominant strains of the religious studies discipline. Particularly in the phenomenology of religion, individual interior experience of supernatural power and reality has served for many scholars as the measure of an authentic religious life. Religious essence for a great many students of religions lies in what Otto (1958) related as the 'numinous' experience of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* in confronting the Holy, or what other scholars, especially Eliade, have called the sacred. In fact, in Eliade's (1959) estimation, authentic experience of the sacred is the essential condition of being human, the defining mode of what he calls *Homo religiosus*.

In his critique of the phenomenological methodologies that dominated religious studies in the middle decades of the twentieth century, Jonathan Z. Smith (1988, p. xi) advocates broadening the academic study of religions by engaging in scholarship without the constraints 'of canon nor of community'; he urges scholars of religion to free their imaginations from the constricting assumptions about religion received from the conventions of the academy, largely inherited from the origins of religious studies in Christian theology, and from the hubris of religious communities who presume their own religious predilections as models of and for religion everywhere. In recent years, a few pioneering studies have begun to move beyond these traditional restraints to encompass cultural phenomena less conventionally regarded as religious in their studies of religion (a notable example is Kathryn Lofton's 2011 analysis of Oprah Winfrey). It still remains to be seen to what extent these new studies will intervene in the discourse on authenticity implicated in so much of religious studies.

My own interventions in this disciplinary discourse tend to look at the relationships between on the one hand 'tourism' as a capitalist activity and on the other the places, practices, traditions, beliefs, and even people regarded as 'religious'. I have found that this relationship between things we identify as tourism and those deemed religious can serve as a heuristic 'angle of vision' on the status, roles, and nature of religion in our contemporary world (Bremer 2014). This heuristic perspective reveals certain elements in the various processes of deeming things religious not readily considered in approaching the study of religious phenomena as 'things in themselves' without regard to wider socio-economic contexts. For instance, in the networks of bodies, practices, places, and interests that constitute tourism, a discourse on authenticity serves as a constitutive element of touristic subjectivity, an attitude of self often founded on the denial of one's status as a tourist, as both MacCannell (1999, p. 10) and Jonathan Culler (1981, p. 130) have noted, that stems from the discursive angst over authenticity. Regarding oneself as a traveller, pilgrim, sojourner, expatriate, or some other sort of mobile, intentionally displaced self serves as a strategy of denial regarding one's touristic desires; this denial

makes a claim of relative authenticity in opposition to the vulgar superficialities of other travellers regarded as 'tourists'. In short, the 'traveller' ranks as a more authentic tourist than the 'tourists' that one denigrates in the move to distance oneself from the loathsome hordes. Thus, we end up with the paradox inherent in tourism: to deny that one is a tourist actually makes one more of a tourist.

This touristic paradox of denial parallels a constitutive discourse of religion. The claim of 'religion' implies and reinforces a positive claim of authenticity that is also a negative denial of otherness as inauthentic. To put it more plainly, asserting one's own beliefs, practices, habits, traditions, etc., as authentically 'religious' implies an orthodoxy that regards the beliefs, practices, habits, traditions, etc. of others that are unlike one's own as inauthentic. This sort of claim, driven by and perpetuating a discourse on authenticity, is evident, for instance, in proselytizing efforts where proclaiming the rightness of one's own views and ways is the central defining strategy. Thus, for the evangelizer, the issue of orthodoxy/orthopraxis as opposed to heterodoxy/heteropraxis concerns itself at some level with fundamental questions of authenticity; the positive claim of an authentic religious self supposes a negative claim of an inauthentic other. On the other side of this rhetorical skirmish, though, the authentic persists: even those widely regarded as 'religious fakes' include an element of authenticity. As David Chidester (2005, p. vii) argues, 'despite their fraudulence, these religious fakes still do authentic religious work in and through the play of American popular culture'. In religion, the authentic reigns as a ubiquitous discourse.

Religious claims of authenticity also contribute to processes of commodification that likewise parallel the tourist economy. From time immemorial, religious organizations and other entrepreneurial operatives have capitalized on the symbols and paraphernalia of religious practice to produce material objects and a host of services available for purchase. But commodifying religions goes far beyond the trinkets, artwork, and utensils of the faithful. In fact, as Chidester (2005, p. 3) deftly argues, all sorts of goods and services have become the basis of a modern consumerist religion; at least in American popular culture, consumer products have been invested with 'transcendent power and sacred significance', thereby emerging as 'the modern fetish, the object of religious desire in a capitalist economy'. Taking it further, religion itself becomes commodity in modern secular societies. According to historian Laurence Moore (1994, p. 5), the processes of modern secularization do not involve so much the disappearance of religion as its commodification. Consequently, religion in highly secularized modern contexts, not unlike what happens in the tourist economy, translates authentic spiritual sentiments into the markets of late capitalism.²

Despite their potential for mutually revealing insights, the parallel discourses of religion and tourism informed by concerns for authenticity and commodification do not form a neatly congruent overlay. Nevertheless, one heuristic payoff of approaching religion through a lens of tourism has to do with critical questions raised concerning relationships between authenticity and alterity in constituting subjectivity. In the cultural complexes of both religion and tourism, the ontology of the subjective self relies on an axis of authenticity intersecting with an axis of otherness. One's location on this grid of authentic alterity contributes at least in some small way to a subjective sense of selfhood, fulfilling the desire for authenticity in relationship to others. Consequently, in the second order metacognitive processes of deeming things religious, including oneself as a religious subject, the discourse on authenticity remains an indispensable component, necessary but not sufficient.

My own interests in explaining these relationships between coinciding discourses on authenticity and otherness involve the profound connections between religion and the capitalist economy as well as the entanglements of religion with the nation-state in the American setting. My entry into these contemplations has been through studies of tourism broadly conceived. I am mostly interested in how the underlying cultural logic of tourist practices and the ethos of touristic pursuits reveal religiously attuned engagement with capitalist economies in a democratic political framework. As a historian with ethnographic orientations, my work has concentrated on the historical circumstances and current instances of tourism that is religious and religion that is touristic, regardless of how we may imagine either religion or tourism.

In what follows, I discuss briefly three American cases for exploring the implications of entanglements that link religion and tourism with attention to the desire for authenticity and touristic commodifications of experience. First, I look at how nineteenth-century interests in the redemptive qualities of nature contributed to the establishment of Yellowstone National Park. Then, I turn to how contemporary travellers seek authentic existential validation in their imaginative engagement with ancient indigenous cultures. Finally, I visit Graceland, the iconic home of the late Elvis Presley, King of Rock 'n' Roll. These three case studies display very different histories, different experiences for tourist visitors, and different connections to what people might regard as religion. Their common feature, however, is an effort to elicit existential significance through commodified means; tourists' aesthetic desires for transcendent meanings and authentic experiences translate to consumable artefacts, sites, and performances that obscure the complexities of history and culture through processes of what McCutcheon (2003, p. 179) has identified as 'the commodification of culture'. In all three of the cases that we will consider, authenticity reigns as the holy grail of the religious quest, a sacred commodity positioned to seduce touristic desires.

9.2 Yellowstone Awakenings

Consider the tourist in nature. The prospect of communing with the natural world has been an inviting pursuit in America at least since Thomas Jefferson (1787, p. 35) described Virginia's natural bridge as 'the most sublime of Nature's works', making it an inviting site for tourists both domestic and foreign. The appeal of authentic experiences of nature gained a boost with publication of Henry David Thoreau's account of his sojourn to Walden Pond in the 1840s; ever since, Americans have sought their own pond in the woods where they could become fully awakened to authentic reality. Thoreau (2004, pp. 87–88) himself declared, 'To be awake is to be alive.' His own awakening on Walden Pond, he explains (2004, p. 86), included a daily ritual of renewal in the cold waters of the pond: 'Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself... I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did.'

Intent to follow Thoreau's religious lead, many of the elite classes of Gilded Age America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought their own wakefulness in the serene settings of nature. One of the first in a long line of wealthy Americans to seek solitude in their own private piece of nature was the banker Jay Cooke, who in 1864 bought the small

island of Gibraltar in Lake Erie not far from his boyhood hometown of Sandusky, Ohio. On his island retreat he built an imposing castle where he entertained an impressive list of guests during his regular vacation retreats; but aside from the social prestige of impressing visitors with his island palace, Cooke mainly indulged his passion for what he regarded as the apostolic vocation of fishing (Oberholtzer 1907, p. 543), plying the waters daily for his catch from the Lake Erie fishery. He loved nothing more than casting a line in the solitude of nature.

Banker and railroad baron Jay Cooke related his passion for nature and specifically for the apostolic avocation of the fisherman to his rigorously maintained evangelical Protestant faith, helped to some extent by the influence of the Transcendentalist reverence for nature that had found its way into the ethos of Protestant culture in nineteenth-century America. Combining an evangelical fervour for conquering and settling Western territories with an aesthetic regard for nature, Cooke became a powerful force in promoting the American West as an aesthetic object of desire for nineteenth-century Americans in the context of a millennialist evangelical ethic. Specifically, the initial appeal of the west relied significantly on the capitalist-missionary compulsion of conquest, settlement, exploitation, what many nineteenth-century evangelicals regarded as the benevolent forces of 'civilization' wrought upon what most of them thought of as a wild and savage region.

In this context of westward expansion and aesthetic regard for nature, America discovered Yellowstone in the 1870s, helped in no small part by Jay Cooke and his company. A few Americans had long known about this unusual piece of topography in the northwest corner of Wyoming territory; besides reports by the occasional American traveller in Montana and Wyoming, it was a popular destination for summer hunting and other activities of Native American groups of the northern Rocky Mountain region (Early 1984, p. 10; Haines 1996, pp. 82–83; Black 2012). Intrigued by the stories and wonders to be seen there, a series of annual expeditions, beginning in 1869, set out in hopes of 'uncovering the nakedness of our sleeping Yellowstone Beauty' (Wilkeson 1870) for a public eager to find places of God's handiwork where authentic spiritual experience could occur. This land of spectacular mountain vistas, stupendous waterfalls tumbling into vivid canyons more than a thousand feet deep, and most of all the largest collection of thermal features on earth with bottomless pools of crystal-clear steaming waters, cauldrons of boiling mud, and constant eruptions of elegant geysers shooting up fountains of scalding water, proved an irresistible lure for Americans enthralled by the notion of authentic experience in natural landscapes. These expeditions would reveal this American 'Wonderland' to all of the nation.

The expeditions to explore Yellowstone in the early 1870s were deliberately arranged as publicity events to expose this wild land in all of its authentic nakedness. For the railroad interests trying to popularize the American West as well as the Montana boosters who stood to profit from public interest in visiting and eventually settling in their territory, Yellowstone's appeal as a place of divine favour had great potential for economic reward. The Northern Pacific Railroad, with banker Jay Cooke at the helm, encouraged and supported the 1870 expedition led by the surveyor general of the Montana Territory, General Henry Dana Washburn. The publicity generated from the Washburn Expedition's 'discovery' of Yellowstone in turn aided the nation's preeminent geographer, Ferdinand Hayden, in securing congressional funding for a geographic survey of the Yellowstone region (Early 1984; Haines 1996, pp. 105–155; Merrill

1999; Lubetkin 2006; Black 2012, pp. 275–361). Jay Cooke himself assured that artist Thomas Moran would travel with the 1871 Hayden Expedition and bring back the drawings to later become the magnificent paintings that would astound the American public (Wilkins and Hinkley 1998, p. 80; Hassrick 2002, pp. 32–33); these along with the images captured by photographer William Henry Jackson created public desire for the authentic landscapes of the Yellowstone Wonderland. The Northern Pacific Railroad's carefully coordinated campaign of lobbying Congress and publicizing the Yellowstone wonders resulted in the creation of America's first national park in 1872.

The story of Yellowstone's founding demonstrates the production of nature as a religious commodity. Ironical as it may seem, there is no contradiction in the involvement of railroad interests and land developers to set aside wilderness land filled with some of the most stupendous and extraordinary natural wonders to be found anywhere. Commodifying the aesthetic attractions of Yellowstone had great financial potential for investors in transportation and development in the American West. Their success in transforming the park's natural wonders into an appealing and profitable magnet for tourist visitors depended to a large extent on a public desire for authentic religious experience.

Contributing to the appeal of Yellowstone in the nineteenth century was a desire for sublime experience, which provided an aesthetic framework for much of the American encounter with the natural world. The eighteenth-century British philosopher Edmund Burke had espoused a notion of the sublime that emphasized subjective response to sublime objects; in Burke's estimation, the sublime involved the immense power of vast or frightening natural objects to transport the human mind. Later, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant located the sublime not in the objects of experience, but in the human state of mind elicited by the frightening and apparently unlimited aspects of nature. This sublime state, according to Kant, led to a realization of the viewer's own deepest powers. In nineteenth-century America this notion of the sublime provided both a justification for visitors' reactions to wild scenery and a vocabulary for expressing those reactions (McGreevy 1994, pp. 10–11). Beholding the wonders of nature, especially monumental scenery, occasioned an aesthetic of authenticity in sublime experience, which contributed to the allure of the stupendous scenery and natural features of places like Yellowstone. For a host of nineteenth-century philosophers, travel writers, and ordinary tourists who could well afford the dangers and discomforts of nineteenth-century travel to the wilds of the American West, the most authentic experiences of sublime nature awaited their arrival.

Commodifying tourists' desire for the authentic, sublime experience of nature, however, was not the sole motivation for setting aside a vast tract of land to create Yellowstone National Park. It also fitted well in the Protestant evangelical logic of Manifest Destiny, as so many American Protestants understood it in the years following the Civil War. A good number of Americans agreed that the bloodshed of the great conflict between the states had atoned for the unsavoury acceptance of human bondage, and now the newly sanctified nation could get on with the business of manifesting God's destiny by Christianizing the entirety of the continent. This meant bringing Christian civilization to the untamed lands of the American West, extending railroads, building towns and cities, turning the barren lands into productive sources of agricultural products, lumber, and minerals. But it also involved appreciation of God's handiwork in the natural landscape, of the mesmerizing features of this land chosen for God's people, where the sublime and the beautiful indicated transcendent meanings for the nation (Sears 1989, pp. 6–7).

This evangelical interpretation of the American landscape as God's promised land, coupled with the Transcendentalist celebration of nature that encouraged the popular desire for sublime experiences in the natural world, coincided with financial interests in promoting the west as a desirable destination. The gem in their crown was the Wonderland of Yellowstone, "That indescribable mountain-locked gem of all the world! – our "Nation's Pleasure Ground,"" according to an 1880 railroad promotional brochure (Union Pacific and Utah & Northern Through Rail Route 1880).

Tourists came to revel in the Yellowstone Wonderland from its earliest days as a national park, and many of them resorted to a religious language to describe their experiences. One of the first was Harry J. Norton (1873), whose account of his sojourn in the park alludes to the metaphorical journey of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; he recalls following the narrow trail through the entangled forest along the Firehole River as bringing to mind 'our youthful endeavours to "blaze" such a moral trail through the intricate wilderness of sin and temptation through which we were called to pass in the halcyon days of our boyhood, as should cause our associates to see and avoid it as the "trail of the serpent!"' (pp. 8–9). Recalling his party's entry into the geyser basins, Norton relates that 'we are now in the enchanted land, surrounded on every side with mystery and marvel. One brief hour has sufficed to change our quiet, love-inspiring, soul-entrancing scenery into that of a land of awe and wonder. The natural king has faded from our vision, and the supernatural monarch has ascended the throne with glittering crown, and with magic wand is ever directing our footsteps through his mystic domain' (p. 11). Norton describes Yellowstone's upper geyser basin as 'grand, majestic, sublime' (p. 17) and resorts to similar language in his recollection of climbing to the brink of the 308-ft Lower Falls of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone:

Never did mortal eye behold a sight of more sublime magnificence, as within three paces of the roaring cataract we peered into the abyss below. Never did Divine ingenuity carve out a more superb frame for a more lovely river than is here before our vision. Like an immense sheet of silver foil, the waters spread out and hang tremblingly over the appalling chasm – for a moment frantically clinging to the cliff, as if afraid to trust the Deity who has marked out its weird pathway, and then reassured by an abiding faith in Him 'who doeth all things well,' it trustingly falls into the extended arms of the mighty can[y]on, far, far beneath, where it again glides onward to the great Missouri. (pp. 39–40)

Like thousands of visitors who followed, Harry Norton's excursion into Yellowstone barely a year after the park's establishment evoked a sublime encounter with nature's wonders recorded in a language of evangelical Protestantism. The touristic desire for authentic experiences in the natural world found fulfilment in the commodified Wonderland of Yellowstone National Park.

9.3 Authentic Alterities

Consider the tourist encountering unfamiliar people and cultures. The desire for otherness has been an economic boon for people willing to market their cultural distinctiveness to tourist visitors seeking authentic experiences of alterity. From extravagant luaus

in Honolulu hotels to primitive treks in search of isolated communities in Amazonian jungles, and in thousands of other touristic encounters of nearly every cultural tradition on earth, hosts and guests conspire in creating the authentic experiences that travellers crave. Sometimes these collusions precipitate a revival of traditional arts and crafts for the host cultures; more often, though, they involve a 'trinketization' of indigenous aesthetics (Smith 1989, pp. 4–5, 8).³ Nevertheless, seeking out the other, discovering one's own limits in alterity, or merely finding pleasure in the aesthetic gaze upon, and sometimes the indulgent immersion within, the lifeways of the other gratifies the existential quest of many travellers.⁴

In North America, many of the indigenous cultures that have managed to survive centuries of colonization and persecution now find themselves as objects of tourist desire. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, as the United States government prosecuted wars against native peoples, Indian cultures entered the romanticized public imagination in commodified forms. Among the early entrepreneurs that offered native cultures as commodities for tourist consumption was the Fred Harvey Company, the monopolistic provider of tourist services for travellers on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad in the American southwest; their development of hotel, restaurant, and retail facilities on the south rim of the Grand Canyon featured Hopi cultural artefacts and performances for visitors' consumption.⁵

This sort of capitalization on touristic fascination with Native American cultures coincided with the appearance of Indians in the popular culture of Gilded Age America. Alongside their appearances in dime novels, short stories, and poems, as well as visual representations in art and photography, Indians became a favoured object in popular entertainments. One of the most renowned celebrities of the era was William F. Cody, famously known as Buffalo Bill, whose Wild West Show toured constantly in North America and Europe beginning in the 1880s and continuing past the turn of the twentieth century. Drawing on a history of performances of Indian cultures for non-Indian audiences, Cody employed real Indians performing what he claimed was real history. Indigenous people, as Cody and others discovered, were a profitable commodity for audiences desiring authentic encounters with otherness (Warren 2005).⁶

The aesthetic appeal of commodified Indian cultures has not subsided. Travellers today seeking out authentic experiences of Native American cultures have no shortage of destinations from which to choose. Besides the numerous national and state parks featuring Native American cultural attractions, tourists also can be found at Native American religious celebrations: Pueblo dances, many pow-wows, and other Native American cultural performances invite non-native visitors. Moreover, scores of entrepreneurs offer 'authentic' experiences of Native American religious ceremonies in such places as Sedona, Arizona, where the absence of Native American people allows New Age enthusiasts to appropriate indigenous traditions and incorporate them into their own religious narratives and interpretations (Ivakhiv 2001, p. 187).

In many places of tourist interest in Native American culture, the exotic other that tourists seek beckons from the ancient past. Imagining ancient peoples has been a fulfilling touristic exercise at least since Renaissance Europeans began visiting the ruins of ancient Greece and Rome as well as the pyramids of Egypt. In the Americas, ancient Native American sites have intrigued the imaginations of travellers since colonial times.

Promoters of the site have offered in recent years a steady stream of experiential glimpses through that window to the past. One of their more ambitious projects was a 70-mile trek in 2009 along what some archaeologists surmise was an ancient road that cut a straight line across the Ohio countryside. Dubbed the Great Hopewell Road, barely discernible archaeological traces reveal a roadway leaving the Newark mound complex in the direction of Chillicothe, Ohio, where another set of significant earthworks, known today as Mound City, are located (Lepper 1995; Romain and Burks 2008). For tourists interested in a direct connection to the spirits of antiquity in the Ohio landscape, the week-long 'Walk with the Ancients' promised participants, in the words of an organizer of the excursion, 'to connect with the ancient people who shaped the landscape'. The tour organizer went on to explain, 'We will walk where they walked and celebrate where they celebrated' (Shiels 2009).⁷ To guarantee the authenticity of the walkers' experience on the ancient road, Native American spiritual leaders were invited to accompany the group along the way; a scholar specializing in indigenous walking traditions also came along to lend authority to the walkers' interpretations of their experiences (Stanzione 2010).⁸

The destiny that these tourist walkers moved towards on their week-long sojourn through the Ohio autumn was a rendezvous with the 'Ancients'. In their act of walking,

of experiencing rural Ohio on foot, moving along a presumed roadway through the same landscape connecting the remains of one ancient site to another, and aided by the accompaniment of authentic Native American spiritual leaders and the commentaries of an expert on 'walking religion', participants encountered the authenticity of alterity in their imagined connection to a people that still haunted these lands. The walkers marched along as active consumers of authentic experience.

This sort of authentic experience of the Ancients has become a regular attraction of the Newark Earthworks structures, a key element in the efforts of local promoters to commodify the mounds as a potential World Heritage site. Another example of invoking the Ancients occurred in 2010 at the Great Circle site in Heath, Ohio, the city adjacent to Newark. The Great Circle mound is among the largest and best preserved of the structures in the Newark Earthworks complex, a large circular formation enclosing roughly 25 acres, with an opening to the northeast and a small V-shaped mound in the centre. Every year numerous cultural events are held at the Great Circle, many of them sponsored by Newark Earthworks Center, an official unit of The Ohio State University's Newark campus. In celebration of the autumnal equinox, the Center organized the Equinox Extravaganza in September, 2010. The festivities included tours of the site, free food, crafts, and a demonstration of an *atlatl* (an indigenous device for throwing spears); the highlight of the program was a Native American ceremony led by members of the Native American Indian Center of Central Ohio (NAICCO) for the dedication of a new sculpture carved from a fallen tree on the Great Circle grounds. Artist Bill Shippen had carved the trunk of the toppled tree into an image of a generic Native American man wearing a bear skin, with the bear's head atop the man's head, and carrying a large staff; the bearskin-and-head adornment is reminiscent of a stone figurine unearthed at the Newark Earthworks in 1881. The ritualized dedication of the new statue attracted about 80 people, according to reports in the local newspaper, who formed 'a prayer circle around the sculpture as Mark Welsh, program director for the Native American Indian Center of Central Ohio, beat a drum and sang several songs'. The news account also reported a propitious sign of divine approval for the new addition to the Great Circle site: as Welsh blessed the statue, he noticed a hawk perched in a nearby tree watching the proceedings; "I had a feeling that God was blessing us," said Welsh. "I think this artist was spiritually guided" (Sudar 2010). The imprimatur of spiritual authenticity could be read by participants in what they regarded as the auspicious presence of a divine emissary in the form of a noble bird perched nearby. For the participants in the holy proceedings of the Equinox Extravaganza, the hawk authenticated their connection to the Ancients of the Newark Earthworks.

The religious authenticity invoked for the benefit of walkers on the trek from Chillicothe to Newark, and also for those who witnessed the auspicious appearance of a hawk at the dedication of the statue of an ancient inhabitant of the Great Circle earthwork, serves these touristic visitors as a commodity for their enjoyment and edification. The experience of alterity that these consumers of the religious imagination seek in their encounters with the Ancients satisfies, if only momentarily, their desire for authentic existential significance. For promoters of the earthworks sites, their presence certainly contributes to the economic significance of the ancient mounds.

9.4 Graceland Charisma

Consider the tourist encountering the charismatic power of celebrity. At Graceland, the Memphis, Tennessee, home of the late Elvis Presley, the direct experience of authentic charisma takes centre stage for millions of fans and other tourist visitors.

Elvis Presley undoubtedly had an unprecedented impact on popular culture in the United States and around the world, and his popularity has not waned since his death from a drug overdose in 1977. His home, the Graceland mansion in Memphis, Tennessee, remains a top tourist attraction in Tennessee, hosting more visitors than any private home in America other than the White House in Washington, DC (Doss 1999, p. 2). Each year hundreds of thousands of visitors arrive in the impoverished neighbourhood of south Memphis to take the tour of the King's famous home, more or less preserved as it was when he lived there. The tour of the mansion ends in the Meditation Garden, where devotees and curious onlookers alike can pay respects at Elvis's grave, the final resting place of the King alongside his parents and grandmother. Back across the street at the tour staging complex, visitors can view his car collection, including his famous pink Cadillac, and board his private jet, getting a glimpse of the trappings of a legendary superstar celebrity's lifestyle.

All this attention to an entertainer long dead remains puzzling. Visitors and other commentators routinely mention his distinctive singing voice and his great hair when attempting to explain his enduring popularity, but talent and good looks alone do not explain Elvis's appeal; certainly many better singers, more talented musicians and actors, equally or more attractive than the King, have remained in relative obscurity, while Elvis claims a place in American popular culture that rivals the mythic status of the nation's greatest heroes. His charismatic appeal has only grown through the years, long after his voice fell silent and his hips stopped their provocative swivelling. What brings tourists, pilgrims, and the mildly curious to Graceland in numbers that significantly impact the local economy remains a bit of a mystery. The existential significance that visitors discover in viewing the unfashionable shag carpeting of the Jungle Room or photographing the King's tomb demonstrates the confluence of religious quest and the capitalistic manipulation of desire for authenticity.

Few things in modern popular culture are more kitsch, more contrived, than Elvis Presley. Graceland remains an artefact of the tasteless excess of a persona that too quickly outgrew its own not-so-modest ambitions. Largely a result of his meteoric rise to fame at a young age (Presley was only 19 when he recorded his first record, 'That's All Right', and his father had to sign the initial contract with RCA records because at age 20 Elvis was still a minor), Elvis himself made his garish home a playhouse of adolescence, with three television sets lined up in the basement TV room, allowing simultaneous viewing of the three major networks, a pool room across from the TV room, an outdoor swimming pool, a firing range for his guns, a fully equipped racquetball court, horses, and an assortment of motorized playthings, in addition to his enviable car collection and his two personal jets, now on display in the tour staging area across Elvis Presley Boulevard from the mansion. One sardonic observer has described the Jungle Room in Graceland as 'a joke such as a fifteen-year-old boy with money would

contrive' (Williamson 2000, p. 328). In fact, these ostentatious trappings of celebrity were attempts by the shy boy from the poor sections of a poor city, whose roots were cultivated in rural Mississippi, one of the poorest regions in America, to demonstrate his triumphal conquest of the entertainment world, proving his worth as much to himself as to the adoring public. When he moved into the Graceland mansion in 1957, his mother Gladys brought chickens as they set up residence in the former home of a Memphis socialite, colonizing elite southern society with vulgar reminders of the rural poor moved to the city; Williamson (2000, p. 327) describes the mansion's furnishings as 'Redneck Eclectic'. At the same time, Gladys Presley was mindful of her son's need to emulate the standards expected of American celebrities in the 1950s; explaining the flamboyant decor she and Elvis chose for Graceland, Gladys told a reporter, 'That's the way they're doing it in Hollywood' (Williamson 2000, p. 329). In bringing the glitz of Tinsel Town to his southern home, the badboy King of Rock and Roll made his Graceland home a monument to the persona he struggled throughout his career to fulfil.

Living up to the larger-than-life persona of Elvis the King in the end proved too much for the middle-aged entertainer, who came to rely more and more on prescription drugs to get him through days of increasing isolation; Elvis himself conceded in 1972, 'It's very hard to live up to an image' (Guralnick 1999, p. xi). Ultimately, he succumbed to the drugs, his crutch that helped him bear the weight of being Elvis. The icon of exuberant, sexy youthfulness could not cope with the realities of ageing, of reigning as a king whose talents and influence had been surpassed by a younger generation of artists and performers capturing their own moment; his moment had passed, and he collapsed ignobly into the thick shag carpet of his Graceland bedroom, a solitary death that was a long time coming.

Elvis Presley's moment may have passed, but preserving it as commodity would become the singular mission of Elvis Presley Enterprises (E.P.E.), the company formed to operate the Graceland site. Following the death of his father, Vernon Presley, in 1979, Elvis's ex-wife Priscilla Presley, as trustee for their minor daughter Lisa Marie, gained control of the Graceland residence and made it available to tourists, a savvy business move that was immediately profitable; in fact, E.P.E. made back its initial investment in just one month (Williamson 2000, pp. 326–327).

The tourists who fill the E.P.E. coffers come to Graceland for a variety of reasons; some arrive as reverent pilgrims at the shrine of their hero. A few come to mock the King and belittle his devotees, but many come out of mere curiosity about a rock-and-roll star whose music they like.¹⁰ Celebrity culture in America, as a result of capitalist mechanisms involved with commodifying famous personalities, creates the desire to be close to the stars, a longing for intimate encounters with the commodified heroes of capitalist society. These encounters, as Kathryn Lofton has demonstrated in an astute analysis of Oprah Winfrey, often combine the spiritual and therapeutic as fans gain proximity to famous persons and acquire the material artefacts of charismatic celebrity.¹¹ Distance and inaccessibility only increases the appeal, heightens the value of the prized encounter. At Graceland, for the moderately steep price of admission, visitors can cross the boundaries between star and fan, entering the intimate spaces of the King's personal residence and even pay respects at his grave. Afterward, they can purchase all manner of Elvis kitsch and memorabilia to carry a bit of his charismatic energy home with them.

The King may have died long ago, but he remains very present at Graceland; for many of the visitors who pass through the hallowed spaces of his home in Memphis, Elvis has never left the building.

A key attraction for virtually all who pay to see Elvis's home is the existential experience of an authentic encounter with celebrity. Elvis's fame, though, has become something more than run-of-the-mill capitalist-generated and Hollywood-produced celebrity. His life story has taken on sanctified proportions; at least for many of his fans, Elvis has become a deified character, a sort of saint of modernity, a bodhisattva of downtrodden consumers. The enigmatic nature of his character, his 'multifaceted image – rockabilly rebel, teen angel, army private, B-movie idol, family man, Las Vegas superstar, Nixon admirer, drug addict, dead icon', as Erika Doss (1999, p. 4) describes it, allows for a variety of narratives and different ways to identify with Elvis, a malleable force made to fit his devotees' own self-images. Reverence of the King has become ritualized at Graceland and elsewhere, with celebrations during 'Elvis Week' on the anniversary of his death in August each year that include fans' construction of shrines on Elvis Presley Boulevard in front of the mansion and a solemn all-night vigil at his grave. Pilgrims from around the world come to pay their respects to the sanctified king.

This hallowed view of the King comports well with the promotional efforts of E.P.E., whose careful management of the Elvis image has found profitability in the apotheosis of Elvis. The admission fare (2018 prices range from \$39.75 per adult for the basic tour to \$169.00 for a full 'Ultimate VIP Tour') as well as the string of stores in the tour staging area offering a startling array of Elvis-themed consumer items capture significant sums of visitors' dollars for the company. Capitalizing on an ancient complicity between trade and pilgrimage, E.P.E. offers souvenir relics of the King for devout fans to carry home. The King's charisma brings power and meaning to the faithful and profits to his handlers.¹²

The commodification of Elvis's charisma seeks to monetize the existential needs of tourist visitors. E.P.E. presents to the world the life-size-cardboard-cutout version of a one-dimensional, sanitized Elvis that avoids his darker, more salacious sides, the drug-addled, sexually prolific, overweight figure, those dimensions of his character that speak to the complexities of the American cultural history that produced Elvis the King as countercultural hero (Doss 1999, p. 18). Elvis as experienced on the Graceland tour is a disneyfied fairy tale of facile success, unwavering dedication and loyalty to family and friends, and upholder of conservative, middle-class values. On the other hand, this idealized, middle-class Elvis, as seen on the tour remains in tension with the polyvalent symbol of the Elvis persona who permeates popular imagination as celebrity entertainer, as icon of American youth culture, as tragic character, even his decadent and less admirable sides as hedonistic adolescent and drug addict. Beneath the veneer of the fairy-tale Elvis, the darker, conflicted, more complex Elvis haunts the grounds of Graceland, enhancing the commodified Elvis with a more mysterious and complicated charisma.

The superficial presentation of Elvis at Graceland offers a mostly empty palette for visitors to overlay their own interpretations and engagements with the King. The degree of existential profundity they find on the grounds of his home, especially in the Meditation Garden where his bones now lie, depends largely on their own situatedness in the cultural milieu of contemporary America. The Elvist pilgrims who descend upon

Memphis in August each year for Elvis tribute week and also for his birthday celebration in January, as well as the thousands of visitors who parade through Graceland every day year round, even the cynical ones who despise the attention to the long-dead entertainer, often find redemptive meanings for their own lives in the authentic spaces of Graceland.

9.5 Authentic Religion

Consider the tourist as a modern religious subject. David Foster Wallace's contention that tourism affords an occasion for existential reflection suggests a parallel to how many people, religious adherents and scholars alike, regard at least one important element of religion, specifically the emphasis on ultimate meaning, purpose, and value. This way of regarding religion, succinctly expressed as 'ultimate concern' in the oft-cited formulation of Christian philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich (Gunn 1981, p. 415), positions the religious seeker as a consumer of the spiritual in ways not unlike the tourist as consumer of the authentic.

The juxtaposition of religion and tourism serves as a methodological two-sided mirror for seeing differently both religion and tourism, but also for gaining a particular angle of vision on both religious claims and touristic activities in the context of a culture defined by consumer capitalism. Authenticity lies at the nexus of this juxtaposition, a constitutive element in the discourses of both religion and of tourism.¹³ As a source of aesthetic authority in the quest of the spiritual seeker and in touristic journeys to distant attractions, authenticity underwrites experiences of ultimate fulfilment.

Wallace's insights about tourism, however, remind us that despite its authority in both religious and touristic discourses, the claim of the authentic has more commodity value than existential value. In the logic of consumer capitalism, discourses on subjectivity tend to mistake commodity worth as spiritual fulfilment. To be a fully actualized authentic person for many people living in contemporary consumerist society means possessing authentic things, having authentic experiences, and cultivating authentic relationships based on the sharing of authentic things and experiences. Moreover, fulfilment of the consumerist desire for the authentic justifies modern subjects in a lifestyle that tolerates the constant strains and debilitating effects of contemporary life, that overlooks the injustices and environmental degradations perpetuated by consumer capitalism, that accepts the multiple layers of paradox that constitute modern subjectivity.

The touristic angle of vision on religion in the modern world, or at least on religious discourses and activities in contemporary America, focuses our hermeneutical sights on a particular element in the relationship between religious claims, whether spiritual, moral, social, or cultural, and the marketplace economy in which such claims circulate. Hoping to overcome their existential loathsomeness as economically significant consumers, many Americans turn to the notion of authenticity as a core religious value, just as tourists justify their own journeys as something more than insects crawling on a dead thing. The dead thing, as a few of the more cynical commentators seem to suggest, may turn out to be the fully commodified spirituality of American religious life.

Notes

- 1 In this analysis of commodification I am equating services with material objects. I agree in this regard with John Urry's (1995, p. 129) insistence that 'the sociology of consumption must consider services as much as material objects'. The performance of services of all kinds, from the most mundane support services of the dishwasher cleaning up in the restaurant kitchen or the housekeeper mopping up the filth left by hotel guests to the most spectacular artistic performances of musicians, dancers, and actors, all have a material aspect in the bodies performing such services as well as in the tools, machines, and other implements that they utilize. The materiality of performance is no less significant than the substance of material objects.
- 2 Additional studies demonstrating the translations of religious sentiments into the commodities of American consumer culture include (Schmidt 1995), and (Lofton 2011).
- 3 The binary distinction between 'hosts' and 'guests' is admittedly a problematic division; many tourist destinations have very transient populations that make distinguishing between locals and outsiders quite difficult. For a critique of the host-and-guest distinction, see Sherlock (2001). In regard particularly to religion, Stausberg (2011, p. 139) identifies tourism as an important 'contact zone' of interreligious encounters.
- 4 Armin Geertz (2004) highlights how this quest has constituted significant strains of religious studies; he specifically identifies a 'new primitivism' that took hold in the 1960s as 'a revival found in all sorts of academic and popular movements and philosophies that continue virtually unabated'. Geertz concludes, 'Some of these have played central roles in the development of religious studies in the United States, the most prominent being theologians of various persuasions (including feminist theologians), Eliadeans, the postmodernists, and some orientalism critics'.
- 5 Leah Dilworth (1996) examines the tourist industry's formulation of 'primitive Indians', with special attention to the Fred Harvey Company. Elsewhere (Dilworth 2001, p. 144) she contends that the coordinated efforts of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad and the Fred Harvey Company rendered Indian life as "'spectacle", a cultural discourse that constructed epistemological and social relations between tourists and Indians as primarily visual; subjectivity resided with the tourist gaze, and Indians were objectified as culturally "blind" and static, available for touristic consumption'. Hal Rothman (1998, pp. 71–74) also discusses how the Fred Harvey Co. commodified Hopi culture at the Grand Canyon. T.C. McLuhan (1985) provides a detailed discussion of the relationships between railroad interests and Native American groups in promoting tourism in the American southwest.
- 6 Philip Deloria (2004, pp. 52–108) regards Cody's shows as a predecessor to 'Westerns' as a genre of Hollywood filmmaking.
- 7 The discussion of the Walk with the Ancients presented here is based on my longer analysis in Bremer (2016).
- 8 I thank Vinny Stanzione for sharing with me his unpublished account of the Walk with the Ancients.
- 9 Joan Stoufer, one of the participants in the walk, made this comment during the walkers' panel discussion that I attended at the Newark Earthworks Day celebration on the day after completing their walk.
- 10 The authors of a 1990 study of visitor demographics at Graceland (Davidson et al. 1990) identify a range of motives for visiting the King's home; they distinguish between 'tourist' visitors and pilgrims, including 'transient pilgrims' (i.e. fans who visit frequently) and 'immigrant pilgrims' (i.e. fans who have relocated to Memphis to be in proximity of Elvis). My

observations over more than a decade living in Memphis and talking to many people, both Memphians and out-of-town visitors, indicate that most people who visit Graceland have a mild interest based on Elvis's enduring fame in popular culture, but would not describe themselves as 'fans'. Although far from systematic and not even remotely scientific, these impressions suggest that exclusive attention to fandom may skew assumptions about why people visit Graceland.

- 11 Lofton's study of Oprah Winfrey (2011) offers a far more detailed and nuanced contemplation of this religious connection to celebrity in contemporary popular culture.
- 12 Several authors (Harrison 1992; Strausbaugh 1995; Doss 1999) have regarded devotion to Elvis as religion. On the other hand, Gregory Reece (2006) dismisses claims of Elvis religion and concludes, unpersuasively in my view, that practices associated with 'the Graceland phenomena' are little more than 'the activities of a group of fun-loving people who associate together once or twice a year to share their interest in Elvis'.
- 13 As does inauthenticity, at least in the estimation of David Chidester (2005, p. vii), who insists, as discussed above, that fake religions, like much of the contrived realities of popular culture, serve significant, authentic purposes in modern culture.

Works Cited

- Black, G. (2012). *Empire of Shadows: The Epic Story of Yellowstone*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1978). *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. (trans. E. Jephcott). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Bremer, T.S. (2004). *Blessed with Tourists: The Borderlands of Religion and Tourism in San Antonio*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Bremer, T.S. (2014). A touristic angle of vision: tourist studies as a methodological approach for the study of religions. *Religion Compass* 8 (12): 371–379.
- Bremer, T.S. (2016). The modern religiosity of the Newark earthworks. In: *The Newark Earthworks: Enduring Monuments, Contested Meanings* (eds. L. Jones and R.D. Shiels), 198–212. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Chidester, D. (2005). *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Culler, J. (1981). Semiotics of tourism. *American Journal of Semiotics* 1 (1–2): 127–140.
- Davidson, J.W., Hecht, A., and Whitney, H.A. (1990). The pilgrimage to Graceland. In: *Geographia Religionum: Interdisziplinäre Schriftenreihe zur Religionsgeographie* (eds. G. Rinschede and S.M. Bhardwaj), 229–249. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Deloria, P.J. (2004). *Indians in Unexpected Places*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Dilworth, L. (1996). *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Dilworth, L. (2001). Tourists and Indians in Fred Harvey's southwest. In: *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West* (eds. D.M. Wrobel and P.T. Long), 142–164. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Doss, E.L. (1999). *Elvis Culture: Fans, Faith, & Image*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Early, K.E. (1984). *'For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People': Cultural Attitudes and the Establishment of Yellowstone National Park*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Eliade, M. (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. (trans. W.R. Trask). New York: Harvest/HBJ.

- Geertz, A. (2004). Can we move beyond primitivism? On recovering the indigenes of indigenous religions in the academic study of religion. In: *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity* (ed. J.K. Olupona), 37–70. New York: Routledge.
- Gunn, G.B. (1981). *New World Metaphysics: Readings on the Religious Meaning of the American Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Guralnick, p. (1999). *Careless Love: The Unmaking of Elvis Presley*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Haines, A.L. (1996). *The Yellowstone Story: A History of our First National Park*, rev. ed. 2 vols. vol. 1. Niwot: University Press of Colorado.
- Harrison, T. (1992). *Elvis People: The Cult of the King*. London: Fount.
- Hassrick, P.H. (2002). *Drawn to Yellowstone: Artists in America's First National Park*. Los Angeles, CA: Autry Museum of Western Heritage in association with University of Washington Press, Seattle.
- Hively, R. and Horn, R. (2006). A statistical study of lunar alignments at the Newark earthworks. *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 31 (2): 281–321.
- Ivakhiv, A.J. (2001). *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Jefferson, T. (1787). *Notes on the State of Virginia*. London: J. Stockdale.
- Lepper, B.T. (1995). Tracking Ohio's Great Hopewell Road. *Archaeology* 48 (6): 52–56.
- Lepper, B.T. (1998). The archaeology of the Newark earthworks. In: *Ancient Earthen Enclosures of the Eastern Woodlands* (eds. R.C. Mainfort and L.P. Sullivan), 114–134. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Lepper, B.T. (2002). *The Newark Earthworks: A Wonder of the Ancient World*. Columbus: Ohio Historical Society.
- Lepper, B.T. (2006). The Great Hopewell Road and the role of the pilgrimage in the Hopewell interaction sphere. In: *Recreating Hopewell* (eds. D.C. Charles and J.E. Buikstra), 122–133. Gainesville: University of Florida.
- Lofton, K. (2011). *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lubetkin, M.J. (2006). *Jay Cooke's Gamble: The Northern Pacific Railroad, the Sioux, and the Panic of 1873*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- MacCannell, D. (1999). *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, 3e. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McCutcheon, R.T. (2003). *The Discipline of Religion: Structure, Meaning, Rhetoric*. New York: Routledge.
- McGreevy, P.V. (1994). *Imagining Niagara: The Meaning and Making of Niagara Falls*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- McLuhan, T.C. (1985). *Dream Tracks: The Railroad and the American Indian 1890–1930*. New York: Abrams.
- Merrill, M. (1999). *Yellowstone and the Great West: Journals, Letters, and Images from the 1871 Hayden Expedition*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Moore, R.L. (1994). *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Norton, H.J. (1873). *Wonder-Land Illustrated; or, Horseback Rides through the Yellowstone National Park*. Virginia City, MT: Harry J. Norton.
- Oberholtzer, E.P. (1907). *Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War*. 2 vols, vol. 2. Philadelphia: G.W. Jacobs & Co.
- Otto, R. (1958). *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*. (trans. J.W. Harvey). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reece, G.L. (2006). *Elvis Religion: The Cult of the King*. New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Romain, W.F. and Burks, J. (2008). LiDAR imaging of the Great Hopewell Road.

- Ohio Archaeological Council. <http://ohioarchaeology.org/39-resources/research/articles-and-abstracts-2008/260-lidar-imaging-of-the-great-hopewell-road> (accessed 23 March 2016).
- Rothman, H. (1998). *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Schmidt, L.E. (1995). *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sears, J.F. (1989). *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sherlock, K. (2001). Revisiting the concept of hosts and guests. *Tourist Studies* 1 (3): 271–295.
- Shiels, R. (2009). Newark was a place of pilgrimage. *The Newark Advocate* (4 September 2009), p. 6A.
- Smith, J.Z. (1988). *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, V.L. (1989). *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, 2e. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Stanzione, V.J. (2010). My walk with the ancients. Unpublished document.
- Stausberg, M. (2011). *Religion and Tourism: Crossroads, Destinations, and Encounters*. New York: Routledge.
- Strausbaugh, J. (1995). *E: Reflections on the Birth of the Elvis Faith*. New York: Blast Books.
- Sudar, A. (2010). Chain saw sculpture dedicated in earthworks. *Newark Advocate* (22 September 2010), p. 3A.
- The Union Pacific and Utah & Northern Through Rail Route to Montana and Yellowstone Park (1880). Omaha: Omaha Republican Print (pamphlet in the Huntington Library Rare Books collection, San Marino, California).
- Thoreau, H.D. (2004). *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Urry, J. (1995). *Consuming Places*. New York: Routledge.
- Wallace, D.F. (2005). *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research* 26 (2): 349–370.
- Warren, L.S. (2005). *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Wilkeson, S. (1870). Letter. October 10, 1870. Original in Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Jay Cooke Collection, Box 148.
- Wilkins, T. and Hinkley, C.L. (1998). *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 2e. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Williamson, J. (2000). Graceland. In: *American Places: Encounters with History: A Celebration of Sheldon Meyer* (ed. W.E. Leuchtenburg), 325–337. New York: Oxford University Press.

Section III

Spatiality, Mobility, and Relationality

CHAPTER 10

Moving, Crossing, and Dwelling Christianity and Place Pilgrimage

John Eade

10.1 Introduction

This is an exciting time for the study of pilgrimage. Since the late 1970s, the field of 'pilgrimage studies' has rapidly expanded through lively theoretical debate linked to empirical research undertaken around the world. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have contributed to this expansion, e.g. religious studies, anthropology, ethnology, geography, tourism studies, and history. Furthermore, a wide range of themes are now being explored such as gender, ethnicity, globalization, performativity, memory, landscape, globalization and various hybrid forms of pilgrimage characterized as alternative or spiritual (see Reader and Walter 1993; Campo 1998; Coleman and Elsner 1998; Coleman and Eade 2004; Margry 2008; Hermkens et al. 2009; Coleman 2012; Hyndman-Rizk 2012; Jansen and Notermans 2012; Fedele 2013). The analysis of Christian place pilgrimage in relation to materiality has added to this rich array and helps us to deepen our understanding of performativity, memory, and landscape in particular. It also enables us to understand the relationship between moving, crossing, and dwelling in terms of the theoretical debates and empirical research which have generated the expansion of pilgrimage studies over the last 40 years.

Before we turn to those debates, it is important to note that, historically, place pilgrimage – defined as a journey to and from places of sacred significance, as well as periods of stay at those places – is not the only mode of pilgrimage practised by Christians. The practice of interior pilgrimage drew on the contemplative life of 'monasticism, anchoritism, meditation and mysticism', while moral pilgrimage was expressed through 'a daily life of obedience to God in the place of one's everyday calling' and an avoidance of sin (Dyas 2001, p. 6). Place pilgrimage, from the perspective of these other modes, was not always seen as beneficial or authentic: the moving, crossing, and dwelling might lead

to transgressing moral codes and concentrating temporary and superficial rituals. These concerns were connected to the sheer materiality of place pilgrimage and its involvement with political power, economics, and collective visceral practices, which were seen as in tension with the interiority of faith and the other-worldly character of private contemplative life. We will see that scholarship is also influenced to some extent by this anti-materialist bias towards place pilgrimage.

Not only was place pilgrimage contested but it did not appear as a recorded practice until the fourth century CE. As Heather Walton notes: 'The visit of Constantine's mother, Helena, to the Holy land in 326, and her "rediscovery" of holy sites associated with the incarnation is generally taken to herald the beginning of pilgrimage as a significant practice' (2014, p. 50). Furthermore, these early Christian pilgrims did not just visit particular places – they also sought out holy people and often 'combined these differing trajectories in one pilgrimage tour' (2014, p. 50).

In order to understand the rich and changing nature of place pilgrimage in Christianity, I will now discuss the framework in which scholars have understood this phenomenon. This discussion will not only show the aspects that have been considered salient from various theoretical perspectives but also the blind spots that have prevented a full appreciation of the roles played by embodied mobility, space, and materiality.¹

10.2 Theoretical Itineraries

One highly influential approach has focused on the exceptional features of pilgrimage and shrines. Mircea Eliade has played a central role here through his contention that religious thought generally seeks to create a hierophanic order based on a sharp distinction between sacred and profane. Pilgrimage supports this order since it establishes sacralized 'centres out there' where pilgrims can experience and express their engagement with absolute reality (Eliade 1954, 1959). This approach is 'heavily imbued with nostalgia for transhistorical origins and a desire for ontological foundations' (Vásquez 2011, p. 7) and it dismisses aspects of a modern, globalizing society which are integral to contemporary religious life. As a result, his analysis not only decontextualizes pilgrimage, but also denigrates expressions of religious mobility that do not fit the archetypal morphologies that he has abstracted. Yet 'it is precisely the "little religions," those hybrid forms that Eliade sees as "pseudoreligious" or "degenerated myths," that are the vital and public face of religion in the present context' (Vásquez and Marquardt 2003, p. 6).

By turning away from Eliade's dehistoricized approach and a preoccupation with textual sources and discursive traditions, we can focus on 'material religion' and the relationship between official and non-official beliefs and practices. Manuel Vásquez has powerfully argued for a materialist approach towards 'religion as it is lived by human beings, not by angels' (Vásquez 2011, p. 5). Such an approach 'highlights complexity, inter-level connectivity emergence, situated knowledge and relative indeterminacy and openness against monocausal, unidirectional and totalizing explanatory schemes' (2011, p. 5).

Given the textual bias of religious studies until recently and the elitist character of the Eliadean tradition, the empirical study of contemporary Christian pilgrimage was

left to others, especially anthropologists. Although Robert Hertz wrote a prescient paper on a local pilgrimage in the Italian Alps (1913), it was not until the 1970s that a framework for the empirical analysis of modern Christian pilgrimage was constructed. In *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978), Victor and Edith Turner claimed that modern pilgrimage involves movement to and from a sacred place where ritual enables pilgrims to celebrate a liminoid 'communitas', which celebrates universal humanity and the freedom from structural divisions. The 'essential' character of pilgrimage is established, therefore, by a crucial boundary between sacred and profane.

The Turners acknowledge that, in practice, pilgrims do not escape the mundane world of the secular. They distinguish between three types of *communitas*, where normative *communitas* acknowledges the continuing influence of social statuses and norms – they note, for example, busy shops, cafés and tourist facilities to be found at the famous French pilgrimage shrine of Lourdes. However, shrines are defined by a sacred essence expressed through ritual traditions, institutional discourses, and material practices. In this binary of sacred and profane the secular world of economic and political institutions plays only a secondary, inferior role. Through another influential binary distinction between pilgrimage and tourism the Turners seek to preserve the essential character of the sacred and its material expression as a shrine. Hence, while people travelling on pilgrimage and during their stay at the shrine may also act as tourists, when they engage with others through the shrine's defining religious rituals they cross the boundary between sacred and profane and occupy a realm where universal human communion is collectively celebrated.

The Turnerian model parallels the Eliadean perspective in its insistence on the phenomenological quest for communion with other human beings and the divine, as well as pilgrimage's essentially sacred character. It has distinct echoes of Catholic discourses, which inform the traditions of interior and moral pilgrimage introduced above. Indeed, these echoes can be traced back to St Augustine's *City of God against the Pagans*, written in the early fifth century. Pilgrims undertake a spiritual journey towards a universal *communio*; within the City of God they can be 'unified with God' through a rejection of 'human precepts in favour of a "higher" – and more egalitarian – order' (Di Giovine 2013, p. 19).

Yet, although modern Catholic pilgrims may indeed be influenced by these long-established Church teachings, we cannot assume that other discourses and practices are less important or should be simply reduced to the profane world of commerce and tourism. In other words, the Turnerian model can be 'seen as representative of a particular discourse *about* pilgrimage rather than as an empirical description *of* it' (Eade and Sallnow 1991, p. 5). As Richard Werbner noted: 'like other ideal typologies ... it tends to represent as mutually exclusive alternatives ... what are in fact aspects which combine in a surprising variety of ways within a range of actual cases' (quoted in Sallnow 1987, p. 9).

From the late 1970s, researchers undertook far more detailed fieldwork than the Turners were able to achieve and explored the role played by contestation in Christian and non-Christian pilgrimage (see Pfaffenberger 1983; Morinis 1984; Sallnow 1981, 1987; Bowman 1993; Bastin 2012). A much more nuanced picture has emerged about people's diverse and sometimes conflicting motives and actions (see Eade and Sallnow

1991; Eade 1992; Dubisch 1995; Frey 1998; Coleman 2002; Badone and Roseman 2004; Timothy and Olsen 2006; 2013; Post 2014).

While the Turnerian model has attracted extensive interest in pilgrimage studies, since the 1980s attention has also been paid to people's engagement with the materiality of sacred places and people. Robert Orsi's deeply engaged and illuminating studies of Roman Catholic pilgrimage in the United States (1985, 1991) show the messy, contested, and mobile ways where 'lived religion' is expressed through '*embodied practice and imagination*' (2010, p. xxxix). Moving away from the preoccupation with meaning, which informed the highly influential anthropological approach developed by Clifford Geertz as well as the Turnerian model, Orsi argues that people 'exist and move through their built and found environments' where 'the material world is not inert background to cult practice' but 'its essential medium' (2010, p. xxxix).

This relational approach towards lived religion and embodiment directed attention towards materiality in terms of both space and movement across landscapes or terrains. The work of another American scholar, Thomas Tweed, also seeks to develop a theory of religion which is both relational and dynamic through a focus on two spatial practices – dwelling and crossing. Critically utilizing the 'spatial turn' within cultural theory, he tries to avoid the construction of 'an omniscient map of the whole by a static observer' (Tweed 2006, p. 13). The dwellings and crossings involved in pilgrimage flows across landscapes to places and sacred objects are approached through reflections on his own positionality and engagement with religion, 'the positioned representations of a terrain by an itinerant cartographer' (Tweed 2006).

Orsi and Tweed have helped researchers to examine carefully the relationship between space, movement, landscape and materiality, and their own involvement in representing this relationship. However, Manuel Vásquez points to the limitations of 'hydraulic models of flows and spatial metaphors of landscapes', arguing that '[t]hese metaphors tend to overstate the pervasiveness of porous boundaries and movement or to privilege the hermeneutic and phenomenological dimensions of religious activity' (Vásquez 2008, p. 151). Focusing on 'mobile religion in the current episode of globalization', particularly migration to the United States from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, he draws on the concept of networks to address the prime position occupied by power in constraining mobility and hardening boundaries. 'Networks can help us to account for mobile religion's flexibility, mobility, connectivity, and innovation, without ignoring how it is often implicated in the hard realities of exclusion, exploitation, and subjugation, which are also part and parcel of globalization' (2008, p. 179).

The appreciation of power, domination, and exclusion, which has informed Vásquez's approach towards religion in contemporary global conditions (see Nolan and Nolan 1989; Crumrine and Morinis 1991; Mahieu and Naumescu 2008; Hann and Goltz 2010; Jansen and Notermans 2012; Albera and Eade 2015, 2017), can be applied in a variety of contexts and here I want to point to the way in which the global power of Anglophone research and academic publishing can prevent an awareness of non-Anglophone theoretical traditions and empirical studies of pilgrimage. A rich discourse and body of empirical knowledge concerning Christian pilgrimage has developed in Latin America and Continental Europe, for example, but Anglophone awareness has been constrained by a number of factors including linguistic barriers. Although many non-Anglophone

researchers have taken a keen interest in Anglophone approaches – the work of Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz has made a deep impact in Mexico, for example – Anglophone scholars have remained largely ignorant of the Marxist understandings of power and domination informing Latin American and Italian studies of pilgrimage and the studies of the materiality of Christian pilgrimage developed by the ethnology and folk studies tradition in central and eastern Europe (see Zapponi 2015; Ros 2017).

These two different perspectives complement the Anglophone theoretical developments outlined earlier and help us to explore more deeply the role played by materiality in place pilgrimage. Taking the Marxist approaches pursued in Italy and Mexico first, when scholars approached the issue of pilgrimage they typically focused on the ways in which peasants expressed ‘popular religiosity’ through their relationship to the material world. They drew on Antonio Gramsci’s contention that ‘popular beliefs and local devotion’ were ‘an expression of a subaltern culture, which indirectly contested the hegemonic social order’ (Zapponi 2015, p. 155). Hence, when anthropologists began to study the ‘magico-religious culture’ of southern Italy during the 1950s they saw peasant folklore as the expression of the ‘gap between popular knowledge and customs, on the one hand, and official Catholicism and hegemonic history, on the other’ (Zapponi 2015). Pilgrimages were arenas where poor people could seek solace in a harsh material world through devotion to tangible material objects such as statues, paintings, rocks, and springs. In due course, this approach influenced those studying Catholic pilgrimage in other countries. Consequently, Gilberto Giménez’s 1978 study of pilgrimage to Chalma in central Mexico not only drew on the semiotic tradition developed in France but also Italian studies of popular religion (Ros 2017). This connection with Italian Marxist studies of religion was further cemented by his Spanish 1979 translation of Alberto Cirese’s 1973 publication, *Cultura egemonica e culture subalterne. Rassegna degli studi sul mondo popolare tradizionale* (Hegemonic culture and subaltern culture: review of the study of the traditional folkworld).

In central and eastern Europe, peasant folklore and religious materiality was approached more in terms of nationalism and the cultural foundation of emergent nations. Many German nationalists, for example, hailed the creation of the German Empire in 1870 as the political expression of the intimate bond between the cultural heritage of German-speaking people – the *volk* or folk – and the new nation. Richard Andree’s pioneering study of pilgrimage and votive offerings in 1904 was shaped by this nationalist perspective and his research encouraged ‘the historical study of votive pictures and national costumes’ during the 1930s (Eberhart 2015, p. 115). After the creation of an independent nation in neighbouring Poland during 1918, Polish scholars also contributed to the developing folk studies tradition by interpreting ‘pilgrimage as an expression of the “folk religiosity”, which the peasantry sustained within the close embrace between Polish nationalism and Roman Catholicism’ (Albera and Eade 2015, p. 15, see also Niedźwiedz 2015).

Despite the differences between the perspectives discussed above, they share a preoccupation with the process of representation, i.e. how people represent the world to one another and how those representations are shaped by different social, political, cultural, and economic structures and processes. I want here to consider an alternative approach advanced by Anglophone scholars through an exploration of the relationship between

society and nature, between humans and non-humans. Rob Shields, for example, rejects the sharp separation between subject and object as well the observer and the observed which is integral to the representational perspective, and examines instead 'the complicity between the body and environment' and 'how they interpenetrate each other'. In her study of pilgrimage in the context of American national parks Lynn Ross-Bryant draws on this approach, which refuses to begin with binaries such as nature/culture, sacred/profane, nature/culture, subject/object, individual/community. She rejects dichotomies which 'label some things part of the pilgrimage experience and others outside of it' (2013, p. 13) and which prioritize 'the role of human cognition ... over our supposedly more immediate, embodied, engaged, even "animalistic" responses' to the world around us (2013, p. 12). Instead, we should engage with 'emotional geographies' and 'other ways through which we interact with other people, material objects and our environment through bodily practices' (Albera and Eade 2015, p. 8).

This dissatisfaction with the binaries, which have dominated social scientific approaches towards religion, has led some Anglophone researchers to question the notion of coherent, bounded (collective or individual) ontologies (see Philo et al. 2011). Huff and Stallins suggest that our attention should move instead towards ontogenesis, defined by Dodge and Kitchen (2007) as a process of 'continually bringing into existence' (Huff and Stallins 2013, p. 99). They point to the emergence of hybrid forms created by the mixture of religious and non-religious space, and suggest 'that the difference between officially sacred space and other space is best understood not as a static binary, but as a dynamic gradient' (2013, p. 97). Danely pursues the same approach in his study of Japanese urban pilgrimage, suggesting that a rejection of ontological boundaries enables us to 'create openings within the frame of pilgrimage for thick flows of meaning between the secular and the spiritual, the individual and the social' (Danely 2015, p. 2) and ultimately between the pilgrimage and the pilgrim.

10.3 Moving, Crossing and Dwelling: From Theory to Practice

Pilgrimage studies has a variety of theoretical perspectives to draw on and they all help in their different ways to understand the complexity and generativity of 'popular Christianity'.² I will now move away from theoretical debates to a discussion of the various ways in which the themes they raise have been analysed through empirical research.

I want first to explore the issue of boundaries and the ways in which these are transgressed through diverse crossing and mixtures beyond the control of religious institutions. Popular Christianity in India, for example, reveals 'a "messy" terrain in which religious identities, borders and authority are not concrete and absolute, but often fluid and open to negotiation' (Raj and Dempsey 2002, p. 2). Local, hybrid traditions have emerged which 'offer coherence and meaning to practitioners in ways that complement and, in some significant instances, supplant institutional modes' (Raj and Dempsey 2002). Hence, at the shrine of St Britto in southern India, Christians and Hindus 'create a liminal space that transcends religious distinction' (2002, p. 3). The saint 'not only offers healing and fertility to his pilgrim devotees, but a welcome transgression that proves redemptive' (Raj and Dempsey 2002).

The increasing popularity of pilgrimage along the *camino* to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain has encouraged researchers to examine an even greater diversity of beliefs and practices created by the co-existence and mingling of religious, 'spiritual', 'New Age', touristic impulses and the political and economic interests. In a recent discussion of walking practices along the *camino*, Doi draws on the philosopher Gilles Deleuze to understand 'pilgrims' bodily movements and their environment. She seeks to avoid a holistic approach by interpreting these movements as 'fractal-like' things, i.e. those which 'are observable sporadically in various activities and are not a reduced-sized copy of the whole' (Doi 2011: p. 275).

Looking beyond boundaries requires us to explore beyond the large body of research which has been generated concerning Roman Catholic cults in Western Europe and the Americas. Coleman in particular (2000, 2004) has reminded us that Protestant churches in northern Europe have seen a revival of a practice which was abolished during the Reformation. Studies are also appearing on pilgrimage in other areas of Europe involving Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox cults (see Bulzalka 2006; Rock 2007; Kormina 2004, 2010; Mahieu and Naumescu 2008; Hann and Goltz 2010; Eade and Katić 2014) that complement work already published on Greek Orthodox pilgrimage (Dubisch 1995). This broader perspective requires a sensitivity to important substantive differences in the way pilgrimage is practised across Christian traditions and how this relates to the themes of moving, crossing, and dwelling.

We have already seen in India how a Catholic shrine can be shared by Catholics and Hindus and Francophone researchers and other non-Anglophone researchers have explored the ways in which shrines across the Balkans and around the Mediterranean can attract different Christian communities as well as Muslims and Jews (see Albera 2005; Chiffolleau and Madoeuf 2005; Albera and Couroucli 2012; Keriakos 2012). As Albera notes, this sharing is not a recent phenomenon and was studied as early as the 1920s by the French scholar, R. Thoumin, who examined the cult of St Thecle in Syria. He reported that according to the shrine's director, Muslims would come to pray to Allah and Muhammad, recite suras and then approach the saint's tomb where they invoked the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus. Sometimes written supplications were left on the tomb asking for blessings and these drew on both Islamic and Christian beliefs and material objects – 'God alone is God and Mahomet is his prophet. Here is a banner for Mar Taqla. My God, deliver the bearer of this banner from all sorrow and misfortune. Keep away from him the evil of those who wish to harm him both in heaven and on earth' (quoted in Albera 2005, p. 367).

These traditions raise both the extent to which they have been affected by conflict and can be described as syncretic. These questions can be closely associated, as analyses of the effects of violence across the Balkans during the 1990s have demonstrated. Robert Hayden (2002) pessimistically claimed that religious sharing and syncretism is a temporary phenomenon and over time will retreat in the face of group competition. Ultimately, 'antagonistic tolerance' and 'competitive sharing' results 'in the exclusion of the symbols of one group or another from a religious shrine' (Hayden 2002, p. 228).

The vigorous debate generated by Hayden's argument has produced evidence which both support and contest his claim. Religious sharing and syncretic practices appear to be more resilient than his model supposes and 'may even continue to exist after violent

manifestation of conflict between groups and in some instances seem to contribute to reshaping a living together after civil war' (Bowman 2012, pp. 21–22). Much depends on historical context and local dynamics, as Marijana Belaj and Zvonko Martić (2014) demonstrate in their study of a Catholic shrine in a Bosnian Muslim-majority town where the shrine has been protected by local residents.

Western Europe as the historic heartland of Roman Catholicism is not immune to this process of sharing shrines. The increasing religious and ethnic diversity of West European countries has led to non-Catholics being drawn to Catholic shrines (see Nolan and Nolan, Hermkens et al. 2009; Jansen and Notermans 2012; Eade 2012). Some Muslim women are visiting certain Marian shrines for succour, while Lourdes has become more diverse with the arrival of Anglicans, Hindus, and Buddhists. This diversity is not without its tensions as non-Catholic visitors seek to express their own beliefs and practices. Yet, despite a few highly publicized confrontations and criticisms from some Catholic commentators, spaces and times can be found where people can express themselves. For example, different rules apply to Catholics and non-Catholics who come to the baths to follow the tradition of being immersed in the waters. While rigorous attempts are made to ensure standard practices for Catholic bathers, others are allowed far more freedom to express their own wishes (Eade 2013).

The European region provides a vivid illustration of the growing importance of global connections between religious and pilgrimage traditions in different areas of the world (Peterson et al. 2001; Vásquez and Marquardt 2003; Reader 2007). These connections were established through colonization of the Americas, for example, from the fifteenth century and Marian cults, in particular, became a crucial tool during European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century for spreading ecclesiastical power and orthodox teachings across the Roman Catholic world. (The assertion of the Vatican's authority could also be pursued in alliance with secular political and social elites in nineteenth-century Brazil, for example – see Steil 2017.)

Once again, official knowledge was intimately associated with religious materiality. The building of shrines dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, for instance, not only celebrated dogmatic teachings concerning Mary's immaculate conception and assumption into heaven. They were also material representations of those and other teachings about miracles and healing; they were also objects which devotees saw as having their own agency and with whom they could establish a personal relationship independent of Church teaching.

10.4 Power and Control: Pilgrimage, Evangelization and Material Religion

The debate surrounding shared shrines highlights the operation of power and control involving Church institutions, material culture, and those attracted to these particular places. A complex interweaving of religious, political, and economic forces swirls around these places and the routes leading to them (see Kaufman 2005; Reader 2013; Coleman and Eade 2018). Because shrines are created around what are

believed to be exceptional individuals, e.g. Jesus Christ, his followers, post-Apostolic martyrs, visionaries, or embodiments of the divine such as painted icons, springs, wells, trees and other natural items, the charismatic power of person and place has the potential to be in tension with the desire of religious and secular authorities to control that power.

Despite the differences between the Christian Churches, officials have generally sought to distance pilgrimage from 'superstition' and 'magic' (see Eade 1989; Harris 1999; Harris 2013). The millions visiting contemporary Catholic shrines, for example, have been welcomed by the Vatican as an expression of the universal quest for salvation and an opportunity for evangelization. Shrines are places where the Church can draw on textual authority to emphasize its theological teachings. A similar strategy is observable in post-Soviet Russian Orthodoxy, although its pursuit reflects its different institutional traditions. These differences are also reflected in new practices such as 'inverted pilgrimage' involving fairs where:

a variety of holy objects are brought from parish churches and monasteries to one centre for a period of days, and travelling icons and relics such as the girdle of the Mother of God, which attracted millions of would-be venerators when it was brought to Russia from Athos. These function as both advertisement for the pilgrimage place, and as a substitute for pilgrimage. (Rock 2015, p. 56)

Material objects are used as vehicles through which religious officials can impart Church teachings to the faithful and draw non-believers into the faith. Hence, visitors categorized as 'tourists' by shrine officials are potential converts and therefore welcome at shrines as long as they are respectful. These official Christian understandings of the charismatic power of individuals and material objects are grounded in traditional teachings about Jesus Christ's incarnation and saving mission. Saints and material objects are mediators of the divine: the cults surrounding them are not ends in themselves.

Yet the diversity of people's bodily practices and the fluidity, playfulness, ambiguous or contradictory character of lived religion may not be easily directed; spaces and times may be found where people can express themselves outside the boundaries of official teaching. Shared shrines vividly display this potential for what officials might see as transgression but this begs the question of what people themselves think or feel about what they are doing. Furthermore, it is clear that there can also be a dynamic relationship between officials and 'ordinary' people which allows different beliefs and practices to co-exist. Jeanne Kormina's study of a local Russian Orthodox shrine uncovers three discourses at work – the pilgrims' focus on healing and miracle, local narratives concerning the punishment of sacrilegious acts and the priest's attempt to 'accommodate folk religiosity to official religion' (Kormina 2004, p. 38). The study of another local cult concerning two 'child saints' (Panchenko 2012) demonstrates that these discourses are not fixed but may intersect with religious officials and thereby enable pilgrim and local narratives to co-exist (Rock 2015, p. 55). Clearly, this is not confined to Russian Orthodox pilgrimage since Alana Harris has described a similar process in operation at Lourdes (2013).

Competition between and within Christian Churches has also played a major role in pilgrimage. While the contested terrain of Jerusalem has attracted extensive research (see Bowman 1993; Stadler 2011; Feldman 2007), the less well known – to an Anglophone audience – competition over place across eastern Europe is highly instructive. A vivid example is provided by Agnieszka Halemba's study (2008) of two Greek (Eastern) Catholic pilgrimages in the contested borderlands of Slovakia and the Ukraine. During 2002, two young Ukrainian girls and a Slovakian nun claimed to have experienced visions of Our Lady. In Slovakia, such claims were not uncommon – more than a hundred apparitions have been recorded 'in recent years' (2008, p. 549) – raising the question why some become the focus of pilgrimage while others fail to 'take off' and may fade away.

Halemba's response is to point to a variety of factors, viz. 'church and lay politics; social networks; national ideologies and their relations to religious identities; needs and expectations of the pilgrims and local believers; features of the place and its transformations from secular into the sacred site; media; societal changes' (2008). She focuses on internal church politics and church-state relations in the belief that they have a 'crucial influence on the development (or decline) of the apparition sites' (2008, p. 550). She then seeks to support her conviction by locating the recent apparitions within the historical context of the emergence of the Greek Catholic Church in the region during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and subsequent developments. Halemba concludes that the 2002 apparition in Slovakia failed because of the nun's 'lack of well-thought-through political and management strategy' (2008, p. 559), in contrast to the instrumentalization and skilful management of the Ukrainian cult, which has 'become a site of struggle for unification of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church' (2008, p. 563). Financial considerations have also been crucial since supporters of the cult have made financial agreements with the church authorities, which have strengthened their position vis-à-vis the religious hierarchy (2008).

10.5 Monumentality, Changing Landscapes, Identity, and Memory

While the process of crossing space and people's engagement with nature as they journey to and from shrines has attracted recent attention, the process of dwelling at particular places along the route and at the shrine is crucial, of course. For centuries, people have used their ingenuity and building skills to erect imposing structures around the human and natural environment. These structures vary from the modest wayside shrine to the vast cathedral and reflect the wealth generated by the numbers of pilgrims visiting the site. Throughout history, there has also existed an intimate, ambivalent relationship between religious and commercial entrepreneurs. They are competitors but they also need one another if the shrine is to prosper. Political elites have also long been involved through granting land, licensing markets and fairs, donating grants and encouraging ideological attachments, e.g. monarchy, international, national, regional and local identity. The effect has been to change the landscape – to socialize it – materially.

The Christian Churches, despite their differences, have usually organized pilgrimages around places to worship and to stay both along the route and at the shrines. Hence, the *camino* has been historically marked by chapels, churches, monasteries,

hostels and, in the urban centres encouraged by pilgrim revenue, cathedrals. The Stations of the Cross, which emerged as a major Christian devotion in Jerusalem, also began to be constructed through the efforts of Franciscan friars across Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Once again political forces influenced their construction and Halemba's case study cited above provides a recent example. Stations of the Cross have been built across the Carpathian Mountains to demonstrate the Virgin Mary's support for unity between Greek Catholic institutions in this borderland area. This would appear to contradict the de-Latinization movement within the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church more generally which has resulted in attempts to eliminate the 'Roman' devotion (see Halemba 2008; Naumescu 2008).

Shrines and routes are shaped by identity politics and the different constructions of social memory bound up with the invention of tradition (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Diverse expressions of national identity have featured large in such processes and have been examined in many Christian contexts as well as in other religious contexts. The architectural expressions of these national identities become the focal point not only for citizens within a particular country but also for diasporas and those visiting another country.

Two illustrations will have to suffice. In the contested terrain of Bosnia-Herzegovina the relatively obscure Marian shrine at Kondžilo has been dramatically developed to express Croat identity – both those living in Bosnia-Herzegovina and those from neighbouring Croatia and even further afield (see Katic 2014). The chapel where a miraculous painting of Our Lady was kept during the main pilgrimage celebration was replaced by a tall monument commemorating those Croats who had died during the early 1990s conflict; 'half' of the hillside had been "stripped" in order to create a flatter surface' for visitors. Accommodation had been built for clergy as well as toilets, a new altar had been erected, and a new route had been cut for the Stations of the Cross procession which linked the shrine to the parish church in the local village. Although only a few celebrations were held at the shrine – the main ones took place in August around the Feast of the Assumption – the landscape was developed to reflect national pride, commemorate the national 'martyrs', and accommodate the political and religious dignitaries and the large throng of visitors. (For an analysis of the relationship between Croatian nationalism and the better-known shrine of Medjugorje see Bax 1995 and Skrbis 2005.)

The second example is provided by the changing fortunes of the French pilgrimage centre in Jerusalem. Unlike Kondžilo and many other isolated shrines, Jerusalem was a magnet for visitors throughout the year and diverse religious and political interests vigorously competed across its terrain. During the nineteenth century, pilgrimage became involved in French attempts to establish a dominant local physical presence (Trimbur 1998). The Assumptionist order, which played a prominent role in the rapid expansion of the shrine at Lourdes, were involved in the organization of a large pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1882, which led to the building of the Notre Dame de France centre on a prominent hill overlooking the old town. The building was:

meant to symbolize a permanent presence and to be on the horizon both literally and figuratively, as though it were marking the ultimate stage in the development, of the city and signifying a French victory. By constructing Notre Dame de France, Paris and the

Assumptionists hoped to demonstrate to the entire population of Jerusalem (local authorities, rival orders, the local population) like the Holy See, that France was indeed the foreign power in Palestine. (Trimbur 1998, p. 121)

The building looked two ways, therefore – towards the most sacred centre in the Christian tradition and back to France where national identity was the site of contestation between clerical and anti-clerical elites.

Studies have long emphasized how landscapes are shaped by human actions and how people represent them religious and politically. However, the ‘more-than-representational’ approach has also encouraged recent explorations of landscape’s immanent features and aura in relation to pilgrimage as a kinetic ritual. Such an approach can lead to an analysis of how ‘mobile practices help construct apparently sacredly charged places’, the ‘power of place’ and the ‘role of landscape aesthetics in the “spiritual magnetism” of pilgrimage sites’ (Maddrell et al. 2014). In her study of pilgrimage walks to the sites of small ancient chapels scattered across the Isle of Man off the British mainland coast, Avril Maddrell argues that ‘the pilgrim encounters the landscape visually and materially, engaging with it kinetically, sensually and imaginatively, both seeing and becoming part of the picture, literally and metaphorically marking and being marked’ (2011, p. 17). Given the traditional Protestant focus on pilgrimage as metaphor, walking can be interpreted as principally an opportunity for individual reflection. Hence, the revival of pilgrimage in Sweden involves walks where ‘nature, outdoor life and especially silence are important means for spiritual experiences, and holy places are perceived in an individualized manner along the trail’ (Bremborg 2013, p. 544).

10.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explore the themes of moving, crossing, and dwelling through theoretical developments within contemporary pilgrimage studies and analyses of how beliefs and practices are performed through place pilgrimage. I have focused largely on the European region and its various Christian traditions but clearly this historic heartland of Christian pilgrimage is only part of a wider and dynamic picture. What conclusions can be drawn from this discussion?

1. A rich diversity has been generated by the theoretical perspectives which have developed since the 1980s. There is a need to balance the traditional preoccupation with text and discourse with an understanding of ‘lived religion’, bodily practices, and emotional engagement with other people, places and material objects.
2. Although Anglophone understandings of moving, crossing, and dwelling have been fruitfully explored through hydraulic models of flow and the spatial metaphors of landscape, other models are needed to understand the role played by power in constraining mobility and hardening boundaries. While the concepts of networks and globalization can assist here, non-Anglophone approaches can direct attention to other ways in which power is expressed through material practices.

3. The influence of binary categorization has failed to do justice to the complexity of the processes involved. Attempts to establish clear boundaries around the concept of pilgrim and pilgrimage fail to grapple with the ambiguities, messiness, and relationships between such key categories as pilgrim, tourist, sacred and secular, culture and nature. Pilgrimage vividly demonstrates the ways in which people move through and cross both space and time. However, the process of dwelling must not be ignored since people often establish homely places at shrines and may be encouraged by religious officials, shopkeepers, hoteliers and restaurateurs to 'feel at home' there. Similar processes of domestication can occur during people's travels to and from the shrines. This home-making can be expressed in both spiritual and secular forms, of course.
4. A global approach must be developed so that the diversity of Christian pilgrimage is adequately recognized. The preoccupation with Roman Catholic pilgrimage in Western Europe and North America must be offset by a focus on other Christian traditions and pilgrimage in other parts of the world. This de-centring process is particularly important as the influence of Christians in the Global South inexorably strengthens.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful for the detailed comments provided by Manuel Vásquez on this opening section.
- 2 This does not just apply to Christian pilgrimage, of course, but a consideration of other modes of pilgrimage is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Works Cited

- Albera, D. (2005). Pèlerinages mixtes et sanctuaires "ambigus" en Méditerranée. In: *Les pèlerinage au Maghreb et Moyen-Orient: espaces publics, espaces du public* (eds. S. Chiffoleau and A. Madœuf), 347–378. Beirut: Institut du François du Proche Orient.
- Albera, D. and Couroucli, M. (eds.) (2012). *Sharing Sacred Spaces in the Mediterranean: Christians, Muslims, and Jews at Shrines and Sanctuaries*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Albera, D. and Eade, J. (2015). International perspectives on pilgrimage research: putting the Anglophone contribution in its place. In: *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Itineraries, Gaps and Obstacles* (eds. D. Albera and J. Eade), 1–22. New York and Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Albera, D. and Eade, J. (eds.) (2017). *New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies: Global Perspectives*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.
- Badone, E. and Roseman, S. (eds.) (2004). *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Belaj, M. and Martić, Z. (2014). Pilgrimage site beyond politics: experience of the sacred and inter-religious dialogue in Bosnia. In: *Crossing the Borders: Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-Making in Eastern Europe* (eds. J. Eade and M. Katic), 59–78. Farnham, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Bastin, R. (2012). Saints, sites and religious accommodation in Sri Lanka. In: *Sharing the Sacra: The Politics and Pragmatics of*

- Intercommunal Relations around Holy Places* (ed. G. Bowman), 97–117. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Bax, M. (1995). *Medjugorje: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Rural Bosnia*. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij.
- Bowman, G. (1993). Nationalizing the sacred: shrines and shifting identities in the Israeli-occupied territories. *MAN (New Series)* 28: 431–460.
- Bowman, G. (ed.) (2012). *Sharing the Sacra: The Politics and Pragmatics of Intercommunal Relations around Holy Places*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Bremborg, A. (2013). Creating sacred space by walking in silence: pilgrimage in a late modern Lutheran context. *Social Compass* 60 (4): 544–560.
- Bulzalka, J. (2006). *Nation and Religion: The Politics of Commemoration in South-East Poland*. Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- Campo, J. (1998). American pilgrimage landscapes. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 558 (1): 40–56.
- Chiffolleau, S. and Madoeuf, A. (eds.) (2005). *Les pèlerinages au Maghreb et au Moyen-Orient*. Beirut: IFPO.
- Coleman, S. (2000). Meanings of movement, place and home at Walsingham. *Culture and Religion* 1 (2): 153–169.
- Coleman, S. (2002). Do you believe in pilgrimage? Communitas, contestation and beyond. *Anthropological Theory* 2 (3): 355–368.
- Coleman, S. (2004). Pilgrimage to “England’s Nazareth”: landscapes of myth and memory at Walsingham. In: *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism* (eds. E. Badone and S. Roseman), 52–67. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Coleman, S. (2012). Memory as absence and presence: pilgrimage, “Archeo-theology”, and the creativity of destruction. *Journeys* 13 (1): 1–20.
- Coleman, S. and Eade, J. (2004). *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Coleman, S. and Eade, J. (eds.) (2018). *Pilgrimage and Political Economy*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn.
- Coleman, S. and Elsner, J. (1998). Performing pilgrimage: Walsingham and the ritual performance of irony. In: *Ritual, Performance, Media* (ed. F. Hughes-Freeland), 46–55. London and New York: Routledge.
- Crumrine, N. and Morinis, A. (1991). *Pilgrimage in Latin America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Danely, J. (2015). A watchful presence: age of wellbeing in a Japanese pilgrimage. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, published online, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2015.1045916>: 1–28. accessed 22 February 2016).
- Di Giovine, M. (2013). A higher purpose: sacred journeys as spaces for peace in Christianity. In: *Pilgrims and Pilgrimages as Peacemakers in Christianity, Judaism and Islam* (ed. A. Pazos), 9–38. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Dodge, M. and Kitchen, R. (2007). Rethinking maps. *Human Geography* 31 (3): 331–344.
- Doi, K. (2011). Onto emerging ground: anticlimactic movement on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. *Tourism* 59 (3): 271–286.
- Dubisch, J. (1995). *In a Different Place: Place, Pilgrimage and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Dyas, D. (2001). *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature, 700–1500*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Eade, J. (1992). Pilgrimage and tourism at Lourdes, France. *Annals of Tourism Research* 19 (1): 18–32.
- Eade, J. (2013). Identitarian pilgrimage and multicultural society. In: *Pilgrims and Pilgrimages as Peacemakers in Christianity, Judaism and Islam* (ed. A. Pazos), 105–118. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Eade, J. and Katić, M. (eds.) (2014). *Crossing the Borders: Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-Making in Eastern Europe*. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

- Eade, J. and Sallnow, M. (eds.) (1991). *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Eberhart, H. (2015). From religious folklore studies to research of popular religiosity: pilgrimage studies in German-speaking Europe. In: *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies* (eds. D. Albera and J. Eade). New York and Abingdon: Routledge.
- Eliade, M. (1954). *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Eliade, M. (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Feldman, J. (2007). Constructing a shared bible land: Jewish Israeli guiding performances for Protestant pilgrims. *American Ethnologist* 34 (2): 351–374.
- Fedele, A. (2013). *Looking for Mary Magdalene: Alternative Pilgrimage and Ritual Creativity at Catholic Shrines in France*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Frey, N. (1998). *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Giménez, G. (1978). *Cultura popular y religión en el Anahuac*. Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Euménicos.
- Halemba, A. (2008). Virgin Mary and the border: identity politics of the Greek Catholic Church at the Ukrainian/Slovak borderland. *Sociología* 40 (6): 548–565.
- Hann, C. and Goltz, H. (eds.) (2010). *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Harris, R. (1999). *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age*. London: Penguin Books.
- Harris, A. (2013). Lourdes and holistic spirituality: contemporary Catholicism, the therapeutic and religious Thermalism. *Culture and Religion* 14 (1): 23–43.
- Hayden, R. (2002). Antagonistic tolerance: competitive sharing of religious sites in South Asia and the Balkans. *Current Anthropology* 43 (2): 205–231.
- Hermkens, A.-K., Jansen, W., and Notermans, C. (eds.) (2009). *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Hertz, R. (1913). Saint Besse: étude d'un culte alpestre. *Revue d'Histoire des Religions* 67: 115–180. (English translation: 'St. Besse: a study of an Alpine cult'. In *Saints and Their Cults*, edited by S. Wilson. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 55–100).
- Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds.) (1983). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huff, B. and Stallins, A. (2013). Beyond binaries: conservative Catholic visions and real estate in Ave Maria, FL. *Culture and Religion* 14 (1): 94–110.
- Hyndman-Rizk, N. (2012). *Pilgrimage in the Age of Globalization*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.
- Jansen, W. and Notermans, C. (eds.) (2012). *Gender, Nation and Religion in European Pilgrimage*. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Katić, M. (2014). From the chapel on the hill to National Shrine: creating a pilgrimage “home” for Bosnian Croats. In: *Crossing the Borders: Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-Making in Eastern Europe* (eds. J. Eade and M. Katić), 15–35. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Kaufman, S. (2005). *Consuming Visions: Mass Culture and the Lourdes Shrine*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.
- Keriakos, S. (2012). Apparitions of the Virgin in Egypt: improving relations between Copts and Muslims? In: *Sharing Sacred Spaces in the Mediterranean: Christians, Muslims, and Jews at Shrines and Sanctuaries* (eds. D. Albera and M. Coroucli). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Kormina, J. (2004). Pilgrims, priest and local religion in contemporary Russia: contested religious discourses. *Folklore* 28: 25–40.

- Kormina, J. (2010). Avtobusniki: Russian orthodox pilgrims' longing for authenticity. In: *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective* (eds. C. Hann and H. Goltz), 267–287. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Maddrell, A. (2011). "Praying the Keeills". Rhythm, meaning and experience on pilgrimage journeys in the Isle of Man. *Landabréfid* 25: 15–29.
- Maddrell, A., della Dora, V., Scafi, A., and Walton, H. (2014). *Journeying to the Sacred: Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape and Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Mahieu, S. and Naumescu, V. (eds.) (2008). *Churches In-between: Greek Catholic Churches in Postsocialist Europe*. Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- Margry, p. (ed.) (2008). *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Morinis, A. (1984). *Pilgrimage in the Hindu Tradition: A Case Study of West Bengal*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Naumescu, V. (2008). Continuities and ruptures of a religious tradition: making "orthodoxy" in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. In: *Churches In-between: Greek Catholic Churches in Postsocialist Europe*, edited by (eds. S. Mahieu and V. Naumescu), 157–182. Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- Niedźwiedz, A. (2015). Old and new paths of polish pilgrimages. In: *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Itineraries, Gaps and Obstacles* (eds. D. Albera and J. Eade), 69–94. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.
- Nolan, M. and Nolan, S. (1989). *Christian Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe*. Chapel Hill, NC and London: University of North Carolina Press.
- Olsen, D. (2013). A scalar comparison of motivations and expectations of experience within the religious tourism market. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 1 (1): 21–41.
- Orsi, R. (1985). *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Orsi, R. (1991). The center out there, in here, and everywhere else: the nature of pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Jude, 1929–1965. *Journal of Social History* 25 (2): 213–232.
- Orsi, R. (2010 [1985]). Introduction to the second edition. In: *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950*, 3e, ix–xxxviii. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Panchenko, A. (2012). *Ivan i Iakov – neobychnye sviatye iz bolotistoi mestnosti: 'krest'ianskaia agiologiya' i religioznye praktiki v Rossii Novogo vremeni*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Peterson, A., Vásquez, M., and Williams, p. (eds.) (2001). *Christianity, Social Change and Globalization in the Americas*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Pfaffenberger, B. (1983). Serious pilgrims and frivolous tourists: the chimera of tourism in the pilgrimage of Sri Lanka. *Annals of Tourism Research* 10 (1): 57–74.
- Philo, C., Cadman, L., and Lea, J. (2011). The new urban spiritual? Tentative framings for a debate and a project. *The new urban spiritual? Working paper no. 1*, University of Glasgow.
- Post, p. (2014). Worship in a network culture: explorations on ritual and liturgical competence. In: *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-Onderzoek*, 191–202. Groningen and Tilburg: Inst. voor Christelijk Cultureel Erfgoed and Inst. voor Rituele en Liturgische Studies.
- Raj, S. and Dempsey, C. (2002). Introduction: between, behind, and beyond the lines. In: *Popular Christianity in India: Writing between the Lines* (eds. S. Raj and C. Dempsey), 1–10. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Reader, I. (2007). Pilgrimage growth in the modern world: meanings and implications. *Religion* 37 (3): 210–229.

- Reader, I. (2013). *Pilgrimage in the Marketplace*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Reader, I. and Walter, T. (eds.) (1993). *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Rock, S. (2007). *Popular Religion in Russia: 'Double Belief' and the Making of an Academic Myth*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rock, S. (2015). Touching the holy: orthodox Christian pilgrimage within Russia. In: *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Itineraries, Gaps and Obstacles* (eds. D. Albera and J. Eade), 47–68. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ros, A.A. (2017). Transcending symbols: the religious landscape of pilgrimage studies in Mexico. In: *New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies* (eds. J. Eade and D. Albera), 142–161. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.
- Sallnow, M. (1981). *Communitas reconsidered: the sociology of Andean pilgrimage*. *Man, New Series* 16 (2): 163–182.
- Sallnow, M. (1987). *Pilgrims of the Andes: Regional Cults in Cusco*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Skrbis, Z. (2005). The apparitions of the Virgin Mary of Medjugorje: the convergence of Croatian nationalism and her apparitions. *Nations and Nationalism* 11 (3): 443–461.
- Stadler, N. (2011). Between scripture and performance: cohesion and dissent at the feast of Mary's Dormition in Jerusalem. *Religion* 41 (4): 645–664.
- Steil, C. (2017). Studies of Catholicism and pilgrimage in Brazil: continuities and ruptures over the long-term. In: *New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies* (eds. J. Eade and D. Albera), 162–180. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.
- Timothy, D. and Olsen, D. (eds.) (2006). *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Trimbur, D. (1998). A French presence in Palestine – Notre-dame de France. *Bulletin du Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem* 3: 117–140.
- Turner, V. and Turner, E. (1978). *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Tweed, T. (2006). *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
- Vásquez, M. (2008). Studying religion in motion: a networks approach. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 20 (2): 151–184.
- Vásquez, M. (2011). *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vásquez, M. and Marquardt, M. (2003). *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion across the Americas*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Walton, H. (2014). Theological perspectives on Christian pilgrimage. In: *Journeying to the Sacred: Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape and Heritage* (eds. A. Maddrell, V.d. Dora, A. Scafi and H. Walton). London: Routledge.
- Zapponi, E. (2015). Italian studies on pilgrimage: beyond folklore towards a national anthropological tradition and the international circulation of ideas. In: *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Itineraries, Gaps and Obstacles* (eds. D. Albera and J. Eade), 152–170. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.

CHAPTER 11

Hindu and Sikh Processions in Europe

Material Objects and Ritual Bodies on the Move

Knut A. Jacobsen

Religious processions are performances, planned and organized to the minutest detail, with distinctive roles and ritual performers. Processions display material religion such as material objects of worship, ritualized bodies, and ritual artefacts, that is, material objects that are not only embedded in the culture, but that are central to the religion and express its values and teachings (see Jacobsen et al. 2015). Ritualized bodies, ritual objects, material objects of worship, possessed bodies, weapons, banners with messages, and people are central parts of the material religion of Hindu and Sikh processions in Europe.

Religious procession can be defined as a performance by people walking together for a religious purpose from one point to another, or in a circle ending the procession where it started (Jacobsen 2008a). Processions are street rituals that use the streets for collective expressions. They are related to street theatre. Processions are often performed on a regular basis, often annually in relation to the festivals calendar. In some festivals such as in the Tamil Hindu *brahmotsavas*, annual temple festival lasting mostly between 10 and 15 days (see Welbon and Yocum 1983; Younger 2002), the processions are so central to the festival that the festivals themselves can be described as procession festivals. Procession is a ritual of great importance in the religions of South Asia and a significant part of material religion of the subcontinent. This importance is due to the centrality of the statues (*murtis*) of the gods of the Hindu temples and the worship of them (*puja*) by giving to and receiving gifts from the gods (*prasad*) (see Pinkney in this volume). Moreover, catching glances (*darshan*) of these *murtis*, is a deeply felt act of veneration, through which devotees and gods exchange recognition and blessings. The statues once ritually installed are thought to be embodiments of the gods and have to be treated as living beings. They live in the inner sanctum (*garbha griha*) of the temple most of the year, but are taken outside of the temple in annual festivals. These festivals are

said to entertain the gods and goddesses. A function of such processions is to project the sacred outward from the *grabha griha* and define the areas that belong to the gods. In the processions, the gods are thought to see the devotees and the devotees see the gods and are able to worship them (*do puja*) outside of the temple.

Religious pluralism in South Asia has probably encouraged establishment of procession rituals. Communities imitate each other's processions. By organizing processions, the religious communities are able to mark their presence in the public space and challenge other communities. Some South Asian processions are world famous such as the bathing processions of *sadhus* at the *kumbhamela* festivals in Haridwar, Allahabad, Nasik, and Ujjain (see Lochtefeld 2008), the Jagannath procession of Puri which has been reduplicated worldwide by ISKCON, the Hare Krishna movement (Kumar 2008), the marriage processions in Madurai of Shiva and his spouse Minakshi (Harman, 1989), the large annual procession in New Delhi to celebrate the birth anniversary (*gurpurab*) of Guru Gobind Singh, and many of the pilgrimage processions to Himalayan shrines such as Amarnath, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangrotri, and Yamunotri. Processions are most often part of festivals and they are often their central public event. They typically mark the high point of the festival with the largest number of people attending.

South Asian procession culture, especially Hindu and Sikh, now has a worldwide presence, and their processions are performed not only in South Asia, but in Australia, North America, Southeast Asia and is now also a feature of the religious landscape of Europe. The establishment of Hindu and Sikh processions in a number of cities in Europe is part of the current religious change that is taking place in the continent caused by migration. Migrants from South Asia have brought the ritual and material and other dimensions of their religions including their complex procession culture to many cities of Europe and the procession culture has been preserved and continued by the migrants' descendants.

Processions have a long history of several thousand years in South Asia and are not a new phenomenon. Processions were part of both the ancient Vedic tradition and early Buddhism as well. The omnipresence and importance of festival processions in Tamil Nadu may indicate their ancient roots in Tamil culture. Buddhist chariot processions with statues of the Buddha and bodhisattvas are described in detail in the accounts of Faxian (*A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*), who travelled in India between 399 and 414 CE (see Jacobsen 2009a). With the increasing prominence of kingship in South Asia, processions were used in the royal rituals as a means of creating order and establishing control and to show that the will of the divine was manifest in the kingdom (Inden 2006). However, religious processions have probably become more important due to phenomena such as colonialism, nationalism, and the strong religious inflection of identities in South Asia. The British colonial power's decision not to interfere in religion probably encouraged political mobilizations to be expressed in religious forms such as in religious processions. Political movements in contemporary India have continued to use religious processions for political mobilization (Davis 2005). There has been an increase in processions in the South Asian diasporas in the last few decades and the introduction of new South Asian procession traditions has been reported in Germany (Luchesi 2008), France (Trouillet 2012), England (Geaves 2007), Singapore (Sinha 2008), North America (Clothey 2006), South Africa (Kumar 2008) and also

Norway (Jacobsen 2008a, b, 2009b, 2011b). This increase is to do with groups gaining greater confidence and with the display function of processions and it relates to the minority situation and specific aspects of religious pluralism such as the maintenance and generation of religious identities, generational transfer, religious rivalry, and religious boundaries, and for the maintenance as well as promotion of a diasporic consciousness among South Asians living outside of South Asia.

In Europe, processions have become an important public face of Hinduism, especially among Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus (Geaves 2007; Luchesi 2008; Trouillet 2012; Jacobsen 2008a, b, 2009b) and of Sikhism (Jacobsen 2011b), as is the case also in other Sri Lankan Tamil and Sikh diasporas. The processions are to some degree functions of the Sri Lankan Tamil and Punjabi Sikh diaspora situation, but they probably also have to be understood as extensions of the temples and gurdwaras. These institutions have great social, community, economic, and political influence.

Processions are often among the most visible of religious activities in public spaces. Processions distinguish themselves from the rituals going on inside the temple and in the home in that they are public display events. In the diaspora, the religious processions are consciously performed in front of an audience. To draw public attention to the group and gain recognition are important purposes for organizing processions. In processions, communities can come together to express their unity and strength and to signal who they are and what is important to them as a group. This they signal not only to themselves but also as much to the other religious communities. Hindus and Sikhs visit temples and gurdwaras most often as individuals and, except in the diaspora, worship is most often not congregational style. Processions, however, bring together larger parts of the religious communities for a common purpose. In the diaspora, they function to bring together a large percentage of the diaspora group, usually larger than the number that gathers at any time in the temples and gurdwaras. As a public display event of the group, there is also a pressure on the individuals to take part. One reason for organizing processions in the diaspora is that the group wants to establish a presence and visibility in public space. Among the Sikhs and Hindus in the diaspora, processions are one of the main ways to organize and display religion, identity, and culture. Once a procession ritual has been established, it usually undergoes changes over time for various reasons.

11.1 Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus and Sikhs in Europe

The majority of Hindus in many countries in continental Europe are Tamils from Sri Lanka (see Baumann et al. 2003; Jacobsen 2011a; Trouillet 2012), who also make up a significant part of the Hindus in Great Britain (Geaves 2007). However, in Great Britain, there are also significant populations of Hindus from India, and Hindus who moved to Britain from East Africa when the Indians were expelled (Vertovec 2000). The largest population of Sikhs in Europe live in Great Britain (see Singh and Barrier 1996; Singh Tatla 1998; Jacobsen and Myrvold, 2011; Nesbitt, 2011; Jacobsen and Myrvold, 2012), but there are Sikhs in almost every country in Europe, with a large Sikh population especially in Italy (see Jacobsen and Myrvold 2011, 2012). Although both Hindus and Sikhs have their origin in South Asia, they belong to two very different

diasporas: the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and the Sikh diaspora. While there is hardly any contact between them, both groups have a long history of migration as well as a history of being minorities in modern nation states in South Asia. Moreover, both were incorporated as minorities in modern nation states because of the colonial politics of the British empire.

The Sri Lankan Tamils constituted a separate political unit in the north of Sri Lanka until the British united the different units of the island and ruled it as one administrative entity. After the independence of Ceylon in 1948, the Jaffna peninsula and the Tamil areas continued to be ruled within the entity of Ceylon, later renamed as Sri Lanka, but now controlled by a Sinhala majority that from 1956 promoted an aggressive 'Sinhala only' policy. The Sikhs likewise constituted a separate political unit with the kingdom of Ranjit Singh from 1799 to 1839, before they were conquered by the British and incorporated into British India. When India gained independence, the interests of the Sikhs were not recognized, and Punjab was divided between India and Pakistan, with the largest part in Pakistan, but with most Sikhs moving to Indian Punjab. Both the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sikhs of Punjab have recently had political movements that have tried to assert nationhood and attempted to recreate their historical separate states, the Khalistan movement in Punjab and the Tamil independence movements in Sri Lanka, which was led by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam).¹ Both movements were crushed by use of great violence by the state, the Khalistan movement by the Indian army in Operation Blue Star in 1984 and the years thereafter and LTTE in a war that started in 1983 and ended with the massacre by the Sri Lankan army of the leadership of LTTE and a large number of civilian Tamils in May 2009. The migration history and diaspora consciousness of these groups are marked by these events. An aspect of the public processions is for maintaining a diasporic consciousness and the connection to the place of origin. In the following, the procession rituals of the Sikhs and the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus in Norway will be presented as representative examples of their procession traditions in Europe.

11.2 Processions of the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus

The largest of the around 10 Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu temples in Norway, the Sivasubramanyar Alayam, was officially opened in Oslo in 1998 (Jacobsen 2004). The annual procession rituals are the most important events of this temple (see Jacobsen 2004, 2006, 2008a). The festival is organized in July and August and lasts for 12 days but the high points of the festival in terms of its ritual importance and the number of people attending are two processions: the chariot (*ter*, *ratha*) procession on the 10th day and the procession to the sacred bathing place (*tirtha*) on the 11th. The procession ritual was organized for the first time the same year the temple opened, in 1998. But the processions have changed over the years. The quality has improved and the number of elements increased. Each year, new elements have been added (see Jacobsen 2006). The largest material objects of the procession are three chariots that are used to transport three objects of worship, the festival statues of the procession festival. These are the three main gods of the temple Murugan, Pillayar (Vinayagar, Ganesha), and Amman

(the mother of Pillayar). The three chariots used during the first years were soon replaced, although they were still functional, with three new more beautiful and bigger chariots, which indicate their importance in the processions at this time. This established the procession as one of the most beautiful Tamil processions in Europe. Another change in the early procession tradition was the establishment of a sacred lake for the bathing procession. In the first years, the procession to the sacred bathing place, *tirthotsava* was organized in the car park outside the temple. Then it was changed into a larger procession ritual to a lake in the forest behind the temple. The lake was made sacred by marking off an area of the lake by a wooden frame on the beach with colourful decorations and shrines for the festival statues, and by the rituals. The procession moved through the forest for an hour including several solemn stops during which the statues of the gods carried on wooden frames were moved from side to side which is common in Tamil Hindu rituals. The *vel* of Murugan is given a sacred bath in the lake, followed by splashing of water and people bathing, and thereafter the performance of *shraddha* for individuals who have lost relatives in the past year. Afterwards, the festival statues are taken in procession back to the temple.

The *rathotsava* procession transports the *utsava murtis* (festival statues) of Murugan, Pillayar, and Amman on the three festival chariots on the streets encircling the temple in a procession and takes several hours. The temple is on a hill, as is proper for a Murugan temple, so controlling the chariots' downward move and pulling them upwards are hard work. The procession has frequent stops. Two solid ropes at the front and two at the back are pulled by a large number of males and females, one rope by females and one by males. The women are dressed in festival saris and the males wear white dhotis and are naked above the waist which indicates their participation in religious ritual. Around 5000 usually participate in the annual procession ritual, making it the biggest annual gathering of Tamils in Norway. The temple is in an industrial building and quite ugly from the outside. However, the temple has bought a new property for erecting a stone temple, which will be the first built in traditional Tamil temple style in the Nordic countries. In Europe, stone temples built from the ground in traditional Tamil temple styles are already found in Germany and England (see Baumann et al. 2003).

The Tamil processions in Norway have typically been characterized by a happy atmosphere since it is a celebration of culture, language, family, and identity. The procession is a time for Tamils to come together and to be 100% Tamil for a few hours. Everyone wears Tamil dress, speaks Tamil, celebrate Tamil religion, and enjoys Tamil food, etc. The group celebrates itself, its unity and identity. The use of flowers is extremely important in Tamil Hindu worship and they are used for garlands (*malas*) of the gods as well as decorations of the chariots,² and the flowers add colour and beauty to the event. But the sorrow of loss and violence caused by the war in Sri Lanka also impacted the festival, most markedly perhaps by the introduction of *kavati* dancers with flesh pierced by fishhooks and small spears. *Kavati* dancers were part of the festival from the start, but not with hooks and spears. *Kavatis* are arches with peacock feathers carried on the shoulders by some devotees who thereby emulate the worship of Itampan, a mythical Murugan devotee, who got the order from Murugan that anyone who made the vow to him of bearing *kavati* would be blessed (Clothey 1978, p. 119, 2006). The peacock feathers on the *kavati* refer to the vehicle of Murugan, the peacock. The *kavati* makes the body a vehicle for Murugan that he can possess. Some forms of *kavati* may perhaps be understood as displaying a willingness to sacrifice the self. The *kavatis* symbolize

devotion and the persons carrying them display total devotion to Murugan. The dancers are thought to be in a state of possession. Their dance imitates the peacock, and the feet of the dancers move faster and faster until they are exhausted. Water is then sprinkled on them to cool down, and the dance starts again.

The *kavati* performance with hooks and spears was introduced into the procession in the summer of 2006. In that year, the persons who carried *kavati* had their flesh pierced by fishhooks and small spears (symbols of Murugan's *vel*) (see Figure 11.1). Those who took *kavati* were mostly young men like Murugan. They had made a promise (Sanskrit: *vrata*, Tam. *nertti*; making a vow, *nerttipanna*; the fulfilment of a vow, *nerttikatan*) to Murugan that they would do *kavati* if their wish was fulfilled and they now had to do their part of the deal. Around 15 of the *kavati* dancers had hooks through the skin of their backs. The hooks were connected to ropes and each dancer had paired up with someone they trusted who pulled the ropes. The dancers leaned forward while moving their feet in a rhythmic dance and the ropes with hooks were pulled by the persons behind. In the following years, the number of *kavati* dancers increased. This was a dramatic change in the *rathotsava* procession. From 2006, the *kavati* dancers and not the chariots were the centre of the attention of the procession. In the years before, the musicians had played in front of the first chariot. Now the musicians stayed instead with the *kavati* dancers between chariot number one and two and their function was now to play music for them to give rhythm to their wild dance. Along the route, two tents had been set up to shelter the musicians from rain at the places where the procession stopped for the *kavati* dancers to perform. Interestingly, the chariots and the material objects of worship (the three festival statues of the divinities) were now overshadowed by the *kavati* dancers, the humans thought to be possessed by the god Murugan. When the procession had reached its final destination, the dancing continued for another half hour to an hour. Only then did people start to line up for their individual *pūja* ritual to the gods in the chariots. The display of the *kavati* had become more important than the



Figure 11.1 Kavati dancer pierced by a small spear, a symbol of Murugan's *vel*. Photo: Knut A. Jacobsen.

display of the gods and chariots. Display of ecstatic and wild dance as well as pain and suffering and sacrifice of self had become the centre of the procession (see Figure 11.2).

The *kavati* dancers added a quite dramatic and wild element to the procession. The reason given for this added feature was that some young men had asked to be allowed to do the penance because they had already made vows to Murugan. Wishes had been fulfilled and the promised penance had to be performed. The hooks and spears gave an opportunity to experience and show strong personal dedication, devotion, and religiosity. The extreme mortification also added to the sacredness of space that was created by Murugan being moved in procession and which made sacred the dancing ground for the males possessed by him.

In 2009, when I gave an academic presentation on the Norwegian Sri Lankan Tamil procession traditions to a large mainly Canadian Tamil audience, showing many of the photos I had taken of the *kavati* dancers in Oslo, an elderly Tamil stood up during the question and comments session and said: 'I do not know what your Tamils in Norway are doing, but this ritual is rarely performed among the Tamils in Sri Lanka and only as folk rituals in certain villages, not in Jaffna and not as part of the temple processions. We do not know of such temple processions from Sri Lanka'.³ This interesting comment indicated that a dramatic change in the procession culture had taken place. The Canadian Tamil speaker was correct in what he said when understood as an observation of how he remembered the past. However, he was incorrect about the present situation. The comment pointed to the dramatic and rapid change that had taken place in the



Figure 11.2 Display of ecstatic and wild dance as well as pain and suffering and sacrifice of self of the *kavati* dancers which had become the centre of the procession. Photo: Knut A. Jacobsen.

procession culture among the Tamils in Sri Lanka, and which also had spread to the diaspora. *Kavati* processions with hooks and spears were rarely performed in Jaffna before the war starting in 1983 and not very often before the mid-1990s (Derges 2013, p. 129). But from 1996 a change in procession culture started, and *kavati* with hooks and spears was moved from the periphery to the mainstream procession culture. Jane Derges in her ethnographic description of the culture and society of the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka based on fieldwork in 2003 and 2004 gives the following comment about the increased importance of the *kavati*:

Its increasing prevalence dates from the latter part of the war, the period of government army occupation of the northern peninsula in the mid-1990s. Prior to the war, *kaavadi* was performed within a narrow segment of Tamil society; the most deeply devout and, so it was said, ex-prisoners who had made a vow to Murugan ... that if released they would pierce themselves as penance for their misdeeds. Its reputation therefore located the practice within a narrowly confined 'folkish' social and environmental setting as a vow and form of penance involving a small group of intensely devout practitioners. It was consequently a relatively unusual practice and seldom observed prior to the war – in Jaffna, its rare performances would bring people onto the streets. (Derges 2013, p. 129)

Derges notes how the situation changed in the middle of the 1990s after the occupation of the north by the army:

The number taking part swelled and the type of devotee changed as the ritual became a familiar sight throughout the peninsula, especially during the festival period. Its growth continued into the ceasefire and now into the post-war era. The new devotees transcend the boundaries of caste, class and social milieu and include students, labourers, office workers and professionals. (Derges 2013, p. 129)

The changes in the Sri Lankan Tamil procession culture in Norway mirrored the changes in the country of origin. New arrivals and regular visits by the Norwegian Tamils to Sri Lanka probably influenced the emergence of the changes in the procession tradition.

This transformation of *kavati* shows that 'the misfortune of the Tamils in the modern nation state of Sri Lanka is an important context for understanding the religious rituals in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora' (Jacobsen 2009b, p. 183). The procession culture has not been static, but has responded to social change and has been able to express the pain and suffering caused by war and other forms of violence as well as their resistance to the suppression of the Tamils by the Sri Lankan state.⁴ Hook swinging has also become a popular form of *kavati* in Sri Lanka (Derges 2013) and also this form of *kavati* was tentatively transferred to Europe but was discontinued because of an accident. Rolling, a ritual in which devotees roll on the streets around the temple, is practised in a number of Sri Lankan Tamil temples in Europe, but not in Norway since the road round the temple is too steep for rolling to be feasible.⁵

By adding the element of *kavati* and 'asceticism of devotion', a new element of Tamil religiousness had been successfully transferred to Europe and displayed in procession. Similarly to the procession traditions of the country of origin, *kavati* could be read as a

sign of authenticity. The temple competes with other diaspora communities about who has the best procession. During the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the situation for the Tamils in Sri Lanka worsened, and the penance of the *kavati* dancers displayed some of the pain and suffering caused by the tragic situation in their country of origin. *Kavati* gave them an opportunity to express in ritual the pain and suffering they had experienced and witnessed. Most Sri Lankan Tamil families in Norway have had relatives killed in the war.

11.3 The Sikh Vaisakhi Procession

Sikhs in a number of cities in Europe perform *nagar kirtan* processions of the sacred book the *Guru Granth Sahib* at the Vaisakhi festival.⁶ One of the significant processions is in Oslo, and it distinguishes itself in many ways. The Sikh gurdwara in Oslo (Gurduara Sri Nanak Dev Ji) was established more than 30 years ago, in 1986 and it is one of the oldest ones in continental Europe. A second gurdwara in the nearby area of Lier, between Oslo and Drammen (Gurduara Sri Guru Nanak Niwas), opened in 2010. The Lier gurdwara is one of the largest in continental Europe (1 500 m²) and was built from scratch (Jacobsen 2011b). Most gurdwaras in continental Europe are older buildings which have been adapted as gurdwaras. The majority of the Indians in Norway were Sikhs until a few years ago, but with recent immigration of Indians in the last couple of years, the majority is probably now Hindus for the first time. The Hindus from North India have several temples, but have no procession rituals. The Sikhs, however, are well known for their processions, and organize their annual Vaisakhi procession through the main parade and shopping street of Oslo. This Sikh procession displays weapons, people, sacred bodies and fighting techniques, as well as combining religious symbols with written statements about the Sikh religion. Around 2000 Sikhs usually participate in the Vaisakhi procession, an equal number of women and men. All cover their heads as they would when visiting a gurdwara. Vaisakhi is also a Hindu festival, but for the Sikhs, Vaisakhi celebrates the foundation of the Khalsa in 1699.

Khalsa represents a form of Sikhism that puts emphasis on the importance of the material display of a Sikh identity, especially uncut hair, tied up, and covered by a turban. The Khalsa identity is displayed by Sikhs wearing the five Ks (*panj kakar*): *kes* (uncut hair), *kara* (an iron or steel bangle), *kacch* (shorts), *kirpan* (sword or dagger), and *kangha* (comb). The symbols define those initiated in the Khalsa, and set them visibly apart from others. Many Sikhs believe that without these five symbols Sikhism as a religion would lose its identity (Singh 2006). Through symbolic devices that act as material markers, the bodies of the persons come to express Sikh orthodoxy. These material symbols define boundaries and reaffirm loyalty to the group.

The foundation day of the Khalsa celebrated in the procession is symbolized by the display of ritualized bodies. Five persons dressed as the 'five beloved ones' (*panj pyares*) walk in front of the procession, just behind the musicians who by their music signal sacredness and that the procession is moving forward (Figure 11.3). They symbolize the five people who volunteered when Guru Gobind Singh asked for five persons, one at a time, who were willing to die for the Sikh faith. The five men's symbolic beheading, their



Figure 11.3 Display of ritualized bodies: the “five beloved ones” (*panj pyares*) walk in front of the procession. Photo: Knut A. Jacobsen.

emergence thereafter dressed in a uniform, and their initiation into the Khalsa by drinking the *amrit*⁷ mark the origin of the Sikh Khalsa. In the procession, the five beloved wear orange clothes and display raised swords. The five swords symbolize that a procession conquers land as it moves and is a reminder of military parades, although that may not be its intended meaning. The intended symbolic meaning is probably the willingness to sacrifice oneself as well as defend and stand up for the Sikh faith. Five women dressed in blue uniforms also walk together near the front of the procession, behind the ‘five beloved ones’, symbolizing the female Khalsa identity, that women also undergo Khalsa initiation. Blue was the colour of Guru Gobind Singh’s army. One main focus of this procession is to display the Khalsa as the true Sikh identity. Only Khalsa Sikhs can be on the governing board of the gurdwaras in Norway, and many of those who have not taken Khalsa initiation may have an ambivalent relationship to the celebration. For example, in my interviews with young adult Sikhs in a project on young Sikhs in Norway some of the informants emphasized that the Sikh religion is about becoming a better person and that the procession instead privileges the external symbols of the Sikh religion.

What is unique about the Vaisakhi procession in Oslo is that the sacred book of the Sikhs and their living guru, the *Guru Granth Sahib* is not part of the procession. This book is usually at the centre of the *nagar kirtan* procession and is usually carried on a decorated float. *Nagar kirtan* means ‘city singing’ and indicates that it is the sacred book and the songs of the sacred book that are in focus, are celebrated and are being displayed to the audience (for a description of the procession with the *Guru Granth Sahib* in

India, see Myrvold 2008). In the Oslo procession, the leader of the Gurduara Sri Nanak Dev Ji suggested that the display of the book was not necessary and the procession should instead display slogans and information written on banners carried by the participants. One reason for not including the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the procession was to solve the problem that some people watching the procession were smoking cigarettes. Since it is highly inappropriate to expose the *Guru Granth Sahib* for cigarette smoke, the leader suggested that including the book in the procession was not really necessary. The information stated in the banners about the teaching of Sikhism is also provided in flyers distributed along the route. The purpose of the procession was redefined from a public display of the *Guru Granth Sahib* to the spreading of information about the teaching of the Guru. The raised swords and the banners became then the main material objects of display.

Around the same time that the Sri Lankan Tamil procession added *kavati* dancers with hooks and spears through their skin, in 2006, Sikhs added a display of marital arts, *gatka* performances in front of the procession.⁸ *Gatka* is an Indian marital art used by the Sikhs. It is especially associated with Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh, who unlike the other Sikh Gurus were warriors. The use of martial arts in the procession, shows the Sikhs as warriors, and the raised swords of the five beloved, the *panj pyares*, resemble a military parade that symbolically conquers space as it moves. The procession is an annual event. Musicians march in front, just in front of the five beloved ones. The music marks the area of the procession as a sacred area. It also functions to make people aware of the procession and sends a signal that a special event is taking place. The procession takes place in the main shopping street in Oslo on a Saturday when it is usually packed with people. The choice of this location is in order to get as large an audience as possible. The purpose is to convey information about the Sikhs to Norwegians. The use of banners explaining who the Sikhs are and what they believe in, performs this function (see Figure 11.4). The function of the five beloved ones, their clothes and their swords, the turbans, and the five women in blue uniforms is to display Khalsa values. But the main items carried in the procession are banners. These are non-religious objects displaying texts describing the values of Sikhs and Sikhism. The banners state that Sikhs believe in peace, justice, and equality of men and women, that it is part of the Sikh religion to earn a living from hard and honest work, that the Sikhs have to deal with racial prejudice and discrimination based on gender, and that a Sikh prays every day for global peace and welfare for all; and that Sikhs do not cut their hair because one should not cut what God has created.⁹ The banners and the flyers confirm that an important objective of the procession is the display of Sikhs and Sikhism and a way of spreading of information about the Sikh tradition to the public. Some young adult Sikhs I interviewed see a contradiction between the military values displayed by the swords and the *gatka* fights and the wish to show Sikhism as a peaceful, but misunderstood religion. The swords and the *gatka* fighters probably puzzle the mostly non-Sikh Norwegians audience,¹⁰ but there is no banner that explains these activities.

The Sikh procession has several purposes: It celebrates the presence of the Sikhs and informs the public about Sikhism. The procession signals that the Sikhs constitute a significant minority. The aim of the procession through the main parade street is to give the Sikhs visibility, to exhibit own identity to the 'other'. Of course, the procession brings the Sikhs



Figure 11.4 The use of banners in procession explaining the identity of the Sikhs. The banner says “A Sikh fights against against racism and gender discrimination.” In the background is the Norwegian parliament, Stortinget. Photo: Knut A. Jacobsen.

together for a common purpose and this has value for the group by strengthening their identity and unity and for promoting the Khalsa identity. The procession is clearly about shaping the views on Sikhism. The procession creates public awareness of the Sikhs and shows that they are a distinct group that people should recognize. The banners are meant to address perceived prejudices about immigrants of those watching the procession.

The procession ends with a *langar*, a free distribution of food to all and with special performances of *gatka*. Organizers, invited politicians and the leader of Young Sikhs, a Sikh youth organization give speeches. Young Sikhs also organize Turban Day on the same day, mobilizing a large number of volunteers to tie turbans for non-Sikhs. This is done to promote the wearing of turbans, especially for encouraging young Sikhs to wear it. The function of the procession and Turban Day is to show what Sikhism is, to inform non-Sikhs about Sikhism, and to give Sikhs greater confidence in their religion. Confidence in Sikhism makes it easier for devotees to use the material objects that symbolize the Sikh identity on a daily basis.

11.4 Conclusion

Since the 1980s, in many countries in continental Europe religious organizations have increasingly become the main focus for immigrants and they play an important part in maintaining identities. The performance of religious identities in processions on public

streets means that religious groups increasingly have sought public recognition of their religion. The excited performance of the *kavati* dancers, the display of the sacrifice of the self of the *panj pyares*, and the mock fighting of the *gatka* performers which have been introduced in the public processions are a sign of increased self-confidence of these religious groups in the immigrant environment. It also indicates the difficult situation of both the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the Sikhs of Punjab. *Kavati*, *panj pyares*, and *gatka* are displays of loss and sorrow and lost wars and the preservation of dignity. Both groups have a collective memory of having constituted separate political units that lost their political independence when they were conquered by the British, and then again when they were incorporated into new nation states as minorities. Both Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus and Punjabi Sikhs have as minorities suffered much violence in Sri Lanka and India. Their own nationalism never materialized into independent states. The use of hooks, spears, swords and fighting sticks, and other *gatka* weapons in the processions is perhaps a reminder of that. The material objects and ritualized bodies of the Sikh and the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu processions in Europe cannot be understood as disconnected from the historical and contemporary dynamics of India and Sri Lanka.

Notes

- 1 The independence movement argued that the Tamil people of the island of Sri Lanka was a distinct nation called Tamil Eelam.
- 2 Flowers constitute the largest expense of the temple (Jacobsen 2010). Other important items are bananas, coconuts, milk, and oil for the lamps.
- 3 I am quoting this from memory, and it sums up the main arguments. The conference was the Tamil Studies conference in Toronto, 21–23 May 2009 and the title of my presentation was ‘Ethnic Identity and Religious Pluralism: Sri Lankan Tamil Ritual Spaces in Norway’.
- 4 The annual procession ritual of the Sivasubramanyar Alayam takes place in the vicinity of the temple and from the temple to the sacred lake. Most of those present are Tamils who are the main spectators of the processions. There are hardly any non-Tamils present to watch the procession. However, the temple leadership seeks the presence of newspapers and television companies on the days of the *rathotsava* and *tirthotsava* and encourages them to publicize the festival. This also shows that the Norwegian public is an intended audience of the processions.
- 5 For this practice among Sri Lankan Tamils in Germany, see Baumann (2007). According to Baumann the first time the rolling body circumambulation was performed in Germany was in 1994.
- 6 For Sikhs in Europe see Jacobsen and Myrvold (2011, 2012).
- 7 *Amrit* refers to the water prepared by Guru Gobind Singh to be used for initiation when he created the Khalsa. This *amrit* is called *khande da amrit*, ‘water touched by the double edged sword’. It has since been a central part of the initiation ritual of the Khalsa.
- 8 For the renewed interest in *gatka* among young Sikhs in the diaspora in Europe, see Satnam Singh (2015).
- 9 Mostly the same banners are used every year. They have been made by persons at the gurdwara and the text on them has been decided by the leadership of the gurdwara.
- 10 The intended audience for the Sikh procession is non-Sikh Norwegians. The procession takes place in the main shopping street of Oslo on a busy Saturday around noon.

Works Cited

- Baumann, M. (2007). Performing vows in diasporic contexts: Tamil Hindu, temples and goddesses in Germany. In: *Dealing with Deities: The Ritual Vow in South Asia* (eds. S.J. Raj and W.P. Harman), 129–144. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Baumann, M., Luchesi, B., and Wilke, A. (eds.) (2003). *Tempel und Tamilen in zweiter Heimat. Hindus aus Sri Lanka im deutschsprachigen und skandinavischen Raum*. Würzburg: Ergon Press.
- Clothey, F.W. (1978). *The Many Faces of Murukan: The History and Meaning of a South Indian God*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Clothey, F.W. (2006). *Ritualizing on the Boundaries: Continuity and Innovation in the Tamil Diaspora*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Davis, R.H. (2005). The iconography of Rama's chariot. In: *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India* (ed. D. Ludden), 27–54. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Derges, J. (2013). *Ritual and Recovery in Post-Conflict Sri Lanka*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Geaves, R. (2007). *Śaivism in the Diaspora: Contemporary Forms of Skanda Worship*. London: Equinox.
- Harman, W.P. (1989). *The Sacred Marriage of a Hindu Goddess*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Inden, R. (2006). *Text and Practice: Essays on South Asian History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (2004). Establishing ritual space in the Hindu diaspora in Norway. In: *South Asians in the Diaspora: Histories and Religious Traditions* (eds. K.A. Jacobsen and P. Pratap Kumar), 134–148. Leiden: Brill.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (2006). Hindu processions, diaspora and religious pluralism. In: *Religious Pluralism and the Diaspora* (ed. P. Pratap Kumar), 163–173. Leiden: Brill.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (ed.) (2008a). *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and the Diaspora*. London: Routledge.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (2008b). Processions, public space and sacred space in the south Asian diasporas in Norway. In: *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora* (ed. K.A. Jacobsen), 191–204. London: Routledge.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (2009a). Processions. In: *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. I Regions, Pilgrimage, Divinities* (ed. K.A. Jacobsen), 445–453. Leiden: Brill.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (2009b). Establishing Tamil ritual space: a comparative analysis of the ritualisation of the traditions of the Tamil Hindus and the Tamil Roman Catholics in Norway. *Journal of Religion in Europe* 2 (2): 180–198.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (2010). Leadership structures and government regulation of Hinduism in Norway. *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration* 5 (2): 39–46.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (2011a). Hinduismen i Norge. In: *Verdensreligioner i Norge*, 3e (ed. K.A. Jacobsen), 76–127. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Jacobsen, K.A. (2011b). Institutionalization of Sikhism in Norway: community growth and generational transfer. In: *Sikhs in Europe: Migration, Identities and Representations* (eds. K.A. Jacobsen and K. Myrvold), 19–36. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Jacobsen, K.A., Aktor, M., and Myrvold, K. (2015). *Objects of Worship in South Asian Religions: Forms, Practices and Meanings*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jacobsen, K.A. and Myrvold, K. (eds.) (2011). *Sikhs in Europe: Migration, Identities and Representations*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Jacobsen, K.A. and Myrvold, K. (eds.) (2012). *Sikhs Across Borders: Transnational Practices of European Sikhs*. London: Bloomsbury.

- Kumar, P.P. (2008). Rathayatra of the Hare Krishnas in Durban: inventing strategies to transmit religious ideas in modern society. In: *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora* (ed. K.A. Jacobsen), 205–216. London: Routledge.
- Lochtefeld, J.G. (2008). Getting in line: the Kumbha Mela festival procession. In: *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora* (ed. K.A. Jacobsen), 29–44. London: Routledge.
- Luchesi, B. (2008). Parading Hindu gods in public: new festival traditions of Tamil Hindus in Germany. In: *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora* (ed. K.A. Jacobsen), 178–190. London: Routledge.
- Myrvold, K. (2008). Personifying the Sikh scripture: ritual procession of the Guru Granth Sahib in India. In: *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora* (ed. K.A. Jacobsen), 140–156. London: Routledge.
- Nesbitt, E. (2011). Sikh diversity in the UK: contexts and evolution. In: *Sikhs in Europe: Migration, Identities and Representations* (eds. K.A. Jacobsen and K. Myrvold), 225–252. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Singh, M. (2006). *Sikhs: Forms and Symbols*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Singh, S. (2015). Worshipping the sword: the practice of Śāstar Pūja in the Sikh warrior tradition. In: *Objects of Worship in South Asian Religions: Forms, Practices and Meanings* (eds. K.A. Jacobsen, M. Aktor and K. Myrvold), 182–199. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Singh, P. and Gerald Barrier, N. (eds.) (1996). *The Transmission of Sikh Heritage in the Diaspora*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Singh Tatla, D. (1998). *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood*. London: Routledge.
- Sinha, V. (2008). Gods on the move: Hindu chariot processions in Singapore. In: *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora* (ed. K.A. Jacobsen), 159–177. London: Routledge.
- Trouillet, P.-Y. (2012). Overseas temples and Tamil migratory space. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 6: 2–21. <http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/86/77/29/PDF/samaj-3415-6-overseas-temples-and-tamil-migratory-space.pdf> (accessed 27 February 2014).
- Vertovec, S. (2000). *The Hindu Diaspora. Comparative Patterns*. London: Routledge.
- Welbon, G.R. and Yocum, G.E. (eds.) (1983). *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Younger, P. (2002). *Playing Host to Deity: festival religion in the South Indian tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CHAPTER 12

Geopolitics, Space Sacralization, and Devotional Labour on the US–Mexico Border

Elaine A. Peña

12.1 Religion Moves

Religion moves. Or put more accurately, diverse sets of actors have carried (and continue to carry) belief systems and practices across empires, national borders, and neighbourhoods (Vásquez and Marquardt 2003; Tweed 2008; Levitt 2013). Sometimes that movement is voluntary but many times it is forced. And adjusting is not easy. As a plethora of studies on immigrant religious groups have shown, devotees use ritual, doctrine, idioms, symbols, imagination, material culture, and various forms of capital to surpass the hardships that accompany mobility – economic uncertainty, xenophobia, family separation, diminishing rights, and the emotional effects of displacement (see, for example, Orsi 1985; Warner and Wittner 1998; McCarthy Brown 1999; McAlister 2002; Korom 2003). A subset of that literature has focused specifically not only on how religion moves but also how it also desires place – how migrants rally around faith-based values to cultivate spaces of worship (Tweed 1997; Orsi 1999; Peña 2011; Becci et al. 2013). The impulse to sanctify space may manifest itself as a brick and mortar edifice, as a makeshift sidewalk altar, or as an annual public procession in which devotees imbue the areas they traverse with their religious sensibilities. Each of these practices of place-making is powerful in its own right, building a deeply felt experience of home through the tangible and the intangible work of believers and the deities they venerate.

Embedded in those studies of immigrant communities who use religion as a coping mechanism are various definitions and qualifications of what constitutes diasporic religion. Thomas Tweed's work on the subject, for example, proposes that 'diasporic religion is translocative'. Building on J.Z. Smith's thinking on diaspora and place making (1978), translocative refers to 'the tendency among many first- and second-generation

[Cuban] migrants to symbolically move between homeland [Cuba] and the new land [Miami]' (Tweed 1997, p. 95). Using 'transtemporal and translocative symbols' located within a Catholic shrine, he argues, Cubans in Miami are able to simultaneously interpret their present and conjure up a collective past in one place. Dealing with a different set of political actors and a multi-sited playing field, Paul Christopher Johnson's findings (2007) resonate with Tweed's insights. Johnson, however, productively insists that there is a difference between 'religious diasporas' – a dispersion of people bonded by common religious ideals (e.g. Puritans, Jews) and 'diasporic religion' – which acknowledges how a group of people far away from home use religious culture, which may not necessarily be their common denominator, to remember and manifest shared conceptions of homeland (p. 258). Indeed, as Johnson and others have signalled, migration and diaspora may share a basic commonality – both involve people on the move – but they are not interchangeable terms (Brubaker 2005; Vertovec 2008). Moreover, the individually and/or collectively-crafted worldviews people carry across spaces, however integral to the maintenance of a common religious identity, are not transhistorical and immutable.

Answering the call to reflect on mobility, material culture, and sacred spatiality, this chapter is keen on drawing our attention to the US–Mexico border where those processes operate in a heightened state of tension. It stays close to traditional definitions of borders, the 'physical and highly visible lines of separation between political, social and economic spaces' (Newman 2006, p. 144), and foregrounds the materiality of the border – the walls, fences, bridges, and man-made ports-of-entry. This perspective differs from those of 'borderlands' scholars who often emphasize the far-reaching effects of international boundary lines to trouble the 'precise correspondence between nation, state, and territory' (Wilson and Donnan 2012, p. 10). From thinking through 'poetic' formulations that characterize religious production in the borderlands (León 1999, p. 543), to examining global institutions that strategically envision borderlands as a common geographic space (Martínez 2014), to focusing on the creative re-purposing of landscape, symbol, and ritual beyond the boundary line proper (Sarat 2013, see also Gómez-Peña 2000; Hondagneu Sotelo et al. 2004), borderlands-oriented studies illuminate the vastly creative ways devotees envision religion's relationship to territory.

Both 'border' and 'borderland' studies share an interest in understanding the way people on the move emplace their cultures and religions. The spaces in and around international boundary lines, however, challenge scholars of religion to engage issues of scale,¹ jurisdiction, and infrastructure – to address the legal logics and enforcement responsibilities of two or more governing entities (i.e. Mexico and the United States) as well as examine the international political relationships and the economic potential (e.g. oil, transport) that are bound to the soil. While it may seem that those issues fall outside purview of the study of religion, they shape and constitute power along different social-spatial dynamics. As Vásquez and Knott remind us, 'the locative work of religion involves navigating the religious and secular ecologies in which migrants settle. Religion entwines itself with spatial regimes and biopolitics, particularly with national and local modes of governmentality, modes of managing immigrant and native populations' (2014, pp. 343–344, see also Vásquez 2008). A border area's geopolitical profile impacts actors' daily experiences and itineraries. It influences, for example, the

location, duration, and frequency of cross-border and wait-station devotion. Cross-border refers to the international commute of actors who may work in one country (i.e. the United States) but technically reside in another. The term wait-station acknowledges the realities of those who must bide their time on one side of the border (see, for example, Arreola 2010; Andersson 2014). To be clear, citizenship or residency status notwithstanding, actors who live, cross, and or/wait an international boundary line are subject to some form of state intervention even if they are perceived to be 'stateless' (Arendt 1951).

This chapter uses *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* (Parish Church of the Holy Child), a Catholic Church located two blocks south of the 'Gateway to the Americas' pedestrian bridge that connects Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas (Mexico) to Laredo, Texas (United States), to highlight the relevancy and utility of a geopolitical approach in the study of border religion.² The parish is an excellent case study because it attracts a variety of cross-border and wait-station religious actors on the move – daily round, off-site, and itinerant. The border environment that hosts the parish and which plays an integral role in determining its usage is a particularly restless site of encounter. Nuevo Laredo is a principal entry point of entry for migrants and refugees travelling from Central America and the interior of Mexico as well as a thoroughfare for sanctioned (i.e. import/export) and unsanctioned industries (i.e. the drug trade). Adapting to those rhythms and ruptures, on-the-go parishioners and itinerant devotees make use of the space when possible and quickly so. Moreover, as Nuevo Laredo's oldest parish church and a federally recognized historic monument, *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* also draws the attention of government authorities that are legally obligated to subsidize half of its operating and maintenance costs. In that respect, the church often confronts expectations that exceed its function as a site of worship. This is particularly true during moments of crisis when investing in the church not only strengthens devotees' ties to the sanctuary but also suggests a communal sense of wellbeing in that city space.

Combining a performance-oriented ethnographic research and geopolitical analysis, this chapter explores space sacralization processes at *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* in Nuevo Laredo (Mexico). It identifies different forms of 'devotional labour' – the embodied practices (e.g. reciting prayer, singing hymns, choreographing dance, cleaning the shrine) and logistical preparations (e.g. curating the altar, raising money, rallying volunteers, negotiating permission) that develop, preserve, and legitimize sacred space (Peña 2011). Devotional labour draws attention to how the embodied, often ephemeral, gestures of sanctification working in tandem with well-rehearsed rites and traditions make religion material and efficacious. This analysis demonstrates how devotional labour, even when improvised, not only transforms the physical infrastructure of *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* but also makes the act of sanctifying space significant beyond the walls of the church.

The first section reviews how *neolaredenses* (residents of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico) erected the church in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War. It does so to establish how geopolitical factors infused a sense of civic responsibility and religious necessity into the earliest stages of the space's development. The second part of the chapter draws our attention to the interconnections among embodied practice, the tension between institutional and non-institutional conceptualizations of sacred space, and the symbolic

elements underwriting shrine maintenance. It examines how parishioners, itinerant devotees, clergy, and municipal actors use the church to advance various agendas – including using the space as a site of worship and as a site of civic engagement (Lefebvre 1991, pp. 33–39).³ Inspired by Arjun Appadurai's work on the 'social life of things', particularly his claim that 'it is only through the analysis of trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things' (1988, p. 5), the last section offers an intimate portrait of space sacralization processes in the church. It traces the trajectory and transformation of an eighteenth-century sculpture of the Ascension of Christ from an object of art to a sanctified object. Reflecting on the statue's burgeoning role in the church, which has been identified as both *el Cristo de la Ascensión* and *el Cristo de los Inmigrantes*, illuminates how devotees on the move adapt and claim sacred space materially and in improvisatory ways.

12.2 Emplacing Religion on the Border: Historical and Geopolitical Considerations

La Parroquia del Santo Niño and the church of San Agustín, its predecessor located in Laredo, Texas (United States), are bound by geography, circumstance, and necessity. They both bear the historic burden of being the first brick and mortar churches in their respective towns. San Agustín, the older of the two, came to fruition in classic colonial fashion. San Agustín de Laredo's founders worked to establish the parish soon after securing permission from José de Escandon, the first governor of Nuevo Santander (New Spain), to populate that area in 1755. Like staking a flag in the ground, erecting a church would not only give them a de facto claim to that stretch of land but also meet the outpost's administrative needs (i.e. baptism, matrimony).

In 1767, Spanish authorities parcelled Laredo and annexed the territory on the west bank of the river (now Nuevo Laredo) to the township. Both came under the jurisdiction of the San Agustín parish, which had been established by the Dioceses of Guadalajara in 1760 (Juárez 2011, p. 3, see also Green 1991). Construction processes commenced in 1768 and were completed in 1788. Those emplacement processes did not unfold in a conflict-free environment. Frontier life, particularly Indian-Spanish-Mexican-American land and trade route conflicts (Weber 1997; Valerio-Jiménez 2013), not to mention the emergence of competing interests and loyalties during Mexico's War of Independence from Spain (1810–1821), the Republic of Texas' violent rise to power (1836–1845), and the formation of the Republic of the Rio Grande, which was established in 1840 with Laredo as its capital, frequently challenged the area's sense of stability (Hinojosa 1983). What irrevocably changed Laredoans' religious life and landscape was the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which divided *la Villa de Laredo* into Laredo, Texas (United States) and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas (Mexico). Although priests based at San Agustín (now in Laredo, Texas) crossed the Rio Grande to continue ministering to parishioners until 1867, residents on the Mexican side of the border quickly rallied together to establish their own place of worship (Juárez 2011, p. 10).

Constructing *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War bears out *neolaredenses'* efforts to piece together a sense of place, religious identity, and civil society in a time of crisis. In 1851, a combination of personal labour, private donations, and the strategic lobbying of ecclesiastical officials set the process in motion. Gifts from Nuevo Laredo's well-to-do residents, which included items like '*un par de zarcillos de oro*' (a pair of gold earrings) and '*un Rosario con cruz de plata*' (a rosary with a silver-plated cross), could not finance the entire operation. As historian Juan E. Richer noted, establishing the parish, '*se llevó a cabo por medio de limosnas, tanto en efectivo como en materiales, habiendo contribuido con su trabajo personal gratis la mayor parte del vecindario*' (was accomplished with donations – made in cash and in building materials – and the larger community's voluntary personal labour) (Richer 1958, p. 22; García Ortega 1980, p. 10). Residents formed committees to monitor production costs and construction. Similar to other expressions of popular Catholicism in which the devotion to patron saints framed the production and experience of space in Mexico (see, for example, Durand and Massey 1995; Vanderwood 1998; Wright-Rios 2009), a separate group was tasked with soliciting a statue of el Santo Niño de Atocha – '*patrón tutelar de la villa*' (protector of Nuevo Laredo) – from nearby Revilla (Guerrero Viejo) and arranging for it to be blessed in that diocese in early January 1851 (Richer 1958, p. 23).⁴

The laying of the first stone on 15 October 1851 was commemorated formally, '*con las ceremonias correspondientes, tanto religiosas como civiles*' (with the appropriate religious and civil ceremonies) (Richer 1958). Indeed, one of the most powerful themes that emerged from historical accounts of *la Parroquia's* initial construction phase, a process that took almost 40 years (1851–1888), was that rising to service and accepting responsibility were paths of action inspired as much as by faith as by civic duty. Establishing a church not only sustained Catholicism's stronghold in that fledgling municipality but also functioned as a symbol of *neolaredenses'* collective desire to assimilate their newly reconfigured environment with their birthright national identity. Indeed, those Mexican citizens had elected to continue residing in the immediate area or moved to the west bank of the river. They chose unequivocally to continue being Mexican, which also meant that they would continue to be Catholic (Ceballos Ramírez 1989). The colonial governing apparatus transposed from the Iberian Peninsula is church as much as it is state. They remained inextricably linked, even in a post-colonial environment. In that respect, the idea that the church exceeds its religious function at this early stage in its development is not surprising. It was both a sanctified space and a symbol of national pride that signalled *neolaredenses'* capacity to cope with the disorienting effects of a seismic geopolitical shift after 1848.

12.2.1 *La Parroquia del Santo Niño: Use, Maintenance, and Expectations*

Although forced to operate independently after 1848, Nuevo Laredo and Laredo remained connected by family ties, language, history, and most prominently, an interdependent economy built around transportation routes and trade (Ceballos Ramírez 2001; Adams 2008). Nuevo Laredo and Laredo's geographic position, specifically having San Antonio Texas (United States) and Monterrey, Nuevo León (Mexico) in their line of sight

as well as their proximity to the gulf port of Corpus Christi, attracted the Texas-Mexican Railroad and the International and Great Northern Railroad in the early 1880s. The arrival of those railway companies not only connected *los dos Laredos* (the two Laredos) to the interior of both countries but also brought unprecedented development and infrastructural change to the area (Alarcón Cantú 1997, p. 25). The development of the Inter-American Highway (1937) – the Central American section of the Pan-American Highway that reaches the US–Mexico border at Nuevo Laredo – and the Texas Interstate Highway (1960), which stops just shy of the US–Canadian border, further solidified Nuevo Laredo's reputation as a migration thoroughfare and one of North America's most important commercial ports.⁵

Today, that rail system is used primarily to transport freight. But the train, which is referred to as *la bestia* (the beast) and has been described as 'the Río Grande's first cousin. They both flow with the same Central American blood', also moves people (Martínez 2013, p. 52). Riding atop the train, migrants risk life and limb to escape poverty, organized crime, or perhaps mistakes they cannot correct. The rail line makes Nuevo Laredo part of a 'traditional' immigration route – 'Guatemala, Chiapas, Veracruz, Edo. de México, San Luis Potosí, Nuevo León, y Tamaulipas' (Kendzierski 2011, pp. 13–14).

Nuevo Laredo's geographic location at the crossroads of the Mexican Federal Highway 85 and US Interstate 35 also makes it an attractive drug smuggling thoroughfare (Navarro and Vivas 2012, p. 384). Vying for access to those transport routes, the Gulf drug cartel relocated its base of operations from Sinaloa, Mexico to Tamaulipas, Mexico in 2003 and changed power dynamics in that border state. *Neolaredenses* as well as migrants seeking to travel on to the United States have had to cope with acts of macabre violence and trauma – beheadings, mass shootings, kidnappings, disappearances, and extortion (Brophy 2008, p. 255, Isacson and Meyer 2012, p. 37). *Neolaredenses* with enough resources have moved to Laredo, Texas, even abandoning their homes in the process. Some 'new refugees' have relocated their business operations to the United States (Garza 2009). But the majority of residents do not have that option. In turn, Laredoans, who may not experience the violence firsthand but who may literally hear or read about it, no longer cross the border into Mexico. Nuevo Laredo's perceived inability to sustain rule of law, to maintain a law enforcement presence that is not corrupt, and to temper cartel activity have discouraged unnecessary travel to Tamaulipas (Kilburn et al. 2013, p. 32).

While it may seem like those processes are far removed from local sites of worship like *la Parroquia del Santo Niño*, ethnographic research suggests that they actually inform the church's day-to-day operations. The use and maintenance of the sacred space as well as larger socio-historical expectations placed upon the church are linked to those developments in several ways. Current parish priest Father José Martínez Ramírez commented, for example, that it was hard to keep the church (or any business) open during extreme periods of violence – when cartel soldiers and federal law enforcement officers engaged in street warfare, when naming a police chief was an effective death sentence, or when mutilated bodies were discovered hanging from bridges or buried in shallow graves. Martínez also noted that it was not just clergy members at *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* who struggled but also personnel across the Dioceses of Nuevo Laredo, which oversees 25 parishes and one cathedral, and

presumably staff at other sites of worship in the city (e.g. Mormon, Baptist, Presbyterian, Evangelical). Even then, he maintained, the parish had to stay open:

Aquí las puertas están abiertas para todos. Es un recinto en que se busca dar paz, orar por la paz, entonces la violencia, aunque exista, no nos va a impedir en lo más mínimo. Verdad. Y es lo que queremos, que a raíz, precisamente, de la oración se deserte esta violencia. Dice la sagrada escritura, la biblia, dos pecados ha cometido mi pueblo: el haberse alejado de mí y haber recorrido a cisternas rotas que no pueden retener el agua. Es decir, la violencia es el producto de habernos alejado de Dios. Hemos hecho ídolos del dinero, del poder, de la corrupción, y eso es los [sic] consecuencias de habernos alejado de Dios. Son esas cisternas rotas que en un momento dado ofrecen un bienestar [...].⁶

Speaking off the cuff and quoting from Jeremiah 2:13, Father Martínez makes two points: widespread violence in Nuevo Laredo is evidence that the city has strayed from God and prayer can help alleviate said violence. Interpreting scripture, Martínez explains *neolaredenses* are drawing their life force from a damaged fountain. But they are too distracted by money and power to see that it will no longer be able to provide for them. Keeping the doors of the church open for a rotating roster of parishioners, providing them with a place to cultivate wellbeing through prayer, can potentially heal the city and its residents.

The church's devotee base, however, fluctuates because of its physical location. It is not surrounded by dwellings but by boarded up buildings, which once upon a time functioned as nightclubs, bars, markets, and restaurants, and by unyielding tertiary sector businesses – dental surgeries, pharmacies, and currency exchanges (Curtis 1993). In that respect, it is not a neighbourhood church; it does not count on a steady Sunday-service congregation (or tithes). A variety of religious actors on the move – *neolaredenses* who live in Nuevo Laredo (and not necessarily within the vicinity of the church), *neolaredenses* who live in Nuevo Laredo but who commute to Laredo to work, *neolaredenses* who live in Laredo and who travel to Nuevo Laredo for work purposes (like Father Martínez, for example), and migrants coming primarily from Honduras and the interior of Mexico en route to the United States – rely on the sanctuary and dictate its day-to-day rhythm.

Because the church is located so close to the border, and specifically less than 300 metres from the metropolitan area's sole pedestrian bridge, it caters to *neolaredenses* who cross into and return from Laredo on foot everyday.⁷ Its location also attracts migrants who stop in before they attempt to cross the river or a place where they come to look for help when they've recently just arrived. Church staff commented that border crossers, both local and migrant, may only stay for a couple of minutes. When asked about that movement, Father Martínez confirmed, '*es típico de esta iglesia, entran y salen*'. But he was careful to point out that not everyone who passes through the doors of the church is a migrant:

Si hay gente que viene a orar precisamente para que Dios los ayude y crucen el puente sin peligro o el río, mejor dicho. Pero hay gente que vienen a darle gracias a Dios a la Virgen porque les concedió un milagro. Hay gente que va a trabajar a Laredo y antes de ir pasa y aquí, a su momento de oración, o regresa de su trabajo dándole gracias a Dios, verdad, por el trabajo.⁸

Parishioners say a quick prayer and bless themselves as part of their daily rounds or perhaps leave a coin and a message at the foot of their preferred saint, of which there are many. In addition to el Santo Niño, who reigns over the altar, the sanctuary also features statues of *el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*, *San Judas Tadeo*, *el Monje Charbel*, *la Santísima Trinidad*, *la Virgen del Carmen*, and *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. On the statue of *el Monje Charbel*, for example, ribbons strewn over his arms narrate the prayers and wishes of some of those religious actors (see Figure 12.1). A close examination of a ribbon reveals that a devotee asked the saint to look after ‘*mi bienestar y mi trabajo en la c-66 del puente Int. Laredo*’. The physical imprints of those visits do more than change the appearance of the church. Those artefacts, the material traces of devotional labour, reinforce the space’s promise of promise. Devotees remind each other that a dream or an impossible situation can potentially be achieved or resolved there (Orsi 1998, p. 116).

It is important to note that visitors may not actually enter the sanctuary. One young man from Honduras whom I spoke with, for example, stood shyly at the front door. He had just survived a harrowing three-day leg of his journey atop ‘*la bestia*’ and he was seeking money to eat and to pay for a shower. When asked how he arrived at the church he answered that he hailed a ride asking only to go to ‘*la frontera*’. In that respect, while not recognized formally as a help centre for transnational migrants like Nuevo Laredo’s *la Casa del Migrante Nazareth* (part of the Scalabrini network), as the church located closest to the border *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* inadvertently becomes a geographic reference point for travellers trying to find their way.⁹



Figure 12.1 *El Monje del Charbel*, 11 October 2013, la Parroquia del Santo Niño, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. Source: Photo courtesy of author.

The church also serves another set of parishioners, off-site parishioners – *neolaredenses* who previously lived within city limits but who have moved to the outskirts of the metropolitan area for work or even to another municipality. Most notably, work opportunities at maquiladora assembly plants, fostered in large part by the Border Industrialization Program (1965) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (1994), have gradually propelled *neolaredenses* to industrial zones located on the outskirts of the city over the past three decades (Trujeque Díaz 1997, p. 521; Palomares León 2001, p. 31). Those devotees may no longer worship at *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* on a regular basis but make a point of maintaining the sacred space because that is where their families' religious identity developed. A church staff member, explained: '*la gente que viene de afuera, viven en esta misma ciudad – km 12, km 14 las colonias más aledañas. Son la gente que antes, en un tiempo, vivió aquí, se fue a vivir más retirada. Y desde allá vienen. Se viene alguna gente a pie, en camión. Y ellos mismos lo comentan: yo aquí me bauticé y yo me fui a vivir a tal lugar pero mi iglesia es esta*'.¹⁰ Having experienced an important rite-of-passage like baptism or even just having the memory of accompanying parents and grandparents to the church links them to that space. Off-site parishioners make incredible sacrifices to attend Mass on Sunday. But they also show their loyalty to Nuevo Laredo's first parish, also their parish, in more tangible ways.

During restoration efforts to commemorate the church's one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary, for example, an off-site parishioner based in Monterrey, Nuevo León donated a considerable amount of money to resurface and polish the floor. Another group of devotees, many of them women, prepared and sold *tamales*, *enchiladas*, and *taquitos* to buy paint and to renovate the doors of the church. While very much a weekend activity, their devotional labour has made a substantial impact on the parish – both in terms of finances and image-management. Taking note of their backstage efforts, for example, one media outlet reported, '*Recibe "manita de gato" la Iglesia Santo Niño: Una iglesia con aroma a pueblo y a enchiladas es la Santo Niño, patrimonio de los neolaredenses al albergar parte de su historia*' (Monge Estrada 2012). Their contributions not only made for good copy but also highlighted the parish's dual function in the city. As suggested above, it is very much a beloved site of worship among *neolaredenses* for a variety of personal reasons. But it is also a veritable part of the city's patrimony and thus deals with a distinct set of rules and expectations. The National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), a federally funded organization, recognized *la Parroquia del Santo Niño* as a historic monument in 1983 (Villarreal Peña 1988, p. 6). Because of that designation, Nuevo Laredo's *presidente municipal* is obligated to take on 50% of operating and restoration costs. His office also provides city workers who supply all of the physical labour for the remodelling projects. Donations, like those contributed by off-site parishioners, pay for the cost of materials. Similar to other places and moments in Mexico where federal agencies fund, and therefore define appropriate modifications to historic sites, there is a catch (see, for example, Scheper Hughes 2010, pp. 189–198). Before any change can be made to the interior or the exterior of the church, clergy members must secure approval from INAH officials to ensure that the church's authenticity isn't compromised. Authentic in this context means austere. Having to defer to federal authorities' guidelines creates a certain amount of tension, particularly during restoration efforts, but it does not deter *neolaredenses* from putting their own mark on the sacred space.

12.2.2 *Cristo de la Ascensión/Cristo de los Inmigrantes*

Nonagenarian Adela 'Marti' Bautista de Franco is one such 'off-site' parishioner. Raised in Mexico City, Marti moved to Nuevo Laredo in the 1950s and soon after established Marti's – a high-end art, clothing, and jewellery shop a block away from the church. Nuevo Laredo's volatile environment diminished her client base, which forced her to close and relocate the shop to San Antonio, Texas in 2009. She now resides in Laredo and crosses the border with a chauffer/body guard at least twice a week to oversee the work of a handful of employees who produce clothing for the San Antonio location. It is worth noting that Marti has several religious identities. First and foremost, she is a Sephardic Jew. And (not but) she considers herself a Buddhist who once meditated in a Burmese temple for 33 days. And she is a long-time patron of *la Parroquia del Santo Niño*. In anticipation of the church's one-hundredth anniversary in 1988, for example, she gifted a *vitral del abside* (a stained glass window placed behind the altar). She has also donated a table, which she renovated from *escombros* (scraps) she found outside of a church in Guanajuato, Mexico. Her patronage and her religious beliefs are not incompatible. As she puts it, '*cuando llegues al punto de la nada, entonces ya eres todo. Y no necesitas nada*' (when you reach the point of nothingness, you are everything. And you do not need anything).¹¹

Marti's most recent gift to the church is a late nineteenth-century sculpture of the Ascension of Christ. She did not buy the piece individually but in bulk during one of her scouting and acquisition trips to the interior of Mexico in the 1950s. One of Marti's staff members discovered the soot-ridden Christ after a fire destroyed much of the store's inventory in 1981. The sculpture is striking not only because of its age or because it survived the fire but also because it is carved from one piece of wood. There is no way to verify its provenance, its creator's identity, or whether its posterior was hollowed out to prevent the wood from cracking or to hide valuable objects (see Figure 12.2). Nevertheless, the statue has taken on a new set of reference points now that it inhabits the church.

Marti was quick to point out that she gifted the Christ figure to the church '*en un momento espontaneo*' (spontaneously).¹² Nevertheless, preparing the Christ for sanctification required close to two months of effort for herself, her personal workforce, for Father Martínez, church staff members, and city labourers. One of Marti's long-time employees cleaned the statue in the empty store. Another labourer built a 9 × 6 frame and pressed a combination of gold, bronze, and copper paper onto it to make it look ornate (see Figure 12.3). Both men transported the frame, the statue, swaths of fabric, and tools to the church. Marti oversaw every detail of the installation process – modifying the Christ's position on the wall, the lighting scheme, and adornments over the course of a week. At one point, she even climbed a ladder to place a white shroud on the Christ just as she had done in her store (see Figure 12.4). Throughout the process, Marti, often in conversation with Father Martínez, insisted that the church should resist the austerity aesthetic prescribed by federal agencies. She argued, '*la iglesia es una inspiración para el hombre. Y (que) haya bellezas, si no, ¿que sería de nosotros? ¿Qué sería el Vaticano sin el arte?*'¹³ (the church is an inspiration for humankind. And let there



Figure 12.2 Rear View of the Christ figure, 10 September 2013, Marti's, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. Source: Photo courtesy of author.



Figure 12.3 Embellishing the frame, 12 September 2013, Marti's, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. Source: Photo courtesy of author.



Figure 12.4 Marti and Rubén perfecting the Christ, 11 October 2013, la Parroquia del Santo Niño, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. Source: Photo courtesy of author.

be beauty, if not, what would become of us? What would the Vatican be without art?). For Marti, placing the exquisite sculpture within the walls of the church would not only enliven the sanctuary and inspire parishioners but also contribute a much-needed spirit of renewal to the city's historic centre.

On 12 October 2013, Marti, her employees, and about 50 attendees, many of them children, witnessed a public blessing ceremony officiated by Father Martínez. The event completed the Christ figure's serendipitous transformation from an object of art to a sanctified statue. But even before the rite was over, the statue had already started to transform the sanctuary. In a space filled with a veritable army of saint figures, the Christ commanded onlookers' attention. Itinerant devotees who had never visited the parish before, particularly those who had lost limbs riding atop '*la bestia*' or had been hurt trying to cross the border, began to identify with the Christ because, like them, his body is mutilated. He is missing both of his feet and one arm (see Figure 12.5). And because the Christ has faced similar hardships, they not only look upon his body but also rub his legs in solidarity. David Morgan's work on religious visual culture is particularly instructive here. He reminds us, 'more than a merely passive means of receiving sensory impressions of the physical world, seeing is a selective and constructive activity, a way of making order, of remembering, and of engaging people and the material world in relationships' (Morgan 2005, p. 48, see also Houtman and Meyer 2012). Far from contrived, those encounters produced exchanges; they created affinities, sanctified space, and set precedent well before the official blessing ceremony (Taylor 2005; Scheper Hughes 2010).



Figure 12.5 *Cristo de los Inmigrantes*, 18 September 2013, la Parroquia del Santo Niño, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. Source: Photo courtesy of author.

Perhaps responding to those early interpretations, Father Martínez offered another take on the Christ's disfigurement in the official blessing ceremony/donation verification letter he signed along with Martí, the church secretary, and a representative from the mayor's office. A portion of the document reads, '*la escultura está mutilada de sus brazos y de sus pies, ignoramos el por qué, pero a la vez es muy significativo para todos nosotros los cristianos porque Él necesita de nuestras manos para servir a los demás, Él necesita de nuestros pies para anunciar el evangelio. ¿Te gustaría ser los pies y las manos de Cristo?*' (there is no way to know why the statue is dismembered but nevertheless it is important to us as Christians because it signals that Christ needs our hands to serve others. He needs our feet to spread the gospel. Would you like to be Christ's feet and hands?). From that point of view, the statue reinforces the importance of service – one of the church's running themes. Indeed, a stack of handbills in the entrance to the church asks visitors to volunteer their time to the parish. Some choices include participating in the liturgy, teaching catechism, helping with maintenance tasks like painting and electrical work, and running bingo sessions. The form's prefatory remarks are also telling: '*Cristo me invita a regresar sus dones prestados en servicio a mi comunidad parroquial, de lo contrario soy un ladrón*' (Christ invites me to give back his supreme goodness with service to the parish; otherwise, I am a thief).

Supported by daily round, off-site, and itinerant actors' devotional labour, the Christ's journey from a salvaged sculpture in Martí's empty store to a sanctified object housed within the walls of a church has been quick. The largely improvised nature of the Christ's itinerary, however, does not make him more popular than holy or preclude

space sacralization. This analysis has shown that making sense of his trajectory, the precariousness of that border environment, and the power grids that shape the frequency and duration of religious practice requires a multi-scalar analysis that is attentive to both geopolitical factors and intimate moments of exchange. In order to understand the efficacy of the sacred objects, spaces, and practices at *la Parroquia del Santo Niño*, we must account for the complex relationships of reciprocal influencing that operate in a border environment. Those dynamics range from the power of the state to interpellate and manage the mobility of citizens and 'illegal aliens' as well as its capacity to select and preserve history (as does the INAH) to the embodied work of parishioners – preparing tamales, painting doors and walls, donating materials, leaving a coin and/or a note in front of their preferred deity on their way to work in Laredo, Texas (United States). Materiality in all its diversity is pervasive in these relations.

It may be too early to tell whether devotees will leave messages before him, or whether parishioners will reciprocate in his name, or whether praying in his presence will inspire peace and goodwill outside the walls of the church. One thing is fairly certain – the Christ's journey, however serendipitous, has contributed to *la Parroquia del Santo Niño's* dual role as a site of worship and as a site of civic engagement in Nuevo Laredo.

Notes

- 1 For a discussion of the limitations and possibilities of scale see Sallie A. Marston (2000).
- 2 This analysis draws from fieldwork and archival research conducted in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas and Laredo, Texas over the course of two and half months (1 August 1 to 15 October 2013). I quote from recorded interviews conducted en route to the church and at the site proper. I would like to thank the *neolaredoenses* and Laredoans with whom I worked, especially Marti Franco, for contributing their time and support to this endeavour. I would like to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities (FT-60803) for funding my field visit to the border.
- 3 For studies that also use Lefebvre's framework to analyse space sacralization processes see Elizabeth McAlister (2005) and Kim Knott (2005).
- 4 Historical studies refer to the church as *el Santo Niño de Atocha*, originally a Spanish devotional entity who is also recognized as a patron of travellers and prisoners in Mexico, but the identity of the church's namesake is still a debatable point. He is also referred to as *el Santo Niño Jesús* and *el Santo Niño de la Natividad del Señor*. The parish does not carry either name affiliation. The identity of the Christ child, like many relics in the church, is continually under negotiation.
- 5 Today, the Laredo-Nuevo Laredo Metropolitan Area claims over 600 000 residents and boasts four international bridges – the Gateway to the Americas Bridge (pedestrian and non-commercial), the Juárez-Lincoln International Bridge (non-commercial), the Columbia-Solidarity Bridge (non-commercial and commercial), and the World Trade Bridge (commercial). To give a concrete sense of what that means, *los dos Laredos* moved \$494 billion dollars in import/export trade in 2012 making it the busiest port in the United States after New York and Los Angeles. See '2012 International Trade Corridor Plan', Texas Department of Transportation (1 December 2012) <http://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/tpp/misc/itcp.pdf> and 'Laredo Monthly Economic Indicators 2002–2013', Laredo Development Foundation (11 September 2013) http://www.ldfonline.org/Economic_Indicators_091113.pdf.

- 6 Father José Martínez Ramírez, Interviewed by author. Recorded: 12 September 2013.
- 7 Bridge employees process over 200 000 pedestrians every month. For more information see the City of Laredo International Bridge System traffic distribution reports available at <http://www.cityoflaredo.com/bridgesys/Reports/TrafficDist.htm>.
- 8 Father José Martínez Ramírez, Interviewed by author. Recorded: 10 September 2013.
- 9 *La Casa del Migrante Nazareth* (est. 2004), which is connected to the Diocese of Nuevo Laredo, provides food, washing areas, beds, and counselling for migrants primarily from Honduras (60%) and Mexico (30%) but also from El Salvador and Guatemala. According to the centre's quarterly newsletter, the number of migrants who have sought help at the centre has fallen over the past 10 years, from over 10 000 between 2004 and 2008 to 6000 from 2009 to 2011, for a variety of reasons. Natural disasters have affected the train service. Organized kidnapping and extortion rings have also deterred migrants from the area.
- 10 María de Jesús Caballero Teniente, Interviewed by author. Recorded: 12 October 2013.
- 11 Adela Bautista de Franco, Interviewed by author. Recorded: 24 September 2013.
- 12 Adela Bautista de Franco, Interviewed by author. Recorded: 10 October 2013.
- 13 Adela Bautista de Franco, Interviewed by author. Recorded: 24 September 2013.

Works Cited

- Adams, J.A. (2008). *Conflict and Commerce on the Rio Grande: Laredo, 1775–1955*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.
- Alarcón Cantú, E. (1997). *Interpretación de la estructura urbana de Laredo y Nuevo Laredo*. Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.
- Andersson, R. (2014). Time and the migrant other: European border controls and the temporal economics of illegality. *American Anthropologist* 116 (4): 795–809.
- Appadurai, A. (1998). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arendt, H. (1951). *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Schocken.
- Arreola, D.D. (2010). The Mexico-US borderlands through two decades. *Journal of Cultural Geography* 27 (3): 331–351.
- Becci, I., Burchardt, M., and Casanova, J. (eds.) (2013). *Topographies of Faith: Religion in Urban Spaces*. Leiden: Brill.
- Brophy, S. (2008). Mexico: cartels, corruption and cocaine: a profile of the Gulf cartel. *Global Crime* 9 (3): 248–261.
- Brubaker, R. (2005). The “Diaspora” diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28 (1): 1–19.
- Ceballos Ramírez, M. (1989). *La Fundación de Nuevo Laredo (elementos para la interpretación de una tradición épica)*. México DF: Miguel Ángel Porrúa.
- Ceballos Ramírez, M. (2001). Los dos Laredos: historia compartida y experiencia de la frontera. In: *Encuentro en la frontera: mexicanos y norteamericanos en un espacio común* (ed. M.C. Ramírez), 233–157. México DF: El Colegio de México.
- Curtis, J.R. (1993). Central business districts of the two Laredos. *Geographical Review* 83 (1): 54–65.
- Durand, J. and Massey, D. (1995). *Miracles on the Border*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- García Ortega, R. (1980). *Apuntes para la historia de Nuevo Laredo: la parroquia del Santo Niño*. México DF: Jus.
- Gómez-Peña, G. (2000). *Dangerous Border Crossers: The Artist Talks Back*. New York: Routledge.
- Green, S. (1991). *A History of San Agustín Church*. Laredo, TX: Webb County Heritage Foundation.

- Hinojosa, G.M. (1983). *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755–1870*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.
- Hondagneu, S., Pierette, G.G., Lara, H., and Ortiz, B.C. (2004). “There’s a spirit that transcends the border”: faith, ritual, and postnational protest at the U.S.-Mexico border. *Sociological Perspectives* 47 (2): 133–159.
- Houtman, D. and Meyer, B. (2012). *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Isacson, A. and Meyer, M. (2012). Beyond the border buildup: security and migrants along the U.S.-Mexico border. Washington Office on Latin America (12 April 2012), http://www.wola.org/files/Beyond_the_Border_Buildup_FINAL.pdf (accessed 12 July 2012).
- Johnson, P.C. (2007). *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Juárez, J.R. (2011). San Agustín Church and Laredo Under Six Dioceses. Paper presented at the monthly meeting for the Villa San Agustín de Laredo Genealogical Society, Laredo, Texas (11 June 2011).
- Kendzierski, L. (ed.) (2011). *Migrantes: revista de información y pastoral migratoria*. Nuevo Laredo: Casa del Migrante Nazareth.
- Killburn, J., Miguel, C.S., and Kwak, D.H. (2013). Is fear of crime splitting the sister cities? The case of los dos Laredos. *Cities* 34: 30–36.
- Knott, K. (2005). *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*. London: Equinox.
- Korom, F.J. (2003). *Hosay Trinidad: Muharram Performances in an Indo-Caribbean Diaspora*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (trans. D. Nicholson-Smith). Oxford: Blackwell.
- León, L.D. (1999). Metaphor and place: the U.S.-Mexico border as center and periphery in the interpretation of religion. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67 (3): 541–571.
- Levitt, p. (2013). Religion on the move: mapping global cultural production and consumption. In: *Religion on the Edge: De-Centering and Re-Centering the Sociology of Religion* (eds. C. Bender, W. Cadge, p. Levitt and D. Smilde), 159–178. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marston, S.A. (2000). The social construction of scale. *Progress in Human Geography* 24 (2): 219–242.
- Martínez, Ó. (2013). *The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail*. (trans. D.M. Ugaz and J. Washington). London: Verso.
- Martínez, A.M. (2014). *Catholic Borderlands: Mapping Catholicism onto American Empire, 1905–1935*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- McAlister, E. (2002). *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and its Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McAlister, E. (2005). Globalization and the religious production of space. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44: 249–255.
- McCarthy Brown, K. (1999). *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Monge Estrada, G. (2012). Recibe ‘manita de gato’ la Iglesia Santo Niño. Primerahora (26 October 2012). www.primerahora.com.mx/index.php?n=82686 (accessed 12 August 2013).
- Morgan, D. (2005). *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Navarro, F.M. and Vivas, L. (2012). Violence, governance, and economic development at the U.S.-Mexico border: the case of Nuevo Laredo and its lessons. *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 28 (2): 377–416.
- Newman, D. (2006). The lines that continue to separate us: borders in a “borderless” world. *Progress in Human Geography* 30 (2): 143–161.

- Orsi, R.A. (1985). *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem 1880–1959*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Orsi, R.A. (1998). *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Orsi, R.A. (ed.) (1999). *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Palomares León, H. (2001). Dinámica económica y configuración intraurbana en Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. *Frontera Norte* 13: 1–35.
- Peña, E.A. (2011). *Performing Piety: Making Space Sacred with the Virgin of Guadalupe*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Richer, J.E. (1958[1901]). *Reseña histórica de Nuevo Laredo*, 2e. Nuevo Laredo: Impresores del Norte.
- Sarat, L.M. (2013). *Fire in the Canyon: Religion, Migration, and the Mexican Dream*. New York: New York University Press.
- Scheper Hughes, J. (2010). *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix: Lived Religion and Local Faith from Conquest to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, W.B. (2005). Two shrines of the Cristo Renovado: religion and peasant politics in late colonial Mexico. *American Historical Review* 110 (4): 945–974.
- Trujeque Díaz, J.A. (1997). Dinámicas políticas y sociales de la urbanización popular en Nuevo Laredo (1990–1995). *Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos* 12 (3): 521–548.
- Tweed, T.A. (1997). *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tweed, T.A. (2008). *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Valerio-Jiménez, O.S. (2013). *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Vanderwood, p. (1998). *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Vásquez, M.A. (2008). Studying religion in motion: a networks approach. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20: 151–184.
- Vásquez, M.A. and Knott, K. (2014). Three dimensions of religious place making in diaspora. *Global Networks* 14: 326–347.
- Vásquez, M.A. and Marquardt, M.F. (2003). *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion across the Americas*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Vertovec, S. (2008). Diaspora and religion. In: *New Approaches to the Study of Religion: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches* (Book 2) (eds. p. Antes, A.W. Geertz and R.R. Warne), 275–304. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Villarreal Peña, I. (1988). *Revista Conmemorativa del Primer Centenario de la Parroquia del Santo Niño*. Nuevo Laredo: Imprenta Offset Papelería.
- Warner, R.S. and Wittner, J. (1998). *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Weber, D.J. (1997). Conflicts and accommodations: Hispanic and Anglo-American borders in historical perspective, 1670–1853. *Journal of the Southwest* 39 (1): 1–32.
- Wilson, T.M. and Donnan, H. (2012). *A Companion to Border Studies*. London: Blackwell.
- Wright-Rios, E. (2009). *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism: Reform and Revelation in Oaxaca, 1887–1934*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

CHAPTER 13

The Imagination of Matter

Mesoamerican Trees, Cities, and Human Sacrifice

David Carrasco

To see Mexico from the air is to look upon the face of creation. Our everyday, earthbound vision takes flight and is transformed into a vision of the elements...a portrait of water and fire, of wind and earthquake, of the moon and the sun.

Carlos Fuentes (1990, p. 15)

In the Beginning was Place, said the philosopher.¹ Not the 'Word' but Place was in the Beginning. Or in the rubric of this volume, in the Beginning was 'matter'. What mattered in the Beginning was matter itself – materiality, things, objects, land, water, rocks, and even trees, as in the story of the Garden of Eden and Aztec cosmic trees. I know the biblical text begins with 'In the beginning God created ...' telling us that God was in the Beginning, but the story only becomes accessible to readers in any existential way when we read that 'God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness'. Soon after we read, 'And the LORD God formed man of the *dust* of the *ground*, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' Materiality again. And soon those material likenesses, Adam and Eve, are walking in a *garden* where there is the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil'. This tree becomes the talisman of the great drama of male and female, sex and sin, knowledge and ignorance, serpents and fruit. In the beginning was the *place*.

Look at almost any creation myth, and materiality is *the* beginning or *in* the beginning. Religious stories often begin with direct statements of the materiality of the sacred world. 'Sedi is the *Earth*: Melo is the *Sky*' say the Minyong (Long 1983). 'The cosmos which had been created from *primeval water* remained quite confused' say the Egyptians. Notice that even in those creation myths where a stout claim of no materiality is made and a vague, formless deity is emphasized, immediate references are to material objects and physical beings in the world. 'At first there was neither *earth* nor *sky*' say the Dhammai. Or 'For a long period Ta'aroa dwelt in his *shell*. It was round like an *egg* and revolved in space in

continuous darkness'. Neither darkness, confusion, nor divine breath holds back the matter and materiality of the world. So say the Navaho: 'There were nine *people* living there, six kinds of *Ants* and three kinds of *Beetles*' to tell us what dwelt in the beginning that was a place [*italics mine*]. Or consider a more recent statement by a contemporary Tz'utujil ritual practitioner who identifies sacred objects as 'animated by beings from the deep past.' I am speaking of stones, shards, shells which are often wrapped and carried in sacred bundles as reported by Linda Brown. Pablo tells her,

The earth has changed many times in the past. It is always changing and creating These sacred materials are part of the earth; they come from there. They are the first beings to be born on the earth. They came before us, before the creation of this sun. They come from the darkness. These stones have a lot of talent, knowledge, and medicine. Even if it's a very small piece – it is powerful! (Brown 2015, p. 58)

These mythic statements about material things lead me as an historian of religions to ask questions. How did primordial beings come to be materialized, cared for, and made real in everyday life? What shapes, material, appearances, sizes, weights? How does ritual mediate between religion and materiality, the divine and its likenesses and the birthing, living, and dying in material forms? It is interesting to me that the Hebrew Bible gives emphasis to humans as 'likenesses' of God while the Aztecs built their ritual sacrificial system around the same idea – humans became the *teixiptla* of gods, the living *images*, *likenesses* of the gods before the sacrifice took place. For the ancient Hebrews who wrote their Bible, humans had living souls because they were likenesses of God. For the Aztecs, humans contained divine fires and souls and *became likenesses* of gods through ritual adorning, shaving, painting, dancing and killing of their bodies.

According to Mircea Eliade, who wrote a lot about religion and materiality, all sacred places discovered and constructed by human kind were dependent 'on a primeval revelation which disclosed the archetype of the sacred space *in illo tempore*', i.e. in the time of creation, linking the contemporary with the primordial. This revelation was then copied, imitated, and repeated in 'the erection of every new altar, temple or sanctuary' (Eliade 1996, p. 372). Eliade should not have stopped there with his list of 'erections' because human bodies in Mesoamerica were transformed ritually every day, week, month, and year into divine beings lavishly decorated and moving through the community with spectacular colours, sounds, gestures, and dance steps. These erect imitations moved and often mapped a ceremonial landscape wherein the dramas of life and death were acted out according to ritual patterns. It can be said that humans themselves were sacred 'places' moving to and fro, dynamic examples of a primordial revelation.

Carlos Fuentes agrees with me as the opening quotation shows. He is writing in a book of aerial photographs of Mexico's astonishing natural and cultural landscape where the 'face of creation' looks up at us. We the viewers are placed in the position of a sky god reviewing the 'elements' or, as Émile Durkheim might say, the 'elementary forms' of a great section of Mesoamerica's cultural life. We see the cosmogonic forms of 'water and fire, wind and earthquake, of the moon and sun' but we also see more – cupolas of cross-shaped Catholic churches where the mass of Jesus' sacrifice take place.

We see bullrings where the drama of warrior and animal death is played out, petroleum tankers that carry fluids from deep in the earth, ruins of pre-Hispanic temples, haciendas, Xochimilco's floating gardens, coastlines and clotheslines, and the moon and sun floating above us all. We see cities!

In my review of Mesoamerican materials, the greatest style centre and material likeness of religious reality and social imagination was the city. The imagination of religious matter was made manifest in the scores of monumental urban centres of local and regional communities. These social and symbolic focal points had the enormous power to integrate what the urban ecologist Paul Wheatley calls the 'ecological complex' that consists of intensive agriculture, territorial order/boundaries, technology and most importantly, social stratification emphasizing unequal human access to the goods and the gods. Wheatley's magisterial comparative study of urban origins shows how monumental ceremonial precincts modelled after a sophisticated religious imagination integrated the ecological complex into long-standing cities. The historian of religions Charles H. Long refers to this religious imagination as 'the imagination of matter'² that develops through a dialectic process of undergoing and becoming deeply aware of the primacy and potency of natural forms in the world and reshaping that awareness in symbols, myths, and rites. Wheatley's work on ecological complexes of primary urban generation shows that the various components of agriculture, technology, warfare, exchange, and territory were *integrated* through a religious imagination that provided elites with divine authority and persuasiveness to shape the city as an *imago mundi*, an earthbound image of the cosmos. Wheatley calls this religious imagination 'cosmomagical thinking' which insisted on a 'parallelism between the macrocosmos and microcosmos without which there could be no prosperity in the world...'. But what were the concrete sources for this thinking about transcendent realities? What were the shapes, substances, and flows that opened the doors of the mind to formulate cosmic patterns? The very materials of the biological and celestial world! The *matters* of nature and the city, i.e. the crops, the mountains and rivers, animals and insects, lights, lightning and storms in the sky, temples and altars, neighbourhoods and playgrounds. The religious imagination, prodigious in its dimensions whether present in local or imperial forms, insists on a grand parallelism between the starry, stormy firmament above and the teeming biological rhythms and social orderings on earth and in the ancestral and mineral worlds below. These connections between cosmos and material forms are seen across the world in many cultures as a recent publication by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago shows. In *Heaven on Earth: Temples, Ritual and Cosmic Symbolism in the Ancient World*, edited by Deena Ragavan, we see multiple examples of intimate parallelisms between elaborate material forms such as temples, pillars, houses, gates, graffiti, decorations and ritual practices, and cosmological formulas. To give but one example from a place distant in space but near in patterning we learn from Tracy Miller's work on temple and pillar architecture in China that when architects and priests built the Hall of Light in the sixth century CE, the ritual efficacy of the building depended on the incorporation of the 'circle and square, heaven and earth, monthly progression, and the cycle of the season...into a single, multi-storied building organized around a central axis'. This grand building and the more modest Yicihui Pillar, a monument to the burial of rebels fighting against the Northern Wei government of the time, show how a visible archetype

was created by consolidating 'multiple systems of knowledge about the cosmos' in a mandala pattern (Miller 2013, p. 19).

Three significant advances on these dynamic models of materiality and religion include the works of Jonathan Z. Smith, Alfredo López Austin, and Lindsay Jones. The former, while supporting the Eliadian ontology as appropriate for understanding ancient Mesoamerican and Near Eastern materials argues for a 'locative view of the world' that reverses the view of 'As Above, So Below' into a more material based model of 'As Below, So Above' (Smith 2005). Smith's reversal which insists we begin inquiries with *texts and territories* as much as *maps* of territories helps us pay attention to ways people project their material relations onto the cosmos and into their theologies. The neo-Marxist Mexican anthropologist Alfredo López Austin has created several influential paradigms for interpreting the ideologies of human body, place, and time in Mesoamerica and argues that 'believers construct the supernatural from their intimate experience, projecting their reality when imagining the other world' (López Austin 2015, p. 31). The historian of religions Lindsay Jones, in a series of thoughtful publications on sacred architecture, some of the world's most elaborated 'material', writes of 'ritual-architectural events' as key to understanding how religion and materiality interact. Religious communities are formed when the 'superabundance of architecture' and their fulsome *meanings reside in an active dialogue* between the built forms and the pilgrims, priests, and ritual participants who parade, see, and carry out ritual actions in these places. In this way, the production of ontologies and powerful ritual objects and buildings is an ongoing exchange between places and peoples.

In what follows, I explore the religious imagination of matter and the urbanized ecological complex by looking at three Mesoamerican materials, i.e. sacred tree, sacred city, and sacred body. I will begin each exploration with a single text that describes what I call a religious matter: (i) the account of Hernán Cortés' physical attack on the Ceiba tree of the Maya in 1519, (ii) Bernal Díaz del Castillo's description of his arrival in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan in 1520, and (iii) the *Florentine Codex's* account of the Aztec sacrifice of the perfect human warrior in the city that Carlos Fuentes, looking back centuries later, called 'bitch city, hungry city, city in the true image of gigantic heaven' (1971, p. 5).

13.1 The Sacred Tree and the Spanish Conquest

The place that I care most about is Mexico, and the history of Mesoamerica is a good place to learn about the materiality of religion. Referring to Paul Wheatley's 'ecological complex', Mesoamerica was one of the six areas of 'primary urban generation' in human history. Complex indigenous urban societies built around monumental architecture serving as ceremonial theatres for acting the out of mythology and political competitions originated around 1500 BCE and developed up until the 'great encounter' with Spanish armies, Catholicism, and empire. Among the key contributors to the development of complex urban societies in Mesoamerica were the diverse ecological niches and the rise of advanced agricultural practices that sustained cities, city-states, and several empires. In various religious traditions stretching from Honduras to central

Mexico, the iconography found on sculptures and in codices shows us that the cosmic tree was a powerful symbol of the regeneration of flowers, fruits, and other edible plants, the agricultural systems, and of life and death. When the Mexican botanist Robert Bye examined the 1540s indigenous codex known as the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan* #2, he was impressed with many ritual plants and what he discovered to be 'Trees of the Other World and This Earth' painted throughout the pictorial narrative. He wrote that the abundant flowers, trees, food plants, and more showed that

Trees are important for the proper functioning of the Mesoamerican cosmos and are often depicted as a dual structure of opposing elements. Through the tree's bidirectional conduit, humans could interact with the deities of the underworld and sky. The great cosmic tree, Tamoanchan, is at the center of the universe between the contrasting poles. (Bye and Linares 2007, p. 269)

Bye and others have proved that the tie between rituals, plants, sacred trees, and cosmology is a permanent, if malleable, part of Mesoamerican history.

An account of the turning point in Hernán Cortés' march to the Aztec capital shows us how Spaniards became aware of the religious power Mesoamericans experienced in certain trees. The narrative also hints at how Spanish Catholics renewed their commitment, in a time of war, to their symbolic tree – the wooden cross where Jesus Christ was sacrificed.

According to Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a soldier who participated in these events, not long after arriving on the mainland of Mesoamerica the Spaniards fought their way up the coast, drawn in part by rumours and reports of a rich and great kingdom and city of the Aztecs. At the culmination of a bloody skirmish near the small city-state of Cintla the Spanish soldiers came to a town where 'took possession of that land for His Majesty, performing the act in His Majesty's name'. We expect from our reading of other Spanish acts of taking possession of a 'land' that he planted a flag and spoke a sermon or uttered a prayer in Spanish. Instead, after killing a number of local warriors and driving others into hiding, Cortes gathered his own troops and as many local inhabitants as possible into the central ceremonial area where a giant tree stands. Demanding the attention of all, he carried out a public performance of cutting marks in a tree that, in the worldview of the local people, represented the central, dynamic power of the Maya universe. We are told

It was done in this way; he drew his sword and as a sign of possession he made three cuts in a huge tree called a *Ceiba*, which stood in the court of that great square, and cried that if any person should raise objection, that he would defend the right with the sword and shield which he held in his hands. (Carrasco 2008, p. 40)

By looking in more detail of this cutting of the tree we gain access into Maya and Catholic worldviews about the ties between the material and religious dimensions of existence. Further, we can understand what thought he was up to and what the *Ceiba* tree meant to the Maya.

In this public act witnessed by native priests, warriors, traders, and other members of the Maya community, Cortes came to the central courtyard of the town and displayed

himself as a warrior attacking, three times, a 'huge tree called a *Ceiba*'. Weeks before this event, Cortés discovered another Spaniard, a Catholic priest named Aguilar who had been shipwrecked in Cozumel 10 years before and had survived as a servant and labourer in a Maya community where he learned to speak Maya and know some aspects of Maya religion. Cortés must have learned from Aguilar, who was now his key translator of Maya speech, that the *Ceiba* tree had a sacred power and prestige of unusual intensity in Maya life. As a Catholic, he may have linked the significance of the tree at the centre of the community with the prestige and power of the Christian sacred tree, i.e. the Cross in Spanish culture. However he had come to know about the religious meaning of the *Ceiba* tree for the Maya, he decided to perform an act of ritual conquest of this community that also reminded his own soldiers and priests that the symbol of the Trinity, i.e. the three cuts, triumphed, through him, over the Maya peoples and their religious views. This was also the beginning of the religious education of the local Maya in Catholic teachings.

In Maya thought, then and now, the *Ceiba* was the World Tree; i.e. it was believed to embody the most essential powers of fertility, stability, and the renewal of life on earth. The *Ceiba* represented the vertical structure of the cosmos. Its roots were believed to reach into the underworld where the ancestors lived and to anchor the earthly Maya to the gods below. It was valued for its height and was said to touch the sky connecting the Maya with the powers of rains, storms, and the lights of the atmosphere. In Maya art (see <http://arts.unomaha.edu/art/SOWELL/ART2040/pacalsar.html>), this tree was depicted as a stylized cross – a four-part structure located in the *centre* of the world, cosmos, or ceremonial courtyard and represented the five cosmic parts in balance. This pattern of four parts and the centre is referred to as 'quadrapartition' (four parts) and 'quincunx' (five parts) among scholars. This pattern of four parts and the centre of the world is sometimes depicted with four sacred trees holding up the sky in the four quadrants of the universe as in the case of the Codex Fejervary Mayer. Sometimes a central sacred tree is depicted as well.

The sacred *Ceiba* tree's supreme importance as a cosmic symbol is further shown in the design of the sarcophagus of the renowned seventh century Maya king Pacal who is depicted after death in the underworld with a huge *Ceiba* tree emerging upward from his stomach. In this intricately carved image, we are presented with an ensemble of Maya symbols including sacred birds, jewels, the jaws of the underworld, and the dead king all organized by the elaborate image of the *Ceiba* tree linking the sky to the earth and the world below.

Cortés' understanding of the Maya perception of the materiality of their cosmic tree becomes clearer a short time after the events just narrated when on Palm Sunday, the week before Easter, he repeats his symbolic conquest in another town. After more intense skirmishes he 'ordered the Caciques to come with their women and children' to pay homage to the Virgin Mary and the Cross. What he does next is audacious.

...Cortes ordered them to send six Indian carpenters to accompany our carpenters to the town of Cintla, there to cut a cross on a great tree called a *Ceiba*, which grew there, and they did it so that it might last a long time, for as the bark is renewed and the cross will show there forever. (Carrasco 2008, p. 49)

Is this not the wooden beginning of many Maya Christs that appear in many Maya communities in the centuries that followed? History now teaches us that in Maya hands and hearts, these crosses are not so much signs of their conquest as of their distinctive styles of devotion, resistance, and dexterity. In 1847, one of Mexico's greatest indigenous revolutions broke out after the apparition of the 'Talking Cross' persuaded natives to revolt against the oppressive Ladinos. This led to the devastating 'Caste War of Yucatan'. Today in areas crossed by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century there are numerous 'talking crosses' that speak to Maya peoples about their ancestral gods and the 'Christs' who look after them from their wooden crosses. Even when the crosses don't talk they are sometimes worshipped at places where the divine surges into view and becomes a 'vessel of sacred treasure and place of refuge' (Taylor 2015). As Jennifer Hughes (2010) shows in her biography of a Mexican crucifix named Cristo Aparecido and made out of maguey, a venerated cross can be worshipped and politicized during centuries of its ritual use.

13.2 Mesoamerican Cities as Super Materiality

Another European who recognized the wonder and beauty of Aztec objects was the greatest artist of the Northern Renaissance, Albrecht Dürer. In 1521, while Cortés was forming Spanish-Indigenous alliances to conquer Moctezuma's capital, Dürer went to Brussels to paint the King of Denmark's portrait. Surprisingly, he saw an exhibition of the Aztec treasures that Cortés had sent to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. He waxed eloquently,

Also I have seen the things which they have brought to the King out of the new land of gold: a sun all of gold, a whole fathom broad, and a moon, too, of silver, of the same size, also two rooms full of armour, and the people there with all manner of wondrous weapons, harness, darts, wonderful shields, extraordinary clothing, beds, and all kinds of wonderful things for human use, much finer to look at than prodigies. These things are all so precious that they are valued at 100,000 florins, and all the days of my life I have seen nothing that reaches my heart so much as these, for among them I have seen wonderfully artistic things and have admired the subtle ingenuity of men in foreign lands; indeed, I don't know how to express what I there found.³

I do not know if Dürer was an unstoppable hyperbolist, but he gives a religious and economic tinge in his diary when he writes that this treasure 'was much more beautiful to me than miracles. These things are so precious that they have been valued at 100000 florins'.

These marvellous objects must have come from the social, political, and symbolic centrepiece of the Aztec capital which was described in the same wondrous tones of Dürer, only this time by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who wrote that upon approaching Tenochtitlan

we saw so many cities and villages...and that straight and level causeway going towards Mexico, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments they tell of in the legend of Amadis on account of the great towers and cues and buildings rising from the water and all built of masonry. And some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream (Carrasco 2008, p. 156)

In reality, Tenochtitlan was the supreme settlement of a political and cultural empire made up of over 400 towns and city-states spread through many regions of central Mesoamerica. According to demographers the city contained nearly 200 000 people and directly influenced over three million people through its political decisions, religious ceremonies, myths, market places, and military elites residing in the ceremonial city located in Lake Texcoco. Tenochtitlan was the dominant sacred and political settlement of a Triple Alliance, which included the city-states of Tezcoco and Tacuba, located *on the shores* of the five lakes that filled up the basin of Mexico. Together these three polities strove to control hundreds of communities spread over an area of more than 77,000 square miles. Yet population, social complexity, and political power was concentrated on an island of only 4.6 square miles, which actually combined the two separate settlements of Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan into one core settlement. Seville, the largest city known to most of the conquistadors, had 60,000 people, while London had closer to 50,000. The largest cities on earth, Paris and Constantinople, each had roughly 300,000 inhabitants.

Once Cortés' expedition began to penetrate the edges of the Aztec empire, he became fascinated and even obsessed with finding his way to the distant city. While other towns and cities both attracted and repulsed the Spaniards with their architecture, ritual practices, and market places, no other settlement compared in size, riches, religious intensity, or political prestige with the 'great City of Mexico' that the Spaniards first saw in 1520. The continuation of Díaz del Castillo's passage of this moment has fascinated readers for centuries.

And then we entered that city of Iztapalapa, the appearance of the palaces in which they lodged us! How spacious and well built they were, of beautiful stone work and cedar wood, and the wood of other sweet scented trees, with great rooms and courts, wonderful to behold, covered with awnings of cotton cloth....we went in the orchard and garden, which was such a wonderful thing to walk in...great canoes were able to pass into the garden from the lake...and all was cemented and very splendid with many kinds of stone monuments with pictures on them...I say again that I stood looking at it and thought that never in the world would there be discovered other lands such as these, for at that time there was no Peru, nor any thought of it. Of all these wonders that I then beheld today all is overthrown and lost, nothing left standing. (Carrasco 2008, p. 157)

All of this reflects Wheatley's notion of the 'ecological complex' with its key components of (i) productive and extensive agriculture, (ii) technological sophistication, (iii) territorial control and (iv) more importantly social stratification. The authority of elite priests and nobles always made an abundant display of material wealth, prestige, and immense power. As the Spaniards quickly learned, the Aztec capital was both a garden city of great agricultural productivity and the centre of a tributary empire that attracted and redistributed huge supplies of foodstuffs and commodities. The emphatic commitment to social stratification and a pyramidal society was impressed upon the Spaniards once inside the city's confines when they were confronted with a parade of the nobles whose number and demeanour reflected the religious cosmology and material riches of the capital. Approaching the heart of

the capital, groups of chiefs and lords glide past the Spaniards who are amazed at the 'very rich mantles, the brilliant liveries of one chieftain different from those of another and the causeway was crowded with them'. Here, I quote at some length the relevant passage.

When we arrived near to Mexico, where there were some other small towers, the Great Moctezuma got down from his litter, and those great Caciques supported him with their arms beneath a marvelously rich canopy of green coloured feathers with much gold and silver embroidery and with pearls and *chalchihuites* suspended from a sort of bordering, which was wonderful to look at. The Great Moctezuma was richly attired according to his usage and he was shod with sandals (*cotoras*) for so they call what they wear on their feet, the soles were of gold and the upper part adorned with precious stones. The four Chieftains who supported his arms were also richly clothed according to their usage, in garments which were apparently held ready for them on the road to enable them to accompany their prince, for they did not appear in such attire when they came to receive us. Besides these four Chieftains, there were four other great Caciques, who supported the canopy over their heads, and many other Lords who walked before the Great Moctezuma, sweeping the ground where he would tread and spreading cloths on it, so that he should not tread on the earth. Not one of these chieftains dared even to think of looking him in the face, but kept their eyes lowered with great reverence, except those four relations, his nephews, who supported him with their arms. (Carrasco 2008, p. 158)

13.2.1 Aztec Cosmovision

In these eyewitness accounts, the capital appears to be a monumental settlement floating in lakes, the heart of an ecological complex marked by sophisticated architecture, grand sculptures, and fertile gardens, crowned in sweet fragrances and all in the midst of an effective transportation system working so smoothly it must be in the higher realm of legend. Díaz del Castillo knew that his powers of description were inferior to the cultural artefact he was entering and observing. He tells us a great deal about what *he* saw, and this eyewitness account is a valuable entry into further understanding of the Aztec city as a sacred place. Following the clues of his effusive description we turn to an Aztec song about the city in order to *gain some access* to what the city meant for the Aztecs.

Proud of itself,
Is the City of Mexico, Tenochtitlan
Here no one fears to die in war
This is our glory
This is Your Command
O Giver of Life
Have this in mind, oh princes
Who could conquer Tenochtitlan
Who could shake the foundation of heaven?
(Leon Portilla 1969, p. 87)

In this passage, we sense that the city was more than just an economic, sculptural, or even military wonder. Rather it is eulogized as a sacred, even cosmic city that provided its inhabitants with a shared sense that divinities, ancestors, and the powers of creation and destruction were manifest all around them. The city is a proud, fearless, and glorious place. It is an invincible centre that linked the world of fearless warriors with the universal god referred to here as the 'Giver of Life' (*ipalnemohuani*). This High God appears in many primary sources as a primordial creative force, the generator of all life and power in the universe. In Aztec cosmology, Ometeotl dwelled eternally in the thirteenth level of heaven above the earth. The heavens were conceived as a powerful, fertilizing, vertical shaft reaching from the surface of the earth upward to the highest heaven where this Ometeotl, a single deity consisting of male and female dimensions, dwelled. The city's crucial location in the celestial scheme and its link with this deity is evident in the statement that the city is 'the foundation of heaven', the bottom level of the celestial shaft, the crucial point of union between the celestial powers above the earth and life on earth. It was a kind of lynch pin holding the city close to the divine forces of the gods above and below and yet anchored in the capital city. The Aztecs called the land containing their city and empire 'Cemanahuac' or 'land surrounded by water'. This terrestrial world, like the universe above and around it, was divided into four major cosmic zones, referred to in at least one text as '*nauhcampa*' or 'from the four directions' which implies the 'four quarters of the world'.

The best single model of this four-part universe surrounding a supreme city or centre is found in the *Codex Fejérváry Mayer* where the entire cosmos is depicted as having five parts, with the four quadrants or *nauhcampa* extending outward from the central section (click on http://www.famsi.org/research/pohl/jpcodices/fejervary_mayer/img_fm01.html). Each quadrant was associated with specific names, colours, influences, and calendar signs. Although the pattern varied from culture to culture, a typical Mesoamerican version was as follows: east – Tlalocan (place of dawn) – yellow, fertile, and good; north – Mictlampa (region of underworld) – red, barren, and dangerous; west – *Cihuatlampa* (region of women) – blue, green, unfavourable, and humid; south – *Huitztlampa* (region of thorns) – white; and centre – *Tlalxicco* (navel) – black. The waters surrounding the inhabited land in the middle were called *ilhica atl* (the celestial water), which extended upward from the edges of the land in the vertical direction merging with the sky and supporting the lower levels of heaven. At the edge of the four quarters stood four mighty Ceiba trees which held up the heavens and participated in the rejuvenation of the cosmos.

Returning now to the entourage of nobles who display their royal finery to the Spaniards we can see they were also a parading, social version of the *quincunx*, the five part universe, as four chieftains hold up the arms of the ruler and four more hold up the canopy over the divine man who resides at and materializes the axis mundi of the world.

13.3 Sacred Body, Ritual Violence, and the City

I approach the materiality of human sacrifice in the Mesoamerican ceremonial city stimulated by a recent encounter with the writings of the French Philosopher Paul Ricoeur. I transform what he says about language, 'The sentence pours language back

into the universe', into '*The sacrifice pours sacred power back into the city*'.⁴ Human sacrifice in Mesoamerica must be understood, not only in terms of Mesoamerican conceptions of time but also in terms of a dynamic social tension between the 'centres' of Tenochtitlan and the 'peripheries' on the edges and beyond the built forms of the capital. I mean 'peripheries' in two ways: (i) the geopolitical territories of allied and enemy city-states located on the peripheries of various capitals and the boundaries between them; (ii) the celestial and underworld places where the gods and the ancestors dwelled near and far beyond the terrestrial communities. These earthly and celestial territories were integrated momentarily and repeatedly into unities during the sacrificial festivals that took place in each of the 18 months of the Aztec year. So much of what I see and read in Mesoamerican documents and archaeological zones leads me to this conclusion; i.e. *the sacrifice pours sacred power back into the city* – the power coming from gods in the sky and underworld and lodging in the bodies, places, blood, buildings, and peoples, (especially the elites) associated with the sacrifice.

In order to understand how materiality/body/blood and ideology/imagination and religiosity were intertwined (Figure 13.1) in the Aztec world, attention must be given to the concept of the *teotl iixiptla* or deity image. In the Mesoamerican world, it was not humans who died in sacrifice but the corporeal coverings of the gods who dwelled within humans as a divine fire, an animistic entity that was inserted in the human body at conception, grew during maturation, and then greatly intensified during the sacrificial ceremony. Ceremonies were ritual generators of this divine fire which took on the identity of specific deities according to the time of the year, the paraphernalia of the sacrifice, and the ritual singing, decorating, dancing, sexuality, and manner of killing. In the second month of the year for instance, the divine fire belonged to Xipe Totec, the Flayed One, and the sacrificial victim was skinned. In the fifth month of the year, the divine fire of Tezcatlipoca, the Lord of the Smoking Mirror, was generated inside of the *teotl iixiptla*. Another month it was a female *teotl iixiptla* who became the corn goddess Xilonen. In these rituals, gods came more powerfully into the presence of the human participants and the city itself by expanding their force within the corporeal confines of the human, animal, and even plant bodies. Thus, the *teixiptla*, i.e. the image, the likeness, was fully animated by *teotl*, the god, and when this combination of container and spirit was sacrificed then the *teotl* was regenerated into new potency – new life. This new spiritual life was destined to enter other forms of materiality within, on or above the surface of the earth.

In order to understand my claim about sacrifice pouring power back into the city (centre and periphery always in play) in these sacrificial ceremonies, allow me to return to Paul Wheatley's work. He shows how the phrase the 'city as a way of life' is not in any way limited to the built form, or walls, or even spatial structure of the 'city'. For as scholars, novelists and poets and painters of urban life have shown, the city is a way of life. In the words of Wheatley (1967, p. 7),

It is the city which has been, and to a large extent still is, the style centre in the traditional world, disseminating social, political, technical, religious and aesthetic values, and functioning as an organizing principle conditioning the manner and quality of life in the countryside...the generative force in the ecological transformation and ...the great tides of social change...



Figure 13.1 This is a mythical twisted tree showing how materiality and spirituality were intertwined in many Mesoamerican communities. The twisted trees and the intertwined serpents represent the opening between the three realms of existence – the upperworld, the earthly level, and the underworld. In some tradition this type of tree is the Tamoanchan tree, the tree that is a doorway to paradise. Source: Courtesy of the Moses Mesoamerican Archive and Research Project, Harvard University.

Mesoamerican texts, sculptures, and pictorials show us that sacrifice *is a way of life*, because death and regeneration were the business of these cities as they set the 'style' of tying centre and periphery together through ritual pathways linking the main temple precinct with nearby and distant neighbourhoods and towns. Perhaps the best example of how this style of sacrificial life set the tone and model for the peoples of the empire is the New Fire Ceremony that took place only once every 52 years when two great calendar cycles exhausted their inter-revolutions. A highly esteemed enemy warrior was paraded in full regalia along with a priestly and warrior entourage out from the centre of Tenochtitlan many miles to the Hill of the Star. During the evening, all the fires in the empire were extinguished after the populace had destroyed all dinnerware and waited in the great darkness. Sacrificed at the moment when the Pleiades passed through the celestial meridian, the warrior's heart cavity was used to light the 'new fire' marking the new age, the new cosmic beginning. That fire was then taken down into the city where it re-lit the fires in the main temples before being relayed out to neighbour and peripheral towns which received the new fires with relief and joy. In this example, we see how the ceremonial design, map and action of this rarest of human sacrifices

integrated astronomy, pilgrimage, the powers of light and darkness into a way of life that mapped out where the centre of the world was and where the peripheries were located within an integrated world. This sacrifice also dramatized how human bodies were 'places' that moved and mapped and poured power back into the city, including the royal palace.

A vivid example of this ritual pattern related to elements of the ecological complex was the killing of the *teotl iixiptla* of the prodigious god Tezcatlipoca, Lord of the Smoking Mirror. The immensely powerful nature of this deity is expressed in his series of names including 'Lord of the Near, Lord of the Close by' 'Capricious One', 'Tyrannical One', 'Knower of People', 'The Enemy on Both Sides', 'Creator of Man', and 'The Mocker'. In the rubric of this publication, he was the master of materiality because one of the prayers to him stated, 'O master, O our lord, O lord of the near, of the nigh...thou seest, thou knowest the things within the trees, the rocks...thou knowest the things within us; thou hearest us from within'.⁵

In the fifth ritual month of the year called Toxcatl or 'Dryness', in reference to the hoped for coming of the rains and the revival of the agricultural cycle, the Aztecs chose the handsomest captive enemy warrior from a special group of prisoners supervised by a corps of guardians to be ritually transformed into Tezcatlipoca. Two aspects of this extensive, complex, year-long ceremony draw our attention: the detailed emphasis on the perfect male human body and the subsequent travels of the *teotl iixiptla* or living image of the deity throughout the city for 12 months before his public sacrifice *on the periphery of the capital*. Here is an abridged description of the formula for choosing the sacrificial figure who had to have a 'fair countenance, of good understanding, slender, reedlike, long and thin like a sout cane, like a stone column all over'. The man who would be the 'human form' of the deity had to be

like something smoothed, like a tomato, like a pebble, as if sculpted in wood; he was not curly haired, ... not rough of forehead, ... not long-headed, ... not of swollen eyelids, ... not of downcast face; he was not flat-nosed; ... he was not concave nosed, ... he was not thick-lipped, he was not gross-lipped, he was not a stutterer, ... not buck-toothed ... His teeth were like seashells, ... he was not tomato-eyed, not of pierced eye...He was not long-handed, he was not fat-fingered, ... he was not of protruding navel; he was not of hatchet shaped buttocks ... For him who had no flaw, who had no defects, who had no blemish, who had no mark, ... there was taken the greatest care that he be taught to blow the flute, that he be able to play his whistle. And that at the same time he holds all his flowers and his smoking tube.⁶

The captive warrior who best represented this negative description of perfection was selected out from the group and carefully trained in several Aztec arts including music, smoking, flower holding, and speaking. He was not a stationary, imprisoned paragon of beauty, but was allowed to go wandering for months throughout the city with an entourage during which he greeted people who considered him 'our lord. There was an assigning of lordship, he was importuned. He was signed for; there was bowing before him'.⁷ He lived in luxury for an entire year and towards the end of his divine life he is joined with four beautiful women, who have *also been transformed ritually into teotl iixiptla* of female goddesses, and they live in sexual union for one month. At the appointed

time, this exemplum of fertility is taken to the palace of Moctezuma where the ruler, the paragon of political and cosmomagical power – the apex of the ecological complex of the empire – ‘repeatedly adorned him: he gave him gifts, he arrayed him; he arrayed him with great pomp. He had all costly things placed on him, for verily he took him to be his beloved god’.

All this concentration of male beauty moving through the city, his footsteps sacralizing every neighbourhood he visits, playing his music, preening, eventually accompanied by the women, is enhanced by the stop for gifts at the royal palace. But where is he to be sacrificed? Not in the city itself, as it turns out. Towards the end of his earthly reign, the *teotl iixiptla* of the ‘Enemy on Both Sides’ was forced into a farewell with the female goddesses, taken by his guards out into the lake and down to the southern port of Chalco, a community long known for its tension and rebellion against the Aztecs. There, in a tightly controlled temple precinct, the Tezcatlipoca image is stripped of his fabulous adornments and, if the *teotl iixiptla* had the courage, he mounts the pyramid of his own accord, breaking his musical flutes on the steps, and offers himself to the sacrificial priests who extract his heart, dismember his head, and then carry his remains with great solemnity back across the lake into Tenochtitlan where his skull is placed on the public skull rack.

In this way, sacrificing the greatest god in the pantheon at the periphery of the empire and in the city of a restless neighbour not only sends a message of ferocity and power outward beyond the island city. It also ‘pours power back into the city’ when Tezcatlipoca’s royal entourage brings his remains and especially his skull back across the lake and into the city. We see this renewed power of the city in a prayer of divine ambivalence dedicated to Tezcatlipoca whenever an Aztec ruler died. The presiding priest prayed about the departed ruler to the Lord of the Smoking Mirror, ‘And the city, will it perhaps here in his absence be mocked? Will it divide? Will it scatter? Truly he came spreading his wings, his tail feather over it; truly he spread himself over it’.⁸

13.4 Conclusion: Stories on Trees

In this chapter, I have tried to show how materiality and religiosity were intertwined in Mesoamerica’s imagination of matter. The ecological complexities of the natural and ceremonial landscapes of Mesoamerican cities became immediately clear to the Spanish strangers who made landfall in 1517. I learned that the giant *Ceiba* trees had deep religious meanings for the Maya. The capital city of Tenochtitlan was the great container of marketplaces, monumental temples, and the thousands of ritual objects filled, in Aztec eyes, with divine presences, sparks, and fire. It was also the theatre for the sacrificial ceremonies in which human bodies were cosmo-magically transformed into ‘likenesses’ of the gods who dwelled and lived and died and were reborn there.

The Spaniards also learned early on that the Aztecs and Maya told their stories through colourful, mysterious hieroglyphs filling pictorial manuscripts often made from trees; i.e. bark paper. I return here to the persistence and power of what Robert Bye called ‘Trees of the Other World and This Earth’ in his examination of the splendid codex imagery of the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan #2* painted in the 1540s. The first time

I saw this long lost codex, in the home of the Mexican philanthropist Ángeles Espinosa Yglesias, with over 600 images and symbols painted on the large piece of bark paper from an *amate tree*, I was filled with feelings of admiration and a kind of religious awe. Created by the native Mesoamerican artists living in the *altepetl* (mountain of water) or community of Cuauhtinchan, the 'Place of the Eagle's Nest', just two decades after the Spanish conquest of central Mexico, the pictorial narrative shows the migration and settlement of Chichimec ancestors who emerge from the Place of Seven Caves and travel to a great city. A closer look at this Place of Seven Caves reveals yet another rare example of Mesoamerican materiality in the form of sacred bundles that are beautifully tied together on the backs of people who seem to be falling to earth. During their pilgrimage to the distant city of Cholula, they periodically open those bundles which harbour the bones of ancestors, the seeds of plants, and the stories of their firesides. They pass through awesome landscapes, floods, battles, ritual ordeals, always carrying their sacred bundles filled with the precious objects that were understood to be living spiritual beings. Along the way, they build temporary shrines within which they place the bundles to be opened for worship, rituals, and storytelling. The footprints on the map show how the pilgrims hunt, worship, argue, intermarry and carry out human and animal sacrifices in order to guarantee their survival and strengthen their alliances. On this 3.5 ft by 6.5 ft bark surface all that I have written here – and more – was glimmering on the Mapa. The saying of the ancient philosopher came back to me – 'In the Beginning was the Place' – for here before me was a mobile, fragile piece of that place called Mesoamerica. For the next 10 years a team of colleagues and I entered into the details, patterns, and world view of the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan that originally came from the trunk of a tree – and I live with the knowledge of its material beauty and stories still. But that is a story for *another time and place*.

Notes

- 1 David Carrasco gives thanks to Scott Sessions for his editorial assistance and to Ben Leeming for his aid in the Nahauatl spelling and usage.
- 2 Wheatley (1967, p. 10). Rene Berthelot calls this model 'astro-biological thought' while Stanley J. Tambiah refers to it as 'cosmological topography'. Charles H. Long's 'imagination of matter' is elaborated in his classic book, *Significations* (1999).
- 3 Albrecht Dürer (1971).
- 4 The spatial sense of these two phrases where city and universe are linked to an implied 'other' place on the edge, on the periphery recalls my own debt and debate with Jonathan Z Smith concerning the implications of the phrases 'to take place' and 'to change place' and their attendant meanings of 'taking place' and 'changing place'. In a masterful series of essays about how three spatial maps of the world – the locative, the utopian and the incongruent maps – take us beyond what he considered the static limitations of 'axis mundi', Smith opened a new geography for reflection and interpretation of ritual life in various religions. My five-year study of the 18 sacrificial ceremonies described in the Florentine Codex revealed to me a fourth spatial map guiding Aztec ritual killings i.e. the changing place map of the world. Following the hypermobility of Aztec rites of passage, we are led to see that metamorphosis of material beings *and places* is emphasized continually. People not only change places but they go to changing places

i.e. places that are designed by spiritual presences *to change them* into death or divinities, ancestors or angels. In this way 'changing' must be seen as both a verb and an adjective. It is not only a locative or utopian place but also a changing place for we are faced with material places that morph and are marked by intense and lavish ritual movements often lubricated by blood which moves spirit into matter.

5 Sahagún, 6 (1950–1982, p. 25).

6 Sahagún, 2 (1950–1982, p. 67).

7 Sahagún, (1950–1982, p. 67).

8 Sahagún, 6, p. 23.

Works Cited

- Brown, L.A. (2015). When pre-sun-rise beings inhabit a post-sunrise world: time, animate objects, and contemporary Tz-uutujil Maya ritual practitioners. In: *The Measure and Meaning of Time in Mesoamerica and the Andes* (ed. A.F. Aveni). Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks.
- Bye, R. and Linares, E. (2007). Botanical symmetry and asymmetry in the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan* No. 2. In: *Cave, City and Eagle's Nest: An Interpretive Journey through the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan #2* (eds. D. Carrasco and S. Sessions), 255–280. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Carrasco, D. (ed.) (2008). *The History of the Conquest of New Spain by Bernal Díaz del Castillo*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Dürer, A. (1971). *Diary of his Journey to the Netherlands*, 21. New York Graphic Society: Greenwich, CT.
- Eliade, M. (1996). *Patterns in Comparative Religions*. (Reprinted edition. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Fuentes, C. (1971). *Where the Air is Clear*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Fuentes, C. (1990). Prologue: the face of creation. In: *Mexico: A Higher Vision, an Aerial Journey from Past to Present* (eds. M. Calderwood and G. Breña). La Jolla, CA: Alti.
- Hughes, J.S. (2010). *Biography of a Mexican Crucifix*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Leon Portilla, M. (1969). *Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Long, C.H. (1983). *Alpha: Myths of Creation (AAR Classics in Religious Studies)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Long, C.H. (1999). *Signification: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*, 2e. Aurora, CO: The Davies Group Publishers.
- López Austin, A. (2015). Ecumene time, Anecumene time: proposal of a paradigm. In: *The Measure and Meaning of Time in Mesoamerica and the Andes* (ed. A.F. Aveni), 29–52. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks.
- Miller, T. (2013). Naturalizing Buddhist cosmology in the temple architecture of China: the case of the Yicahui pillar. In: *Heaven on Earth: Temples, Ritual and Cosmic Symbolism in the Ancient World*, vol. 9 (ed. D. Ragavan), 17–39. Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- de Sahagún, B. (1950–1982). *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain* (trans. C.E. Dibble and A.J.O. Anderson). Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Smith, J.Z. (2005). Introduction. In: *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*, 2e (ed. M. Eliade), ix–xxii. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, W.B. (2015). Theatre of a thousand marvels. Unpublished manuscript.
- Wheatley, P. (1967). *City as Symbol*. London: J.K. Lewis & Co. Ltd.

CHAPTER 14

Material Religion, Materialism, and Non-human Animals

Anna L. Peterson

14.1 Introduction

Artefacts, bodies, practices, places, and other kinds of materiality are important to all religions, but they have rarely been at the centre of religious studies theory. Theoretical models developed to interpret texts, symbols, and beliefs were turned on material objects and practices with little or no modification. One of the contributions of this book is to show that when we put materiality explicitly at the centre of both religion and religious studies, we not only see familiar material in a new light but also face challenging methodological and theoretical questions. The most important of these questions concern the relationship between content and theory. Is a materialist approach necessary to understand material religion? What happens when we view material life through a symbolic or idealist lens? What would happen if we developed an explicitly materialist theoretical stance in response to the turn to material religion?

Many of the same points arise when we turn attention to non-human animals.¹ Like material artefacts and practices, animals are always present and almost never foregrounded in the study of religion. Animals are among the most persistent and important concerns in religious imagery and ritual across all cultures, regions, and periods. They are central figures in the earliest practices and representations that scholars term 'religious', as revealed in archaeological evidence from Egypt, Greece, China, India, and elsewhere (Culotta 2009). They arise, as at least bit players, in most comparative studies of religion. They are generally seen as reflections of human concerns, important for what they tell us about the people involved rather than in and of themselves. When we consider animals as central and explicit aspects of religion, and perhaps as religious actors themselves, we confront some of the same questions prompted by the 'material turn'. Can we understand the religious significance of animals from a purely anthropocentric perspective? What do

we miss when our subject matter does not shape our theoretical and methodological stance? What would happen if we placed non-human animals front and centre among other religious agents?

These questions drive my thinking about animals and material religion in this chapter. In answering them, I argue that animals and materiality are not two important but separate themes for contemporary religion; rather they are necessarily tied together. Attention to non-human animals help us think better about material religion, and attention to materiality helps us think better about the place of animals in religion. In short, we need to foreground animals if we are to develop a full and nuanced portrait of material religion, and we need to foreground materiality if we are to develop a similarly rich portrait of the place of animals in religion. I also suggest that the significance of both topics extends to broader understandings of religion itself and of religious studies theory. Both animals and materiality raise important questions about method, about the adequacy of existing models, and about disciplinary boundaries. They also help us explore and answer these questions, showing new and important ways in which religion is constituted not only by symbols, beliefs, and texts but also by physical acts and bodily presence in the world – acts and presences which may not be only human.

Last, I begin in this chapter to discuss what kind of materialist theoretical framework is best suited for thinking about animals and materiality. Traditional preoccupations with texts and ideas are inadequate to understanding the concrete, embodied experiences of animals and of people interacting with them, in religion as in other spheres of human life. Some scholars distinguish attention to ‘material religion’ from materialist theories and suggest that the former can be interpreted adequately without embracing the latter. This effort is a bit like putting new wine into old wineskins, and misses the real opportunities that emerge when we think seriously about materiality. Putting animals into the conversation, I argue, helps us see the creative possibilities more clearly and also more subversively.

14.2 Religion, Material and Materialist

To make sense of the place of animals in material religion and developing adequate materialist accounts of both, it is helpful to begin with a look at the material turn in religious studies. My goal here is not to provide an overview, since that has been done both in existing single-author books and in the Introduction to this book. Rather, I want to clarify and highlight several issues that are especially relevant to thinking about animals in relation to material religion.

The first important issue is the definition of materiality. What counts as ‘material’ varies widely among different scholars and different fields, but it generally encompasses artefacts, the (human) body, buildings, art, and practices such as ritual. Second, in religious studies, as in other humanities and social science disciplines, the turn to materiality involves a shift not only in topic but in theoretical stance. Not all the theories employed in the study of material religion are materialist, but most challenge, to some extent, established theoretical approaches in the discipline. Some of the most prominent models involved in discussions about materiality include affect theory, post-structuralism, the

'new materialism', and phenomenology, among others. While they disagree on many points, they share a conviction that established approaches to religious studies are inadequate due to their focus on texts and professions of faith. They propose, instead, that 'material things and phenomena – objects, practices, spaces, bodies, sensations, affects, and so on' should be 'at the center of scholarly inquiry' (Hazard 2013, p. 58).

These approaches challenge established religious studies models, which view material things and practices merely 'as symbols to be interpreted for the religious meanings they carry', as Sonia Hazard puts it (2013, p. 59). Hazard associates this approach with Clifford Geertz, but it also describes most other prominent religious studies theories, both classical and contemporary. These approaches have had to address material factors, because it is impossible to talk about religion without some reference to bodies, rituals, artefacts, and places. However, they do not make the 'material turn', insofar as they do not permit materiality to shape their theoretical framework but rather interpret it with the same approaches developed in interpretations of texts and symbols.

Contemporary scholars of material religion argue that such approaches present a partial, limited, and often inaccurate view of religion. They propose that materiality should not be just another object of study, to which existing theoretical frameworks can be applied. Religion, in this view, is by definition material, because it is about physical bodies in physical locations, doing physical things. Thus, a more adequate approach would make materiality central to the study of religion, which would in turn transform the way we think about the topic – and our scholarly field – in general. This new vantage point would change not only our objects of concern but also the questions we ask and the options we consider.

14.2.1 *Materialisms New and Old*

Materialist theories have been overshadowed by the symbolic and textual focus of most theoretical approaches in religious studies in the United States. In recent years, however, a number of religion scholars have engaged the 'new materialism'.² While it means different things to different people, one of the hallmarks of this approach is its focus on inanimate objects. One of the pioneers of the new materialism, Jane Bennett, says that she aims 'to give voice to a less specifically human kind of materiality, to make manifest what I call "thing-power"' (2004, p. 348). This materialism is 'a speculative onto-story, a rather presumptuous attempt to depict the nonhumanity that flows around but also through humans' (Bennett 2004, p. 349). This 'nonhumanity' cannot be understood in dualistic or mechanistic terms, according to Bennett; rather, she proposes a 'vital materialism' according to which all objects – human and non-human, animate and inanimate – are intimately linked in a 'dense network of relations' (2010, p. 13). This 'thing-materialism', she argues, is 'a viable competitor alongside the historical materialism of Marx and the body materialism of cultural studies' (2004, p. 366).

Bennett's work and the 'new materialism' more generally have been very influential for scholars of material religion. The new materialism is valuable for religious studies, as Hazard notes, because it sees objects not only as important aspects of human experience

but also as active agents: 'In a new materialist paradigm, things are not reducible to symbolic representation, nor are they merely passive data for phenomenological perception. They have a wide range of powers' (Hazard 2013, p. 59). The 'vital materialism' of 'thing power' provides a new and provocative way of talking about religious artefacts. In particular, it rejects the division between human subjects and material objects and instead focuses on the interactions between them.

Environmental philosopher Steven Vogel does not address religion explicitly, but his work offers a sophisticated and helpful materialist account of objects and the relationships in which they are embedded. Vogel argues that materialism should take objects seriously while also attending to 'the processes through which they came to be, and most importantly about the people – real flesh and blood people, just like us – whose effort and labor helped to bring them into existence' (Vogel 2015, p. 85). He thus shares Hazard's critiques of approaches that take material objects for granted; at the same time he insists on viewing objects in the larger context of natural and social processes.

This leads to a materialist approach that highlights the practices that produce objects and, more importantly, which constitute the material engagement of humans and other animals with the world. Such an approach can reveal not only the 'produced' character of objects but also their social character, as Vogel notes, their embeddedness in the actions and relationships between living individuals (2015, p. 74). This insight, of course, comes from Marx, who insists that it is in and through material practice that we both make and comprehend the world. This conception of practice grounds Marx's critique of both materialist and idealist philosophies: 'The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively' (1978, p. 143). Human practice mediates 'the relations between the social and natural orders', as Gramsci noted (1971, p. 34). This practice-focused materialism has been developed in the humanistic Marxism of scholars such as E.P. Thompson, who provides a sophisticated materialist account of religion's role in the making of the English working class (1966). A practice-focused materialism is more helpful for both religious studies and animal studies than the new materialist focus on objects in and of themselves. Both human and non-human actors are constituted by their 'real, sensuous activity as such' and shaped by their social and natural contexts. A non-anthropocentric, practice-focused materialism can help us understand the experiences of humans and of other species, in religion as in other areas.

A focus on practice also helps scholars conceive of ourselves as active participants in the world we are viewing. As Vogel explains, 'To say that we can come to know the world only insofar as we constitute it – which is to say, only insofar as we prestructure it – is to say that we know it because we *build* it, through the actual processes of labor, of physical acting and making, that are fundamental to who we are. It is only to the extent that we are actively involved in transforming the world that it can come to be known by us' (Vogel 2015, p. 51). This is true for non-human animals as well as for humans, and it provides a theoretical stance that helps us make sense of our commonalities – including perhaps religious life.

14.3 Animal Studies

Paralleling the material turn in religious studies and other disciplines is an equally lively 'animal turn', an interdisciplinary scholarly conversation about the role of non-human animals in human culture and society, including religion. Because animals are so fully identified with physicality and embodiment – with materiality – these two conversations have much in common and much to teach each other.

Animal studies questions the common neglect of non-human animals in most scholarly disciplines, especially the humanities and social sciences. It parallels women's studies, African American studies, and other interdisciplinary efforts to bring 'invisible' categories into the open. From the perspective of animal studies, ignoring animals, no less than ignoring various categories of people, leaves our knowledge incomplete. It is not that scholars have not paid attention to animals. Non-human creatures have been important characters in every single human endeavour, including literature, art, military engagements, agriculture, and many other activities. There is also increasing interest in animals in religion, prompting a number of recent scholarly studies, a few of which I discuss below. What is new about animal studies, as it has developed in the past decade or two, is that, as Carey Wolfe explains, it creates a new 'theoretical and critical space' in which animals' roles and significance are the centrepiece (Wolfe 2009, p. 565).

There is no single consensus about what animal studies is or what it should do. It is diverse both in the subjects addressed and in the theoretical stances adopted. In the humanities and social sciences, most works in animal studies explore the meaning and significance of animals for human culture (Bulliet 2005; Fudge 2002; King 2010). From this perspective, animals are primarily symbols, keys to understanding human faith, thought, and experience more deeply; they are 'good to think', in Lévi-Strauss's famous phrase, regardless of whether or not they think for themselves. Other names for this subfield include human-animal studies and zooanthropology, terms that suggest the significance of human perceptions for our understandings of other animals and hint that the reason that we study animals is because they help us understand ourselves, our histories and our cultures, more fully. Thus, anthropocentrism is not absent even from many kinds of scholarship that focus on animals.

Part of this is due to the common focus on 'symbolic' animals, rather than 'real' ones, in animal studies as in more traditional scholarly fields. The significance of animals comes in their roles as instruments for human purposes or reflections of human meanings, not as actors and agents themselves. This is perhaps especially true in religious studies, which deals with a realm of experience commonly seen as 'uniquely human' and concerned with spiritual and cultural activities and identities that are rarely attributed to other species. Even work on 'material religion', in which embodiment comes to the fore, non-human animals very rarely enter the stage.

To be fair, it is not easy to know how to present animals as actors. Even if we acknowledge that at least some non-human species have agency, this agency can remain inaccessible. Thus, even researchers who believe in non-human subjectivity often dismiss the possibility of accurate understanding. In a seminal essay titled 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?' Thomas Nagel (1974) asserted that 'the essence of the belief that bats have experience is that there is something that it is like to be a bat'. Bats are subjects, with

subjective experience, and thus there is something that it is like *for the bat* to be a bat. However, this 'something' is always beyond human capacity to understand, Nagel added. Because bats' ways of perceiving and acting in the world are so radically different from human ways, it is difficult, if not impossible, for humans even to imagine what it is like to experience the world as a bat (Nagel 1974, p. 235).

Others are more optimistic about the possibility of understanding the 'real animal'. Psychologist Alexandra Horowitz argues that Nagel 'wrongly treated interspecies difference as something wholly unlike an intraspecies difference' (Horowitz 2009, pp. 242, 243). The line between humans and other species is not always hard and fast, and communication across this line is often possible. It is possible, further, because of basic continuities, both physical and anatomical, between humans and many other animals (Bekoff and Jamieson 1996; Masson and McCarthy 1995). Horowitz thus embraces a creative (though not undisciplined) 'anthropomorphism'. The attribution of human traits to non-human beings has long been considered a basic error by philosophers and scientists alike. However, shared evolutionary origins and bodily structures make it not only legitimate but necessary to talk about shared traits (Balcombe 2007, 2010; Griffin 1984). As Horowitz puts it, 'Anthropomorphisms are not inherently odious. They are born of attempts to understand the world, not to subvert it' (2009, p. 15). The problem is that the limits of our perception often subvert our attempts to understand non-human others, in particular.

Because of these limits, attempts to understand the world from the perspective of another animal will never be fully successful. However, this is due not to an impassable divide between humans and all other species but rather to the divide between the self and others of all sorts. As philosopher Mary Midgley puts it, 'The barrier [to complete understanding] does not fall between us and the dog. It falls between you and me' (Midgley 1983, p. 30). Horowitz agrees, noting that Nagel's mistake was to think that bats are inaccessible in a way that other humans are not. She suggests that it is possible to know much about the 'real animal', like the 'real person', although at the same time the full subjective experience of another being can never be grasped by an outside observer of any species.

In relation to other subjects, human and non-human, we can achieve what Donna Haraway calls 'situated knowledge'. In regards to nature, other people, or the world in general, Haraway argues that our partial perspectives always prevent us from achieving a totally objective 'view from nowhere'. However, this social constructionist insight, she adds, 'cannot be allowed to decay into the radiant emanations of cynicism' (Haraway 1991, p. 184). Against the solipsism of hard constructionism, she asserts the possibility of 'better accounts of the world, that is, "science"' (Haraway 1991, 196). Haraway's epistemology is relevant to material religion because it suggests that our efforts to understand non-human animals need not, and should not, stop with their portrayal in texts, art, and other human representations. Looking only at symbolic (non-real) animals prevents us (or saves us) from facing the disquieting moral and political implications of non-human subjectivity. The combination of epistemological difficulty and ethical challenge may account for the fact that most scholarship in animal studies focuses on human interpretations and portrayals of other creatures – the symbolic animal – rather than on the real, material animals themselves, their practices, relationships, and interactions with the world.

14.4 Animals and Religion

Every religious tradition is full of non-human creatures, both real, and mythical. As animal studies has developed and expanded in the humanities and social sciences generally, its influence has been felt in religious studies, where a small but growing number of scholars have begun giving other species serious and systematic attention (Benston 2009). Their material is vast, since non-human species appeared in the earliest known forms of human ritual behaviour and symbolic expression first began. As Nicholas Saunders recounts,

Among the first religiously or mystically significant rituals for which there is archaeological evidence were those performed in France and Israel by Neanderthals, as much as 70 000 years ago. They consist of buried bodies, laid to rest as if they were asleep, aligned with the rising and setting sun, and surrounded by weapons and the bones of bison, reindeer, boar and other creatures of the hunt. At about the same time, in Switzerland and Germany, giant bear skulls were being arranged and sealed away in crude stone cabinets: the first animal cult for which evidence has survived. (Saunders 1995, p. 34)

Animals have been central to human efforts to make a living and to make sense of the world, and it makes sense, from this perspective, that they have been central to religious life as well. Recognition of this fact has led to growing scholarly interest in the role of animals in religion, mostly concentrated on the way people have interpreted and used animals in religious images, texts, and practices and also on the moral attitudes developed within religious worldviews (Creegan 2013; Hobgood-Oster 2008; Linzey 1987; Randall 2014). Of the scholarly monographs available presently on animals and religion, none focuses on materiality, much less taking an explicitly materialist perspective. One book, Lisa Kemmerer's *Animals in World Religions*, limits itself specifically to 'religious ideals', stating plainly that the author 'does not attempt to explain how people within each religious tradition actually behave, or what they actually believe' (Kemmerer 2011, p. 8). In addition, Kemmerer 'focuses on religious teachings that are relevant to animal advocacy', which she defines as synonymous with – perhaps even limited to – a rejection of meat eating (2011, pp. 7, 10). The result is a book which 'mines' various religious ideas and stories for their potential support for vegetarianism and veganism, rather than an expansive account of the place of animals in religious life.

Another of the recent scholarly studies of animals and religion, Katherine Perlo's *Kinship and Killing: The Animal in World Religions*, shares a commitment to animal rights but explores negative as well as positive teachings about animals in different religions. Perlo is interested in particular in the tension between the terms in her title: affiliation with animals and exploitation of them, a contradiction she sees repeated in virtually all human cultures. Religion, she argues, helps people respond to this tension in several distinct ways, including justifications of human superiority, attempts to deny cruelty by incorporating 'precepts of kindness', and efforts to 'whitewash' problematic behaviour (Perlo 2009, pp. 6–8). A third and more recent book, Aaron Gross's *The Question of the Animal and Religion* (2014), also addresses the tension between cruelty and humanitarian concern, particularly in the context of kosher certification. *The Question of the*

Animal is theoretically innovative and nuanced, but it does not directly address materiality, materialist theory, or the possibility of animals as religious actors.

The most extensive book on the topic is a massive edited volume titled *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (Waldau and Patton 2006). Here again, materialism plays little role in efforts to understand the role of animals in different religious traditions and communities. The focus is on animals' roles in human stories and rituals. Animals appear as creators and guardians, spirit guides and trickster gods, totems and demons, objects of worship and of sacrifice, friends of gods, or even gods themselves. There are narrative accounts of animals as religious actors in indigenous traditions and Buddhism, among others. In narratives such as the Buddhist jataka tales, Ivette Vargas argues, 'animals are often subjects and active agents', not merely metaphorical tools but also 'transformative players' in important Buddhist stories (Vargas 2006, p. 219).

Such accounts present animals as agents in interactions with humans and with divinities, showing that interpretations of animals in religion are not limited to their roles as objects or images. These are still symbolic animals, not real ones, but there is less simple projection of human interests and desires onto the animals. They are allowed, at least in story, preferences, capacities, and feelings that are not mere reflections of what humans want them to be. They are complex, sometimes contrary or destructive creatures. These portrayals often reflect detailed knowledge of animal behaviour and respectful, affectionate attitudes. Thus, Nelson writes that 'Koyukon people watch animals with fascination and with empathy based on their understanding that animals and humans are much the same order of being. When they are not hunting, they watch animals as an end in itself, born of curiosity and a desire to understand the community of natural things. Sometimes... they explain the behaviour of animals in terms of more complex emotions than an outsider would attribute to non-human beings' (1986, p. 136). Stories of animals who exercise power and agency in religious stories can be seen as intermediate steps between the imaginary animals of sacrificial rituals and the real animals who create and occupy their own worlds, which sometimes intersect with those of humans but which are not limited to human meanings and purposes.

14.4.1 *Animals as Religious Objects*

As the prehistoric archaeological evidence makes clear, one of the earliest and most important religious roles for animals has been as victims of ritual sacrifice, which has been practices across many different regions and cultures. Sacrifice is by definition material: it involves human material practices and material objects, including inanimate objects, non-human animals, and human beings (Patton 2006; Sterckx 2006). Because sacrifice entails the destruction or loss of something valued for (or on behalf of) something that is even more valuable, it is always ambivalent, as Kay Read argues in her chapter in this volume. Sacrifice is one of the most important and also most common ways in which non-human animals enter into human religious life, and thus a particularly powerful and illuminating lens for thinking about material religion, animals, and the two together.

Some scholars believe that animal sacrifice originated in hunting, which is seen in many cultures as a kind of exchange that involves 'an intimate spiritual relationship' between the human hunters and the prey animals. In this relationship, 'the perpetuation of the hunter's life depends directly upon the animal's readiness to concede its own. In such circumstances, the hunt becomes a sacrificial bargain between hunter and animal, in which, as the mythologist Joseph Campbell expressed it, "the beast to be slaughtered is interpreted as a willing victim, or rather, as a knowing participant in a covenanted sacred act"' (Saunders 1995, p. 54). Hunting ceremonies often include requests for permission prior to the act. Many prey species, including deer, commonly stop and turn to look at predators, including human hunters. Some hunting cultures interpret this behaviour as a willing 'offering'. Biologists, however, explain the practice of stopping and turning to look at predators as a way to evaluate the risk they pose, gauging the number and type of predators, their condition and size, the distance between them and the prey, and so forth. It is a strategy aimed at maximizing the prey animal's chance of survival, in other words, not the expression of a death wish.

In keeping with the common belief that animals offer themselves to be killed, many cultures also have ritual displays of gratitude after the kill. 'When the Koryaks of Siberia kill a bear the women endeavour to appease its spirit by dancing in its skin, entreating the animal not to be angry and making it an offering of food.' Hunters in the Mackenzie River area in northwestern Canada sing to a dying bear 'to please it and ensure that it will encourage many more bears to allow themselves to be caught' (Saunders 1995, pp. 54, 55). This view of hunting presents animals as exercising a certain type of agency, which limits human power. If humans do not follow the rules of etiquette governing their behaviour towards other animals, their subsistence efforts will fail. Environmental philosophers and others have pointed to these stories and related rituals as evidence that at least some human cultures have held respectful, even loving attitudes towards non-human nature (see Callicott and Nelson 2004; McIntosh 2006).

The respect and appreciation are real, but the fact remains that hunting and sacrifice deny the real material interests of real material animals. Animals express their desire to continue living in multiple, unambiguous ways, by running away and resisting human hunters just as vigorously as they do non-human predators. Hunting rituals and myths are a way for humans to recast their objectification of animals as a mutual bargain that somehow benefits both parties. This is a good example of the ambivalence that Perlo finds throughout religious treatments of animals. Humans' very real feelings of kinship and respect must be reconciled with the equally real fact of killing. The respect, however sincere, almost never prevents killing, and attributions of agency are part of a worldview that justifies exploitation, rather than grounds for considering animals' own interests.

Similar contradictions between attributions of agency and practices of objectification are evident in discussions of ritual sacrifice. Echoing the notion that deer 'offer themselves' to hunters, both religious insiders and religion scholars claim that animals used in ritual sacrifice are active agents in the ritual that leads to their deaths. We should 'think of animals as subjects, and not as objects', in regards to rituals of sacrifice, asserts Jonathan Klawans, writing about ancient Israelite sacrifice (Klawans 2006, pp. 66–67). He argues that the Israelites who sacrificed animals did not objectify them but rather acted as 'their animals' shepherds' (2006, p. 67). As shepherds, he believes, they act

with care and sympathy for the animals they are preparing to kill: 'If placing oneself in the position of another constitutes the essence of empathy, then ancient Israel had empathy to spare for their own domesticated animals, even when – or perhaps, especially when – they carefully guided them to the altar to sacrifice them to their own divine shepherd' (2006, p. 75).

Klawans's account reveals a common conflation: the recognition that an animal is an active participant in some relational practices with humans turns into an argument that the animal agrees to and willingly participates in the practice, even (or especially) when it leads to the animal's death. Writing about South Asian traditions, Kimberley Patton makes this argument even more strongly. Against the argument made by animal ethicist Tom Regan that animals are treated as objects in sacrifice, she asserts that 'Animals are seen as active subjects from start to finish in the sacrificial process, glorified mediators between realms, whose cooperation is essential to the efficacy of the ritual, whose forgiveness is often sought from kinship groups to avert vengeance' (Patton 2006, pp. 392–393). It is worth pointing out, as Regan surely would note, that being 'seen as' an active subject is hardly the same as having real active subjectivity. According to Patton, sacrifice calls for 'the animal's cooperation in every step of proceedings', or the sacrifice will not succeed. 'The animal is virtually never divested of agency or free will. Instead, it is understood to assent to its own demise; this "voluntary" self-offering by the animal is non-negotiable' (2006, p. 396). For Patton, the sacrificial animal is never just an expendable resource or a 'thing', but instead 'is seen as a life-dealing subject, a sanctified mediator between realms on behalf of the sacrificing community, and a divinized entity of eternal, powerful, and unassailable immortal status' (2006, p. 402). Somehow, recognition of non-human agency leads to uncritical approval of ritual sacrifice; to claim that sacrifice objectifies the victim, from this perspective, appears as a lack of respect for the animal.³

Patton, Klawans, and other religious studies scholars assert that their subject is 'real animals', non-human creatures as active agents. However, the 'subjects' they present act as humans wish them to act, without any effort to uncover animals' own desires or feelings. The subjectivity they claim to uncover turns out to be a projection of human wishes, the only way that animals who are bound and carried to a sacrificial altar can be seen to assent to the ritual. Simply asserting that animals are ('seen as') subjects does not take away either the lack of attention to what animals might want (why must they be tied and restrained?) or the power inequity involved in practices such as ritual sacrifice.

Similar confusion infects Erica Hill's discussion of animals in prehistoric religions. She criticizes the common treatment of animals as mere objects, arguing that in many cultures 'animals played prominent roles in origin stories, as actors in myth, and as harbingers of future events. In each case, animals act as agents, effecting change, influencing events, helping humans or avoiding them as recompense for a perceived offence' (Hill 2014, p. 277). The agency involved here, however, is entirely in the imagination of humans. This becomes clear in one of Hill's main examples, religious restrictions on hunting and butchering. She writes that in many cultures, 'If a hunter boasts about his hunting success, for example, animals may be offended and refuse to come to him the next time he goes out. Similarly, if the process of butchery is done improperly, the

animal in its reincarnated form will avoid the hunter and spread knowledge of the hunter's bad behavior among fellow creatures.' Such examples, she believes, show that 'animals cannot be considered ritual objects manipulated by humans. Instead, they are active participants in daily life; they are dynamic decision makers with the ability to cause great harm' (Hill 2014, p. 274). More accurately, the imagined ghosts of butchered animals are active participants in human efforts to understand and cope with everyday events.

In sacrifice and hunting rituals, there is material religion – the bodies of animals and of humans, concrete practices and places, physical tools and artefacts. Here we confront religion as far more than belief, symbol, and text. This religion also involves material animals, but they are not active agents or willing participants; they are dead, or captive and soon to die. *Pace* the contentions of Patton, Klawans, Hill, and others, the animals participate only as objects of human interests and desires. Animals' feelings and experiences about, and in, ritual sacrifice are not really relevant. Human actors attribute acceptance or engagement to the ritual victims, but these perceptions fly in the face of animals' actual behaviour.

This relates to a confusion which is evident in some discussions of anthropocentrism in relation to new materialism. Hazard, in particular, argues that new materialism challenges the 'anthropocentrism' of theories which consider material things only in relation to 'human subjects and bodies'. New materialism looks at 'the materiality of things themselves', without 'the lenses of a human subject' (Hazard 2013, p. 59). Hazard's confusion between the viewer's perspective and the object viewed is not hers alone; it pervades discussion on religion and animals. Discussions of animal 'agency' in ritual sacrifice make this abundantly clear. The non-human animals to whom agency is attributed are viewed from an anthropocentric and idealist lens in which their bodies and actions mean what humans want them to mean. The 'animal turn' in these studies is a human turn in which the animals remain objects of vision, not partners in movement. A full turn to animals, like a turn to materialism, will have both epistemological and ethical implications. It will decentre humans – not by using the same lens to look at new topics, or by building a materialism that privileges inanimate objects, but rather by turning to the active, sensuous agents whose material bodies and practices share our physical world and shape our material engagement with it.

14.4.2 *Animals as Religious Actors*

In addition to animals' roles as material objects in human religious practices, there is another way we can think about materiality, religion, and animals together: the possibility of non-human religious experience. The most famous account of such experience is the chimpanzee 'waterfall dance' first described by Jane Goodall (1971, 1999). Upon arriving at a particularly impressive waterfall, the chimpanzees that Goodall was watching performed a series of rhythmic actions, including stamping their feet, swinging their arms, and throwing branches and rocks. Such 'elemental displays' by chimpanzees have also been observed by other primatologists. Other well-documented ritual behaviours include mourning and funerary practices, including burial, in elephants and other species.

Many ethologists also argue that non-human animals have ethical systems. Frans de Waal (1996) is one of the most prominent advocates of this approach, arguing that both moral rules and ritualized behaviours, including food-sharing, celebrations, and formalized reciprocity, exist in non-human species for the same evolutionary reasons that they exist in *Homo sapiens*, especially to cement social bonds. Another influential ethologist, Marc Bekoff, asserts that 'a sense of fairness is common to many animals, because there could be no social play without it, and without social play individual animals and entire groups would be at a disadvantage... morality evolved because it is adaptive. It helps many animals, including humans, to survive and flourish in their particular social environment' (Bekoff 2006, p. 142).

It is tempting to describe non-human behaviours as 'quasi' or 'proto' religious or ethical, or as 'precursors' of 'real' religion or real morality – which must be exclusively human. What happens, however, if we see them simply as 'religious'? This is the question examined by Donovan Schaefer in his recent book *Religious Affects*, which argues 'that if we are to attempt to understand the chimpanzee waterfall dance, we must allow for the possibility that what gets called religion may not be predicated on the uniquely human property of language. This approach not only asks what it would mean for animals to have religion; it explores the possibility that a turn to affect can help us better understand human religion as animal' (Schaefer 2015, p. 3). Schaefer's innovative and important book is the fullest account so far of the religious life of animals. He uses his interpretation of the waterfall dance to develop an understanding of religion in which emotion, or affect, plays the defining role. He frames his work as an explicit complement to materialist theories of religion such as that developed by Manuel Vásquez in *More Than Belief*. I affirm Schaefer's claim that materiality, animals, and religion go together and add, further, that not only emotion but also practices must take centre stage in our efforts to build a theory that can make sense of them all together.

As Marx would say, however, 'hitherto existing materialisms' will not be adequate to this task. The materiality that matters cannot be only artefacts and inanimate objects – the 'matter' that interests the new materialism. Rather, it must encompass the physical experiences and practices of embodied creatures. Much of our practices, religious and other, involve non-human animals – as objects, workers, and sometimes partners. An approach that highlights multi-species relationships and activities both underlines the shortcomings of a purely symbolic approach to animals and also presents resources for approaching 'real' animals. This means that our theoretical and methodological tool kits will encompass ethology, evolutionary biology, ecology, and other ways of documenting and understand animal behaviour (Peterson 2004). From these perspectives, non-human activities such as the waterfall dance can be compared – not necessarily equated, but compared – with similar human behaviours. Evolution by natural selection suggests no less. All human actions and capacities, as de Waal asserts, are theoretically within the capacity of other creatures: 'there must at some level be continuity' (1996, p. 1; quoted in Schaefer 2015, p. 207). This continuity, as well as the distinctiveness of what different species do, becomes clearer when we focus on practice.

Carey Wolfe, a pioneer in animal studies, argues that 'the questions that occupy animal studies can be addressed adequately only if we confront them on two levels: not just the level of content, thematics, and the object of knowledge (the animal studied by

animal studies) but also the level of theoretical and methodological approach (*how* animal studies the animal). To put it bluntly, just because we study non-human animals does not mean that we are not continuing to be humanist – and therefore, by definition, anthropocentric’ (Wolfe 2009, p. 568). Wolfe’s point is clearly relevant to the treatment of animals in religious studies. In most discussions of animal sacrifice, for example, human fantasies overwhelm the ‘real’ animal, describing death wishes, piety, and submission that exist only in the human imagination. Such versions of ‘animal studies’ are merely studies of how humans think about animals. Studying animals themselves demands methods and perspectives from the natural sciences, especially ethology, and also innovative theoretical approaches from within the humanities and social sciences. Here a practice-focused materialism is especially helpful. It can enable us to think about animals, material religion, and the two together. It helps us take seriously both the ways non-human animals can be religious actors and also the significance of human-animal interactions for human religious expressions.

14.5 Conclusion: Animals, Anthropocentrism, and Materiality

This chapter has explored the implications of thinking about materiality, animals, and religion together. I want to conclude by looking at one last theoretical, methodological, and also ethical issue that emerges from this conversation, centred on challenges to anthropocentrism.

Anthropocentrism is challenged in the new materialism in the name of inanimate objects, asserting ‘thing power’ as an important complement to a focus on human activities and thoughts. In environmental and animal studies, however, ‘anthropocentrism’ refers first and foremost to a worldview that makes *Homo sapiens* the centre of value and interest, at the expense – and sometimes to the exclusion – of non-human nature and animals. Scholars in animal and environmental ethics challenge anthropocentrism because it leaves out the perspective of other sentient beings and the value of non-human nature generally. Many would agree with the aim of a ‘radical decentering of the human subject’ which is central to the object-centred new materialism (Hazard 2013, p. 67). However, this decentering is only in relation to material objects, not to other living creatures. Hazard, in her extensive discussion of anthropocentrism, mentions animals only once, and then as part of a list of items that might make up assemblages: ‘statues, trees, feet, brains, animals and umbrellas’ (Hazard 2013, p. 65). There is nothing distinctive about non-human living entities such as trees and animals – they are simply part of the world of objects that interact with humans. This critique of anthropocentrism, and this kind of materialism, ignores the greatest challenge to human exceptionalism: the agency and power of the non-human natural world. In this regard, ‘new materialist’ scholars do not differ from the large majority of scholars in religious studies and other humanities and social sciences disciplines.

The notable exception is Schaefer’s work on affect theory, which shows one way to take this radical step. He argues that taking animals seriously points to the need for a new theoretical framework. To see something different – like animal religion – we need to see in different ways. Or, as Schaefer writes, ‘We fail to see non-human animal

religion because we only search for religion in places where we already know we will find it' (2015, p. 212). In turn, the practices of other animals, including their practices which look like religion, call us to see and interpret our own practices, traditions, and communities differently. They point to the possibility that religion is not only 'more than belief' but also more than human. A materialist approach helps scholars perceive and interpret these possibilities, because it prompts us to consider data and to ask questions that are left out of more common idealist frameworks. The benefit may be a better understanding of religion itself, of the experiences and capacities of non-human animals, and of the human-animal bond.

Taking materiality seriously demands a different theoretical framework than that developed in the text- and symbol-focused studies of the past. It calls us to look at 'religion as it is lived by human beings, not angels', in the words of Vásquez (2010, p. 5). When we take animals into perspective, a materialist approach can call us to revise not only our view of religion but also our understanding of humans as akin to angels, more spirit than matter.

Notes

- 1 'Non-human animals' is the most accurate way to refer to what we usually call 'animals'. However, to avoid frequent repetition of this rather clunky term, I will often follow common usage that defines 'animal' as species other than humans.
- 2 Contemporary uses of the term 'new materialism' refer to the object-focused theories associated especially with the work of Jane Bennett and her notion of 'thing power'. However, the term 'new materialism' was used in quite a different sense in the 1920s, where it referred to behaviourism and related theories which focused on 'sense-data' rather than 'mental states'. As one article put it, 'the "material" of the new materialism is not constituted by hypothetical entities outside experience, but by entities which enter into experience, namely sense-data. The latter are no longer regarded as mental, but as physical' (Richardson 1920–21, pp. 54–55; see also Lovejoy 1922; Pratt 1922). In the 1920s, the materialism that was 'old' was a particular version of Darwinism.
- 3 These discussions of ritual sacrifice echo Mary Daly's analysis of 'sado-rituals' in which women become apparently willing participants in their own victimization, identifying with their exploiters – and 'objective' scholarship provides legitimation (Daly 1980, pp. 131–133).

Works Cited

- | | |
|--|---|
| Balcombe, J. (2007). <i>Pleasurable Kingdom: Animals and the Nature of Feeling Good</i> . London: Macmillan. | Bekoff, M. and Jamieson, D. (eds.) (1996). <i>Readings in Animal Cognition</i> . Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. |
| Balcombe, J. (2010). <i>Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals</i> . New York: Palgrave Macmillan. | Bennett, J. (2004). The force of things: steps toward an ecology of matter. <i>Political Theory</i> 32 (3) (June): 347–372. |
| Bekoff, M. (2006). <i>Animal Passions and Beastly Virtues: Reflections on Redecorating Nature</i> . Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. | Bennett, J. (2010). <i>Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things</i> . Durham, NC: Duke University Press. |

- Benston, K. (2009). Experimenting at the threshold: sacrifice, anthropomorphism, and the aims of (critical) animal studies. *PMLA* 124 (2): 548–555.
- Bulliet, R.W. (2005). *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers: The Past and Future of Human-Animal Relationships*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Callicott, J.B. and Nelson, M.P. (2004). *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Creegan, N. (2013). *Animal Suffering and the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Culotta, E. (2009). On the origin of religion. *Science* 326 (5954) (6 November): 784–787.
- De Waal, F. (1996). *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Daly, M. (1980). *Gyn/Ecology: The Meta-Ethics of Radical Feminism*, 2e. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Fudge, E. (2002). *Animal*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Goodall, J. (1971). *The Shadow of Man*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Goodall, J. (1999). *Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey*. New York: Soko.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. (ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith). New York: International Publishers.
- Griffin, D.R. (1984). *Animal Thinking*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gross, A. (2014). *The Question of the Animal and Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Haraway, D. (1991). Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. In: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (ed. D. Haraway), 183–202. New York: Routledge.
- Hazard, S. (2013). The material turn in the study of religion. *Religion and Society* 4: 58–78.
- Hill, E. (2014). Imagining animals in prehistoric religion. In: *Archaeological Imaginations of Religion* (eds. E. Jerem and W. Meid), 265–282. Budapest: Archaeolingua.
- Hobgood-Oster, L. (2008). *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Horowitz, A. (2009). *Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know*. New York: Scribner.
- Kemmerer, L. (2011). *Animals and World Religions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- King, B.J. (2010). *Being with Animals: Why We Are Obsessed with the Furry, Scaly, Feathered Creatures Who Populate our World*. New York: Doubleday.
- Klawans, J. (2006). Sacrifice in ancient Israel. In: *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (eds. p. Waldau and K. Patton), 62–80. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lovejoy, A.O. (1922). Pragmatism and the new materialism. *The Journal of Philosophy* 19 (1) (5 January): 5–15.
- Linzey, A. (1987). *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*. New York: Crossroad.
- Marx, K. (1978). Theses on Feuerbach. In: *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed. R. Tucker), 143–146. New York: Norton.
- Masson, J.M. and McCarthy, S. (1995). *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*. New York: Dell Publishing.
- McIntosh, I. (2006). “Why Umbulka killed his master”: aboriginal reconciliation and the Australian wild dog (*Canis lupus dingo*). In: *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (eds. p. Waldau and K. Patton), 360–369. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Midgley, M. (1983). *Animals and Why They Matter*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

- Nagel, T. (1974). What is it like to be a bat? *Philosophical Review* 83: 435–250.
- Nelson, R. (1986). *Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Patton, K. (2006). Animal sacrifice: meta-physics of the sublimated victim. In: *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (eds. p. Waldau and K. Patton), 391–405. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Perlo, K. (2009). *Kinship and Killing: The Animal in World Religions*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Peterson, A.L. (2004). Religion and animal behavior. In: *Encyclopedia of Animal Behavior, Vol 3 (R–Z)* (ed. M. Bekoff), 866–870. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Pratt, J.B. (1922). The new materialism. *The Journal of Philosophy* 19 (13) (22 June): 337–351.
- Randall, C. (2014). *The Wisdom of Animals: Creatureliness in Early Modern French Spirituality*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Richardson, C.A. (1920–21). The new materialism. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 21: 51–70.
- Saunders, N.J. (1995). *Animal Spirits*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co.
- Schaefer, D.O. (2015). *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sterckx, R. (2006). “Of a tawny bull we make offering”: animals in early Chinese religions. In: *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (eds. p. Waldau and K. Patton), 259–274. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Thompson, E.P. (1966). *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage.
- Vargas, I. (2006). Snake-kings, Boars’ heads, deer parks, monkey talk: animals as transmitters and transformers in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist narratives. In: *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (eds. p. Waldau and K. Patton), 218–240. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Vásquez, M.A. (2010). *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vogel, S. (2015). *Thinking like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wolfe, C. (2009). Human, all too human: “animal studies” and the humanities. *PMLA* 124 (2): 564–575.
- Waldau, p. and Patton, K. (eds.) (2006). *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Section IV

Sacred Objects and Beings

CHAPTER 15

Assembling Inferences in Material Analysis

David Morgan

When we look at an image like this one, a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Figure 15.1), what do we actually see? What we see depends on how we look at it. For instance, we may look quickly for a convenient handle or tag by which to grasp the object epistemologically. A symbol, a logo, or a name – an easy rubric by which to classify the thing and be done with it. Such looking, which consists of a peek or no more than a passing glance, probably relies more on memory than it does actual vision.¹ A peek is part of a process of specification that may not deal with empirical knowledge much at all, but largely with the conventions of classification that need only a quick look at something to be called up for the purpose of comparison and sorting. As superficial as it may be, the procedure often yields very practical results when the point is to manage information expediently. A peek answers certain kinds of questions very effectively: what is this thing? is it dangerous? fragile? valuable? In an instant, we have filed away Figure 15.1 under such categories as bust, religious paraphernalia, kitsch, or antique.

But in another way of looking, the routine is much slower and more deliberate. Scrutiny is the word that comes to mind. Our eyes scan the object, noting its primary contour and shape, its colouration, the body's posture, the object's size and relation to one's own body. We look for various levels of meaning all at once – the culturally shared language of the body (gesture and facial expression), literary references, and symbolic devices, but also the physical evidences of the object's relationship to other things as well as indications of its purpose. The task is not rapid specification – the identification of what this object shares in common with an entire class of like objects – but close consideration of the artefact. But I still haven't answered the opening question: what do we actually see when we look at an object?



Figure 15.1 Sacred Heart of Jesus sick call station. Source: Photo by author.

I propose to answer the question by both specifying and carefully examining the object in order to demonstrate what moved me to regard it in the first place: when I look at Figure 15.1, I have the sense that this thing has its feet set invisibly in a distant past and that it came to look at me as it does by a widely circuitous set of paths. I am not sure what I'm looking at, and that intrigues me. A material analysis of this object seeks what we can learn to see in it, but may easily miss at first glance. It is a slow process of making inferences and gathering them into an account that takes the materiality of the object as primary evidence. The inquiry unfolds in the shape of an assemblage of connections stretching broadly across time. Objects draw on manifold debts to the past and converge them in the single object facing us. A great deal of work assembles itself before us in an object like Figure 15.1, which may be understood as an intersection of diverse trajectories.

My intention is to learn how the study of material culture can benefit from the inquiry into an account that is not strictly linear, but a network, a reverberation between object and everything we see beyond it that has gone into crafting the object.² An object bears the characteristics it does because of a complex interweaving of history, chance, intentionality, technology, industry, craft, commerce, consumption, use, and the material nature of its medium. The scrutiny of material analysis will make visible the assemblage of agents that go into making an object what it is at any moment. This will mean beginning and ending over and over, spinning a kind of web about and through the object. The result will be an account that oscillates repeatedly between a single representation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and wherever the search is led to go. The anatomy of inquiry here accommodates the structure of what Deleuze and Guattari call an assemblage or a rhizome. They contrast

a tree with a map in defining an assemblage as an explanatory account. A tree is a metaphor of explanation that proceeds from a single beginning to a final end on the assumption that tracing the genealogy, governed by the growth of the phenomenon, will result in an account that is structurally analogous to what it explains: the account begins and ends in a single trajectory of totality.

A map, by contrast, has no beginning or end and presents innumerable points of entry. It is, moreover, 'open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 12). An event, an artefact, a person, or a group is understood rhizomatically by drawing the map that includes whatever needs to be there in order to show the object's location. The task is infinite, of course, until one stops at some point. This iterative approach assures that the things we explain remain unstable, always subject to more mapping, greater detail, correction, re-scaling, deciding on certain features to map. Knowledge is contingent, never final, but it works, that is, it functions within the framework of particular tasks. What is more, the presence of the cartographer is always strongly implied in the hermeneutical turn that drives the rhizomatic mode of inquiry. The *telos* propelling the 'naturalistic' explanation of what we might call arboreal narration is presumed to reside in the thing we want to explain. The assemblage, however, begins with what the cartographer wants to know and proceeds in the surprise of what one finds. And yet genealogy remains a useful way of thinking about images since the genetic descent turns on reproduction, the generation of a likeness. Genealogy is, moreover, a necessarily temporal framework and a map is purely spatial and non-temporal. It is useful to keep the two in tandem. So, I do not intend to eliminate temporality from my explanation, only to refuse to organize it as a linear narration from a single genesis to a single conclusion.

15.1 The Artefact

Let me begin once again with the object (Figure 15.1). I bought this item on eBay for \$29.99 in 2013. The dealer who put it up for bidding purchased the object in an estate sale, from a household whose owner had died, leaving a number of things to be liquidated. It is called a 'Sacred Heart Sick Call Set'. The object is not a work of art, not intended to be enjoyed for fine workmanship, rarity, or original conception. Belonging to a genre of mass-produced objects known as 'chalkware', this image of Jesus is made of cast plaster. It was produced by pouring liquid plaster into a matrix composed of two pieces of plaster-reinforced, rubber-lined mould (Figure 15.2). By the 1920s, liquid rubber and gelatin were commonly used media to fashion flexible moulds. Silicone became commercially available in the 1940s. Flexible moulds had the advantage of allowing only a single seam and affording greater detail and undercuts. Figure 15.1 bears the faint trace of a single seam running up the arm and shoulder on each side and meeting in a shallow trough over the crest of the head. Because plaster was inexpensive and solid casts were less likely to be damaged in production, the cast was solid, resulting in a heavy but durable figure. The object was painted with a spray gun and paint brush for details (see Figure 15.5). It was manufactured by Pennsylvania Statuary Company, Inc., a firm in Philadelphia. Founded by two Italian immigrant brothers, Pietro and Antonio



Figure 15.2 Rubber mould for plaster figure of saint, Miami, Florida, artist José Ceballos, photographer Richard Parks, 1985. State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*, <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/106260>.

Allegrini, around 1919, the company specialized in the production of religious statuary, manufacturing many different religious artefacts in plaster, principally saints, shrines, and sick call sets. Both brothers died in the 1960s and the company closed in 1977.³ Figure 15.1 is undated, but it bears great similarity in details of production to another Sacred Heart Sick Call Station by the same firm that carries the copyright date of 1932.

A number of such companies existed in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Switzerland, France, and Italy. They competed with one another in the market of images of Mary, Jesus, and saints. Many of the companies responsible for much of the work still available in secondary markets like eBay are no longer in business. The market in 'vintage chalkware' has tipped more to collectors, of which there are many. Chalkware issued by the companies was based on work produced in Europe in the nineteenth century, and derived from much earlier production.⁴ Several firms in Europe and North America provided a large array of Catholic statuary producing trade catalogues that served churches and other religious institutions. A page of one American firm based in Kansas City, Missouri, the I. Donnelly Company, is reproduced here (Figure 15.3).⁵ The images were commonly placed on altars in churches, used in home shrines, and displayed in Catholic hospitals and schools. A lithograph of c. 1855 shows how the images could be used by children to celebrate the feast day of Corpus Christi (Figure 15.4). The girls gather to create an altar devoted to Jesus on this day of celebrating the Eucharistic host as the flesh of the saviour. Visible and tangible, the objects serve the purpose well by encouraging the pious girls to fashion floral wreathes and garlands to decorate the miniature altar, an object whose size suits the sweet statuary dedicated to a liturgical feast to recognize the incarnation of Jesus and to serve as the site for the adoration of the Eucharist as the body of Christ. It is a useful image and festival to note because it has everything to do with the origin and purpose of the Sacred Heart.



Figure 15.3 Imported statuary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, The I. Donnelly Company catalogue for 1923–1924, p. 158. Source: Courtesy The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

The look of chalkware is unmistakable. The forms are rounded and smooth, and there are very few undercuts, that is, forms fully in the round (see Figures 15.1 and 15.5). The fingers, for example, are not free-floating, but attached to the torso behind them in order to facilitate a minimal number of mould pieces to cast the figure. If the underside of the finger pointing to the heart were fully sculpted, the resulting space would require a much more complex form of casting, thus increasing the labour and difficulty of production, which could only be compensated for by charging a much higher price for the finished product, which would be fewer in number. Note the smooth texture of the hair and the folds in the robe and tunic (Figure 15.1). The smaller number of mould pieces used in a cast means faster production and lower price. Likewise, the painting process is quick and mechanized. Workers used spray guns or airbrushes to apply the paint to most of the surfaces, simply painting over (often incompletely) layers of colour already applied. The pneumatic and electric technology of painting replaced the hand brush techniques used earlier. It is not difficult to find places where two or



Figure 15.4 Corpus Christi Day, hand-painted lithograph, c.1855. Image courtesy of Michael M. Raguin.

three layers meet. Because of the speed of production to ensure low cost, these traces of expedited workmanship are signatures of chalkware.

A final phase of painting applies accents by hand. In Figure 15.1 this is evident in the heart and band of thorns, the golden hem on tunic and mantle, the lips, eyes, and eyebrows, the scars on Jesus' hands. Their success is critical for the effect of the imagery. The soft contours and surfaces issued by plaster casting and the ability of plaster to reproduce very smooth surfaces afford the deft use of the small brush for detailing and the airbrush for applying the thinnest layer of blush colour to the cheeks, and to convey in a formulaic application of dots and dashes of paint the glistening effect of dewy eyes (Figure 15.5).



Figure 15.5 Detail of face, Figure 15.1

But that does not answer a simple question: why should he look this way? Even more, how is it that he came to be here, a small figure gazing into the space our bodies occupy? A half-body on an altar-like platter? In order to answer these questions, we need to leave the image and wander into the past. We are drawn there by other images, which seem to volunteer for comparison with this one. I wonder what mechanism it is that aligns one image with another? Perhaps it is the viral force of likeness. Images have a way of reproducing themselves. That is a poetic way of saying something that is more literally true: image-makers rely on visual precedent for the images they make. But that does not get at everything. Human beings look for similarities. We associate things that resemble one another. The world seems to come to us in likenesses. That is because images share a basic anatomy that consists of discrete forms or motifs, *gestalts* that separate along joints or seams and migrate for use in other instances. And human perception has evolved the sensitivity for seeing the patterns of parts and wholes that organize objects. We recognize the migration of motifs as a rearrangement of the same parts in relation to different wholes. The art historical method for studying this migration is called iconography. Art historians explain what images *mean* by the family resemblances they bear owing to the transmission of visual motifs. But I'm interested in something more than meaning. Structures persist, the likeness of a thing tends to remember, however badly, what came before it. This is certainly a strategy for preserving something that might be called meaning, but not simply the encoded message of an iconographical transmission. The persistence of likeness has to do with access to the real thing, to making it present. Likeness is about recovery, not coding. And it is important to say that persistence does not mean exact duplication or unchanging sameness. Likeness is forever evolving, as imprecisely as memory, which re-invents even as it conveys.

15.2 Specification

We follow the echoes we hear. That means working with an archive or repository that we must build if we don't already have it collected in memory. So much in material analysis, like other forms of cultural and historical study, depends on a scholar's education by long browsing and collecting. It's a little like beach combing or fishing. Archival work, browsing in library stacks, ethnographic interviewing, reading correspondence, conducting literature searches, collecting specimens, undertaking archaeological digs – all of these belong to the empirical methods that enrich the scholar's data, the raw material awaiting study. Material analysis begins with objects of one sort or another, examines their physical structure, the signs of their manufacture, the spaces and contexts in which they are used, and the symbolic or textual material embedded in them. In order to bring all of this into focus, it is indispensable to understand the object's relation to other things like it. It is crucial to get the likeness right, that is, to compare apples with apples, not oranges. The aim is to be able to generalize in order to illuminate the particular, to situate it within historical periods, geographical sites, conceptual taxonomies, social settings, and historical narratives. If we are to learn about the cultural work that an object performed – how it enabled or compelled human beings in a particular time and place to be 'women' or 'children' or 'men' or 'pious' or 'redeemed' or 'racially pure' or 'elite', how the object helped construct power or authority or thwart it, how it disciplined, formed, and articulated bodies, how it launched imagination or curtailed it – we have to know what the object is really like. Likeness, in other words, is about belonging, about specification, about the architecture of experience that we also call by that impossible word, culture.

But to do that, we need to assemble an archive, a collection of things to which we can compare our object. So, I will begin with what bothers me most about Figure 15.1: its format. I am least familiar with that aspect of the artefact, so it captures my attention. The next step is simple: I ask myself, or someone else, what the object looks like: a shrine? a portrait bust? an altar? a reliquary? a miniature portable shrine or altar? a reliquary bust? Armed with the suspicion that a peek can provide, we avail ourselves of indexes, catalogues, databases, museum collections, Google, or the art historian down the hall. One way or another, we get a lead, we find something that looks like this object, and then we go to work. The archive has begun and the task of refining likenesses gets underway.

My archive begins with a polychromed wood bust of Jesus by Pedro de Mena (Figure 15.6), dating to the middle of the seventeenth century. The head-and-shoulders format is consistent with Figure 15.1. And the similarities continue. De Mena's work is a portable device that could travel with its owner and be used on altars anywhere. It portrays a key devotional moment in the Passion of Jesus, the *Ecce Homo*, or 'Behold, the man'. These were the words of Pontius Pilate when he displayed his scourged captive to the crowd calling for his execution. It was part of the *Via Dolorosa*, or way of sorrows, and became an important moment in the Stations of the Cross, allowing devotees to gaze raptly upon the abused body of Jesus, with a pathetic presentation of his suffering. The image's verisimilitude invites close and empathetic inspection and was a moment of identification with Jesus' suffering and even a prompting to regard one's sins as the reason for his agony. As such, the viewer's pain joins Christ's in a moment of

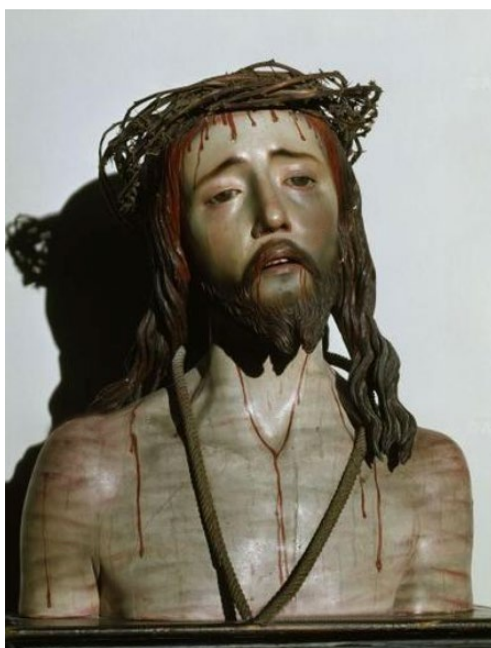


Figure 15.6 Pedro de Mena, *Ecce Homo*, seventeenth century, polychromed wood. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Granada, Spain. Source: Art Resource, NY. Reproduced with permission.

felt sharing and compassion. It is not difficult to imagine candles on either side of De Mena's figure. The artist has used the body to portray key features: the face and the special details of his bodily pain – the lacerated flesh, crown of thorns, and noose about Jesus' neck in Figure 15.6 and the device of the Sacred Heart in Figure 15.1. The format allows the coordination of face and body, thus embodying the gaze and the person or presence projected in that gaze. We learn here that the format of De Mena's bust of Jesus may lend to Figure 15.1 a strong interest in materializing the person in the look and face in order to produce an intimate presence. The size of the objects confirms this. The reliquary is just less than 17 inches high; Figure 15.1 is 13 inches. At this size, situated on tables or altars or mantles, the objects address themselves to those standing or lying directly before them. I do not presume that Figure 15.6 itself exerted direct causal influence on Figure 15.1, only that Figure 15.6 belongs to a tradition of image-making and altar use that has ultimately informed the format and conception of Figure 15.1. The former reverberates in the latter. How loudly is another matter, but to hear the echo, to see the likeness of the two, is to start to think about purpose and the long arc of genealogical descent.

The visual reverberations of Figure 15.1 are manifold once we start to train our eye to certain patterns. Figure 15.6 suggests a tradition of portraying the truncated body as the context for a material address to viewers. So we can start to look for the truncated figure as a theme. When we do, we find a very popular motif in the late Middle Ages: the portrayal of Jesus arising from the sarcophagus as St. Gregory says Mass (Figure 15.7). We know that this portrayal of Jesus as the Man of Sorrows was influenced by a

Byzantine icon of Christ that came to Europe in the fifteenth century and that it derived from an ancient practice of showing Christ from the waist up.⁶ Thus, the motif had long been associated with the Passion and contemplation of it in the liturgical context of the Eucharist as well as Holy Week. But does the visual similarity evident in Figures 15.6 and 15.7 mean anything more than a resemblance to Figure 15.1? Does the similarity convey a similar intention? Can we say that Figures 15.6 and 15.7 and the long history of images and visual practices are remembered in Figure 15.1?

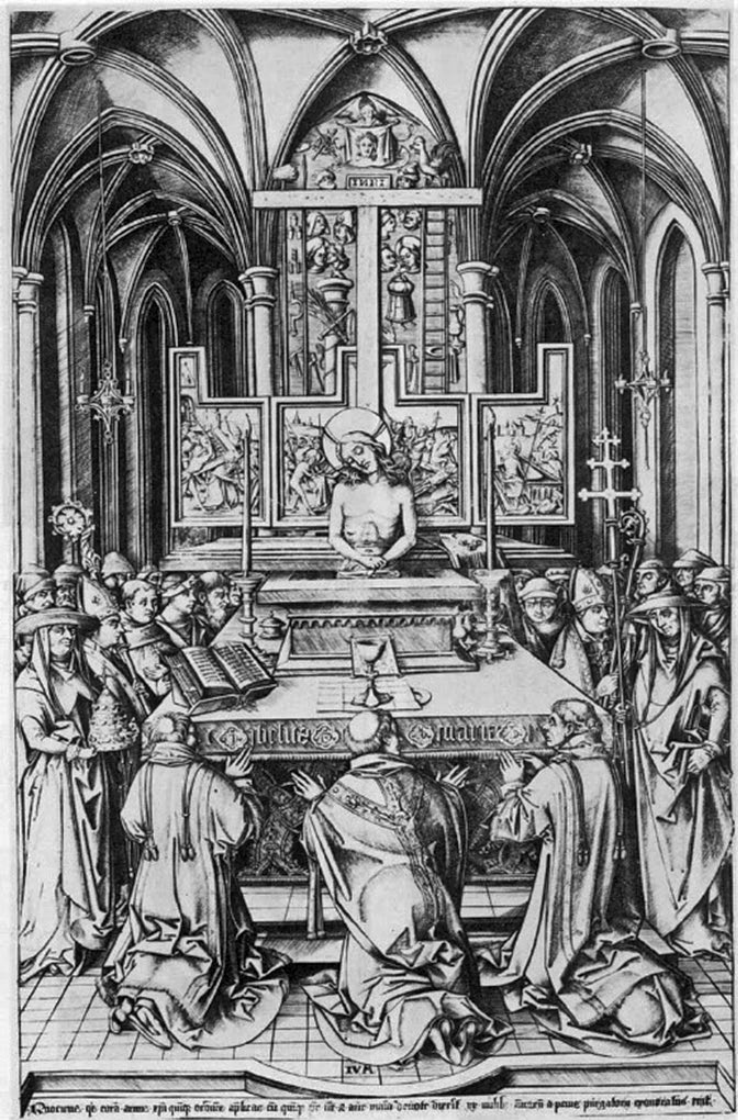


Figure 15.7 Israhel van Meckenem, Mass of Saint Gregory, 1490s. Foto Marburg/ Art Resource, NY. Reproduced with permission.

Perhaps, but we need to know much more in order to hear the reverberation tell us something. Figure 15.1 might remind us of many things, but there must be a way to test the similarity to determine whether it is a true likeness. Figures 15.6 and 15.7 urge us to keep in mind the relevance of the body of Jesus as image and sacrament for the analysis of Figure 15.1. But making fuller sense of that is going to have to await further progress. Robust material analysis is a juggling act. We have to get several balls in the air at once.

To that end, we can turn to another half or three-quarters portrayal of Jesus, but one that bears undeniably closer connection to Figure 15.1. Figure 15.8 is a widely distributed lithographic print that reproduces a painting, which may have been created by the French painter of religious subjects, Alexandre Grellet (1835–1918). Now probably lost, the original has been replaced by an endless stream of reproductions. You will note the same heavy eyelids, ethereal gaze, soft hair, feathery contours, well-defined lips, broad forehead, and boneless fingers of Figure 15.1. We might assemble a large archive of such imagery to compare with our statue, all of it from the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the modern heyday of the devotion, whose association with an ethnic Catholicism in the United States found the plaster figures produced in Europe and brought to the US by immigrants in the twentieth century where they were produced in Chicago, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and elsewhere. But I am not sure we learn much more about why Jesus looks the way he does, beyond situating the look in the nineteenth century as a matter of origin. We find in Figure 15.8, however, something that may point us in a direction worth pursuing. This is the sharp delineation of the

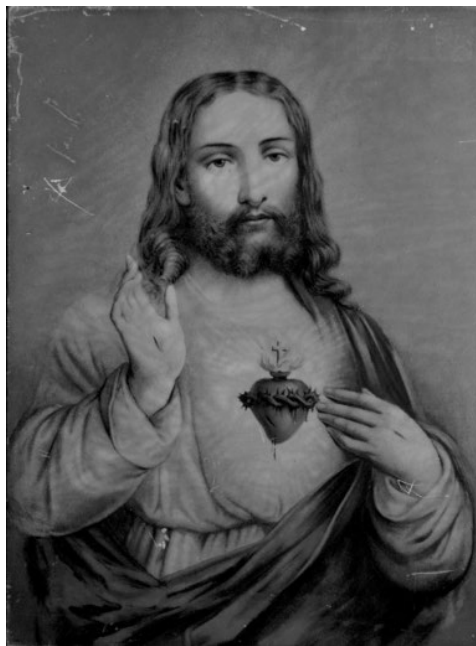


Figure 15.8 Alexandre Grellet (?), *Sacred Heart of Jesus*, second half of the nineteenth century. Source: Photo author.

central motif: a floating heart that is halfway between the human organ and a Valentine's heart. It radiates light, bears a deep gash that drips blood, is wrapped in a tightly woven band of thorns, and is surmounted by flames and a cross. Jesus gestures to the heart with one hand and displays the nail wound in the palm of the other, suggesting some manner of connection between the two. But like Figure 15.1, the expression on his face does not appear to register agony or anger. He gazes solemnly at us, in what appears to be a kind of stupor unless we learn to read the look otherwise.

So, from this hazy cloud of images floating somewhere in the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, we must continue our search. And since the current of visual references moves backward in time, we may follow it. But how far shall we go? It's an important question to pose, and even more important to answer since I fear there is no limit stopping us. As far as I know, images of the heart of Jesus can be found at least as far back as the thirteenth century, where German mystics invited cloistered nuns to inhabit the heart of Jesus as a refuge from the sinful world.⁷ A century before them Bernard of Clairvaux expressed admiration for the heart of Jesus. And if we want to venture on, we can continue to look for poetic allusions in earlier work, and in Scripture. But the demands of cogent explanation rein us in. The expanding network of connections is curbed by the practicality of empiricism: if you want to explain *something*, it's best to impose constraints that prevent you from becoming lost in explaining *everything*. The constraint I have in mind, at least for the moment, will send us in the direction of the emblem floating before Christ's chest. We have already discerned that its triangulation with the eyes and the hands of the figure are a motif that may promise something. If we cannot read his face, at least we might try to decipher the hieroglyph to which he tenderly directs our attention.

15.3 Refining Likeness: Putting the Archive to Work

To learn more about the device of the heart, we turn to Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690), even though she never laid eyes on anything like our plaster figure. Alacoque spent her life in a Visitandine convent in Paray-le-Monial, in eastern France, where she reported ecstatic visions of Jesus bearing his heart. Alacoque recalled the following words of Jesus regarding the purpose of the revelation of his Heart and the mission for which he chose Alacoque as servant:

My Divine Heart is so inflamed with love for men, and for thee in particular that, being unable any longer to contain within itself the flames of its burning Charity, it must needs spread them abroad by thy means, and manifest itself to them (mankind) in order to enrich them with the precious treasures which I discover to thee, and which contain graces of sanctification and salvation necessary to withdraw them from the abyss of perdition. I have chosen thee as an abyss of unworthiness and ignorance for the accomplishment of this great design, in order that every thing may be done by Me.⁸

Alacoque did not provide a detailed description of the motif until 1689, in a long letter to her Jesuit confessor, Fr. Jean Croiset, which reads like a program, a kind of résumé for

the devotion. A number of images had been produced since the mid-1680s, which likely contributed to her later description. But throughout her *Autobiography* and the letters before 1689, we find no detailed description of the heart she saw. The imagery that she came to endorse enthusiastically belonged to a class of highly emblematic devices (Figure 15.9) and derived largely from a conception described in 1611 by Francis de Sales in a letter to Jane Frances de Chantal, the co-founders of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, or the Visitandines, Alacoque's religious order. Francis asked Chantal if she would approve of a spiritual coat-of-arms that bears remarkable resemblance to what Alacoque later endorsed: 'a heart pierced with two arrows, encircled by a crown of thorns, and surmounted by a cross, graven with the sacred names of Jesus and Mary'.⁹ We see something very similar in Figure 15.9: a Valentine's heart bearing a large wound, with a cross and flames emerging from a spout-like aorta, and encircled by a decorative interlacing of thorns and surmounted by a cross and the names of Jesus and Mary, as well as her husband and her mother and father. This may suggest that what we see in Figure 15.9 is not a visual depiction of the vision, but an emblem that conveys its meaning. Alacoque's letter to Croiset indicates a good deal of reflection about the motif as symbolic. For instance, the heart was 'surmounted by a cross which signified that, from the first moment of His Incarnation, that is, from the time this Sacred Heart was formed, the cross was planted in it' (Alacoque 1997, p. 229). She indicates that the heart 'must be honored under the symbol [*la figure*] of this Heart of Flesh, whose image he wished to be publicly exposed'.¹⁰ She still used the term 'figure' or symbol, but now she had come to fix on the fleshly nature of the heart, which had not been a major issue until then. The image itself had also come to be a device of honour, a talisman, and a special divine initiative in the end times: 'He wanted me to carry it on



Figure 15.9 Emblem of 20 July 1685, given by Alacoque to the Sisters at Paray-le-Monial. The Picture Art Collection/ Alamy Stock Photo. Reproduced with permission.

my person, over my heart, that He might imprint his love there, fill my heart with all the gifts with which his own is filled, and destroy all inordinate affection. Wherever this sacred image would be exposed for veneration He would pour forth his graces and blessings. This devotion was as a last effort of his love which wished to favor men in these last centuries with this loving redemption...' (Alacoque 1997, p. 229).

What did it mean? The heart had already become a fervent motif in Catholic piety following the Reformation. Giving one's heart to Jesus is something that Protestants and Catholics alike have long espoused. One Protestant polemicist in the nineteenth century even contended that Alacoque borrowed the motif of the beloved heart from Thomas Goodwin, the Puritan chaplain to Oliver Cromwell (Jenkins 1880, p. 28)! No doubt, this would have surprised her and her Jesuit supporters, not to mention Cromwell. Although some have insisted that Alacoque knew almost nothing of previous devotion to the Sacred Heart, it is hard to believe because of its extensive presence in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French piety (Hamon 1928, vol. 1, p. 148). Certainly, the powerful and pervasive practice of imagining an endearing intimacy with Jesus in the amorous interior of the soul portrayed as the heart was common and widely disseminated in illustrated literature. A host of such pamphlets and emblem books appeared in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century, many of which featured a Valentine's sweetheart as an emblem of the soul occupied by Jesus.¹¹ Alacoque's Valentine heart was gashed and surrounded by thorns whose pain she longed to feel as the basis of her union with Jesus: 'I had no greater desire than to make of myself a true and perfect copy and representation of my Jesus Crucified' (Alacoque 1986, p. 100). And so she twice carved the name of the lover into her own flesh and reported that after receiving Holy Communion Jesus appeared to her holding a crown of thorns, which he placed on her head as a way of making her 'conformable' to him (Alacoque 1986, pp. 97, 115, 120).

And that brings us back to the gaze in the statue of Jesus (Figure 15.1). I had thought of the eyes as sleepy or sentimental or ecstatic or vaguely amorous. It's hard to say at first, when you look into them. Is he looking at you? If not, at whom does he look? The lids seem thick and partially descended; the pupils are large. But looking at them again, in light of Alacoque's account of her lover's severity, his penetrating vision in search of every iota of sin and self, I wondered if these placid blue eyes were something very different. Read differently, the demure, almost effeminate expression of Jesus' face, matched by his narrow shoulders and pudgy fingers, suggests the meekness of a character who does not seem consistent with an ascetic nun's mystical infatuation with Jesus as her spiritual paramour. The emblem, her image of the Sacred Heart, seems to celebrate a love relationship in the manner of Valentine's hearts. If so, that is precisely why it did not come to the fore in the international career of the devotion that she struggled to establish.

The Jesuits shaped the story of Alacoque's heart with her cooperation. This began with Rev. Father Claude de la Colombière, her first Jesuit confessor, who was appointed spiritual director of the nuns in the Monastery of the Visitation in 1675. After Colombière died, another young Jesuit priest, Jean Croiset, replaced him as spiritual director of Alacoque's monastery. In the fall of 1689, she wrote to Croiset, thanking him for the effort he had undertaken to propose the idea of meditations and indulgences for the Sacred Heart. Alacoque occupied herself in the last decade of her life with establishing

an infrastructure to support her all-consuming devotion. In effect, she had dedicated herself to transforming the private love affair she had with Jesus into an ambitious mission to which she passionately sought to dedicate her convent, sister convents, and even the nation of France itself by wanting to urge Louis XIV to create a chapel at Versailles dedicated to the Sacred Heart. 'Would not the application for the indulgences', she pressed Croiset, 'furnish a good occasion for asking the Holy See to approve a Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart? ... He [Jesus] wants this devotion to be practiced in the palaces of kings and princes'.¹²

Alacoque addressed herself to the national and ecclesiastical hierarchies that might institutionalize her devotion, installing it within the sacred economy of Catholicism and the prestige of the monarchies that supported the Church in Europe. Indulging meditation or prayer before the image meant offering to its devotees currency to engage in spiritual compensation: to pay the reparations that Alacoque had come to insist was the principal message of Jesus. He presented himself to her as the scourged victim whose unjust treatment was intended to ignite compassionate indignation in the devotee. The appropriate response was to compensate Jesus for his loss of prestige, that is, to pay reparations in the form of adoration of his heart. 'This divine Heart', Alacoque assured Croiset, 'is the treasury of heaven from which precious gold has already been given us in many ways to pay off our debt and purchase heaven' (Alacoque 1997, p. 221). The prospect was alluring to Fr. Croiset and many in his order. When she died, Croiset published *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart* (1691), which included a biography of the saint and a selection of her writings. Croiset asserted that the aim of the devotion was twofold: first, 'to recognize and honor as much as lies in our power by our frequent adoration, by a return of love, by our acts of thanksgiving and by every kind of homage, all the sentiments of tender love which Jesus Christ has for us in the adorable Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist... [and] secondly, to make reparation, by all possible means, for the indignities and outrages to which His love has exposed Him during the course of his mortal life, and to which this same love exposes Him every day in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar' (Croiset 1988, p. 54).

The penitential value of the piety accommodated a sacred economy that the Jesuits wanted to make practical and lay-friendly. This became especially clear in their long fight with the Jansenists, who waged a battle with Jesuit defenders of Alacoque and the Sacred Heart over Jansenism's strenuous interpretation of penance, opposition to frequent communion, and attack on the sacred economy of reparations that had been the focus of the devotion in the last 10 years of Alacoque's life. The sacred economy to which Alacoque referred resounds in the inscription around the base of Figure 15.1: 'I will bless every place where an image of my heart shall be exposed and venerated'. In a letter written in 1685, Alacoque assured a fellow devotee of the Sacred Heart at another convent that Jesus 'will shower [blessings] in abundance on every place where a picture of His divine Heart shall be set up and honored'.¹³ She said the same to Croiset a few years later, adding the reason for Jesus' generosity: 'because His love urges Him to dispense the inexhaustible treasures of His sanctifying and salutary graces to all souls of good will'.¹⁴

It may be that the quiet look in the eyes of our plaster Jesus should be read as a gaze of resignation meant to instigate a sense of responsibility in the viewer as a way of

compelling the willingness to make reparation. The coordination of the face, hands, and heart accommodated a shift in the heart's communicative focus that appears to have surfaced in the eighteenth century, but already started in the last decade of Alacoque's lifetime. Structuring the devotion in terms of a sacred economy of reparations meant the need for a cult object to serve as the focus for indulgenced prayer and pilgrimage. Alacoque longed for a chapel to enshrine a cult image at her convent and elsewhere and eventually was successful in seeing one provided not long before her death.¹⁵ So she busied herself with efforts to produce an engraved version of the emblem and to circulate it among members of her order, who were encouraged to pin the image over their own hearts as a sign of having given their hearts to Jesus. The portrayal of Jesus showing his heart that we see today did not appear before the eighteenth century, when it was conceived as more suitable for what the devotion had become.

Alacoque often experienced the Sacred Heart before the Eucharistic host and following the Feast of Corpus Christi. The reparations that Jesus wanted to receive were for offences against the exposure of his body on the altar, committed by those who failed to adore his presence there. So, it makes sense to find the literal nature of the heart emphasized in the history of the devotion. Yet the bloody organ caused some Catholics concern, and it is not surprising to find it being replaced in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in light of other popular iconography geared for children such as lithographs showing young girls fondly creating altars for Corpus Christi (see Figure 15.3). Thus, a growing preference emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century for images that allegorized the heart. By far the most frequently iterated imagery of the devotion after 1870 was the half or three-quarter length portrait of Jesus that became the visual signature of the Sacred Heart (see Figure 15.8).

It is not difficult to imagine why. The devotion spread most commonly at the effort of religious communities of nuns and friars who concerned themselves with teaching, and in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century campaign to consecrate homes to the Sacred Heart. Large images of bloody, anatomically correct hearts are probably not what teachers, parents, nurses, and orphanage directors wanted to display. What works in monasteries and convents is less apt to direct the minds of children and the bedridden to the comforting message of a compassionate saviour. The Jesus who looks kindly into one's eyes and invites one to look back (Figure 15.8) is likely to be the sort of presence many parents would prefer for the walls of their living rooms, hanging there as a comforting proclamation concerning the consecration of this Catholic home to the cause of the Sacred Heart. Moreover, the image turned the amorous relation at work in Alacoque's spirituality into the offer of a gift that would invite a response from the viewer, an exchange that suits the practice of reparation and the devotion's role in a sacred economy. The Jesus of Figure 15.8 offers not a living organ, but himself, his entire body, as a domestic presence, as a friend.

It is becoming clear that what we have in our image (Figure 15.1) is a complex piece of visual technology. And so we return to it, armed with the sense that it is a tool, a device geared to a particular purpose. The longer I inspect the object, the more I realize that it is part of a situation, an apparatus, a piece of religious technology. In addition to being a container, a kind of tabernacle, Jesus is a face and a body and a gesture. He gazes steadily and displays his heart. The image enacts what the priest performs. And the

image helps construct a small, local sacred space for the ritual action of preparing the Eucharist or applying the blessing of the unction or christening oils. The figure of Jesus brings to bedside an entire world of history and story. Jesus is made present for the believer. But the miracle is not a pyrotechnic feat of dazzling drama, but the quiet technology of candlelight, a gaze, and the whispered recitation of Latin. *Hoc est corpus meum*. The words, uttered by Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:20), summon an ancient history to this moment of pointing and looking. In the hushed look of the plaster figure we see a world unfold, a distant reach of nodes and connections.

15.4 Function and Form in a Religious Technology

The pieces start to fall together. The idea of reparations was directed at expiating a visceral sense of personal guilt for the indignities that Jesus had suffered. This was not a new idea, but was powerfully part of medieval Catholic piety. Caroline Walker Bynum has pointed out that the Mass of St. Gregory was sometimes associated with guilt and reproach for Christ's suffering. The blood Jesus spilled in his scourging (note the instruments of his torture floating above him in Figure 15.7) and crucifixion was not only an element of the Sacrament of the Altar, but also a reference to penance and baptism (Bynum 2006, p. 220). The scourged, bleeding, crucified rises from the tomb to incite reproach and contrition in the presence of Gregory and his entourage, and before viewers of the image, to urge them to penitence. Pedro de Mena's bust of Christ (see Figure 15.6) carefully simulated trails of blood and bruised flesh in order to evoke a palpable sense of Jesus' suffering. Built on the same tradition, Alacoque's piety experienced a Jesus who urged her to make reparation for the abuse he had suffered in the neglect for his body exposed in the Sacrament of the Altar. The emphasis on the Eucharist drew directly from Alacoque, who morphed the Eucharist into the amorous symbol of the heart. But she did so within the framework of a longstanding medieval piety of the sacramental host and its adoration of the Corpus Christi. The Jesuits helped expand the piety beyond Alacoque's personal devotion by linking devotion to the Sacred Heart to the much older practice of penitential piety. All of this shapes our perception of Figure 15.1: the half-length format placed on a home altar, recalls the penitential economy that directed devotion to Jesus in the late Middle Ages. Jesus seeks out the eye of the ailing and points to his heart as the stimulus to penitential self-reproach and the means for paying the debt that reproach is to acknowledge. The promise he makes is what becomes visible in the Mass of St. Gregory as well as the bearing of the Sacred Heart: ponder what you have done to me and I will bless you. But we need to understand a bit more about how this piece of plaster technology operates.

On the base of Figure 15.1, in front of the figure, are two holes for candles and the small notch in the centre in which is placed a small crucifix. The candles and crucifix, along with a linen cloth and a small glass bottle for holy water are stored in a compartment built into the backside of the figure and contained by a sliding door (Figure 15.10). We are now in a position to consider the function of Figure 15.1. A page of instructions included with the object indicates how it is to be used. The object, in other words, is an



Figure 15.10 Rear compartment with liturgical items, back view of Figure 15.1.

instrument in an operation, a device that performs a particular ritual function, which is the message around the base.

A small piece of printed paper included with the set carries the title: 'Use of the Sacred Heart Sick Call Set'. The text reads as follows:

Place a table near the bed in such a way that it can be seen by the patient. Cover the table with clean linen and on it place the Sacred Heart Sick-Call Set.

Place the candles in the candle holders and light them before the entrance of the priest. Place on the table a vessel containing pure water and see that the linen in the set is perfectly clean.

On one end of the metal plates place some bread crumbs and a little salt, and on the other the white cotton and napkin. This is in case the patient is to receive Extreme Unction.

The Sacred Heart Sick-Call Set contains all the vessels necessary for the use of the priest in administering Holy Communion and the last rites of the Church.

An extra supply of Holy Water and Blessed Candles should always be kept in every Catholic home.

These instructions make it clear that the object was intended for use in the home when a priest would call on an ailing family member in order to provide pastoral care for the ill and celebrate the Mass or, in the event of the imminent death, perform the last rites. The instructions corroborate what is likely a contemporary booklet for lay caretakers of bedridden Catholics. In *The Catholic Sick Room* (1925), the Rev. James F. Splaine, SJ,

instructed readers when to call a priest to attend to a sick person and how to prepare for the clergyman's work at bedside. Preparations focused on organizing the sick room, providing appropriate furniture and supplies, and placing them properly to facilitate the priest's work. The reader was told to place a small table at the foot of the bed, 'on the patient's right hand, in such a position that it will not be in the priest's way when giving Holy Communion or Extreme Unction, and that the sick person may be able to see Our Lord on the Cross' (Splaine 1925, p. 3). In lieu of the cross in the case of Figure 15.1 is Jesus presenting his heart as the adorable correspondent to the Eucharist. Father Splaine provided a diagram of the room (Figure 15.11). He also gave explicit directions for the lay attendant's prayers in Latin 'if you can, but English will do', as well as instruction about providing fresh air, introducing fresh fruit and flowers, and indicating where the priest should sit (upwind of the patient). The room was a carefully orchestrated stage set and organized with sensitivity to the sensations of both patient and priest. Lighting, noise, air quality, and temperature were among the features to be optimally controlled for effective bedside administering of the sacraments in care for the sick and dying. Bearing this in mind changes once again what we make of the gaze of our plaster Jesus, which now seems deliberately serene, reassuring, calming, and designed to seek out the sight line of the bedridden from the little table at the foot of the bed. Surrounded by candles, neatly pressed linen, and flowers, the gentle colours of the object would join its sweet expression and pacific gaze to minister with the soft intonations of a solemn, well-rehearsed priest.

Making the connections that constitute this material account means returning to the image before us in a kind of reverberation. The object resonates each time we return to it because it is, in some sense, not quite the same as before. We spiral around the object, wheeling into the past, into industrial production, into devotional practices, into sick rooms and priestly rites, into the record of ecclesiastical debate and political

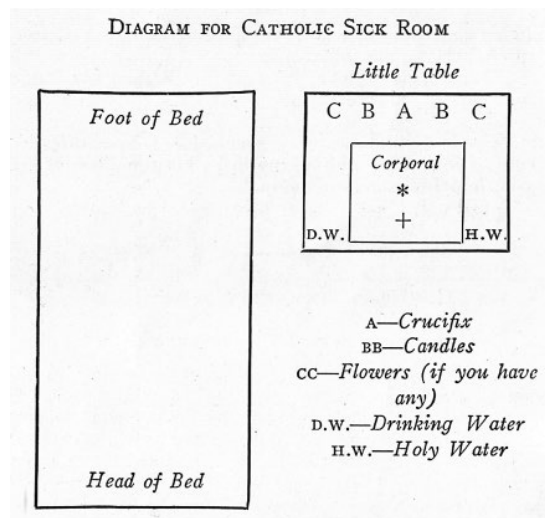


Figure 15.11 Diagram for Catholic sick room, 1925.

dispute, into commerce and the marketplace, into the history of iconography, guide books, into theology and papal encyclicals, into Catholic devotionism, childhood, suffering. And with each orbit we rebound, returning to face the object. What seemed important the last time around recedes this time as we notice something we'd not seen before. The expanding archive of objects and images that we have assembled change what we see in Figure 15.1 each time we return to it. And every time, Jesus looks at us a bit differently, now mercifully, now ridiculously, now a pathetic victim, now a nun's plaything, now with a pastoral look in a grave moment.

15.5 Reticulating the Sacred

Who is this plaster man who peers calmly past us, across centuries of story, ritual, nationalism, international intrigue, warfare, territorial conquest, myth, theological debate, delusion, torture, asceticism, devotion, and prayer? Put simply, he is a nodal point in a vast network of connections that assembles the sacred (Morgan 2014). This intricate, reticular definition of sacrality is implied by Jesus' invitation to pay reparations as expiation for the indignities he had suffered. By looking at him, by feeling sympathy for his suffering and gratitude for his compassion, by paying him devotion and attention, the devotee enters into an economy, a system of exchange, a current of gift and counter-gift, of obligation and compensation. This engagement is driven by and in turn augments intense feelings, especially shame and devotion, that help form a bond, a relationship with the deity. The network begins unfolding with only a glance at the image, object, saint, heart, deity, practice, the industry of mass production, illness, France, Jesuits, Eucharist, penitence, theology, ritual exchange, candles, and family. The image subsumes the network, occludes it while offering interface with it. The distant times, places, and people press against the viewer in the shape of the Sacred Heart and the devotee responds with the efforts of devotion that generate a spectrum of feelings of shame, guilt, compassion, and dedication. The result is holiness.

What then is the sacred? Is it Jesus? The image? The relation between devotee and Jesus? The saint who first envisioned this Jesus? The tradition of belief invested in the saint? The acts or fruits of divinity that issue from devotion to her or her cause? The system of exchange that structures the devotee's relation with the saint or the deity beyond the saint? I think we must say that the sacred is all of these and not any single one by itself. Indeed, in the late twentieth century, even the motif of the Sacred Heart itself could vanish from depictions of the Sacred Heart, leaving Jesus himself gesturing towards his plain chest. The heart had re-merged entirely with his person and body. It did not matter, I was told by a priest at a shrine to the Sacred Heart in Kenya. The heart was understood to be there (Morgan 2008, p. 40).

What do we learn about religion in this account? Many things, I think, but surely that, whatever we choose to call it – belief, the sacred, religion – is a product of and a condition for the performance that happens inside and outside of the pliant barrier of the human body, each side affecting and affected by the other. Movement, dress, perception, imagination, speech, and things interact in the animate zone of the flesh, forming discourses that are interactively cerebral and material. Belief is not exceptionally

mental, but robustly embodied. This is evident in the engagement of the Sacred Heart shrine, where memory, history, object, image, practice, and the senses intermingle to create the sacred in a performative web of many actors. The shrine is activated by being appropriately positioned, lighted, read, gazed at, possibly caressed, whereupon it looks back, reminds, shows, reassures, blesses. The resulting presence may be called sacred, and is something that suffuses matter, air, moment, memory, and person. These many lists capture, however awkwardly, the heterogeneity of the assemblages that are the mediation of the sacred.

Notes

- 1 For a rich and extensive consideration of the glance rather than the gaze as the basis for the phenomenological inquiry of vision, see Casey (2007). Casey articulates the operation of the glance in a very nuanced way that is not to be confused with my much simpler distinction between peeking and scrutiny.
- 2 I have written about the history of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on several occasions. While this chapter draws on some of those discussions, it sets out to do something very different. See Morgan (2012a, pp. 111–136, 2012b, 2008).
- 3 See the records of the Allegrini family in the Research Library of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Baltimore – Allegrini Papers, 1910–1975, first series, nine folders.
- 4 For an image of an assembly line of artisans painting plaster statues of Catholic subjects from 1894, see McDannell (1995, pp. 57–61 and 167–173), and a discussion of the modern industry of statuary. The history of plaster cast figures extends to antiquity. In the modern world, the practice of copying classical statuary was commonly undertaken by collectors, museum curators, and art school instructors in the eighteenth century, see von Gaetringen (2012) and Frederiksen and Marchand (2010). Inexpensive plaster casts of busts and devotional figures were plied by street venders from Rome to London in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- 5 A collection of trade catalogues for Catholic church goods is located at the Winterthur Museum Library, Winterthur, Delaware. The firm of Benziger Brothers dominated international trade in Catholic imagery. On the firm's catalogues and visual production, see Coffey (2001) and Zalesch (1999).
- 6 See Finaldi (2000, pp. 150–151), for a discussion on images, icons, and death, see Cormack (1997, pp. 64–76) and Belting (2011, pp. 9–36 and 84–124).
- 7 See Høystad (2007); for an erudite study of late medieval nuns as makers of images of the heart as sacred motif in the crucifixion of Jesus, see Hamburger (1997).
- 8 Alacoque (1986, p. 67). I have removed the capitalization of 'It' and 'Itself' which the English edition honorifically used since the French edition does not capitalize the pronouns 'le', 'lui' or 'son' in reference to the Sacred Heart, see Alacoque (1962, pp. 97–98 and 84–85). Moreover, use of 'It' suggests something alien to the French text, resembling the 'es' (or 'id', in the standard English translation) of Freudian psychoanalysis, however tempting it may be to imagine such a resonance.
- 9 Letter of June 10, 1611, to Chantal, quoted in Bougaud (2012[1875], p. 143).
- 10 Alacoque (1997, p. 230). The letter to Croiset is dated 3 November 1689. For the French original, see Hamon (1928, vol. 1, p. 148).

- 11 See for example the many additions of *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (Sacred Heart of Jesus, Lover of the Faithful), which was first illustrated about 1596 by the Belgian engraver, Antoine Wierix.
- 12 Alacoque (1997, p. 210); for her remarks about Louis XIV see the letter to Mother de Saumaise, at Dijon, 28 August 1689 in Alacoque (1997, pp. 159–160).
- 13 Letter to Mother Greyfié, 1685, in Alacoque (1997, p. 50, letter #36).
- 14 Letter to Father Croiset, 10 August 1689, in Alacoque (1997, p. 203, letter # 131).
- 15 Letter to Sister Félice-Madeleine de la Barge, at Moulins, March, 1689, in Alacoque (1997, p. 144).

Works Cited

- Alacoque, S.M.-M. (1962). *Oeuvres choisies*. Paray-Le-Monial: Monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie.
- Alacoque, M.M. (1986). *The Autobiography of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque* (trans. The Sisters of the Visitation). Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers.
- Alacoque, M.M. (1997). *The Letters of Margaret Mary Alacoque, Apostle of the Sacred Heart* (trans. Fr. C.A. Herbst, S.J.). Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers.
- Belting, H. (2011). *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* (trans. T. Dunlap). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bougaud, R.É. (2012 [1875]). *The Life of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque*. Charlotte, NC: TAN Books.
- Bynum, C.W. (2006). Seeing and seeing beyond: the Mass of St. Gregory in the fifteenth century. In: *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (eds. J.F. Hamburger and A.-M. Bouché), 208–240. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Department of Art and Archaeology.
- Casey, E.S. (2007). *The World at a Glance*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Coffey, R. (2001). Negotiating tradition and technology: Benziger Brothers' trade catalogues of church goods, 1879–1937. MA thesis. University of Delaware, Program in Early American Culture.
- Cormack, R. (1997). *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks and Shrouds*. London: Reaktion.
- Croiset, J., S.J. (1988). *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: How to Practice the Sacred Heart Devotion* (trans. Father B.D. Patrick O'Connell, 2e. Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (trans. B. Massumi). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Finaldi, G. (2000). *The Image of Christ*. London: National Gallery.
- Frederiksen, R. and Marchand, E. (2010). *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting, and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present*. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.
- Hamburger, J.S. (1997). *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hamon, A., S.J. (1928). *Histoire de la dévotion au Sacré-Cœur*, 5 vols., 5e. Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne.
- Høystad, O.M. (2007). *A History of the Heart*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Jenkins, R.C. (1880). *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart: An Exposure of its Errors and Dangers*. London: Religious Tract Society.
- McDannell, C. (1995). *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. London: Yale University Press.

- Morgan, D. (2008). *The Sacred Heart of Jesus: The Visual Evolution of a Devotion*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press.
- Morgan, D. (2012a). *The Embodied Eye: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Social Life of Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Morgan, D. (2012b). Rhetoric of the heart: figuring the body in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In: *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality* (eds. D. Houtman and B. Meyer), 90–111. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Morgan, D. (2014). The ecology of images: seeing and the study of religion. *Religion & Society* 5: 83–105.
- Splaine, J., S.J. (1925). *The Catholic Sick Room*. New York: Paulist Press.
- von Gaetringen, H.G. (2012). *Masterpieces of the Gipsformerei: Art Manufactory of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin since 1819*. Berlin: Gipsformerei, Staatlich Museen zu Berlin; Munich: Hirmer.
- Zalesch, S. (1999). The religious art of Benziger brothers. *American Art* 13 (2): 58–79.

CHAPTER 16

Woven Beliefs

Textiles and Religious Practice in Africa¹

Victoria L. Rovine

At sunrise on the appointed day, the seventh ancestor Spirit spat out eighty threads of cotton; these he distributed between his upper teeth which acted as the teeth of a weaver's reed. In this way he made the uneven threads of a warp. He did the same with the lower teeth to make the even threads. By opening and closing his jaws the Spirit caused the threads of the warp to make the movements required in weaving... As the threads crossed and uncrossed, the two tips of the Spirit's forked tongue pushed the thread of the weft to and fro... and the web took shape from his mouth in the breath of the second revealed Word. ... They [the words that the Spirit uttered] were the cloth, and the cloth was the Word.

—Ogotemmêli, as recorded by Marcel Griaule, *Conversations with Ogotemmêli* (1965), pp. 27–28

The Dogon, a Malian ethnic group famed for their artistic production, offer an ideal starting point for an exploration of textiles and religion in Africa. In his famous encounter with French ethnographer Marcel Griaule, the Dogon sage Ogotemmêli, a blind former hunter, recounted elaborate creation stories that centred on Amma, the sky deity, and Nommo, the four sets of twins descended from Amma and the earth deity. These stories involve many aspects of Dogon life, from agriculture and architecture to shrines and masked dances. Cloth is central in Ogotemmêli's narrative, with its warp and weft serving as a metaphor for the many dichotomies that are essential to life: male/female, earth/sky, water/land, silence/speech, and so on. Cloth is a powerful symbol of the deep knowledge passed from spirit beings and deities to the humans they created. Indeed, for the Dogon people steeped in indigenous cosmology, weaving re-enacts this moment of enlightenment. It is difficult to imagine a more powerful illustration of the connections between textiles and religion in Africa. Such connections, the ties that bind fabrics to human lives (and, inevitably, deaths), are what I refer to as 'woven beliefs'. This complex of associations between the fabric that protects and adorns bodies, and

the spiritual practices that enrich lived experiences, is evident many of Africa's richly varied textile traditions. To explore African textiles, then, is to explore conceptions of the world and humanity's place within it.

Along with their symbolic and spiritual significance, textiles are embedded in African histories, as illustrated by several archaeological sites in the Dogon region. Long before the Dogon migrated into central Mali, likely in the fifteenth century, textiles were being made and used in the region. Caves high up in the Bandiagara Cliffs – the Dogon homeland – contain evidence of the most ancient textile production in all of sub-Saharan Africa. These sites also suggest that the ancient textiles were used in the context of religious belief. A population known as the Tellem inhabited the cliffs before the Dogon, from approximately the eleventh to the fifteenth century. Though we have little information about the Tellem, we know that they created beautiful textiles of cotton and wool, adorned with woven patterns and detailed embroidery. These textiles were found in funerary contexts, located in caves that are extraordinarily difficult to access, nestled in the sheer cliff walls that tower above the villages and fields of the valleys. Some contain hundreds of remains, many dressed in fine garments and accompanied by other textiles such as blankets. Some of the fragments have been dated to the eleventh century (Bolland 1992, p. 54). The textiles might have been offerings, or goods the deceased were believed to require in the afterlife; whatever their purpose, these burial goods suggest that links between textiles and the afterlife may have a very long history in this part of Africa.

The Dogon and their predecessors vividly illustrate the resonance of textiles in spiritual and religious contexts, where they are adaptable to both practical and symbolic uses. In many parts of the world, woven cloth is an important form of body- and place-adornment, used to mark locations and people as spiritually powerful, sacred, protected by divine forces. Because they are portable and flexible, textiles can be highly responsive to changing contexts. They can quickly transform a person or a space by wrapping or hanging – little infrastructure is required – and just as quickly they can return places and people to their quotidian states.

The textiles that are used in religious contexts are often highly elaborated, the result of complicated technologies and iconographies. Many are aesthetically powerful – beautifully worked, using precious or symbolically important materials and iconography that clearly distinguish them from the stuff of ordinary life. This aesthetic element, which has led museums around the world to display African textiles as highly valued works of art, augments their spiritual efficacy. Objects that inspire admiration, awe, and even fear may be created for spirit world audiences as much as for human ones. A beautiful cloth that is given as an offering, worn at a ceremony, or used to adorn a shrine may please the spirits to whom it is directed, leading them to protect families and communities from bad fortune. Yet, the appearance of a textile may reveal little about its spiritual significance; cloth that appears to be very ordinary may be put to powerful use on a shrine, at a funeral, or in another context of religious worship.

Some manifestations of the ties between religion and textiles in Africa are not specifically African. For example, veils and other head coverings are used by Muslim women the world over as an element of their religious practice (see Gokariksel and Secor in this

volume). In Africa, women wear veils in a wide array of regional and denominational styles (Renne 2013). Other uses of textiles to express religious affiliation or engage in worship are distinctly African, including some expressions of Muslim faith, as described in the pages that follow.

All over Africa, people make, purchase, and use cloth for a wide range of religious purposes. Textiles offer insights into African cosmologies, social structures, and conceptions of power. To address the vast array of textiles used in African religious practice, this chapter is divided into three broad – and porous – categories: textiles as clothing that expresses religious affiliation or spiritual state; textiles as markers of space; and textiles in funerary practices. Whether elaborately worked or technologically simple, visible, or concealed, used in the practice of world religions or reflecting indigenous belief systems, textiles are key elements of the religious lives of many African people.

Today, students of African textiles have a vast field of scholarship to draw from. Like the field of African art history as a whole, the academic study of textiles in Africa has its roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. European observers – primarily missionaries, colonial officials, ethnographers, and adventurers – focused their artistic appreciation solely on the materials and the styles that Europeans recognized as fine art in their own terms: figurative sculpture made of wood, metal, or (less frequently) stone. Myriad other forms, also made with aesthetic care and technical skill, were broadly classified as ‘craft’, just as similar media were categorized in Western cultures at the time. Textiles, ceramics, basketry, and furniture were collected as ethnographic artefacts, displayed in natural history museums rather than in art museums. This ethnographic information provides a valuable record today. Roy Sieber, the first American to earn a doctorate in African art history, was also the first to turn focused attention to textiles. His groundbreaking 1972 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City, *African Textiles and Decorative Arts*, surveyed the continent and clearly demonstrated that textiles are often deeply embedded in African systems of thought, including religious beliefs. Indeed, in many parts of Africa, textiles are key artistic forms, more deeply embedded in local cultures than sculpture and other art forms. The extensive scholarship on African textiles that followed the MOMA exhibition, primarily from the fields of art history and anthropology, informs the analysis that follows.

Before turning to the uses of textiles in religious contexts, it is important to note that the association of cultures and people with specific religions is rarely clear and absolute. In Africa as elsewhere, the practice of world religions such as Christianity and Islam does not preclude adherence to aspects of indigenous religions, and vice versa. Indeed, an individual may use textiles in the practice of multiple religions; a Muslim whose garments are embroidered with references to Koranic scriptures might on some occasions wear clothing adorned with symbols of power drawn from pre-Muslim, indigenous religions; a Christian who wears a European-style suit to church services may also use richly woven cloth to decorate a shrine dedicated to a local deity. While some people strictly adhere to a single set of religious beliefs and practices, the blending of religions has a long history in Africa, manifested in the objects that express conceptions of the spirit world, including textiles.

16.1 Textiles as Clothing for the Spirit World

In cultures the world over, textiles are the primary medium for clothing, a form that is simultaneously highly intimate and widely visible. Both characteristics make textiles as clothing readily adaptable to religious and spiritual contexts. Clothing may communicate the wearer's religious affiliation or specific spiritual role, in which case its visibility is key to its function. Alternatively, clothing's closeness to the body may bring spiritually powerful textiles directly into contact with the wearer, often through garments or ornaments that are not visible. Several genres of textile-based garments illustrate how this medium operates both visibly and invisibly to enhance connections with the spirit world. Several of these examples also demonstrate that spiritually significant textiles need not be local in origin; imported forms may also be absorbed into local systems of beliefs.

In many parts of Africa, and most prominently in West Africa, textiles are imbued with spiritual force through the addition of powerful materials that are stitched directly onto their surfaces. Small packets made of leather or cloth that contain animal parts, herbal materials, or talismanic writing forms such as Koranic verses may be attached to shirts, hats, shorts, and other garments. These amulets transform clothing into spiritual armour that wards off bad luck or enhances the wearer's power. A similar effect is achieved by applying talismanic motifs directly onto clothing in the form of written or painted motifs. Garments that incorporate amulets and other empowering devices are often concealed beneath outer layers of clothing, their invisibility augmenting their power. People may wear specially treated textiles and garments on the advice of a diviner, to address a problem in their lives such as an illness or bad fortune. Spiritual and political leaders may wear empowered garments to enhance their authority and to declare it publicly. When they are visible, these spiritually charged garments are impressive; the visual impact of the clothing enhances the invisible power that animates it. A hunter, warrior, or ruler wearing a tunic that bristles with amulets and is covered with rows of texts and symbols is likely to inspire awe, even if the viewer knows little about the specific nature of these empowering devices. Indeed, merely the suspicion that a person is wearing textiles that have been imbued with power, invisible beneath outer garments, may enhance their authority.

In the Bamana region of central and southern Mali, textiles are empowered through patterns that are painted onto their surfaces using specially prepared leaves and mud. *Bogolanfini*, also known as mudcloth, is customarily created by women who use techniques and iconography passed down to them from older women in their families (Rovine 2008, pp. 24–25). The cloth's bold black or brown and white patterns refer to Bamana history, social mores, and mythology, and they are believed to have protective powers. For adherents to indigenous religious beliefs, bogolanfini's protective powers are crucial in two precarious contexts, both of which are fundamental to the perpetuation of society: girls' initiation rites and the dangerous work of hunters. During their initiation ceremonies, girls wear bogolanfini wrappers given to them by aunts, mothers, and other senior women. The cloth shields them from spells that might be cast to harm them during the vulnerable weeks between girlhood and womanhood, and the patterns that adorn the wrappers can be used to teach the girls about local history and values. Hunters are brave and often solitary men whose work sends them into the wilderness,

home to dangerous animals and unpredictable spirits. Hunters loom large in Bamana culture; legendary hunters advised kings, founded new communities, and preserved cultural knowledge. In addition to weapons and survival skills, hunters use bogolanfini as a form of spiritual protection (McNaughton 1982). Bogolanfini's spiritual power is, thus, central to these two very different contexts.

In Southern Africa, specialists in healing, divination, and other forms of communication with the spirit world wear cloth that both announces their profession and facilitates their work. The attire of religious specialists varies across the region. In some cultures, diviners wear a wig adorned with white beads, while in others they carry an ornate flywhisk made of animal hair. Yet, a distinctive style of factory-produced cloth is consistently associated with the spirit world across many Southern African cultures. This cloth is distinguished by its bold red, black, and white patterns. It is part of a history of trade with European textile producers, which flourished in the late nineteenth century-early twentieth centuries. These imported textiles, initially made in Britain and Holland, inspired by styles from Indonesia and South Asia, and later in other European and Asian countries (Picton 1995, pp. 24–29). Since the mid-twentieth century, they have also been produced in the African countries where they are consumed. In Zimbabwe, factory-printed cloth in these colours is known as *retso*. In the form of capes, wrappers, or simply a strip used as a scarf, *retso* is worn by diviners as well as by participants in spirit incorporation ceremonies. The cloth is so powerful that spirits and ancestors may communicate through it. For example, a person who is destined to become a diviner may come to recognize this fate through an illness that is cured by wearing *retso*; the textile's efficacy is a sure sign of communication from the spirit world (Dewey 2010, pp. 557–558).

Another religious practice expressed through industrially produced textiles originated in nineteenth-century Senegal, where scholar and mystic Sheikh Amadou Bamba established the Mouride brotherhood, a branch of Sufi Islam. Mouridism celebrates prayer, hard work, and abstemiousness. A sub-group of Mourides known as Baye Fall embodies the group's values through their attire, which is made of recycled scraps of cloth. Baye Fall adherents rely on their communities to feed and clothe them so that they can devote themselves to prayer and hard work on behalf of their religious order. Some renounce all worldly comforts and beg in the streets for offerings, including bits of cloth and used clothing that they use to create patchwork garments (Roberts and Roberts 2003, pp. 115–117). Clothing made of scraps is a visual symbol of their piety; even Baye Fall adherents who have the means to purchase new clothing may also wear patchwork garments to signify their religious affiliation. These recycled clothes may also be read as symbols of the Baye Fall rejection of dominant systems of wealth and status; the scraps out of which their garments are made have been used and discarded, thus taken out of economic circulation. Their garments are key symbols of the Mouride belief system, and of the faith's place in West African society.

Textiles also reflect other African manifestations of Islam, signifying piety and attesting to the religion's deep roots in many parts of the continent. Throughout North and West Africa, Muslim men and women wear large, untailored robes that are adorned with embroidered patterns. Many of these patterns – especially those used for men's attire – are based on calligraphic and amuletic forms, evoking the Arabic script of the

Koran as well as diagrams and symbols drawn from Islamic traditions of healing and mysticism (Gardi 2002, pp. 64–65, see also Elias in this volume). These garments, which are known by various names across this vast region, have a long history as symbols of prestige as well as piety. In some cases, they are also believed to have protective powers, shielding the wearer from spiritual threats through the patterns' evocation of Koranic scripture. In some communities, embroidery's close affiliation with Islam is vividly expressed by the ritual that surrounds the profession; before embarking on their work, embroiderers prepare themselves to pray, washing their hands, feet, and face (Rovine 2014, chapter 2). In the past, the delicate patterns were always embroidered by hand, taking months even with several embroiderers working on a single garment. Today, the work is more often done with a sewing machine and the patterns are generally more distant from the texts and symbols that originally inspired them. The adornment of these garments need not incorporate the precise motifs and scripts that bear spiritual power; innovative embroiderers have long used the protective motifs as sources of inspiration for new forms, many of which have developed into new conventions that reflect regional styles. Through all of these modifications, the garments continue to project Muslim identity.

The important role of textiles in African religion and spirituality is, paradoxically, also evident in their occasional absence; the use of non-textile garments is a mark of otherworldly origins. Clothing, and more specifically the textiles that are the basis of clothing, is so central to the norms of most cultures (in Africa as elsewhere), that the absence of textile-based attire may be a symbol of non-human, otherworldly power. All over Africa, spirit beings that exert control over human lives are incarnated in masquerade performances. Examples from West, Central, and Southern Africa indirectly illustrate the symbolic power of textile-based clothing by incorporating non-textile garments. Masked performers who embody ancestors, nature spirits, and other non-human forces are dressed in clothing that is not made of textiles, or in one instance made of textiles but not sewn into garments.

In Burkina Faso, the Bwa and the Mossi are well known for their elaborate masquerades, which bring spirits into the world of human beings. Many of their wooden masks, which represent animals and nature spirits, are worn along with a costume made of shredded hemp fibres. This fibre, which can be used to create rope, is deliberately left in the form of loose fibres, dyed black or red (Roy 1987, pp. 38–40). The long strands hang in thick layers that create dramatic effects as dancers move. Another masquerade, performed in Bwa communities, employs leaves and vines as a costume, wrapped around the body of the dancer to create a hybrid of plant and human (Roy 1987, pp. 285–287). The massive, shaggy raffia costume and the unearthly effect created by the dancing vine-covered being throw into relief the association between human society and textiles. Other examples abound: for the Chewa people of Malawi, costumes made of basketry rather than textiles are used in a prominent masquerade that expresses indigenous spiritual belief (Faulkner 1988). And in the Kongo region, wooden *ndunga* masks are worn with costumes made of feathers, another expression of otherworldly origins (Cooksey et al. 2013, p. 160). Even more than the masks that cover their faces, the non-woven materials that cover their bodies transform these dancers into spirit beings.

Another masquerade moves a step closer to conventional clothing; it incorporates textiles, yet the attire of these spirit beings is still unmistakably different from the dress of humans. In southwestern Nigeria and neighbouring Benin, a widespread masquerade called *egungun* is an important Yoruba religious expression. The masquerade, which represents a spirit temporarily embodied in the world of humans, appears at festivals and ceremonies that honour ancestors or commemorate the deaths of important community members. While they are made in a variety of styles, some incorporating wooden masks, others adorned with beadwork, *egungun* are always distinguished by their use of cloth. Textiles are transformed into unconventional attire, hanging in layers rather than sewn into recognizable garments. Like unwoven raffia, the flaps or panels of fabric create dramatic effects as the dancer leaps and spins, adding to the impact of this visitor from the spirit world (Drewal et al. 1989, pp. 177–187).

Textiles have other associations with masquerades as well. In the coastal Niger Delta region of Nigeria, a masquerade tradition among the Ijo brings powerful water spirits into the human realm. These spirits are incarnated by dramatic masks that depict fish, crocodiles, and other water dwellers; their association with water is dramatized by their arrival in a canoe, moving from water onto land. To encourage and honour them, a payment must be made to the maskers, or they will not leave the canoe to join the community. Rather than money, the spirits demand a special type of cloth, called *iselema bite*. This cloth is woven with a geometrical design that symbolizes the shell of a tortoise, another water dweller. No other cloth is acceptable; just as humans prefer specific colours and patterns, so too do the spirits (Aronson 1992, p. 60).

16.2 Textiles and Sacred Places

Textiles lend themselves to the marking of space; they are portable yet can be made in large sizes and adorned with bold patterns. They can create barriers, adorn walls, and beautify the sites of ceremonies. In other contexts, cloth can subtly indicate the presence of spirit beings, or the limits of a sacred site.

In southeastern Nigeria and western Cameroon, a resist-dyed indigo textile called *ukara* cloth is associated with the Igbo, Ejagham, Efik, and other ethnic groups. The cloth's style and its functions vary across ethnic groups and communities, yet wherever it is used, *ukara* is associated with men's initiation societies, including the Ekpe and Ngbe. In the communities where they are active, these organizations wield great judicial and political power. *Ukara* cloth marks the spaces where the spiritual business of these societies take place, whether inside lodges, outside in forest groves, or in public squares during ceremonies and festivals. It can be used to mark a place as temporarily sacred, hung on walls or draped between trees to warn off passers-by. The symbols that adorn the cloth, called *nsibidi*, are created by stitching the shapes with raffia thread before dyeing it with indigo, then removing the stitches to reveal the patterns in white. The motifs are multivalent, interpretable at various levels depending on the level of initiation of the viewer. Finally, *ukara* is also worn by initiates and titleholders within the men's societies, used as a wrapper in public ceremonies such as funerals (Carlson 2007, p. 146). The bold

blue and white patterns communicate clearly wherever the cloth appears, transforming places and people into sites for ritual activity.

In the Akan region of Ghana, home to the centuries-old Ashanti Empire, cloth and other regalia are associated with royalty. It is also used to 'dress' shrines, employing symbols of human high status to honour and propitiate deities. *Kente*, a textile widely admired for its complex patterns and vivid colours, is usually associated with political rather than spiritual power. Historically, kente was used by royalty and those in the orbit of royal courts in Ashanti and neighbouring kingdoms. Weavers were attached to the courts of leaders, who controlled the distribution of the cloth. Although these restrictions are largely obsolete, kente is still associated with power and traditional governance. Kente's spiritual roles are less well known outside Akan communities. Practitioners of indigenous Akan religion employ kente to honour divinities, using the cloth to wrap key objects on shrines. These deities are associated with the Tano River, an important element of the natural environment used as a source of water and a route for travel, and it is also believed to be home to powerful deities called *abosom*. Taa Koro, the most senior abosom, is associated with the source of the Tano River. Just as Akan social structure is hierarchical, with kings, chiefs, and members of the court, abosom are also ranked. Their shrines reflect their relative stature, adorned with the symbols of their status. Kente cloth figures prominently in this adornment, used to wrap the symbols of a deity and to decorate the platforms used to carry these symbols when they appear in public processions (Silverman 1998, pp. 65–67).

While much of the cloth used in religious contexts makes a strong visual impact on viewers, drawing attention and often enhancing the efficacy of rituals, unassuming, even unattractive textiles can also bear great spiritual weight. Returning to Yoruba culture, the powerful objects called *ààlè* exemplify the symbolic weight worn-out, unprepossessing textile might bear. *Ààlè* are protective devices that might be placed on a personal possession or at the entrance to a home or a farm, intended to ward off both physical and spiritual harm. They are created by knowledgeable individuals or by spiritual specialists, using materials whose uses and associations lend them power. Cloth that has been worn, torn, even made into a nearly useless rag may have new uses as a spiritual tool. The shredded cloth, tied to a stick or a string and hung where it might be seen in a field or a marketplace, can evoke the fate of a thief or an enemy; like the cloth itself, once whole and functional, the person who has ill intentions will be left useless by the retributive power the *ààlè* can call down from the spirit world (Doris 2011, pp. 52–53). A beautiful textile, or even a plain cloth that could still be used as a wrapper, a baby carrier, or a blanket would be ineffective in this context. Instead, the spirit world can only be invoked by a tattered, apparently worthless rag.

16.3 Textiles and the Afterlife

In cultures and religious traditions all over Africa, textiles are central to funerary practices. The rituals that surround the departure of a member of the community, and the conceptualization of the place they will inhabit in the beyond, is fundamental to religious belief; it shapes the way people imagine their place in the cosmos, and their evaluation of a life

well-lived. The prominence of textiles in these rituals is perhaps the most dramatic attestation to this medium's importance as a marker of personal and cultural identity.

Intricately woven, embroidered, and appliqued raffia cloths from Central Africa have for centuries been used as currency, clothing, and as funerary goods that are displayed during ceremonies and, in many instances, buried with the deceased. The work of weavers and other textile artists of diverse ethnic groups in the Kuba region, located in the savannah lands of southeastern Democratic Republic of Congo, take this art form to heights of complexity (Darish 1989). A single raffia skirt, several meters in length, may incorporate the work of more than 30 people, including weavers (always male), dyers, embroiderers, and appliqué makers (men and women). Families own these textiles in common, and when worn at ceremonies and festivities they communicate a family or clan's status. Raffia cloth's association with high status extends into the afterlife (a place called *ilueemy*), where the spirits of the deceased go until they are reborn back into this world. On the journey to *ilueemy*, the deceased must be recognizable to the members of their new spirit community so that they will be welcomed by their family members and accorded the proper status. Dressing the body in the family's cloth ensures the deceased will be recognized, and that their spirit will be appeased. Along with the lengths of elaborately worked raffia cloth wrapped around the body as skirts, textiles are used to create belts, headwear, and other garments. Still more cloth is displayed along with the body during a visitation period, then placed inside the coffin for burial. These gifts of cloth honour the deceased, and enhance the status of the family as a whole. As Darish describes, the use of raffia textiles in Kuba funerals 'actively links the living to one another as well as to the community of the recently deceased' (p. 138).

Also, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, members of the Bwende ethnic group employed a dramatic funerary practice that literally merges the human body with textiles. Like the Kuba use of raffia textiles, Bwende funerals involved wrapping the body, especially in the case of people of high status. Rather than simply wrapping the body or placing textiles in the grave with the deceased, Bwende mourners created coffins out of cloth, called *niombo*. Niombo are coffins and, simultaneously, portraits of the deceased, sometimes also referred to as mannequins. The Bwende are part of a complex of ethnic groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon whose funerary practice historically included the creation of reliquaries that preserved key parts of the bodies of important deceased people. Along with the containers that held the remains, a sculpture provided a focal point for communication with the community member who had now become an ancestor. While the best known of these reliquary sculptures are the smaller, highly abstract wooden and metal figures of the Fang and Kota of Gabon, the Bwende created large, figurative containers for the entire body using cloth. Although niombo are no longer made, records of them in the drawings, photographs, and films by European visitors to the area in the early twentieth century document this dramatic use of textiles to facilitate the transition from this world to the next. Experts in this process surrounded the wrapped corpse with a structure made of cane, on top of which further textiles were secured, then arms and legs were constructed of cane and textiles, and a textile-covered head constructed at the top. These mammoth figures – 10 feet (3 m) tall and more – portrayed the deceased at a funeral ceremony that culminated with the burial of the entire

construction. The colour of the textiles on the surface of the niombo was key; red wool blankets, acquired through trade with Europeans, reflect the power and prestige of the deceased. The hundreds of cloths required to create these figures, the time and effort required to shape them into a likeness of the person whose remains it contained, were all elements of the respect accorded the deceased (LaGamma 2007, pp. 116–117).

In Madagascar, textiles are deeply embedded in religious practice, and especially in the connections between the living and their ancestors (Green 1998). Two of the nation's largest ethnic groups, the Merina and Betsileo, both based in the central highlands region, use silk textiles to honour and communicate with their ancestors, both the recently deceased and distant forebears. Women weave shrouds called *lambamena* using a type of silk that is indigenous to Madagascar; these cloths have more symbolic significance than textiles made of a type of silk that has its origins elsewhere, even if the cocoons are processed into thread and woven locally. On the death of a community member, family and friends donate *lambamena* to wrap the body before it is taken to the family's tomb. Years after the initial funeral, families continue to care for the dead by opening the tomb, bringing out the remains, and carefully rewrapping them in new shrouds. This ceremony, called *famadihana*, provides an opportunity to reconnect with the ancestors, celebrating and caring for them. The textiles ensure that these family members, who now dwell in another world, will be warm and content, knowing that they are remembered by their descendants (p. 32).

16.4 Conclusion

This survey of African cultures across vast distances of place and time indicates the myriad functions textiles serve, beyond their basic uses as body protection. Cloth and clothing in many forms is central to funerals, communication with ancestors and spirits, healing, declaring religious affiliation, and much more. A final example, from the Bùnù Yoruba culture of Nigeria, coalesces these diverse functions (Renne 1995). White cotton cloth, woven by Bùnù women, is a central element of religious practice and spiritual belief. A piece of white cloth might be wrapped around a tree, to propitiate the spirits associated with the place (p. 23). A diviner might counsel a woman who is having difficulty becoming pregnant to wear a white wrapper (p. 23), and white cloth hung between poles or trees 'demarcates spaces associated with a spirit' (p. 35). Other textiles in specific styles and colours are associated with weddings, with healing, and with countless other essential elements of Bùnù Yoruba life.

Textiles are so deeply intertwined with beliefs and worldviews in many African cultures that separating cloth from the lives it touches is impossible. From the swaddling that accompanies newborn babies into their communities, to the shrouds and, in the case of the Bwembe niombo, the coffins that encase bodies on their departure from the earthly realm, textiles offer rich insights into African religious expressions. While other materials are employed in the practice of religion in Africa – wooden sculptures that adorn shrines, ceramic containers that hold offerings, paper that bears prayers and talismans – textiles are both the most visible and the most intimate of these media.

Note

- 1 This chapter also appears in French in: 'Textiles et croyances: les tissus africains et les pratiques religieux', in *La culture et la religion en Afrique: perspectives pluridisciplinaires*. Edited by Issiaka Latoundji Lalèyè. Dakar, Senegal: Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique.

Works Cited

- Aronson, L. (1992). Ijebu Yoruba Aso Olona: a contextual and historical overview. *African Arts* 25 (3): 52–63.
- Bolland, R. (1992). Clothing from burial caves in Mali, 11th–18th century. In: *History, Design, and Craft in West African Strip-Woven Cloth* (ed. R. Sieber), 53–82. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution.
- Carlson, A. (2007). *Nsibidi: old and new scripts*. In: *Inscribing Meaning: Writing and Graphic Systems in African Art* (eds. C.M. Kreamer, M.N. Roberts, E. Harney and A. Purpura), 146–153. Washington DC: National Museum of African Art.
- Cooksey, S., Poynor, R., and VanHee, H. (eds.) (2013). *Kongo Across the Waters*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Darish, p. (1989). Dressing for the next life: raffia textile production and use among the Kuba of Zaire. In: *Cloth and Human Experience* (eds. A.B. Weiner and J. Schneider), 117–140. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Dewey, W.J. (2010). Zimbabwe. In: *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion, Volume 1-Africa* (eds. J.B. Eicher and D.H. Ross), 553–559. New York: Berg.
- Doris, D. (2011). *Vigilant Things: On Thieves, Yoruba Anti-Aesthetics, and the Strange Fates of Ordinary Objects in Nigeria*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Drewal, H.J., Pemberton, J. III, and Abiodun, R. (1989). *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*. New York: Center for African Art.
- Faulkner, L.B. (1988). Basketry masks of the Chewa. *African Arts* 21 (3): 28–31.
- Gardi, B. (2002). *Le boubou—C'est chic: les boubous du Mali et d'autres pays de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*. Basel: Museum der Kulturen Basel/Christoph Merian Verlag.
- Green, R.L. (1998). *Once Is Never Enough: Textiles, Ancestors, and Reburials in Highland Madagascar*. Bloomington: Indiana University Art Museum.
- Griaule, M. (1965). *Conversations with Ogotemmêli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas*. London: Published for the International African Institute by Oxford University Press.
- LaGamma, A. (2007). *Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- McNaughton, P.R. (1982). The shirts that Mande hunters wear. *African Arts* 15 (3): 54–58.
- Picton, J. (1995). *The Art of African Textiles: Technology, Tradition and Lurex*. London: Barbican Art Gallery.
- Renne, E.P. (1995). *Cloth That Does Not Die: The Meaning of Cloth in Bùnù Social Life*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Renne, E.P. (ed.) (2013). *Veiling in Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Roberts Allen, F. and Roberts, M.N. (2003). *A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.
- Rovine, V.L. (2008). *Bogolan: Shaping Culture Through Cloth in Contemporary Mali*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Rovine, V.L. (2014). *African Fashion Global Style: Clothing, Innovation, and Stories About Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Roy, C.D. (1987). *Art of the Upper Volta Rivers*. Meudon: A. and F. Chaffin.
- Sieber, R. (1972). *African Textiles and Decorative Arts*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.
- Silverman, R.A. (1998). The Gods wear Kente. In: *Wrapped in Pride: Ghanaian Kente and African American Identity* (ed. D.H. Ross), 65–69. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

CHAPTER 17

Beyond the Symbolism of the Headscarf

The Assemblage of Veiling and the Headscarf as a Thing

Banu Gökarıksel and Anna J. Secor

On 15 March 2004, Jacques Chirac signed into law a bill that forbade students in public schools from wearing the *hijab*, henceforth considered a '*signe religieux ostentatoire*' (an ostentatious religious sign) by the French Republic. While more discrete religious iconography, like a necklace bearing a cross or Star of David, would be acceptable, the Stasi Commission considered Muslim girls' headscarves to be less an act of piety than a symbol of hostility to the Republic and the institution of *laïcité* (Scott 2007; Taylor 2011). Protesters took to the street with slogans and signs that variously tried to rescript the headscarf as a symbol of dignity, diversity, and freedom. But perhaps the most arresting claim of all was that '*le foulard n'est pas un signe*' ('the headscarf is not a sign') (Houraira 2007). What does it mean to consider the headscarf as *not a sign*? How can the headscarf, or any object for that matter, retreat from the play of signification?

In Turkey as in France, the headscarf has been regulated in the name of protecting state secularism. Such regulations have been contested since the 1980s, and today in Turkey women have greater freedom to veil than at any previous time in republican history (since 1923).¹ Supporters of women's right to wear the headscarf in public schools and other state spaces have argued that the headscarf is not a symbol of religious extremism or political Islam. For example, when Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan praised his government's new policy of allowing women representatives to wear headscarves in the Turkish Parliament, he found it imperative to state that 'Terming the headscarf as a political symbol [is something] that can only be as a result of ignorance' (Hürriyet 2013). Instead, supporters of the headscarf emphasize that veiling is a religious obligation that performs piety and modesty according to Islam. In our research with veiled women in Turkey, we heard many express their frustration with the secular public's ceaseless attempts to 'read' their dress. For example, women insisted that the pins affixing their scarves were purely functional, not signs of support for a political

party or coded messages about membership in Sufi sects as widely believed. Yet, despite all attempts to fix the meaning of the headscarf, the scarf's meaning continues to slip; the object always provokes a surplus of significance (Baudrillard 1981). In the case of fashionable styles of veiling in Turkey, the surplus of any particular ensemble of Islamic dress includes distinctions of age, class, and personal style. In short, it becomes much easier to argue that the headscarf is a *contested* sign than to argue that it is no sign at all.

Yet, the protest '*le foulard n'est pas un signe*' resonates in such a way that demands greater attention. What happens when we adhere to the idea that the headscarf – as the element that anchors any ensemble of modest dress according to Islam – is first of all not a sign, but a material thing? In their introduction to *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*, Dick Houtman and Birgit Meyer point out the 'scandalous materiality' of the idol, the fetish, or the totem in Protestant-oriented religious studies, and instead frame their approach in terms of 'things' through which the material and the spiritual are conjoined (2012, p. 16). Immediately, we must note that, despite its role in the practice of Islam, the headscarf is not a sacred object; headscarves may touch the ground, may be worn on the shoulders or hung on the wall, may be used as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding (see Gökırksel 2012). Arguably, the headscarf used as a tourniquet or a decoration is merely an object, while the headscarf becomes a *thing* – that which, according to Bill Brown, exceeds the utility of the object to become a forceful and sensuous presence (2004) – when it plays its part in the assemblage of veiling. To explain this distinction, Bernstein and other 'thing theorists' draw on Martin Heidegger (1971) to define 'an object as a chunk of matter that one looks through or beyond to understand something human', while 'a thing, in contrast, asserts itself within a field of matter' (Bernstein 2009, p. 69). She illustrates this distinction with a powerful example:

For example, when an amateur cook uses a knife to chop an onion, the knife might function as an object that the amateur barely notices; in this scenario, the knife is only a tool used to obtain the chopped onion that the human desires. For a trained chef, however, a knife can never be an object: for such a person, each edge of a knife glitters individually with potential and stubbornness, with past, present, and future motions of slicing and chopping. The trained chef's knife is thus a thing with which a chef negotiates, while an amateur's knife is an object to the extent that it is only a means to an end. If the amateur's knife should slip and cut a finger, however, that knife suddenly becomes a thing that has leapt up and asserted itself, a thing that demands to be reckoned with. The difference between objects and things, then, is not essential but situational and subjective. (Bernstein 2009, p. 69)

In this chapter, we argue that for a veiled Muslim woman, the headscarf is such a thing: a thing that is part of past, present, and future motions and a thing with which she negotiates. While we are by no means the first to consider the materiality of the headscarf (see Sandikci and Ger 2005; Ünal and Moors 2012), other treatments of the headscarf within the framework of material culture or material religion have focused on the headscarf as an object with certain qualities – it is easy to store and transport, it is often a gift, it is part of a collection, if it is silk it may be ruined by pinning, etc. The headscarf can indeed be a mere object, a tool used to obtain a desired result (even simply

dust-free hair or a warm neck). Yet, when the headscarf becomes part of the ensemble of veiling, it becomes a thing. As such, it is no longer merely an object at the disposal of a subject, but is instead an ‘actant’ or an ‘operator’, a thing that ‘by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event’ (Bennett 2010, p. 9). However, we will argue that the headscarf does not ‘operate’ mechanically or, for that matter, ‘decisively’ or on its own. As an agent within an assemblage, the headscarf is a ‘thing ... that modifies the state of affairs by making a difference’ (Latour 2005, p. 71), yet we will show that this difference is never absolute but instead inaugurates a field of struggle, a problematic specific to veiling. Through our interrogation of the headscarf as a thing, we ask: How does the headscarf act, and on what kind of assemblage? And can this understanding of the *thing* bring us closer to the retreat from signification demanded by the protest, *le foulard n’est pas un signe*?

17.1 The Assemblage of Veiling

Veiling, a term we use to refer to women’s modest dress according to Islam (*tesettür* in Turkish), is an assemblage within which the headscarf plays a unique role. Heterogeneous collectives made up of both human and non-human elements, assemblages are dynamic, affective, and open (Delanda 2006; Latour 2005). While an assemblage is often conceptualized as a collective without ‘a central head’ (Bennett 2010, p. 25), the headscarf is a particularly powerful nodal point within the assemblage of veiling. For without the head covered, the woman is not considered to be covered, no matter how modest the rest of her attire. Yet, at the same time, the effects of the headscarf emerge in relation to other things, such as skirts, jackets, shoes, bags, faux buns, bonnets, pins, etc. – things that are outside of veiling strictly speaking, but are nonetheless part of the assemblage that we call veiling-fashion.

Veiling-fashion, or stylish modest dress with ever-changing colours, cuts, and designs has been on the rise globally and in Turkey since the 1990s. Today, there are over 200 companies in Turkey that specialize in the production and sale of veiling-fashion. The leaders of this industry have brands that are recognized widely and market their products through glossy catalogues and fashion shows. The consumer base for this industry consists of the newly ascendant, Islamically identifying devout middle-class women who continue to wear the latest styles despite public scrutiny and widespread accusations of hypocrisy from conservative Islamic and secular communities alike.

While in the 1980s, the focus of veiling was mostly on the oversized headscarf and overcoat alone (all in subdued or dark colours, see Kılıçbay and Binark 2002; Navaro-Yashin 2002), through veiling-fashion, an increasing number of clothing items and accessories have become integrated into the assemblage of veiling. This proliferation of modest dress incorporated elements previously considered unthinkable, such as pants, bright colours, striking patterns, and tight clothing that may reveal the shape of the body. As Nesrin, a 44-year-old housewife in one of our 2009 focus groups with consumers of veiling-fashion in Istanbul, pointed out, ‘If you said to the covered community 20 years ago: “you will wear pants, a shirt and on top of that, a headscarf” they would boo you. But

this is now the fashion'. Just as pants have become commonplace in veiling-fashion catalogues and fashion shows and on the street, new accessories such as a faux bun (that gives the covered head an elongated shape) and bonnet (usually in colours that match the headscarf and that cover the hairline completely) have become sought after albeit controversial elements of veiling-fashion. Women carefully select the multiple items that constitute their veiling-fashion ensemble from head to toe, including matching shoes and handbags that are considered the finishing touch of a chic look. Leading veiling-fashion companies (such as Tekbir) produce shoes and handbags that bear their logos. Thus, veiling-fashion assemblage is a collective of constantly changing and proliferating objects, many of which do not have any explicit religious significance.

Veiling is thus more than the headscarf, and even more than a headscarf and an overcoat. Our research seeks to examine veiling-fashion in Turkey from production to marketing, sale, and consumption. In this chapter, we draw on focus group interviews conducted with wearers of veiling-fashion from age 18 to 55 in Istanbul and Konya in the summer of 2009.² In the following discussion among young consumers of veiling-fashion in Konya, women enumerate the elements of their dress:

MELIKE: Covering has so many details. Headscarves for example. If I were open [non-veiled], I would wear a t-shirt, jeans, and that's all. And sneakers. But when you are a covered person there are so many details you have to take into account, from your stockings to your headscarf.

ÖZLEM: For example, yesterday I was about to go out, I thought to myself 'What will I do, what will I do, what will I wear'. I can't do much because we have exams right now. I put on my jeans, my shirt, and I said 'I would go out like this if I were non-covered'. But instead I thought about it for hours...For us, it's really a lot of pressure.

For these women, veiling is an exercise that requires attention, planning, and money to pull off. In fact, there is a whole assemblage of items without religious significance that come together to become veiling. Given that these items – from stockings to long sleeved undershirts – might be otherwise deployed, it is the headscarf that ties them together, one could say conscripts them, into the practice of veiling.

Because the headscarf acts as the nodal point that makes veiling (almost) cohere, its removal signals the disintegration of the assemblage and its effects. Thus, while veiling is more than the headscarf, it is nonetheless the case that whatever else one is wearing, without the headscarf one is not veiling (*tesettürlü*). This creates an interesting set of potentialities for manufacturers of *tesettür modası*, or veiling-fashion in Turkey. In the interest of profit, many firms wish to market their clothes to both covered and non-covered women. Yet, what is the ensemble without the headscarf that organizes it into something that consumers understand? In the absence of the headscarf, the strangeness of the outfits, in which fashionable details (such as the cut of a sleeve, the placement of a zipper, or the season's trendiest pattern) festoon ankle length skirts and neck-high jackets, is palpable. A video for the Ankara-based veiling-fashion firm Kayra's 2012 spring/summer collection (Kayra 2012) presents a vignette in which two women, one who wears the headscarf and one who does not (but who also wears Kayra styles),

are shown having a seaside vacation, relaxing in hammocks, reading books, gazing out to sea. The scene shifts between these two women as if between doubles. The objects – skirts, blouses, jackets, shoes, bags, seaside villa, hammocks, books, an iPad – are deployed twice, once within and once outside of the network oriented by the headscarf. Whatever the marketing goals of this doubling (to broaden Kayra's appeal to those who do not veil, to convince covered women that these clothes are so fashionable anyone would wear them), the effect is uncanny. The play between the two versions seems to demote the headscarf from its centrality in the assemblage; it becomes once again an object among objects, an incidental element that may be missing or present in the ensemble. Yet the other elements of the outfit are somehow lost without the headscarf, not quite wearable outside of the universe of veiling-fashion. It turns out that the effects of the headscarf on the organization of the assemblage are such that the absence of the scarf becomes as powerful a transfer point as its presence.

17.2 The Agentic Thing

The headscarf not only orients other things (skirts, jackets, bags, shoes, etc.) within an assemblage of veiling, but it also works upon its wearers. Articles of clothing can be understood as what Bernstein (2009, p. 69) calls 'scriptive things', or elements of material culture that channel, but do not determine, the performances of wearers. As Webb Keane writes with regard to the adoption of Western clothes in postcolonial contexts, 'New clothing makes possible or inhibits new practices, habits, and intentions; it invites new projects' (2005, p. 193). Likewise, Banerjee and Miller (2003) suggest that clothing puts demands upon its wearer: '[T]he dynamism and demands of the sari may transform everything from the manner in which she encounters other people to her sense of what it is to be modern or rational' (Miller 2005a, p. 32). Clothing thus acts upon the body and its movement, constraining or enabling certain motions, modes of comportment, and affective engagements.

While all clothing acts upon the body, veiling is interesting because the way it acts upon the body has a specific, religious orientation towards a moral code. In Saba Mahmood's (2005) analysis of the women's mosque movement in Cairo, veiling shapes the daily conduct of women and thereby enables the cultivation of piety. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's (1990) technologies of the self and Judith Butler's (1990) concept of performativity, Mahmood understands veiling as a bodily practice that is integral to women's self-disciplinary program and a ritualized, repetitive act through which women train themselves in attributes of Islamic virtue. Yet, veiling is not simply a means to an end; 'one cannot simply discard the veil once a modest deportment has been acquired, because the veil itself is part of what defines that deportment' (Mahmood 2005, p. 158). Veiling is necessary for the continued cultivation and performance of piety.

Covered women in Turkey likewise talk about veiling as a self-disciplinary practice, affecting their daily movements, from the way that they sit to their ability to hop on and off city buses, to the spaces that they can comfortably inhabit (Gökarıksel and Secor 2012). Covered women describe adjusting their behavior to align their conduct with the expectations of veiling. For example, some avoid going to movie theatres, while others try

not to speak or laugh too loudly in public spaces. As a 19-year-old woman in our youngest group in Istanbul put it, 'You have to be able to wear [the veil], to handle it. If you're going to cover, you should also watch how you act, how you carry yourself'. Other women in the group concurred, saying that they too watch how they act and are more particular about their comportment than they were when they were not covered.

When the headscarf is not present, the assemblage of veiling may start to disintegrate and modest comportment may become difficult to achieve. In a focus group with middle-aged women in Istanbul, Merve explained how her decision to uncover her head led to drastic changes in her. She had started to wear the headscarf as a teenager when she was 13. She decided to take off her headscarf to alleviate the pressure her husband was facing from his colleagues in the military. This was a period during which many military officials whose wives wore the headscarf were purged under suspicion of being 'Islamists'. Merve did not want her husband to lose his job. Tearing up, she described how she felt when she first appeared in public without her headscarf:

The first time I went out, pardon me, but I felt as if I were naked and I felt like everyone was looking at me. It was psychological; no one was looking at me but I felt as if everyone was staring... It was such a horrible feeling that I don't know how to put it into words. It was really just like when you're showering, in that condition [you're out in public], that's how I felt. I wasn't wearing short-sleeves or anything. I was wearing my regular skirt and shirt. The only thing that wasn't there was my headscarf. It was the first time I had to go out. I felt like everyone turned around to look at me. But no one was looking at me; everyone went about her/his own business.

When Merve first stepped out into the street without her headscarf, she felt completely naked. She was still wearing the very same modest clothes that she put on when she wore the headscarf, clothes that fully covered her arms and legs. The only thing missing was her headscarf, but that was enough for her to feel like her whole body was showing. Without the headscarf, her clothes did not provide the coverage she was used to. The headscarf made her skirt and shirt resonate within the veiling assemblage that orients Merve and her clothing towards Islamic modesty. Yet, this discomfort was only temporary. Merve continued to explain in the focus group that, over the course of the year that she was uncovered, her initial uneasiness of appearing in public without her headscarf slowly diminished. She found herself increasingly taking pleasure in her new life without a headscarf:

Giving in [to uncovering] meant more and more giving in. I started to like it... First you uncover, then you start going to hairdressers, then to evening parties, to cocktail receptions. You haven't been to any for years. You start to enjoy the environment but you realize there is no end to all this.

Taking off the headscarf is not simply about baring the hair. Removing the headscarf also alters Merve's orientation towards an Islamic code of modesty. With the headscarf absent from the assemblage of her dress, she felt her pleasures, bodily conduct, and social environments beginning to change. She started to do and enjoy things that she previously did not, such as getting her hair done and participating in parties where alcohol is served.

She felt herself slipping further and further away from an Islamically-oriented life. Her solution was to put an end to this new life by taking on the headscarf again. The headscarf as an agentic thing within the shifting assemblages of her life would put her on the right path and reorient her towards Islamic virtues.

17.3 The Ethical Problematic

If the examples above illustrate the way in which the headscarf makes the assemblage of veiling resonate and orients its wearers in particular ways, here we turn to that which escapes this correspondence. It is here that we find the real work of the headscarf-thing, which, we will argue, produces not a seamless piety, but rather a field of struggle. The trouble begins when we notice that, in Turkey, discussions of the headscarf are riddled by a complaint. It is a complaint that reverberates across multiple spaces and ricochets between multiple parties; it is heard in public and in private, a complaint lodged by Islamist pundits and secularists alike, a complaint that veiled women lodge against each other and with which they also chastise themselves. The complaint is always the same: the covered woman is not fulfilling the expectations of her headscarf. She has covered her head, but not her arms; she has covered her head, but her jacket is too tight; she has covered her head, but the colours are too bright; she has covered her head, but she is still going out to public places of entertainment where others drink alcohol; she has covered her head, but she is holding hands with a boyfriend in public. In short, she has not harmonized her bodily conduct, her habits, her desires, her spatial practices in line with the headscarf and its demand. The headscarf as an agentic thing orients its wearer towards an ideal, but it seems that the woman is not adequate to it.

The problematic towards which the headscarf orients its wearers is that of the harmonious integration of the veiled woman's appearance, conduct, and desires. For example, when Esin (in an Istanbul focus group of upper-middle class women) designates herself as *süslü kapalı*, or 'fancy-covered', and explains that this means that she covers her head but otherwise considers herself free to wear whatever a non-covered woman would, others in the group express their displeasure; once you cover your head, a woman explains to her, you have to follow certain rules. When she further expresses her desire to go to bars (which she used to do before she adopted the headscarf), they are appalled, telling her that she should not want to go to these places:

- ESIN:** Covered women cannot go everywhere. For example, I used to go out for entertainment a lot. I cannot go anymore [since veiling]. I used to go even to bars sometimes.
- EBRU:** But that's completely contradictory [to veiling].
- ESIN:** Of course it's contradictory. I decided to veil myself because I felt it within me.
- EBRU:** It shouldn't be 'I cannot go' but it should be 'I choose not to go'.
- ESIN:** Of course [a veiled woman] should choose not to go but I still think about it... I still want to go. But because you are covered you cannot go anymore. That's how it is.

When Esin says that covered women *cannot* go everywhere, she is acknowledging the power of the headscarf to channel her movements, to map where it is appropriate for her to go. The headscarf, which she emphasizes that she herself willingly adopted, is now an actant. Yet, what Ebru points out is that in saying that she *cannot* go, she reveals her desire for something incongruous; she has not been fully captured within the Islamic ideal of modesty to which the assemblage of veiling is supposed to orient her. Esin recognizes this ideal – she no longer goes where she used to – but also acknowledges the gap between that and her own desires. The headscarf, for all its power within the assemblage of veiling, is not a mechanical, determinate, or uniform operator. It affects Esin's behavior but does not (yet) change her desire.

The complaint in the above example is directed from one covered woman to another, but women in our focus groups often discussed the ways their own performances deviated from the harmonious ideal to which the headscarf orients them. Like the woman in the above example who uses veiling to discipline what she perceives as her unruly body, women often frame their own veiling practices as part of an ongoing ethical struggle. It is not as though one puts on the headscarf and thereby achieves the complete piety for which she is striving. Instead, women talk about themselves as engaged in an ongoing project to bring their conduct, desires, and appearance into harmony with an Islamic moral telos. The following quote is from Çağla, in an Istanbul focus group with young women:

....I like purple and I wear it but that doesn't mean this is Islam or that this is right for Islam. No way. I wear purple because I like it, because it pleases me. But it's different when you face God. (*Allah katında farklıdır.*) ... We wear these [colors and styles] not because it's a requirement of our religion, but because we're human and weak, we are dressed like this [in veiling-fashion] right now....In present day Turkey, there is no restriction of color because people wear such colorful, showy things. Of course it's wrong. [It doesn't mean it's right] just because that's the way it is in Turkey...

Çağla expresses her own struggle between what she understands Islam to require and how she herself (and other women in the group) dresses. She refers to the colourful scarves and clothes associated with veiling-fashion in Turkey and indicates that these are deviations from a strict interpretation of the Islamic code of modesty. Wearing the headscarf orients the woman towards this demand, but when the scarf is purple, it shows itself to be not a guarantor of the fulfilment of that demand but rather that which establishes the ethical problematic.

Interestingly, the idea that the headscarf orients the wearer towards particular desires and within a particular ethical problematic is mirrored in the 2004 French law that prohibited 'visible religious and political signs' in schools. For, as Joan Scott points out, this law refused all compromises that had previously been operating in French schools. No longer could women even loosely cover their heads with bandanas, headbands, or small scarves, or shift their scarves from head to shoulders during class. In her analysis of French discourse around the veil, Scott notes that these compromises 'were thought to muddy the issue, since they granted the validity of the *desire* to wear a veil, even if the particular head covering was only a gesture,

and incomplete at that' (Scott 2007, p. 134). The National Assembly's study group, therefore, sets out not simply to remove an *object* from the schools, but to root out the headscarf as an active and powerful *thing* in excess of the object. Once again, the headscarf becomes that which orients its wearers within a particular field of action and subjectivity.

As Banerjee and Miller (2003) point out in their discussion of the sari, clothing always makes demands. But the demand to which the headscarf orients its wearers is arguably more ambitious than most. According to the women in our focus groups, the Islamic modesty to which the headscarf is indexed concerns not only the covering of parts of the body, but also a whole system of conduct that includes humility and the avoidance of excess of any kind (of power, materialism, showiness, vanity) and even gossip. In essence, the demand of the headscarf is not simply that women appear modest, but that they harmonize their conduct, appearance, and desires. While women in our focus groups orient themselves towards this ideal of harmony, they do not position themselves as having achieved it. They accept this harmony as their goal and yet at the same time they recognize that this goal may never be achieved (Gökarişel and Secor 2014). Rather, it is the struggle towards this ideal of harmony in an Islamic register to which the headscarf initiates its wearers.

Following Simon Critchley (2012a), who borrows from Levinas, the demand to which the headscarf orients its wearers can be called an 'infinite demand'. Critchley argues that ethical subjectivity is shaped in relation to a demand, an 'infinite demand' because it is one that cannot be fulfilled (such as 'love your enemy' in Christianity, or in the case of veiling, 'achieve perfect harmony of piety, desire, conduct and appearance'). In binding oneself to such an impossible demand, one enters into an ethical struggle. Ethics is that fidelity to the demand and the struggle that it initiates. For Critchley, 'The essential feature of ethical experience is that the subject of the demand – the moral self – affirms that demand, assents to finding it good, binds itself to that good and shapes its subjectivity in relation to that good' (2012a, p. 17). Elsewhere he writes, 'What such a demand does is to expose our imperfection and failure: we wrestle in solitude with the fact of the infinite demand and the constraints of the finite situation in which we find ourselves. Otherwise said, ethics is all about the experience of failure – but in failing something is learned, something is experienced from the depths' (Critchley 2012b, p. 7).

The headscarf inaugurates such a struggle. It orients its wearer towards a demand, an impossible demand of perfect harmony that calls for the performance of a unified pious self. The headscarf is an agentic thing – anchoring an assemblage and affecting bodily conduct, habits, affects, and modes of insertion into broader relations – but it is not a mechanical operator or a guarantee. It is rather that which puts a woman in a relation of acceptance towards a particular demand. As such, it is a thing that initiates an ethical problematic, a field of struggle, rather than that which provides or indicates a seamless piety. The headscarf is therefore not determining; it is a powerful thing, but it does not fulfil the demand or represent its fulfilment. It therefore cannot be taken simply as a sign. It can only open up a problematic that women must engage.

17.4 Conclusion

What does it mean to say that the headscarf is not a sign? What kind of materiality does such a claim bring forth? We do not achieve an understanding of this claim merely by recognizing the threads with which the scarf is woven or by revelling in its sensory characteristics. Such a response cannot do justice to the power of the protest, *le foulard n'est pas un signe*. For if this was all that was called for, we would be talking about a piece of cloth, and the protest would simply be directing us to recognize it as such. But for the women who wear it, the headscarf is more than the cloth out of which it is woven or the utility to which it presents itself. By regarding the headscarf not as a mere object but as *a thing*, we point instead towards that which is excessive in the object, to that which exceeds its mere utility (Brown 2004). In doing so, we both bypass the singularity of the object and go beyond the move to re-signify the scarf outside of Islamophobic and Orientalist registers (such as by claiming that the headscarf signifies dignity, freedom, etc.). Instead, along with Miller (2005b) and Keane (2005), we move towards a new understanding of the materiality of the sign.

As we indicated at the beginning of this chapter, it is possible to conclude that the protest is not *really* a protest against the sign, but against the fetishism of the headscarf wherein it becomes absorbed into a system of differences, the play of signifiers in which the scarf signifies all kinds of things that its wearers cannot control, such as 'separation' or difference from (secular or in any case non-Muslim) French culture. Within this play of signification, the headscarf becomes an 'object eviscerated of its substance and history, and reduced to the state of marking a difference, epitomizing a whole system of differences' (Baudrillard 1981, p. 93). In this sense, the protest could be understood as a retreat from the play of the signifier towards the (imagined) moral ground of the signified, towards an object defined by its use³ – and indeed, elsewhere we have traced the ways in which women seek to anchor veiling practices in utility as opposed to signification (Gökarıksel and Secor 2012).

But what if we take the protest at face value as a demand to consider the headscarf *not to be a sign at all*? In this reading, the protest is much more profound. It is not a matter of reiterating the moral ground of the signified and its use value, but instead it is about protesting the very logic of the sign itself. Our affirmation of the agentic materiality of the headscarf against its reduction to signification echoes Talal Asad's (1983) critique of Clifford Geertz's (1973, p. 90) definition of religion as 'a system of symbols' that serve as vehicles for meaning. The problem to which the protest is addressed is that, in the system of the sign, the headscarf becomes just an expression or a symbol of something deemed to be more fundamental (social relations, identities, interior states, political projects, etc.). Indeed, the whole premise of the critique of fetishism is that the fetish is a 'falsely' apprehended sign object that masks the 'real' relations undergirding it. Thus if we take the protest at face value, we arrive at Baudrillard's critique of the political economy of the sign: It is not a matter of choosing one side over another (signified over signifier, use value over exchange value), but of deconstructing the internal logic of the sign itself, which rests on the premise that there is a deceptive play of signification masking the real and moral object that lies beneath. It is this logic of the sign that has *dematerialized* the

headscarf within 'a tradition that treats signs as though they were only the garb of meaning – meaning that, it would seem, must be stripped bare' (Keane 2005, p. 184).

In this chapter, we have proposed that one way to escape this logic of signification and thereby to restore the materiality of the headscarf is to approach it not as an object or a sign, but as a thing. Instead of asking what it means, one might ask what it does, how it 'gives rise to and transforms modalities of action and subjectivity' within and through an assemblage of other things (Keane 2005, p. 186). When Manuel Vásquez calls for scholars of religion 'to study how embodiment and embeddedness in time and place enable and constrain diverse, flexible, yet patterned subjective experiences that come to be understood as religious' (2011, p. 7), he calls for a study of religion that works across dichotomies such as material or immaterial, tangible or intangible, interior or exterior. Thing theory, insofar as it enjoins us to work from a point outside of the object/subject dichotomy, furthers a project for the construction of a materialist understanding of religion. By examining the work of things, we find that not only does the body, through its regulation and its embodied dispositions, operate as a material site of religion, but that it does so within an assemblage that includes a host of other active things. When regarded from this perspective, the headscarf is understood neither in terms of its symbolism nor in terms of its use. As a thing instead of a sign or merely an object, the headscarf orients its wearer towards a demand. It positions its wearer within an ethical problematic, but it does not dictate or symbolize an inner state, an identity, or a given set of social relations. Instead, the assemblage of veiling opens up certain possibilities, marks out certain paths, and suggests certain relations to other things, people, oneself, and God. This is the field of the ethical problematic of veiling to which the headscarf orients its wearer. From this vantage point, the headscarf is neither a tool nor a message.

Notes

- 1 We use the term headscarf to refer specifically to the covering of the head with a scarf as a commonly accepted Islamic obligation (*başörtüsü* in Turkish). But we also use the term veil and veiling, and this is because injunctions regarding women's modesty in Islam are not limited to covering the hair, but also involve a broader demand for modest dress. Of course, these injunctions are subject to a range of interpretations, with some Muslim women fully covering themselves in outerwear such as the *abaya*, or *çarşaf* in Turkish, while other women wear raincoats, tunics, or other more-or-less modest ensembles (our research subjects fall in this latter category). We use the term veiling to refer to the 'covered' mode of dress as a whole, in all its variation, much like the word *tesettür* is used in Turkish. The word 'covered' (*kapalı*) is commonly used in Turkish to refer to veiled women, and we use it too in our writing.
- 2 In our fieldwork research in the summer of 2009, we conducted a total of nine focus groups with consumers and workers in the veiling-fashion industry. We also conducted a survey of producers and interviews with managers, CEOs, and designers of veiling-fashion. This research was supported by the National Science Foundation, Geography and Regional Science, No. 0722825 and No. 0723986. The title is 'Collaborative Research: The veiling-fashion industry: transnational geographies of Islamism, capitalism, and identity'. The six focus groups with consumers that we draw upon in this chapter were each composed of eight women and organized by age group and

socio-economic status (from lower to upper-middle class). Five of the six focus groups with consumers were in Istanbul and one in Konya. Focus group discussions took place on the premises of a research firm in Istanbul and at a hotel in Konya. They lasted two to two and a half hours. Sosyal Araştırmalar Merkezi (SAM, Levent, Istanbul) provided assistance in conducting this study. Only the authors are responsible for the content of this article.

- 3 What Baudrillard makes clear in his *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981) is the correspondence between the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the semiological sign (Sr/Sd) and the relationship between use value and exchange value (EV/UV) for Marx. Just as the signifier and exchange value both refer to an abstracted system of difference and equivalence, the signified (inseparable from the referent) and use value are taken to be the 'object in its truth' or the 'moral law at the heart of the object' (p. 133). This bipolarity within the sign is the target of Baudrillard's critique. He argues that this hierarchized relationship is an ideological premise in which the signified and use value act as the 'alibis' of the signifier and exchange value: 'They provide the latter with the guarantee of the real, the lived, the concrete; they are the guarantee of an objective reality for which, however, in the same moment, these systems qua systems substitute their own total logic' (p. 137). This critique of the sign and of value is significant because it provides the basis for a critique of fetishism in Baudrillard's early work.

Works Cited

- Asad, T. (1983). Anthropological conceptions of religion: reflections on Geertz. *Man, New Series* 18 (2): 237–259.
- Banerjee, M. and Miller, D. (2003). *The Sari*. Oxford: Berg.
- Baudrillard, J. (1981). *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. St. Louis, MO: Telos Press.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bernstein, R. (2009). Dances with things: material culture and the performance of race. *Social Text* 27 (4): 67–94.
- Brown, B. (2004). Thing theory. In: *Things* (ed. B. Brown), 1–23. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Critchley, S. (2012a). *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*. New York: Verso.
- Critchley, S. (2012b). *Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology*. New York: Verso.
- Delanda, M. (2006). *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. London: Continuum.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 2. The Use of Pleasure*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gökariksel, B. (2012). The intimate politics of secularism and the headscarf: the mall, the neighborhood, and the public square in Istanbul. *Gender, Place, and Culture* 19 (1): 1–20.
- Gökariksel, B. and Secor, A.J. (2012). "Even I was tempt'd": the moral ambivalence and ethical practice of veiling-fashion in Turkey. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102 (4): 847–862.
- Gökariksel, B. and Secor, A.J. (2014). The veil, desire, and the gaze: turning the inside out. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*.
- Heidegger, M. (1971). The thing. In: *Poetry, Language, Thought* (trans. Albert Hofstadter), 174–182. New York: Harper and Row.

- Houraira (2007). Le voile n'est pas un symbole religieux. www.bladi.net/forum/threads/voile-symbole-religieux.107275 (accessed 18 June 2014).
- Hürriyet (2013). Turkish PM praises 'end of discrimination' with removal of ban on headscarves in Parliament'. www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-pm-praises-end-of-discrimination-with-removal-of-ban-on-headscarves-in-parliament.aspx?pageID=238&nID=57189&NewsCatID=338 (accessed 5 December 2018).
- Kayra, (2012). İlkahar-Yaz Koleksiyonu [Spring-Summer Collection]. www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrqc3Mc3i7Q (accessed 5 December 2018).
- Keane, W. (2005). Signs are not the garb of meaning: on the social analysis of material things. In: *Materiality* (ed. D. Miller), 182–205. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kılıçbay, B. and Binark, M. (2002). Consumer culture, Islam and the politics of lifestyle: fashion for veiling in contemporary Turkey. *European Journal of Communication* 17: 495–511.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Meyer, B. and Houtman, D. (2012). Introduction: material religion – how things matter. In: *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality* (eds. D. Houtman and B. Meyer), 1–23. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Miller, D. (2005a). Introduction. In: *Clothing as Material Culture* (eds. S. Küchler and D. Miller), 1–20. Oxford: Berg.
- Miller, D. (2005b). Materiality: an introduction. In: *Materiality* (ed. D. Miller), 1–50. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Navaro-Yashin, Y. (2002). *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sandikci, O. and Ger, G. (2005). Aesthetics, ethics and politics of the Turkish headscarf. In: *Clothing as Material Culture* (eds. S. Küchler and D. Miller), 61–82. Oxford: Berg.
- Scott, J.W. (2007). *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, C. (2011). Why we need a radical redefinition of secularism. In: *The Power of Religion in the Public Square* (eds. J. Butler, J. Habermas, C. Taylor and C. West), 34–59. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ünal, R.A. and Moors, A. (2012). Formats, fabrics, and fashions: Muslim headscarves revisited. *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 8 (3): 308–329.
- Vásquez, M. (2011). *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

CHAPTER 18

Indigenous Sacred Objects after NAGPRA

In and Out of Circulation

Greg Johnson

18.1 Introduction: Law, Tradition, and Mêtis

Consider the following epigraphs by way of introduction, as they frame the broad issues I wish to explore concerning modes of Indigenous engagement with nation-state apparatuses, including definitions of sacred objects in law:

Remember, the Indian is cunning but not intelligent, we only need to surround and surprise them.

—from *Peter Pan*

Thus, when the individual who is endowed with mêtis, be he god or man, is confronted with a multiple, changing reality whose limitless polymorphic powers render it almost impossible to seize, he can only dominate it – that is to say enclose it within the limits of a single, unchangeable form within his control – if he proves himself to be even more multiple, more mobile, more polyvalent than his adversary.

—Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, from *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (1978, p. 5)

Following the illuminating studies of Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, we can find in the Greek concept of mêtis a means of comparing the forms of knowledge embedded in local experience with the more general, abstract knowledge deployed by the state and its technical agencies.

—James C. Scott, from *Seeing Like a State* (1998, p. 311)

In the course of drafting the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* of 1990 (hereafter NAGPRA; 25 U.S.C. 3001), legislators settled on the following

definition of sacred objects, thinking they had fit them into a tidy box: 'Sacred objects shall mean specific ceremonial objects which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present day adherents' (25 U.S.C. 3001, section 2). Tidy it was, but it had no lid. It was open dimensionally – to the past and to the future, and most of all to the present. Never before and perhaps never again will we see US federal legislation that so explicitly addresses the category of the sacred and does so with such open-ended definitions, parameters, and standards, as I will describe below.

In passing such a law, legislators set themselves and the judiciary up for unending complications. To some degree, they saw this coming, but made the choice to pass a forward-thinking piece of legislation that could begin to undo some of the wrongs of colonial history through restoring basic human rights to the dead and their communities. But legislators surely did not anticipate the range and diversity of claims that would follow. 'Tradition' (the qualifier twice stipulated in the definition of sacred objects), it turns out, and contrary to most Western folk conceptions of it, is marvellously plastic. One might say that in practice it is capable of being animated by *métis*, a quality of creative and tactical brilliance celebrated in the epigraphs above. For Native peoples, tradition in its *métis* mode continues to be supple, playful, multi-vocal, and immensely capable of self-defence, so long as it can speak and act on its own behalf, which is precisely what the law has enabled (Johnson 2002). That materiality could be approached and claimed in such an expansive way has come as a surprise to law and museum communities and a boon to many tribes. To students of religion, NAGPRA-related processes should be viewed as a gift, for they give to us new models for thinking afresh about the stakes and possibilities of materiality and provide numerous real-world opportunities to see material in cultural motion.

NAGPRA has generated tremendous commentary from numerous points of view, much of which is relevant to the study of religion and material culture (e.g. Fine-Dare 2002; McKeown and Hutt 2003; Riding In et al. 2004). Of the many features of NAGPRA that might be productively explored here, I will limit my primary analysis to a few aspects of repatriation dynamics that offer the best traction for exploring materiality and religion in ways charted by this volume. To this end, I will attend to the ways NAGPRA has had twinned but sometimes countervailing effects on the circulation of 'sacred objects' within Indigenous communities. A similar observation can be made with regard to various state laws in the United States and with regard to early outcomes of the repatriation provisions of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007). In all of these contexts, legal frameworks and mechanisms have, on some occasions, contributed to an increased circulation of religious objects in Indigenous communities but also, on other occasions, facilitated settings wherein religious objects are taken out of circulation. Sometimes these apparently opposite dynamics are a function of outside interference or facilitation, but my point here pertains to how processes of circulation are internally managed. In both cases, I will argue, religious expression has been heightened vis-à-vis objects' circulation status, even and especially when circulation leads to (i) 'quotidian' use and (ii) outright contestation within communities.

In what follows, I will unpack these points by way of two counter-posed examples, one from the Makah Tribe and the other from Hawai'i. By means of this juxtaposition, I will analyse the religious aspects of each scenario, beginning with increased circulation

and then turning to terminated circulation. My attention to circulation is motivated in a twofold way. First, following a series of here-converging-there-departing social trails marked by Appadurai (1986), Tweed (2006), and Vásquez (2011), among others, I regard movement (and its absence) as fundamental to understanding the religious materiality of objects. Second, relevant contemporary laws foreground and construct circulation and use as central to the definition of 'sacred objects'. How Indigenous actors manoeuvre in this situation reveals a great deal about the intersection of state-based definitions of 'the sacred' and living Indigenous traditions. Of such dynamics, Elizabeth Povilleni writes, 'What are the social consequences of the non-correspondence between the object of national allegiance, "ancient tradition," and any particular Aboriginal person, group, practice, memory, or artifact?' (2002, p. 39).

18.2 The Law: Legislators Theorize the Sacred

They – not we – were here first. I do not mean Native Americans (alone), though of course I recognize their prior claims to the 'New World', their histories, and their objects. What *do* I mean? Where is here? Who are we? Who are they? 'Here' is a sophisticated theory of material culture and a laboratory in which to test it. 'We' are scholars of religion. 'They' are an unlikely group of religion theorists: sundry legislators; various American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian activists, religious leaders, and political representatives; a motley crew of museum professionals, archaeologists, and physical anthropologists; a herd of government administrators; a sprinkling of bit players; and a raft full of attorneys. Their work on repatriation and burial protection, which was initiated in the mid-1980s and which culminated in NAGPRA, and the cultural foment it has fostered over the past 25 years, can teach us a great deal about material religion in practical and theoretical terms. My point is not that the legislative and implementation history of NAGPRA somehow answers in full the riddle of material culture. For all of its vision and balance, the law still often falters in practice, and its conceptual apparatuses as well as its implementation mechanisms remain clunky at best. My point is to suggest that we pay attention to NAGPRA, not only for the reason that it is an example of material culture in action that we may wish to theorize, but also for the reason that it constitutes in its own right a highly theoretical experiment (if profoundly real-world and high-stakes) in state-level interventions in the 'social lives of things'.

As I noted above, the drafters of NAGPRA faced a conundrum that scholars of religion are very familiar with and bedevilled by: how to weigh religious evidence. From the very outset of the legislative process religion was front and centre in several ways. First, with regard to the repatriation of human remains and burial protections, an argument was advanced that eventually gained broad assent and – more importantly – cut off dissent: respect for the dead is a widely shared religious conviction and human right. Second, beyond human remains, the range of objects eligible for repatriation was quickly limited to two classes of objects: ritual objects and objects of cultural patrimony. The process of limiting the law to these two classes of objects was highly theoretical. Over the course of numerous meetings, hearings, and workshops, the parties involved settled on these classes of objects for their putatively heightened, marked, and otherwise special qualities.

In short, they determined that these kinds of objects stand out because they stand apart – they are ‘sacred’, in the discourse that gained currency. This should already strike us as interesting and familiar. Was Durkheim there, if only in spectral form, especially insofar as group engagement with objects – and the solidarity imagined to both cause and emerge from such settings – was a repeated theme of the debates? They also grappled with methodology. More empirical as a lot than we tend to be, the legislators and their interlocutors struggled to find standards of evidence for demonstrating that an object was sacred and/or an object of cultural patrimony. In the case of the former, in a manner anticipating cutting edge currents in anthropology and religious studies several decades later (e.g. Keane 2007; Vásquez 2011), they jettisoned claims about ‘belief’ in favour of a more quotidian and observable standard: *use*, with special attention to the idea and possibility of *renewed use* (U.S. House 1990, p. 14). Thus, sacred objects gained definition as those objects that were, are, or could again be used in traditional rituals. In the case of cultural patrimony, they settled on an empirical, verifiable standard: *transaction* (or, more precisely, the absence of rightful transaction). Items of cultural patrimony were defined as those objects that could not and cannot be alienated by any individual; they are property of the whole, examples of which would include things such as Iroquois wampum and Zuni war gods.

It is worth noting that the cultural patrimony provision of the law has been the least acted upon of NAGPRA categories. However much the notion of inalienability may map onto some Indigenous conceptions of communally valuable objects, it is a claim that has proved difficult to pursue in practice. It is one thing to argue that no one individual in a community has right of possession to an object, but it is a rather large and somewhat romantic jump to move from that claim to the conclusion that the object is owned by the community as a whole (not to mention the question of who, in the present, is capable of generating consent that he or she is a legitimate representative of the group’s past *tout court*). Romanticism concerning pure egalitarianism aside, Indigenous communities have long evinced multiple modes and layers of ownership as well as user entities that are more than individual and less than a total collective (e.g. clans, moities, bands, ritual societies on various scales, and so forth). Moreover, these ‘ownership’ domains may shift cyclically (e.g. by season or generation) or come in and out of relevance depending on specific historical events. Legislators did not adequately account for this range of socially mediated and diachronically variable ways of claiming objects.

Here legislators appear to have missed the mark for two basic reasons. First, their discourse illustrates that they relied heavily on a naturalized sense of singular identity when framing collective concerns, with the implicit normative model being the nation – i.e. one is French, South African, or Navajo, and this social fact doesn’t change with the seasons. Second, Native testimony perhaps led legislators down this somewhat reified and reifying path insofar as the mimetic play of *métis* here was to decentre naturalized assumptions about the linkage of individuals and property rights. In this herculean task of linking ‘we’ to property, a hidden cost was calcifying otherwise supple forms of collective belonging and expression. Compounding this problem was the fact that many tribes then, as now, were agitating for stronger forms of sovereignty, often articulated in the idiom of nationhood, thus rendering themselves in terms legislators were already predisposed to see. Facing the ‘impossible’ task of casting their identities in multiple registers simultaneously (cf. Johnson

2005), Native representatives traded one form of rights bearing body for another, which, no matter how much more capacious in principle, remains flawed insofar as it does not map onto Native territory with anything like cartographic precision. Owing to these shortcomings, the concept of cultural patrimony will need to be revisited in order for it to have culturally-relevant utility under the law. Meanwhile, the majority of claims that might be made by way of this category have instead been pursued as sacred object claims.

Despite the shortcomings of the category of cultural patrimony, the theoretical advances made by legislators with regard to religious claims positioned NAGPRA legislators ahead of our field on the whole. Attending to ritual use – implying gesture (see Gill 2012) – transactions, and the implications of open-ended historical processes for these, are hallmarks of field-leading scholarship today. Humbling, indeed, that federal bureaucrats got there in the late 1980s. And they took it further. They realized that they were in a bind: their categories were empirical, but the evidence that would be brought to bear to fill them would not be. Namely, non-falsifiable religious claims would be marshalled to describe relationships to putative ancestors, ritual use, and cultural inalienability. Having recognized this impasse, one could understand if the legislators would have given up on the process, or at least the aspect of it that entailed building religious categories into the law. Instead, they did something radical. They blew open the evidentiary parameters of the law, declaring that various non-translatable forms of evidence may be advanced in the course of making claims upon an object or human remains. These forms of evidence are ‘to be held equal’ and range a spectrum from micro-empirical (e.g. carbon 14 dating) to the macro-spiritual (direct testimony of recognized traditional religious leaders). Consider this passage from a key Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs report at a pivotal stage of the legislative history:

The types of evidence which may be offered to show cultural affiliation may include, but are not limited to, geographical, kinship, biological, archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, oral tradition, or historical evidence or other relevant information or expert opinion. The requirement of continuity between present day Indian tribes and materials from historic or prehistoric Indian tribes is intended to ensure that the claimant has a reasonable connection with the materials. Where human remains and funerary objects are concerned, the Committee is aware that it may be extremely difficult, unfair or even impossible in many instances for claimants to show an absolute continuity from present day Indian tribes to older, prehistoric remains without some reasonable gaps in the historic or prehistoric record. In such instances, a finding of cultural affiliation should be based upon an overall evaluation of the totality of the circumstances and evidence pertaining to the connection between the claimant and the material being claimed and should not be precluded solely because of gaps in the record. (U.S. Senate 1990, p. 9).

Crucially, as the ideas above were codified in NAGPRA, legislators stipulated that claims of affiliation need not meet a standard of ‘scientific certainty’, but instead must meet a more modest threshold: ‘preponderance of the evidence’. In view of their expansive allowances for evidence, one can hardly fault the Senate’s willingness to play ball in terms of trying to find a workable legal framework for assessing sacred claims. Even so, the non-commensurate nature of empirical and religious evidence had them in a bind.

To adopt a gridiron metaphor, they found themselves at fourth and long. So legislators did the only thing they could: they punted.

To get out of this bind they created a Review Committee. According to the law, the Review Committee is to be constituted by seven members, '3 of whom shall be appointed by the Secretary from nominations submitted by Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, and traditional Native American religious leaders with at least 2 of such persons being traditional Indian religious leaders; 3 of whom shall be appointed by the Secretary from nominations submitted by national museum organizations and scientific organizations; and 1 who shall be appointed by the Secretary from a list of persons developed and consented to by all of the [other] members' (25 U.S.C. 3001, section 8). The charge of the Committee is to hold public meetings as needed (usually twice a year in person and once a year telephonically) in various locations around the country (so as to meet the needs of various Native communities) in order to work out details in the administration of the law and to hear disputes, in response to which they offer non-legally binding recommendations. This last aspect of their charge has consumed considerable energy and time over the past 25 years. Verbatim transcripts of these meetings are recorded and made available to the public by the National Park Service, the federal agency charged with administration of NAGPRA (McKeown 2012). The meetings are very well attended by various parties and especially by members of Native communities. They have been occasions for rich, detailed, and moving accounts of tribal histories, rituals, struggles, and contemporary aspirations. They have also been occasions of intense battle with recalcitrant institutions, but also of consultation, communication, and occasional compromise. The Review Committee has been largely successful in resolving disputes, and very few that they have heard have gone to court. That said, the meetings can be cumbersome and the Committee faces a backlog of disputes on a regular basis. Nonetheless, I want to underscore the ways in which the Committee, when functioning well, is among the most inspiring democratic processes I have witnessed. In practice, the work of the Committee amounts to an honourable case-by-case way-finding on the stormy seas of contested claims. Most of all, the work of the Committee is far from over. Pending claims will keep the Committee and the communities it serves busy for years to come. Along the way, scholars of religion stand to learn a great deal.

18.3 In Circulation: Makah Whaling

Theologically speaking, if you will, one scandal of repatriation is that it converts immortality to mortality in the name of the sacred. Repatriation sets time ticking again, puts objects back in hands, on landscapes, subjects them to contestation and circulation. In a 'secular' mode, museums produced the holiness of objects by taking them out of circulation, declaring their scarcity, and stopping time (sometimes quite literally, as with various chemical treatments to preserve objects from material decay). In the hands of Indigenous claimants, repatriation of sacred objects draws upon and then exchanges this holy status for an altogether different, entropy-bound, and often quotidian sacrality – use. Materiality in this key is not, however, simply about a thing reanimating tradition or tradition breathing restored life into a thing. Renewed use

signals gestural process, a concept Sam Gill (2012) has devoted considerable energy towards theorizing. Understood with reference to gesture, objects shape users, movements, and transactions. In this way of framing matter, objects and bodies take analytical priority because 'meaning' is produced out of them, not the other way around. I find it intriguing and instructive that the NAGPRA legislators – pushed in this direction by Native testimony – found bodily engagement with objects and circulations of them to be central to defining religion in practice.

In order to play out some implications of material religion thus defined, and to explore the circulatory social lives of sacred objects, I turn our attention to the Makah Tribe, whose reservation is in the state of Washington, on Cape Flattery at the end of the Puget Sound, starkly open to the Pacific Ocean. The Makah are well known for the fact that they have begun whaling again after a decades-long hiatus during which time whaling fell out of global favour for a variety of reasons. In 1997, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) approved the Makah's application to hunt several grey whales, based on the fact that grey whale populations had rebounded considerably in the twentieth century and based on the small number of whales to be hunted. Upon receiving IWC approval, the Makah began a sustained effort to re-establish a whaling culture, complete with preparation protocols, spiritual exercises, physical preparation, and so forth. At the same time, various anti-whaling groups began protesting the projected hunt, eventually generating a sizable presence at Neah Bay, the tribal headquarters (Sullivan 2000). The media soon followed and the ensuing drama, including the killing of a grey whale with an elephant gun, became international news. The 'authenticity' of the hunt and of Makah tradition, including and especially its 'religious' aspects, were the subject of much scrutiny and commentary. The Makah were accused of 'inventing tradition' (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Johnson 2008) precisely with regard to their whaling practices. Various critics said the Makah had lost touch with their whaling heritage and it was a farce to think they could recover it. Much of this commentary missed the point – the importance of ancient harpoon points, to be precise.

Prior to the 1999 hunt, the Makah last practised whaling in the early years of the twentieth century. Declining whale populations and various modern pressures directed Makah energy away from whaling and towards other pursuits. But the Makah never stopped being a whale-oriented people, and their ocean-based subsistence practices continued in other ways. Makah interest in and identification with whaling surged back to the surface in the late 1960s. Just as tribes across the country were reasserting their political and cultural sovereignty, an amazing discovery was made on Makah aboriginal lands. An episode of the tribe's oral tradition took on material life. This occurred at Ozette, a village on the Pacific coast just south of the reservation boundary, which was long revered in the oral tradition as a whaling outpost, and which was occupied until the 1880s. Well prior to that time – about 1500 CE. – a mudslide had covered a significant portion of the village. In the 1960s, the tribe entered into an agreement with an archaeologist, Richard Daugherty, to allow surveys at the site in exchange for his help using recovered material culture information in pending tribal land claims (Tweedie 2002, pp. 77–78). This arrangement soon yielded remarkable results. Working with constant and eager tribal support and volunteer labour, Daugherty's excavations revealed that the portion of Ozette that had been buried was preserved almost intact

due to the dense nature of the mud flow. A pre-contact whaling village was just beneath the surface. Over several years and thousands of hours of labour, the Makah and the archaeological crew excavated, removed, and handled hundreds upon hundreds of whaling objects.

This last fact – of objects being handled – is what I wish to attend to here. Makah people touched, held, and wielded the objects of their immediate ancestors. Objects of lore (e.g. seal skin floats, specially woven fibre ropes, and mussel shell-tipped harpoons, as well as a range of ritual objects) were suddenly objects of touch, feel, and gesture. Makah people expressed understandable fascination with and appreciation for the material mastery of their ancestors, as well as gestural curiosity about the objects. How would they use this float or that harpoon? How was it held or thrown? What somatic re-education would be needed to viscerally comprehend the point and power of the harpoon? This gestural curiosity soon crystallized in a desire to hunt once again. Meanwhile, as a part of their arrangement with Daugherty, the objects from Ozette were moved to a facility created to house them, the Makah Cultural and Research Center (MCRC) in Neah Bay, the centre of the reservation (Erikson 2005). The Center was and is visionary for the ways it puts representation of Native histories in Native hands. In the post-NAGPRA world, such museums and cultural centres are more and more common. The Center was one institution that modelled such a future, and it did so in remarkably generative ways. Namely, the gestural re-acquaintance process continued and accelerated as Makah tribal members worked out ways to best display the Ozette objects. They relearned the relationship of objects to one another so as to group them according to function. They learned to fix and fabricate where necessary. They learned to replicate. Fashioning objects on Ozette models, the Makah re-inhabited the skill sets of their ancestors. Harpoons, canoes, and other implements taught the Makah how to ‘draw back’ culture (Tweedie 2002).

The walls of the MCRC would not long contain this enthusiasm for a material connection to their cultural selves. Soon Makah were crafting Ozette-based objects for use. By the 1990s, this rejuvenated material life intersected with the resurgence of grey whales, leading to the Makah request to the IWC to hunt whales once again. As I noted above, the hunt was approved, much to the outrage of the international anti-whaling community. So it was that a number of environmentalist groups that often align with Indigenous rights and people found occasion to cast aspersion on the Makah hunt. What the critics routinely failed to see, limited as they were by colonial optics capable of perceiving ‘tradition’ only when amber-locked, was the way the materiality of the hunt was itself spiritual practice for some Makah, especially with regard to the harpoon used to make the first strike. By way of oral tradition and ethnographic sources, the Makah whalers knew that their recent ancestors regarded the harpoon point in flight as the spiritual conduit linking the Makah to the whale. Finding whale flesh, it anchored the taught umbilicus-like cord that would link the Makah to their mythic relative. Blind to this connection, critics focused on the elephant gun used to euthanize the whale after the harpoon strike. They focused on the support motorboat and the nylon jackets of some crewmembers. Fake! Ghastly! Modern! And in the name of tradition!

Following an object- and gesture-focused line of analysis, as I have attempted here, reveals the generative powers of materiality in a way that is neither theological nor

flatly essentialistic. If I have inched towards the latter, it is for the sake of foregrounding ways Makah have represented their connection to the harpoon points and therefore to the hunt, which is taken – by many insiders and outsiders alike – to be the definitive thing Makah do. Letting the pendulum swing back, I certainly don't mean to imply that a hunt without such objects would be inauthentic – indeed, I strongly advocate for abandoning discourses of authenticity entirely in the study of religion (Johnson 2008). My emphasis falls on the *metonymic* capacity of objects understood as authentic to shape bodily practice and, in turn, to discipline and articulate cultural practice. As currently implemented, NAGPRA limits repatriation to a small set of objects. These few objects, out of necessity and in practice, stand for tradition writ large, especially when put back into circulation. That a whale hunt should also include a motor boat, for example, does not in my view diminish its potential to be regarded as traditional, so long as our conception of tradition is reasonable enough to entail acknowledgement of change and channelling of representations of change in the idiom of adaptability, a perspective not always found in the media.

Through all of this cultural action, harpoon points and other whaling implements took on a heightened spiritual relevance for the Makah. The religious-cum-subsistence tools of the past had shaped Makah notions of the future. Specifically, some Makah became increasingly attuned to ancient ideas about the religious powers of harpoon points, of prayers made to them, of modes of care appropriate to them, and so forth. By way of NAGPRA-related inventory processes, they became aware of harpoon points and other whaling implements held by museums across the country. They have begun the process of seeking to repatriate these items under NAGPRA. But repatriation processes can be painstakingly slow, and, as Ann Tweedie has shown, NAGPRA categories, and the category of cultural patrimony (i.e. objects held in common) in particular, are a poor fit with elements of Makah cultural patterns of ownership and possession. Thus, it is not the case that the Makah have recovered all of their material whaling heritage yet, but they are pursuing this course, collectively asserting a sacred claim on the objects that have taught them how to be, move, and hunt as a whaling people, metonymically speaking.

18.4 Out of Circulation: Hawaiian Objects

It is hard to outdo the Makah story of a buried village, their visionary cultural centre, and a renewed whaling tradition. But contemporary Hawaiian religious life in the context of repatriation is fraught with intense and instructive episodes as well. If the story of the Makah is about circulation, use, and gestural inspiration by way of handling objects, the story I will tell now has a considerably different trajectory. Its themes are about the removal of objects from circulation and the ways absence can catalyse intense cultural friction. This friction, however, should not be narrowly understood as necessarily negative or plotted as a story about cultural decline. To the contrary, the kind of friction that erupted in the Kawaihae dispute is profoundly generative, illustrating that repatriation of material objects can have religiously influential results when – even because – objects are taken out of circulation.

Known popularly and in the media as the Forbes' Cave conflict, the Kawaihae dispute has been among the most visible and contested of Native Hawaiian religious events in the past century. Sixteen different Native Hawaiian organizations have made contesting claims in the ongoing dispute, many of them anchored in religious assertions (Johnson 2007). Eighty-three priceless objects are at the centre of the conflict, as are numerous *iwi kūpuna* (ancestors, human remains). The objects include many *ki'i* (carved wood statues), including images of the war god Kū. The objects were looted by non-Hawaiians in 1905 from a burial cave in Honokoa Gulch near the town of Kawaihae on Hawai'i Island. Subsequently, the objects were purchased by the Bishop Museum and many of them were featured in prominent display there throughout the twentieth century. After NAGPRA was passed, the so-called Forbes collection drew the attention of repatriation activists in Hawai'i.

Foremost among repatriation groups in Hawai'i, *Hui Mālama I Na Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei* (group caring for the ancestors, hereafter Hui Mālama) pursued NAGPRA claims on the objects (Ayau and Tengan 2002). Hui Mālama explored a range of possible claims, asserting that the objects fit several categories under the law, including funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. Frustrated with the slow pace of the law's administration among other factors, Hui Mālama, which has a notably successful record working within the framework of the law, decided to pursue repatriation of the objects through direct action. In 2002, Halealoha Ayau, *po'o* (head) of the hui, worked out an arrangement with the Museum to receive the objects on 'loan', with the understanding that the objects would not be returned to the Museum. Upon receiving the objects, members of Hui Mālama returned them to the cave from which they were taken and, so as to maintain the relative secrecy of the site and thus protect it from future looting, sealed off the entrance to the cave. With these actions, members of the hui were confident that they had fulfilled their *kuleana* (responsibility) to the *kūpuna* (ancestors). They had returned the funerary objects (*moepū*) to their rightful owners and thus reconnected the *mana* (power) of the objects to the mana of the *kūpuna*, completing a crucial circuit in foundational networks of Hawaiian spirituality.

Shortly after this direct action was completed, other Hawaiians weighed in with counter narratives and other views about the meaning and place of the past's materiality. Several Native Hawaiian organizations came forward to challenge Hui Mālama and the Bishop Museum, asserting that the repatriation was not legal. These groups took their case to the NAGPRA Review Committee, which considered the matter over the course of several meetings and a span of more than five years. The growing dispute garnered considerable media attention and became something most all Native Hawaiians had some connection to and *mana'o* (opinion, wisdom) about. The dispute was about the fate of objects, to be sure, but it was also about the place and role of traditional Hawaiian religion in the present and the authority to guide its practice and interpretation. It was also a dispute about the very ground of Hawaiian history, as Kawaihae is a storied place immediately in the heartland of Kamehameha the Great and his legendary '*ohana* (family). Some features of the objects suggested that they were from Kamehameha's time, and some even speculated that the burial cave was that of Kamehameha himself. Hawaiians have remarkably strong genealogical and sensibilities and memories. Anything that triggers a palpable connection to the era of Kamehameha

is bound to generate considerable commentary and outright struggle. And so it was with the Kawaihae moepū. Here again cultural objects play a metonymic role, standing for tradition and its command writ large.

Claims to affiliation with and therefore control over the objects were announced in a number of cultural and religious keys, which included geographical and genealogical claims, as well as a diversity of positions about the past and present meaning of the objects (see Johnson 2011). One prominent faction included members of the Royal Hawaiian Academy of the Arts, who argued that the objects should be returned to the Bishop Museum and put back on display so that future generations of Hawaiians could see and learn from their material heritage. Another group from Hawai'i Island argued for the importance of museum display as well, but they leveraged a geographical claim in order to insist that a facility be established on Hawai'i Island that would be suited to this purpose. Another group expressed basic agreement with Hui Mālama's argument that the objects should be buried with the dead, but took exception to the way Hui Mālama pursued this goal outside of legal channels and without acknowledging the authority and perspectives of other Native Hawaiian organizations. Meanwhile, members of Hui Mālama remained steadfast in their position, asserting that the issue was so important that they had to take whatever means necessary to restore wellbeing to the kūpuna.

This position – that the matter is about the circuit of power between the ancestors and their objects and, further, that this circuit enables an emanation of power to the land and to the living generation – goes beyond what most NAGPRA-related processes can address or accommodate. Such an idea pushes the envelope of materialist understandings. What does it mean to take seriously the material needs of the dead? Can emerging theories of materiality offer guidance for thinking through the ramifications of such ideas for religions, the study of religion, and the adjudication of religious claims in the context of legal disputes? What then of secular notions of agency, ownership, and responsibility, all of which hinge upon and map onto a rights bearing, time-bound individual? My point is to suggest that Hui Mālama's position does in a more extreme way what repatriation-related processes have been doing for several decades: it pushes us, students and scholars of religion, to think as immediately and creatively about materiality as some Hawaiians have on behalf of their ancestors. I am not suggesting we become theologically Hawaiian in our theorizing, of course, but that we accept the challenge of thinking beyond the calcified conceptual horizons we have inherited.

One major conclusion we come to by following the Kawaihae dispute is the power of friction to generate tradition. In this case, a small and hidden energy source (objects in a cave) catalysed an intense cultural explosion – of words, actions, epithets, and curses; of learning, consultation, soul-searching and occasional compromise. Antagonisms and allegiances were formed. Aunties and grandmas were asked to share their memories. Academic histories were read and contested. Archives were combed. Sites were visited. Prayers were offered. The dispute has continued – some would say festered – for over a decade. In some circles the sheer length and intensity of the dispute has become evidence of cultural decay. This interpretation of the Kawaihae struggle has been prevalent in print and Internet media sources. A related interpretation emphasizes how this case is symptomatic of the incongruent fit between modern law and traditional

cultures. Hawaiians have been asked to work with and through a law that does not adequately address the categories, energies, and intentions of their culture.

Both narratives emerge from wrong-headed assumptions about the nature of tradition. The story of cultural decay is faulty at a number of levels, not least of which is the Edenic authenticity it must assume as a point from which a cultural fall can begin. Along with this, such a story assumes an indexical relationship between conflict and decay, between struggle and decline, at least with regard to Indigenous peoples. As a scholar of religion, I am invested in resisting this narrative. I am not defending individual or collective Hawaiian actions, and I am not romanticizing vestiges of traditionalism. My point is to insist that human struggle precisely marks issues that matter and, on occasion, is the very source of generative thinking. Struggle on this view can be an engine of tradition. Scholars have viewed Christian factionalism in this light, seeing intra-Christian disputes as yielding powerful theological developments, for example. My aim is to challenge us to see the same of other traditions. One entailment of abandoning static, exoticizing views of tradition is that we begin to see tradition as process and as constituted by a range of sometimes shrill and cacophonous voices. This is the stuff of religion in action, not symptoms of anachronistic traditions in decline. Similarly, the story of the mismatch between tradition and law fails to do justice to Indigenous creativity and contemporaneity. Hawaiians and American Indians helped draft NAGPRA, and they have made incredibly productive use of it. Does the law carry forward some Western biases and categories? Of course it does. But to cast the unfolding of NAGPRA disputes as story of helplessly mismatched sides is patronizing at best, not to mention uniformed. *Métis*, to return to my characterization of some Indigenous actions by means of an admittedly European trope, is visible again. It reveals a great deal about religion-making with and through objects, especially when one must negotiate with and through nation-state apparatuses, playing with and against the rules, running with and against the grain, sparring here with museums, and there with one's own people.

To round out my argument about friction as an engine of tradition, I want to point out that Native Hawaiians I know who have been involved in the *Kawaihae* dispute are unambiguously 'more Hawaiian' than they were at the outset of the case. They have been challenged to articulate their identities and affiliations in ways far more detailed than ever before. They have risen to this challenge through finding passions and sources of knowledge they had not previously engaged. Much as Makah tribal members are more Makah than ever before due to the experience of rediscovering and re-gesturing their material whaling past, Hawaiians are more in touch with the central place and value of the ancestors to their traditions in the wake of *Kawaihae*. Let me underscore that this Hawaianness is not univocal and monochromatic. Indeed, the dispute remains unsettled. In fact, in response to a suit brought against Hui Mālama and the Bishop Museum, a federal court demanded that the cave be opened. Following the decision, the objects were returned to the Bishop Museum, where they are currently being held until the matter can be resolved by means of NAPGRA guidelines and an agreement can be reached among the 16 Native Hawaiian organizations that have advanced repatriation claims. This is unlikely to occur any time soon precisely because the multiple claimants have dug in, just as their ancestor would have if confronted by a weighty contest over the meaning and power of their objects.

18.5 Conclusion: Object Lessons

In closing, I want to underscore the ways NAGPRA has succeeded and note a few issues that remain problematic. Since 1990, thousands of human remains and hundreds of sacred objects have been repatriated to American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians. A culture shift has taken place as well. On the whole, tribes and museums are far more collaborative now than before NAGPRA, and interesting experiments have been tried from both sides, including shared possession arrangements, jointly designed educational curricula, and so forth. By way of legally mandated inventory and consultation processes, museums have become much more transparent and communicative. A new generation of tribal cultural affairs offices has blossomed and tribes have become increasingly adept at working through the legal apparatus established by NAGPRA and related laws. Tribes have begun collaborating on consortium arrangements to make collective claims on a regional basis, offering one solution to the still-unresolved and thorny issue of addressing the disposition of culturally unidentifiable human remains (those without provenience). Now a young generation of cultural experts and activists is pushing hard on issues not adequately addressed by NAGPRA – burial protection on private land, international repatriations, and, by way of invoking the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP 2007), pushing the United States, and other governments to enable self-determination agendas wherein repatriation claims are part and parcel of broad-reaching claims on other resources, including land, water, mineral rights, and intellectual property. Of the many positive things NAGPRA has facilitated, it is this spirit of collaboration and communication that signals its most profound contribution.

There are, of course, weaknesses in the law and in its implementation history. Along with the unsettled fate of culturally unidentifiable human remains, problems remain with how to enfranchise unrecognized tribes and Native people who lack tribal affiliations. In Hawai'i, the lack of tribal status continues to cause difficulties, as the law and the federal Indian law framework it relies upon presuppose federally recognized tribal status on the part of claimants. It is one thing, of course, to struggle with the state on legal ground; it is another matter of course when the state refuses to recognize that ground in the first place. Another area of weakness has been enforcement. Many museums and institutions have been good actors, filing inventories more or less on schedule and participating in consultations. But a number of federal agencies have been slow to act, as have some large and powerful museums. Tribes have pushed for greater accountability, but remedies have been few to date. However, despite some foot dragging and other ways of avoiding NAGPRA, museums have brought few constitutional challenges against the law. Several have threatened, particularly on the grounds that NAGPRA violates the first amendment, particularly with regard to the sacred objects provisions of the law and related evidentiary parameters (e.g. soliciting the expert opinion of religious leaders), but no sustained challenges have materialized to date. That said, in the scope of legal history NAGPRA is still an adolescent law. We can expect more growing pains and challenges before it can be regarded as settled law. Meanwhile, new histories of materiality will be crafted every day as sacred objects move in and out of circulation.

Works Cited

- Appadurai, A. (ed.) (1986). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ayau, E.H. and Tengan, T.K. (2002). Ka Huaka'i O Nā 'Oiwī: the journey home. In: *The Dead and Their Possessions: Repatriation in Principle, Policy and Practice* (eds. C. Fforde, J. Hubert and P. Turnbull), 171–189. London and New York: Routledge.
- Detienne, M. and Vernant, J.-P. (1978). *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (trans. J. Lloyd). London: Humanities Press.
- Erikson, P.P., Ward, H., and Wachendorf, K. (2005). *Voice of a Thousand People: The Makah Cultural and Research Center*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Fine-Dare, K. (2002). *Grave Injustice: The American Indian Repatriation Movement*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Gill, S. (2012). *Dancing Culture Religion*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds.) (1983). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, G. (2002). Tradition, authority and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. *Religion* 32: 355–381. <https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.2002.0426>.
- Johnson, G. (2005). Facing down the representation of an impossibility: indigenous responses to a “universal” problem in the repatriation context. *Culture and Religion* 6 (1): 57–78.
- Johnson, G. (2007). *Sacred Claims: Repatriation and Living Tradition*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.
- Johnson, G. (2008). Authenticity, articulation, invention: theorizing contemporary Hawaiian traditions from the outside. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 20 (3): 243–258.
- Johnson, G. (2011). Courting culture: unexpected relationships between religion and law in contemporary Hawai'i. In: *After Secular Law* (eds. W.F. Sullivan, R.A. Yelle and M. Taussig-Rubbo), 282–301. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Keane, W. (2007). *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Missionary Encounter*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.
- McKeown, T.C. (2012). *In the Smaller Scope of Conscience: The Struggle for Repatriation Legislation, 1986–1990*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- McKeown, T.C. and Hutt, S. (2003). In the smaller scope of conscience: the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act twelve years after. *UCLA Journal of Environmental Law and Policy* 21 (2): 153–213.
- Povinelli, E. (2002). *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
- Riding In, J. et al. (2004). Protecting Native American human remains, burial grounds, and sacred places. *Wicazo Sa Review* 19: 169–183.
- Scott, J.C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Sullivan, R. (2000). *A Whale Hunt*. New York and London: Touchstone Books.
- Tweed, T. (2006). *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
- Tweedie, A.M. (2002). *Drawing Back Culture: The Makah Struggle for Repatriation*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- United Nations (2007). United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Adopted 107th plenary meeting (13 September 2007).

- U.S. House (1990). House Report 101–877 on H.R. 5237. Providing for the protection of Native American graves (15 October 1990).
- U.S. Senate (1990). Senate Report 101–473 on S. 1980. Providing for the protection of Native American graves and the repatriation of Native American remains and cultural patrimony (26 September 1990).
- Vásquez, M. (2011). *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

CHAPTER 19

Relics in the Sikh Tradition

Anne Murphy

The term 'relic' is in many ways a problematic one. In general usage, the term evokes the material forms found in Christianity and Buddhism, the two perhaps 'ideal' cases of relic cultures available in world religions today. Within such traditions, the term is most commonly associated with revered bodily remains and ideas of and practices related to embodiment (or, in other words, the 'animate' nature of the object; Schopen 1998, p. 259). It might thus be argued that we should avoid the use of the term 'relic' in the case of objects revered in Sikh tradition, because they so clearly do not replicate these basic features of the 'relic' in Christian and Buddhist contexts: While there is the rare instance of a bodily relic – such as the hair of Guru Amardas, kept at his centre at Goindwal – this is very much outside the norm, and objects related to the Gurus and other important persons, which comprise what we might call 'relics' in Sikh traditions, have not been seen as 'embodying' these persons in the way they have been (but do not always) in Christian and Buddhist contexts. The idea of the 'relic' in this way seems inappropriate for the particular formations of the culture of remembrance and materiality found in the Sikh context.

This is perhaps even more the case because there is no parallel for the term 'relic' in Punjabi, the language in which the Sikh traditions have taken shape. While revered objects related to the Gurus and others are called 'relics' in English by some scholars, they are described as *itihāsik vāstuāṇ* ('historical objects') and *shastar vastar* ('weapons and clothes') in Punjabi texts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which lists of them were compiled (Murphy 2012, chapter 7). The use of the term *itihāsik* (historical) is particularly instructive. This term provides a direct link to the sites that commemorate the lives and activities of the Gurus, the *itihāsik* Gurdwaras that are so prominent today particularly in Punjab but also in other parts of the world where the Gurus travelled and the community settled. Both act to commemorate and

create an experiential link to the Sikh past. This designation of one term that is generally used for both objects and sites reflects the underlying conceptual order that links them: both the historical site and object represent relationships in time to the Gurus, and respect for them constitutes a central way of participating in the community in relation to the Sikh past.

This is indeed very different terrain from that which is characterized by reverence for bodily remains that are seen to embody the charisma, power, or even the very personhood of an individual. Yet, there are reasons to utilize the term 'relic' in the Sikh context as well. This is so, first, because in Christian and Buddhist traditions, too, the term designates more than just bodily remains that have been made the object of worship. Indeed, even in this ideal case, as Schopen notes, 'there is both a startling precision and a maddening conceptual fuzziness in what Christians and Buddhists' say about relics and the roughly equivalent terms used in the Buddhist case, *śarīra* and *dhātu*. (1998, p. 259) In these traditions, too, we see a lack of engagement in 'exegesis, discussion, or rationalization' (Schopen 1998, p. 266). Second, the ontology of such objects has been diverse in Christian and Buddhist contexts, as well as in other traditions; embodiment, in short, is not their only feature. This challenges the designation of these two elements – bodily remains and embodiment – as the defining features of the relic. The Sikh revered object can be considered a relic, then, if we construe 'relic' in the broad terms that the full diversity of its forms requires, in ways that draw out commonalities among religious traditions while respecting the distinctions among and within them.

The use of 'relic' here, therefore, relies upon a capacious sense of the term, and a move away from its articulation in particular aspects of the specific cases of Buddhism and Christianity, and towards a more cross-cultural category of material culture and religious expression. As Alexandra Walsham noted with reference to a 2010 collection of essays on the theme of the relic, this requires that we attend to the 'slippery, elastic, and expansive nature of this concept and category' (p. 11). Indeed, Walsham's basic definition of a relic allows the move advocated here: a relic in her view is 'a material object that relates to a particular individual and/or to events and places with which that individual was associated' (2010, p. 11), akin perhaps to the sense that the relic acts simply as, in the words of Gregory Schopen, 'something left behind' (1998, p. 256). More detailed definitions of the relic understand it as taking two general forms: first, as 'the venerated remains of venerable persons' (the bodily remains that are so central in Christianity and Buddhism), and second, as 'objects that they once owned and, by extension, things that were once in physical contact with them' (Eliade 1987, p. 275; see Trainor 1997, p. 30); what Sharf calls a 'contact relic surrogate' (Sharf 1999, p. 77). The power of both body and object is said to derive from principles of 'contagious' or 'sympathetic' magic, by which a part of a person's body or an object associated with her/him can stand for the whole person (Sharf 1999, p. 79). While we associate bodily remains with the relic in particular, both types of relics are common in Christian and Buddhist traditions (Geary 1978, 1994a, b; Schopen 1997; Trainor 1997). The normative Buddhist tradition since approximately the fifth century CE has recognized different classes of relics or *cetiya* that are revered and stand in some physical relationship to the Buddha or holy person: corporeal relics, relics of use, and commemorative

relics (Trainor 1997, pp. 30, 89). In Christianity, non-bodily or 'associative' relics (what we might also call 'objects of use') have a significant role alongside bodily remains, particularly in the memorialization of angels and persons assumed bodily into heaven, such as Jesus and his mother Mary (Lucas 1986; Weyl Carr 2001). Indeed, the Eucharist in a sense acts as a kind of infinitely replicable relic for Jesus Christ, although it is perhaps most accurately comparable to an enlivened image such as is found in some South Asian religions, since it undergoes a transformation to be infused with divine presence (Bynum 2013; Davis 1999, chapter 1; Geary 1994a, p. 185). Christian traditions also feature the veneration of weapons said to have been used in the Crusades and objects associated with saints, such as bells, staffs, and books (Lucas 1986).

The relationship between the remembered and the material object varies in these examples and the many more that characterize this aspect of material religious culture: an object might physically embody the remembered, as Gregory Schopen has argued is the case for relics in early Buddhism (1997), and/or act as a memorial device, which is crucial to Kevin Trainor's definition of the relic in the Sri Lankan Buddhist context as a 'a technology of remembrance and representation' (1997, p. 26). This latter definition can be used to describe relics in Islamic traditions as well, such as the sacred hair of the Prophet Muhammad held in the Hazratbal shrine in Kashmir, one of the most famous Muslim relics in India today; relics in Islamic contexts are thus in some sense 'enablers of historical memory' (Meri 2010, p. 99). Such memorial devices, however, also possess a special grace: the hair of Muhammad, like his fingernails, has been seen to possess a special power and produces a powerful effect on the world with its embodiment of *baraka* or divine blessing (Meri 2010, pp. 101–104). Such objects bestow the grace of the remembered person upon the person in contact with the relic. Other bodily remains are also revered in Islamic tradition, such as the head of Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet, which also transformed places it rested into pilgrimage sites as it was brought West (Meri 2002, p. 191; Meri 2010, pp. 100–101); so too are objects associated with the Prophet and other holy persons. Representations of relics – such as footprints, or drawings of them – have also proved efficacious in Islamic traditions and well beyond, such as the vivid life of the footprint well known among adherents of the Varkari tradition in Maharashtra (Meri 2002, p. 206; Meri 2010, p. 108; Novetzke 2008, pp. 12–13). We can see the famous handprint of Guru Nanak at Panja Sahib (in present-day Pakistan) as akin to such representations. The ontology of the relic, therefore, varies widely, including notions of embodiment and ideas of grace, and exhibiting powers even in passing contact. It also often merges in complex ways with other kinds of material objects, sites, and representations.

The use of the term 'relic' allows us to explore this rich terrain and understand the commonalities that link diverse cultural practices around notions of collection, reverence, and display and around the complicated and sometimes fraught problem of representation. Memory, as the preceding discussion indicates, is central – and this is where the most important convergence lies between world relic traditions with Sikh traditions. Sikh venerated objects find their parallel among other relic traditions acting as 'relics' in Trainor's sense, with a continuing religious and historical significance for the Sikh community (1997, p. 26). They enable the participation of the Sikh community in the substantiation and experience of their collective past, providing a means through which

the community is constituted and maintained in relation to that past. Through such objects, the past is experienced and proved, and history narrated and performed for a transnational religious community. They refer to the memory of the ten Sikh Gurus, from the first, Guru Nanak (1469–1539), to the final embodied human Guru, Gobind Singh (1666–1708), and of other important persons revered by the community. As such, they act as links with, or memorial technologies to recuperate, the past. The lack of a single specific name for them in Punjabi does not deny their existence and the connections that exist to link them to other cultural phenomena; as will be discussed, it is the usage of the term *itihisik*, or ‘historical’, that reveals the nature and scope of the relic and connects it to related traditions in both material and textual form.

Walsham argues that a distinctive feature of the relic is its ‘power’ – it does things in the world (2010, p. 13). This is so in the Sikh case on several different levels. We can see this in conventional ‘miraculous’ terms to a limited degree – such as in the consumption of pieces of the shoe of the Guru, for instance, for the birth of a son, and the eating of *chole* (chick peas) in front of the mirror at Takhat Damdama Sahib for those suffering paralysis (Murphy 2012, p. 35). These are reminiscent of the healing practices associated with relics associated with Muhammad (Meri 2010, p. 109) and at the shrine of Sufi saint Baba Farid in the Indian Punjabi city of Faridkot, which is associated with the healing of skin ailments (Murphy 2012, p. 27). These features are not foregrounded within Sikh tradition, however, even while objects are collected and revered. In broadest terms, and in ways iterated across cultural production in textual as well as material form, the power of such objects is best understood in relation to the shared experience of memory, a communitarian experience of the past in relation to the ongoing lived world. Sikh relic objects enable the enactment of memory, the proof of the past, and the participation of a community of memory in its own collective production.

19.1 The Materiality of Sikh Traditions

Sikh religious or ‘relic’ objects are found in gurdwaras and private homes throughout the Punjab and Sikh diaspora, and consist of a wide range of types: clothing, shoes, chariots, and weapons. All are associated with the ten Sikh Gurus, martyrs, or other revered persons. Weapons are the most commonly found type of relic object. Such weapons are, for example, collected and displayed at the centre of Takhat Keshgarh Sahib in Anandpur, one of the five *takhats* or seats of authority within the structure of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee or SGPC, which manages historical gurdwaras in Punjab today. They are also displayed and described orally – who used them, when, and why – to an audience every evening in the most prominent of the five *takhats*, the Akal Takhat, across from the Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple, the most prominent of Sikh shrines today in India. Such weapons are also collected at smaller sites and in private hands, and are often displayed next to the *Guru Granth Sahib* or in special locked cases in the central congregational hall of a gurdwara (see Figure 19.1).

‘Objects of use’ or associative relics dominate in Sikh tradition. These, in turn, consist of two primary types: objects used by or owned by the Gurus and/or members of their families (and sometimes, by their important followers) and objects that were gifted by or



Figure 19.1 Historical weapons at Paonta Sahib. Photo by author.

to the Gurus. An example of first type is the *choḷā* [cloak] *sāhib* held at Dera Baba Nanak by the Bedi family, which originally belonged to the first Guru, or kitchen implements revered at the village of Drolli Bhai Ki because they were used to create food served to the Guru; an example of the second is found in the home of Bhai Dalla, a prominent follower of the Guru in the Malwa section of Punjab (Murphy 2012, chapter 2). The collection housed in Dalla's family home (still owned by his descendants) near the Damdama Sahib Takhat complex, features several gifts by the Guru to Dalla and his family in recognition of their devotion and service (see Figure 19.2). Many such gifts evoke or even mirror the tradition of *khil'at*, or the ritualized gifting of objects between patron and client, materializing that relationship and acknowledging the mutual obligation and connection within it (Gordon 2003; Murphy 2012, pp. 47–51). Such practices have both political and religious implications in a range of settings – among *sufis* as well as in the court context, in both the Mughal court and in the British Raj – as an expression of power and authority, and an assertion of loyalty and service. These practices were adapted and integrated into evolving Sikh traditions, demonstrating the devotional connections between the Gurus and followers, and particularly the patterns of *seva* or service that constituted such connections.

Sikh relic objects as objects of memory are tied to the broader memorial traditions that characterize much of the cultural and intellectual production of the tradition.



Figure 19.2 Member of Dalla family displaying collection. Photo by author.

In this way, material traditions mirror, augment, and act as proof for a far larger discursive tradition that is primarily expressed in textual form. This connection between material and textual expression is an intimate one. The textual orientation of Sikh tradition is most vividly demonstrated by the centrality of the *Guru Granth Sahib* – the text that is the Guru – in shaping the ideas, practices, and ongoing ethical shape of the community in ongoing terms. The *material* dimensions of this orientation also express this importance of text. Thus we can see reverence for the *Guru Granth Sahib* in material and behavioural terms, as a means of expression of its living embodiment of the ideas and ethos of the Gurus, demonstrated by the treatment of the text as a kind of sovereign: enshrined on a throne, accompanied by an attendant with a fly-whisk, and carried high when moved from place to place. As this example demonstrates, material forms directly manifest ideological formations; they are not separate from them. We see this in the orientation of the Sikh tradition towards the representation of the past as well, and relics thus can only be understood in relation to the broader textual representations that bring the past into the present.

Historiographical traditions in Sikh contexts take several forms. Early forms are found in the *janam-sākhī* literature, literally the ‘witnessings of the life’ of the first and founding Guru, Guru Nanak, although the historicity of these texts is open to question due to their inclusion of miraculous elements (McLeod 2000, p. 38). As W.H. McLeod and Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh have argued in related ways however, ‘the testimony which the *janam-sākhīs* give is to their own period and place’ (McLeod 2000, p. 43) and, according to Kaur Singh, ‘the “truth” of the myths is to be found in the history and the life of the religious community’ (1992, p. 343). What such texts also provide is evidence of the importance of the narration of the past life of the Guru itself, in relation to the formation of the Sikh community. This type of orientation towards the past blossoms in the eighteenth century, when the period of living human-embodied Guruship ends with the death of the Tenth and final human-embodied Guru in 1708, and the *granth* or

text takes centre-stage as the conceptual leader of the community or *panth*. We see in tandem with this literary florescence a significant expansion in material mnemonic and representational practices oriented towards the telling of the Sikh past.

Two related genres of textual production in this period demonstrate this interface between textual historiographical traditions and the material culture of memory. One of these is the genre known as the *Gurbilās*, or 'the play of the Guru' (Dhavan 2011a; Murphy 2007, 2012); the other is known as the *Rahit*, a body of texts that, in some cases, feature narrative portions reminiscent of the *Gurbilās*, but otherwise represent ideals and imperatives on behaviour and belief for members of the evolving Sikh community, particularly in the form of the *Khalsā*, the orthodox form of Sikh practice promulgated by Guru Gobind Singh at the end of the seventeenth century. The historical orientations that emerged in these and related forms (such as the *bansāvalīān* and *gurpranālīān*) in the eighteenth century drew upon a wide range of antecedents, and were influenced by a range of contemporary elements, including Persian, Sanskritic, and vernacular linguistic sources (Dhavan 2011a, b; Fenech 2008, 2013; Murphy 2007, 2012; Rinehart 2011). Muzaffar Alam has shown that Persian traditions were already established in literary and administrative terms in the region by the eleventh century, when Lahore was known as 'Little Ghazna', clearly linking Punjab with political centres to the west (Alam 2003, p. 133); Persianate notions of literary and historical representation certainly represented one model that influenced Sikh cultural production in the period, demonstrated for example by the influence of the Persian *Shahnamah* on the *Zafarnāmah*, attributed to the Tenth Guru (Fenech 2013); it was also an important influence on the production of historical representations in the courts of Sikh rulers in the second half of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Dhavan 2011b). Many of the Gurus' writings were influenced by or were composed in Braj, a devotional and literary language across North India; compositions within the Dasam Granth, said to contain the writings of the Tenth Guru or his court poets, reflect a wide range of religious and cultural influences, drawing upon puranic sources, as Deol (2001), Rinehart (2011), and others have explored, but also Persian traditions (Fenech 2008, 2013). The telling of the life of the community through the narration of the lives of key figures was indeed a growing feature of a range of devotional traditions in the period, exemplified by the hagiographical text by Nabhdas at the opening of the seventeenth century (Hare 2011; Pinch 1999).

Sainapati's *Gur Sobhā* ('the Light or Glory of the Guru') from the beginning of the eighteenth century provides a further developed example of a Sikh historical imaginary that emerges in a more defined form in the eighteenth century (Murphy 2007, 2012). We see a particular logic of historical representation in *Gur Sobhā*, at times reminiscent of simultaneously emergent European historical imaginaries, and at times distinct. In its *specifically soteriological* dimension, for instance, the text portrays a separation of the past and present, the evolution of the present out of a past that is fully past and no longer present. This sense of rupture is central to the conceit of the text in defining Sikhs in relation to the Guru, and in defining the community so constituted, a sensibility made urgent by the death of the Tenth Guru and the transference of Guruship to the *granth* and *pañth*. At the same time, the *pañth* is defined in a way that opens up a sense of the past that is not over and done with, but rather continues to operate in the present

and on into the future, the presence of the Guru continuing into an always unfolding present and beyond. This initiates a new relationship of the community with its past, a new temporality, and therefore a new historical sensibility, one in which the past is in one sense gone – as is the human-embodied Guru – and in another, ever present. In *Gur Sobhā*, then, the narration of religious content within a historical narrative provides a means not only for relating the teachings of the Guru by means of certain past events, but for creating the community itself as the continuation of this past into the present. The human community becomes the locus of history, as the *pañth*: the centre of practice and engagement. This speaks to the way in which historical representation constitutes a fundamental constituting principle of the community: that which refers to the past and produces the present. The historical sense associated with the Tenth Guru in *Gur Sobhā* is further complicated in literary and other representations that follow in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, building upon the broader orientation that can be seen in *Gur Sobhā* and reflecting the complex intersection of emergent Sikh political interests with this communitarian imagination as centralized Mughal authority became less effective in the region and successor powers emerged in its absence (Murphy 2012, chapter 3; Vig forthcoming).

The *Rahit* that emerges at roughly the same time as the later texts of the *Gurbilās* genre reflect a similar historical imaginary, but within a limited and more constrained form. It is here that we also see vividly the intersection between the newly emergent historical orientation as expressed in text and the production of memory in and through material representations of the past. In the *Rahit*, behaviour and the manifestation of belief are the concern, through the narration of the Guru's conversations with followers and his directions regarding the requirements for membership in the emergent Khalsa community. Strikingly, this imagination of the past centred around the Guru here is marked by discussion of those material connections to the Gurus that persist in the ongoing present: the places where martyrs gave up their lives, for instance, or places the Gurus stayed (Murphy 2012, chapter 3). Material objects related to the Gurus are described as being worthy of reverence; this is particularly true for the *Hukamnāme*, the letters of the Gurus that brought instructions and established connections with dispersed Sikh communities. This practice is for example described in the Chaupa Singh *Rahitnāma*, one of the longest of this type of text (Murphy 2012, pp. 107–108; Singh 1987, p. 106 (for McLeod's translation, see p. 181); Singh 1999, p. 5). There is thus a broad category at work among the things to be revered: those objects, places, and people associated with and providing a connection to the Guru. This can provide a means for understanding the reverence paid to the sword within the text, as well the ways in which *behaviour* functions alongside material forms of memory in the broadest sense (Singh 1987, p. 40). Thus: 'A Sikh of the Guru should revere and worship [*pūjā kare*] the sword [*sirī sāhib*]. The Guru worshipped [his sword]'. (Singh 1987, p. 63 (for McLeod's translation, see p. 153)). Remembrance of the behaviour of the Guru, much like the interest in the *sunna* of the Prophet in the *hadīth* literature in Islam, constitutes the embodiment of perfect Sikh behaviour: remembrance of such behaviour becomes parallel to remembrance through other means. In such a context, remembrances of the material traces of the Guru-in-the-world are parallel to the traces of memory that are behavioural; behaviour is, in this view, a form of remembrance/realization of the

Guru-in-the-world. Respect is paid to a range of objects and representatives of Sikh authority; none should be seen in isolation. 'A Sikh of the Guru should show respect for the letters of the *Gurmukhī* writing system. These should never come beneath one's feet, nor be made into wrapping' (Singh 1987, p. 78 (for McLeod's translation, see p. 166)). The key to all these instances is the degree to which they represent an 'authentic' connection to the Guru, proven (in the case of the descendants of the Guru) by behaviour and expressing a parallel memory of the Guru that is parallel to the ideal behaviour of the Guru. This form of history is expressed through categories of evidence: those traces of the Gurus that remain, through blood lineage, place, and object, and as expressed through the behaviour that stands as the central concern of the *Rahit* literature.

There emerges, in short, a Sikh historical imaginary in the eighteenth century within which the relic object takes its place among a range of textual and material technologies of memory. These technologies were at the centre of the emergent Sikh historiographical tradition both textual and material. There is a fuller range of material culture relevant to the Sikh tradition – most notably the five Ks, which mark in material terms membership in the Khalsa. These too relate to relic traditions, and can be seen to function as a generalization of the tradition of *khil'at*, whereby the Guru provided signs and mementos to all members of the community to define membership and establish direct connections between each individual and the Guru (Murphy 2012, pp. 12, 63). Relic objects therefore should not be seen in isolation, but instead as a type of memorial technology deeply tied to a broader Sikh historical imaginary that has changed and developed in diverse ways over time, which is in turn linked to a range of practices that work in concert to assert the relationship of the Guru to the disciple, and the relationships within the community thus formed. It is no surprise, therefore, that the status and understanding of such relics too would change over time.

19.2 The *itihāsik*: Historical Place and Historical Object

The idea of the relic as a general term resonates with Sikh objects and the cultures of collection and display that accompany them, but must also be understood in relation to a broader memorial culture that embraced primarily textual forms alongside material forms. In this way, they are tied also to another form of materializing the Sikh past: the historical gurdwara, the congregational site of the Sikh community, where members come together to worship and experience the living presence of the Guru in the form of the canonical text, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The gurdwara took central stage in the early formation of the Sikh community, in direct reference to its name – the doorway to the Guru (or under the related designation *dharamshāla*). Early mentions of the 'doorway to the Guru' do not necessarily reflect the institutional sense of the term as it later develops, but instead physical proximity to the Guru: Guru Nanak spoke of '*sacu sālāhī dhainu gurduāru*': 'That blessed doorway to the Guru, where there is praise of Truth' and the Third Guru, Amardas, spoke of coming before the Guru – '*devaṇ vāle kai hathi dāti hai gurū duārai pāi*': 'The gift is in the hands of the giver. It is received at the doorway to the Guru' (Adi Granth/Guru Granth Sahib, 153 (first quotation); 33 (second quotation)). The term *duāra* is utilized commonly in the text to indicate the means to an end or a goal,

such as *mokh duār*, the doorway to moksha or liberation. The sense of proximity and means continues in the *institutional* sense of the gurdwara in a continuing sense, as well, as the place where the Guru as text as well as person could be approached and through which fulfilment could be realized (Murphy 2012, chapter 2).

The site of access to the Guru was thus foundational to the growing community around him, in a spiritual as well as institutional sense, and the reverence for the site of the Guru came to be extended to those that were related to the Guru in the past – and were remembered in early histories and other texts (Dhillon 1996, p. 37). In Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnāma*, we see injunctions to revere the places associated with the Gurus and martyrs for the tradition and, conversely, to avoid the sites associated with other religious traditions (Singh 1987, p. 110 (for McLeod's translation, see p. 184), 72 (for McLeod's translation, see p. 160), and 76 (for McLeod's translation, see p. 163)). The site of access to the Guru was foundational to the growing community around him, in a spiritual as well as institutional sense. (Dhillon 1996, p. 37). The reverence for the location of the Guru came to be extended to places that were related to the Guru in the past – and were remembered in early histories and other texts. Examples include the founding of commemorative sites by Baghel Singh in the 1780s. It is not surprising, then, that the landscape of Punjab (and beyond) today is populated by such *itihāsik* or 'historical' gurdwaras associated with the Sikh Gurus. Large signboards declare the *itihāsik* nature of such sites, associated with particular events in Sikh history. The materialization of history thus takes place in site as well as object: the marking of memory on a sacred landscape in relation to a specifically Sikh historical imaginary accompanies the history being marked out through object and described in text.

Historical or *itihāsik* gurdwaras are distinguished by their historical connection to the history of the Gurus or the community. While a gurdwara is thus any site where the Sikh sacred scripture, the *Adi Granth* or *Guru Granth Sahib*, lies in state and a congregation of Sikhs gather around it in reverence, a historical or *itihāsik* gurdwara is one with a historical connection to the Gurus or to the history of the Sikh community in general. This term took on a specific *administrative* dimension in the colonial period, when a special category of the *itihāsik* or historical gurdwara was brought into being with the passage of the Gurdwara Reform Act in 1925, which brought all *historical* Sikh Gurdwaras in Punjab under the control of a single body, the SGPC. It was the founding of the SGPC and the determination of a Sikh history that was mapped onto place, in relation to a specifically bounded notion of the Sikh community, that fundamentally shaped a reformulation of this once integrated category of the *itihāsik* – which included objects, sites, and textual forms of memory production in one conceptual field – into one dominated by places associated with the Sikh tradition.

The effort to define a community in relation to religious sites had been a preoccupation of the colonial state since the end of the nineteenth century, when it began to disengage itself from active management of religious sites (Murphy 2012, chapter 6). The bounded definition of 'Sikh' that emerged in 1925, which can be seen as an extension of this larger process, however, was strikingly different from that determined for Hindus in relation to Hindu congregational centres or temples – such sites were configured in simultaneously more locally defined and open-ended terms. Similarly, for Muslims determined to have a stake in a given *Waqf* or Muslim charitable site, relevant Islamic law was defined in broad

terms that eschewed local cultural dimensions and privileged a Arab-centred notion of Islam (Murphy 2012, chapters 5–7). Such differences indicate the ways in which efforts to define communities in relation to religious sites were transformed by broader colonial discourses on the definition of religious communities. The legislation associated with Gurdwara Reform thus reveals the ways that a clearly demarcated Sikh community was mapped onto a Sikh historical landscape.

It is this historical development that accounts for a change in the status of the relic in the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The predominance of a territorialized imagination of the Sikh past accounts for the decreasing attention paid to relic objects at the beginning of the twentieth century. This is vividly demonstrated within a set of books produced as ‘tour guides’ to the Sikh historical landscape of Punjab (Murphy 2012, chapter 7). Such guides, which began to be written in the end of the nineteenth century alongside other kinds of encyclopaedic materials about the Sikh tradition – most famously Kahn Singh Nabha’s *Mahān Kosh* – at first listed objects alongside sites in their configurations of the historical landscape of the Sikh past. As time progressed into the twentieth century, after the influential Gurdwara Reform movement shaped a new understanding of the representation of Sikh history through the historical gurdwara, such objects disappeared within this type of text. An emphasis on property and its tie to bounded communities, and particularly for the Sikh community in relatively narrow terms, encouraged the territorialization of the representation of the Sikh past. The relic was less prominent in such an historical imaginary and was relegated to a peripheral place within the dominant historical narrative (Murphy 2012, chapters 5–7).

19.3 Relic Travels

Yet, the relic is still present in Sikh traditions, and has come to take an increasingly public role in representing the Sikh past in the closing decades of the twentieth century (Murphy 2015). This accompanies a general interest in the Museum as a technology of representation in Sikh contexts. While this technology does not always include relics – a self-conscious decision was made not to include relic objects in the new *Khalsa Virāsāt Kendra* in Anandpur – at times it does, as is most vividly seen in the Central Sikh Museum at the Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple complex in Amritsar (Jacob 2012). Relic objects are thus held by a range of individuals and entities and have a public role in myriad ways. They were, for instance, a part of the Toshakhana of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and efforts were made in the 1960s to acquire the weapons of the Guru for their return to India; the returned weapons now are housed at the centre of the Takhat Kesgarh Sahib in Anandpur, where one can also see weapons gifted by Harbhajan Singh Yogi, the founder of the 3HO organization, and by the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sevak Jatha out of Birmingham (Murphy 2009). Relics were collected by the Maharaja of Patiala and are displayed in the Palace; other relics are displayed at the House of Bagrian, which played a key role in the Phulkian states of eastern Punjab and has maintained a *langar* or community kitchen since the time of the Sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, at his command (Singh and Singh 2012). The family of Boota Singh at Bhai Rupa, a village not far from



Figure 19.3 An object from the Bhai Rupa collection, from Bhai Sikander Singh and Roopinder Singh, *Sikh Heritage: Ethos and Relics*, courtesy of the authors.

Damdama Sahib, displays objects given to the family by the Guru and which the Guru used or once possessed, including a *rath* or chariot (see Figure 19.3). These objects have been taken around the world – to Singapore, the United States, and Canada – as well as to major gatherings in India, such as the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa in 1999.

This mobility of the relic is what distinguishes the relic from the sacred site – and is particularly useful for understanding both its evolving significance specifically in the Sikh context, and the ties that exist between Sikh relics and other relic traditions. Just as other relic traditions have participated in the remapping of religious communities through the configuration of relic travels and associated pilgrimage, the Sikh relic has participated in a new mapping of the Sikh community today (for instance, see Geary 1978). The mobility of the relic today – and its connection to a broad range of ideas and practices in Sikh tradition, outlined in brief here – suggest that it is a powerful metaphor for the Sikh community at this particular moment. The visit of the objects of the village of Bhai Rupa to Surrey (a suburb of Vancouver, Canada) in 2008 and 2010, when they allowed local Sikhs to ‘connect to the past’ and experience it directly, is therefore perhaps indicative of a broader shift in representation and an embrace of more mobile configurations of the Sikh past (Murphy 2012, pp. 4–6, 258; Murphy 2015) (see Figure 19.4). It is now impossible to accept fully the assertion of Giorgio Shani, that ‘Sikh *diasporic* narratives do not attempt to place territorial limits on the sovereignty of the *quam* [or nation/community]... [because] the contemporary phase of globalization has effectively de-territorialized *sovereignty*’ (2008, p. 156 emphasis his, see also 150) due to the persistence of interests in the idea of a Sikh national formation under the name ‘Khalistan’. Territorialized understandings of the Sikh community do persist, in Canada and elsewhere. They map however to the Sikh historical landscape in diverse ways.



Figure 19.4 Bhai Boota Singh with objects from the family collection, visiting Vancouver, BC, Canada in 2010.

19.4 Relics and the Materiality of Religious Life

Robert Sharf has suggested that there is something ‘almost voyeuristic or prurient in our fascination with relics’, particularly when such relics take the form of human remains (1999, p. 80). Such a concern is misplaced in the Sikh context, where the relic object takes a different form. It is still controversial to speak of the material aspects of Sikh religious life, however, just as an appreciation of Sikh visual culture can also bring about censure (Kaur Singh 2013, pp. 28–29; Murphy 2005, p. 176) Sikhism as a religious tradition has emphasized a *nirgun* vision of God: God is not to be contained in form or likeness, and is beyond representation. As such, discussion of materiality may seem to contravene basic tenets. Concern about attention to the material and lived aspects of religious life is not only found, however, within *nirgun* traditions; it has also manifested in Western scholarly approaches to the study of religion, as Schopen noted early in his assertion that Protestant presuppositions had shaped scholarly approaches to the study of Buddhist traditions, privileging text over material forms of evidence (and evidence of materiality) (1997, pp. 1–22). Indeed, we can see this confluence of Western and Sikh perspectives on the image and the relic as what Tony Ballantyne has called a ‘point of recognition’, where different ideologies merged in a sometimes convenient order (2009, pp. 28–29). We would do well to remember that relics and images were controversial in Christianity as well as in Indian religions (Bynum 2013, p. 8; Davis 2001).

An appreciation of the ways in which material forms embody the ethos of and experience within Sikh tradition, however, does not deny a commitment to God that is beyond

the material. Indeed, the Gurus themselves eschewed an absolute distinction between the *nirgun* and *sagun*, asserting that binaries of such a kind themselves hinder true understanding of the fullness of transcendent expression and experience (Mandair 2009, p. 376). The material relic may therefore be less of a threat than might appear. To infuse the experienced life, that world within which we live, with the memory of and connection to the Guru is to embrace a different kind of materiality than one contained in a notion of embodiment. In a way, then, Sikh relic representations can be seen as akin to the denotation of absence that occurs in some representational traditions, such as those associated with the Jain traditions (Cort 2009, pp. 63–66). Sharf rightly warns us against seeking an easy exit in this way; the assumption of ‘absence’ may function as a way to make messy materiality fit with textual ideological formulations when, in fact, this is not actually what the sources say: ‘on the contrary’, he tells us, ‘the materials at our disposal suggest that [Buddhist] relics were treated as presences pure and simple’ (1999, p. 78).

Yet, ideas of presence do not resonate with Sikh materials. As Sharf has rightly noted, it is only the ‘frame’ around the relic that gives it meaning; that frame is not the same for all (1999, p. 81). Caroline Bynum has advised that if we want to understand ‘religious attitudes towards matter – that is, special material revelations of the divine’, we must look more broadly to understand how matter itself is understood in a given time and place (2013, p. 16). Divine materiality makes sense, she argues, within larger understandings of the material world. In a similar but different way, we must look in the Sikh case as well to the broader cultural formations within which relics ‘make sense’. Relics in the Sikh context provide a means for the experience of the past and the participation in a larger communitarian creation out of that past, through the Gurus, and through the narration of history itself. This is a past that is expressed and narrated in text, behaviour, and historical object and place alike. If there is any presence associated with them, it is the presence of this past. As such, it only reiterates that past in its already manifest, living form, in community and text, *pañth* and *grāñth*.

Works Cited

- Alam, M. (2003). The culture and politics of Persian in precolonial Hindustan. In: *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (ed. S. Pollock), 131–198. New Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ballantyne, T. (2009). *Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bynum, C.W. (2013). The sacrality of things: an inquiry into divine materiality in the Christian middle ages. *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78 (1): 3–18.
- Cort, J. (2009). *Framing the Jina: Narratives of Icons and Idols in Jain History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, R. (1999). *Lives of Indian Images*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Davis, R. (2001). Indian image-worship and its discontents. In: *Representation in religion: Studies in honor of Moshe Barasch* (eds. J. Assmann and A.J. Baumgarten), 107–132. Leiden: Brill.
- Deol, J. (2001). Eighteenth century Khalsa identity: discourse, praxis, and narrative. In: *Sikh Religion, Culture, and Ethnicity* (eds. C. Shackle, G. Singh and A.-p.S. Mandair), 25–46. Abingdon: Curzon Press.
- Dhavan, p. (2011a). *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699–1799*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Dhavan, p. (2011b). Redemptive pasts and imperiled futures: the writing of a Sikh history. In: *Time, History and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia*, 40–54. London and New York: Routledge.
- Dhillon, B.S. (1996). Dharamsala: an early Sikh religious centre. In: *On Gurdwara Legislation* (ed. K. Singh), 36–48. Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies.
- Eliade, M. (ed.) (1987). *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Fenech, L. (2008). *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus: The Court of God in the World of Men*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Fenech, L. (2013). *The Sikh Zafarnāmah of Guru Gobind Singh: A Discursive Blade in the Heart of the Mughal Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Geary, P.J. (1978). *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Geary, P.J. (1994a). *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Geary, P.J. (1994b). *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gordon, S. (ed.) (2003). *Robes of Honour: Khil'at in Pre-colonial and Colonial India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Hare, J. (2011). Contested communities and the re-imagining of Nābhādās' Bhaktamāl. In: *Time, History and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia* (ed. A. Murphy), 150–166. New York: Routledge.
- Interviews with members of the Bhai Rupa family (2012). Interviews with members of the Bhai Rupa Family 2008, and 2010, and with several members of the *sangat* or community who came to view the images, at the Dasmesh Darbar Gurdwara in Surrey, BC (12–13 November 2008).
- Jacob, G. (Director, Khalsa Heritage Centre). (2012). Lecture and conversation. University of British Columbia (2 November 2012).
- Kaur Singh, N.-G. (1992). The myth of the founder: the Janamsakhis and Sikh tradition. *History of Religions* 31 (4): 329–343.
- Kaur Singh, N.-G. (2013). Corporeal metaphysics: Guru Nanak in early Sikh art. *History of Religions* 53 (1): 28–65.
- Lucas, A.T. (1986). The social role of relics and reliquaries in ancient Ireland. *The Journal for the Royal Society of Antiquities of Ireland* 116: 5–37.
- Mandair, A.-p.S. (2009). *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- McLeod, W.H. (2000). *Exploring Sikhism: Aspects of Sikh Identity, Culture, and Thought*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Meri, J.W. (2002). *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Meri, J.W. (2010). Relics of piety and power in medieval Islam. *Past and Present* 206 (Supplement 5): 97–120.
- Murphy, A. (2005). Materializing Sikh pasts. *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory* 1 (2): 175–200.
- Murphy, A. (2007). History in the Sikh past. *History and Theory* 46 (2): 345–365.
- Murphy, A. (2009). The Guru's weapons. *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77 (2): 1–30.
- Murphy, A. (2012). *The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Murphy, A. (2015). Sikh museuming. In: *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums* (ed. B. Sullivan), 49–64, 157. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Novetzke, C. (2008). *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of the Sant Namdev in India*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Pinch, W. (1999). History, devotion and the search for Nabhdas of Galta. In: *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia* (ed. D. Ali), 366–399. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Rinehart, R. (2011). *Debating the Dasam Granth*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schopen, G. (1997). *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Schopen, G. (1998). Relic. In: *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. M. Taylor), 256–268. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Singh, C. (1987). *The Chaupa Singh Rahit Nama* (trans. and ed. W.H. McLeod). Dunedin: University of Otago Press.
- Singh, G. (1999 [1967?]). *Hukamname: Gurū sāhibāṇ, mātā sāhibāṇ, bandā singh ate khālsā ji de*. Reprint, Patiala: Publication Board, Panjabi University.
- Singh, R. and Singh, B.S. (2012). *Sikh Heritage: Ethos and Relics*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co.
- Shani, G. (2008). *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age*. London: Routledge.
- Sharf, R.H. (1999). On the allure of Buddhist relics. *Representations* 66: 76–99.
- Trainor, K. (1997). *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vig, J. (Forthcoming). Doctoral research. University of British Columbia.
- Walsham, A. (2010). Introduction: relics and remains. *Past and Present* 206 (Supplement 5): 9–36.
- Weyl Carr, A. (2001). Threads of authority: the Virgin Mary's veil in the middle ages. In: *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture* (ed. S. Gordon), 59–93. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Section V

Religion, Food, and Comensality

CHAPTER 20

Religion, Food, and Agriculture

Three Case Studies

A. Whitney Sanford

Food and commensality have been central to the study of religion from the outset, as demonstrated in the works of scholars including Robertson Smith, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, and Mary Douglas, among others. Scholars such as anthropologist Mary Douglas (2002), for example, explored issues of purity and danger, asking how foods were deemed permissible to eat, who could eat with whom, and how these boundaries shaped religious practices and communities. Sociologist Émile Durkheim (1995) pondered social distinctions between sacred and profane, for example, why is wine considered sacred in the context of Communion or Seder yet profane at the local bistro? Historians of religion have mined sacred texts to better understand the rules that shape food and eating and their role in ritual practice and further examined the symbolic dimensions. In *Singing Krishna: Sound Becomes Sight in Paramanand's Poetry*, for example, I illustrate how eating the same foods as the deity Krishna helps devotees build a relationship with the divine (Sanford 2008).

Emphasizing the material dimensions of religion, though, raises new sets of questions; who produces the food that Krishna and the devotees eat, and how does growing food for ritual practice fit into larger socio-economic structures? Tom Boylston exemplifies this approach in 'Food, Life, and Material Religion in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity' (Boylston 2013). These inquiries into material religion also reflect the relatively recent emphasis on 'lived religion', an approach that highlights how beliefs, symbols, and practice shape the lived experiences of everyday life, a more holistic approach to the study of religion. The lived religion approach reveals the dynamic and processual nature of religious experience, the reciprocity of food-related religious practices and religiously-inflected food and agricultural practices. This emphasis on dynamic processes and holism is especially appropriate for the study of religion and agriculture, which is, after all, an embodied relationship between humans and the biotic community. How do religious

values and practices inform farming and agricultural ethics, and reciprocally how do the material realities of food production and labour shape religious values, including food sovereignty and food justice? The case studies I have chosen illustrate these processes and demonstrate what we might learn from inquiries into material religion.

Every morning, the sisters of Brahma Vidya Mandir, an ashram or religious community in Paunar, Maharashtra, rise long before the sun and sing their prayers before beginning their daily labour of preparing, growing, and producing their food.¹ Since 1959, when Gandhi's disciple Vinobha Bhave founded this community, these women have consciously fashioned their food and agricultural practices according to Gandhian and Vaishnava ideals. Across the globe, in the United States, residents of Cherith Brook Catholic Worker in Kansas City, Missouri offer hospitality to the poor by serving meals, and Sirius Community in Shutesbury, Massachusetts enact their spiritual and ecological goals through their extensive gardens and community meals. The residents of these three intentional communities, defined broadly as residential communities with shared values, eat, grow, prepare, and serve meals as practices shaped by their respective religious or spiritual traditions. Their food and agricultural practices are not incidental, but central to their religious identities and lived experiences, for example, the sisters of Brahma Vidya Mandir eat a Vaishnava diet which prohibits meat, garlic, and onions. Exploring how these religious or spiritual communities eat, grow, prepare, and serve their meals helps us understand the material realities of these food-related religious practices.

Food and, increasingly, agriculture has captured the scholarly imagination, and scholars of religion have analysed food rituals such as Seder and food prohibitions such as halal. Most studies have adopted history of religions approaches, privileging texts, and concepts of religion as a matter of individual belief. These studies neglected and sometimes obscured the material conditions and larger socio-economic structures in which religious practices occur. In contrast, Daniel Sack's *Whitebread Protestants* places late nineteenth-century debates about individual vs. shared communion cups in the context of larger social anxieties around immigration, disease, and social change (Sack 2001, pp. 6–60). Similarly, the essays in *Religion, Food, and Eating in North America* broadly address foodways in multiple historical and contemporary religious and cultural traditions (Zeller et al. 2014). Investigating the material dimensions of food and agriculture illustrates how food and agricultural practices shape and respond to bodies, social structures, and the environment. For example, Catholic Worker choices about what foods to serve their guests reflect socio-economic realities that render less nutritious foods both cheap and desirable. Further, Sirius Community's agricultural practices illustrate alternate ideas about human relationships with nature by highlighting interdependence with both the biotic and other human communities and destabilizing the autonomous individual.

In this chapter, I will use three case studies to explore what considering the material realities of food and agriculture reveals about these communities. To do so, first, I will briefly discuss the food and agricultural practices of Brahma Vidya Mandir, Cherith Brook Catholic House, and Sirius Community, illustrating how they eat, grow, and prepare their foods. These communities are geographically and religiously diverse, but all three communities see food and agriculture as critical aspects of their religious identities and practices. All three communities grow some portion of their food, eat communally,

and serve food to visitors. Further, all three communities value the concept of 'bread labour', that premise that everyone should physically contribute towards their basic physical needs, e.g. food, clothing, and shelter. These communities are intentional, meaning that residents have freely chosen this lifestyle. The freedom to choose this labour represents a critical distinction because, historically and today, many individuals have been forced into agricultural labour.

Analysing the material conditions of these practices reveals a great deal about the body, social structures, and the environment. For example, asking who grows and prepares food offers insights into both the role of physical labour and its effects on specific bodies. For the sisters of Brahma Vidya Mandir, performing their own labour represents an important community value, but this labour now falls upon an ageing population of women. Questions of labour invite questions about the larger social-economic structures surrounding food and agriculture, including what foods are grown and eaten and why. Although all three communities eat and grow food in accord with their religious values, they are not insulated from larger socio-economic forces that privilege industrial agriculture, GMOs (genetically modified organisms), and neoliberal market forces. Finally, as small food-growing communities, they must bear the consequences of their agricultural practices, and their preference for local and organic foods and sustainable agricultural methods demonstrates an ethic of care towards the earth and the biotic community. These questions and issues are not comprehensive, but suggest directions of inquiry regarding the material conditions of religious practice. Now, let us turn to Brahma Vidya Mandir, the first of our three case studies.

20.1 The Communities

The three communities I have chosen are religiously and geographically diverse, but they share critical similarities. In all three communities, food and agriculture manifests as religious practice, and their choices and practices are not neutral. Instead, their food and agricultural practices help them enact their core principles of non-violence, social justice, and voluntary simplicity. The communities are non-hierarchical and practise consensus-style governance, and members have joined these communities voluntarily. Although each group emphasizes building community, they stress their roles as demonstration sites and view outreach and service to their larger community contexts as vital. Finally, these communities share broad concerns about larger socio-economic structures, and all three communities understand their food and agricultural practices as response and resistance to the social and environmental problems wrought by globalized industrial agriculture.

20.2 Brahma Vidya Mandir

In 1959, Vinoba Bhave (1895–1982), a contemporary follower of Gandhi and considered Gandhi's spiritual successor, established Brahma Vidya Mandir (BVM) for women to achieve spiritual liberation and to practise ideals of self-sufficiency, non-violence, and

self-discipline in a community setting. Bhavé thought that India needed a class of what he called 'social workers' whose work and lives would demonstrate by example how to build a new form of society, in part by living together without regard to caste, language, religion, or nationality.² As a 'spiritual laboratory', this community would demonstrate by example the possibility of creating new, more egalitarian social structures, and residents would engage in productive labour, providing for their own material needs to the extent possible. The founders and residents of Brahma Vidya Mandir are Vaishnavas, those Hindus who are devoted to the deity Vishnu and his descents including Rama and Krishna. Their practices reflect a materiality that appears within *bhakti*, or devotional, Hinduism. The material world and the body, for example, express divinity and can be used to serve the divine in ritual practices.

Today, approximately 25 women reside there, and most have taken vows of celibacy (*brahmacharya*) and thus have the status of religious sisters. The sisters have no official leader, and all decisions are made by consensus. The community emphasizes performing one's duty, practising non-violence, and reducing ego to decrease greed and attachment to consumer goods, a form of voluntary simplicity. These women in the ashram are well-educated and informed, and have dedicated their lives to service. They represent a small demographic of India's population – the subset who have sought to practise Gandhian values. While the women of Brahma Vidya Mandir have removed themselves from mainstream society both geographically and psychologically, they continue Gandhi and Bhavé's work both through the examples of their own lives and by educating and training short- and long-term Brahma Vidya Mandir visitors.

The sisters are primarily self-reliant on food and energy, although they do not produce all their own grains. (For most people aiming for self-reliance in food, producing grains is the most difficult.) They understand their small-scale agricultural practices as resistance to industrial agriculture and articulated their concerns regarding industrial agriculture, the global financial system, and the overwhelming power of multi-national corporations and consistently framed their own actions in terms of engaged critiques of big agriculture, big business, and greed. For example, Bhavé and the sisters I spoke with believed that BVM reflected a microcosm of the world's social problems, and that their experiments would point the way to solving problems on a larger scale (Sykes 2006, p. 225). This ashram has become a hub of agricultural resistance to large-scale industrial agriculture, and the women have trained a number of farmer-activists, men and women, who themselves train others. They framed their responses to contemporary global agrarian failures in religiously-inflected language drawn from the *Bhagavad-Gita* (*The Song of the Lord*), and they use this text as a guide to develop to agricultural practices that they deem non-violent and socially just. For example, as two sisters explained to me, the *Bhagavad-Gita* gives the 'science, or the *yoga* (meaning discipline), of how one should live'. She continued to emphasize the importance of holism, that spirituality, as laid out in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, should frame actions in the world from food production to economics.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* is a central Hindu text, composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE and is particularly important for Vaishnavas. Therein, Krishna offers a discourse about duty, selfless action, and devotion to God which provides a moral framework and practical guide for transforming action in the world into devotion to the divine. Brahma Vidya Mandir founder Vinoba Bhavé also considered the *Bhagavad-Gita* as a guide in philosophical and

practical matters, and he communicated these insights in his *Gita Pravachan*, or *Talks on the Gita*. For the *karmayogi*, one following the path of selfless action, all actions are motivated by love and service first and only then by the practical result; the *karmayogi* farmer, for example, works to feed society and to establish a basis of love with all beings, not simply for wages. Work and labour become a prayer; and compassion and love render service a joy rather than drudgery (Bhave 2007, pp. 48–50, 58).

[The Gita] will come to the lowliest of the low, to the poor and the weak and the ignorant, not to keep them in that state, but to grasp them by their hands and lift them up. Its only desire is that man should purify his daily life and reach the ultimate state, the final destination. In fact, this is the very aim and object of the Gita. (Bhave 2007, p. 82)

For Bhave and the sisters, the *Bhagavad-Gita* provided the frame and authority to restructure society to benefit the poor and oppressed. In addition to providing a philosophical and spiritual guide, the *Bhagavad-Gita* also validates the sisters' understanding of labour as a spiritual practice. In a discussion about Bhave's reading of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, several sisters emphasized to me that this practice reflected Bhave's philosophy of voluntary labour – that work, especially agricultural work, was better than meditation for spiritual development because it helped to open up the mind. Like Bhave, they follow the path of the *karmayogi* farmer, and her words reflect the integration of spiritual development and agricultural practice.

Brahma Vidya Mandir sits along the Dham River, which narrows to a trickle in the hot months before the summer monsoon. Beyond the entrance gates (which are closed for several hours in the afternoon), a short stretch of road, approximately 100 yards, continues up a small hill to the ashram's buildings. Visitors first see a fenced in garden on the right side of the road, then a set of one-storey buildings, including rooms which house male visitors and guests during ashram events and a kitchen that can handle large numbers of people. Most of the ashram's residents and female guests lived in the buildings that form a quadrangle around the central courtyard. The garden, worked by members and guests, covered approximately one half of the courtyard. The other half held long-buried statues of deities discovered by Bhave when he established the ashram as well as several large sundials that Bhave liked. These buildings also housed the ashram bookstore, featuring publications by Gandhi, Bhave, and others; the temple; the kitchen and dining area; and a conference room. Many of the buildings featured covered walkways, sitting areas, and a platform for prayers and spinning. The covered areas provided both protection from the sun and rain and places for visitors and residents to sit outside and visit.

Three times a day, residents and visitors assembled at the end of a covered walkway for communal prayers. Sitting cross-legged on the floor, they recited from the *Ishavasya Upanishad* at dawn, the *Vishnu-Sahasranama* (One Thousand names of Vishnu) at mid-morning, and the *Bhagavad-Gita* in the evening. The sisters hand out pamphlets for those who have not memorized the words. The *Ishavasya Upanishad* presented the necessary discipline for spiritual seekers, and so Bhave considered it an appropriate way to start the day (Sykes 2006, p. 203). The evening prayers centred on the verses from the *Bhagavad-Gita* that describe the 'man of steadfast wisdom', one who is the 'embodiment of restraint' and united with the divine (Bhave 2007, pp. 40–41).

During the mid-morning prayers, they made homespun cloth, each sister with her own small spinning wheel. For Gandhi, spinning was a dense and critical symbol that encapsulated his views on the multiple facets of independence, self-sufficiency, and inner control, and he believed home-based work such as spinning offered women unprecedented autonomy over their economic lives. Further, spinning functions as a means of self-transformation and mindfulness, a means to develop the inner transformation necessary for changed practices, and the work of taming self-indulgence with self-control (Sykes 2006, p. 184). Spinning also embodied the ashram's emphasis on local economies. While the women did not make their own clothes, they wore the homespun cloth, or *khadi*, that became for Gandhi and many Indians a means to demonstrate their allegiance to the incipient Indian state. Today, wearing *khadi* and spinning points towards contemporary controversies surrounding cotton production in central India, where GMO cotton has had environmental, financial, and nutritional consequences as monoculture cotton crops replaced traditional systems of inter-cropping of food and cotton. Several sisters identified industrial cotton production in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh as a form of violence tied to global financial regimes.

In the morning after prayers, residents and visitors worked, performing such tasks as sweeping, food preparation, and gardening. Visitors generally did approximately 30 minutes of sweeping and 30 minutes in the garden in addition to food preparation. Equitable distribution of agricultural and other tasks meant that those who might romanticize this labour actually performed it. Doing labour such as tilling soil ensured that all members recognized the value and difficulties of agricultural work echoing Gandhi and Bhavé's insistence on 'bread labour'. Bhavé believed that three to three and a half hours of productive and well-planned labour, which is also considered a form of worship, would be sufficient to support the ashram and that all labour should be considered equal (Sykes 2006, p. 225).

Although Bhavé and Gandhi borrowed the concept of bread labour from the Russian author Leo Tolstoy, he stated that the third chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* reflects the principle that food eaten without sacrifice, or bread labour, is stolen (Gandhi 1962, p. 43). Tolstoy argued that everyone should perform some 'bread labour', or physical work, to support their own existence, whether growing food, building shelter, or making clothes, rather than simply living off the labour of others. Bhavé considered physical labour, including cleaning, a form of 'faith in action', and bodily labour must be undertaken with love and voluntarily (Sykes 2006, pp. 218–221, 246–247).

The sisters ate a vegetarian diet and generally avoid addictive substances, including tea and coffee, although they served tea during conferences. The food was pure and *sat-tvik*, a category describing light foods that do not arouse the passions. Their food reflected a traditional simple Indian meal, based on rice and dal, vegetables, chapattis (unleavened wheat flat bread), yogurt, and milk. When I visited in December 2009, we prepared and ate seasonal vegetables such as radish, eggplant, and lauki, a mild gourd. When cutting these vegetables, I was admonished to do so with '*ahimsa*', that is, to avoid harming the worms that inevitably appear in organic produce. Their food was locally sourced: the milk, *ghee* (clarified butter), and yogurt came from their own cows, and the remaining milk was made into *pedas*, a popular dessert. The cow manure was used for fertilizer, and the *ashram* has a bio-gas digester for the cow manure which provided for

some of their energy needs. The bio-gas digester illustrates what we now think of as an 'appropriate technology' (a term coined by E.F. Schumacher, in *Small is Beautiful*). Gandhi emphasized the development of human-scale, village-based technologies that enhanced agricultural productivity and returned the benefits to village populations (Gandhi 1962, pp. 26–27).

The sisters grew their own vegetables, without inputs such as herbicides and pesticides, what in India is described as 'natural farming', rather than organic. Water from the kitchen's grey-water system provided some fertilizer; the sisters used ash to first wash the pots and dishes, and the ash-water then fertilized the garden. The sisters used only hand-tools in the garden, a practice established by Bhawe. Wheat and pulses grew in the fields surrounding the ashram, and villagers provided this labour (along with the labour for the bio-gas), using teams of oxen.

The women of Brahma Vidya Mandir eat, grow, and serve their food according to Vaishnava Hindu principles, relying on the *Bhagavata-Gita* as a central text to frame their interpretations. Their devotion to the cowherding deity Krishna and his elder brother Balarama, associated with agriculture, is grounded in the reality that, for them, sustainable agriculture and cow husbandry, are intertwined; without the manure, milk, and curd from their cows, there would be no food. Yet, the sisters' practices also demonstrate their response to regional and global socio-economic and environmental conditions, topics to be addressed later in this chapter. Now, let us turn to the second case study, Cherith Brook Catholic Worker House in Kansas City, MO.

20.3 Cherith Brook Catholic Worker

Founded in 2007, Cherith Brook Catholic Worker House is located in an historic impoverished neighbourhood in northeast Kansas City, and its campus consists of two buildings, separated by large yard and parking lot. One building is a large brick house with a wrap-around porch, and the other has a kitchen, shower, and eating area in the front and apartments for workers in the rear. Like many older buildings, they are slightly run-down, but the wooden trim and older windows give the buildings character, perhaps a shabby gentility. The community has established an extensive garden, beehives, and a chicken coops that contribute to their hospitality mission. Gardens irrigated by large rain barrels adorn the front and side yards, and painted wooden doors serve as a fence to demarcate their backyard. The doors and artistic labels in the gardens help offset the grimness of the surrounding neighbourhood. They serve eggs from their chickens that roam in the backyard, although occasionally one escapes into the driveway.

Cherith Brook Catholic Worker is one node of loosely-affiliated houses and farms in the United States. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin started the Catholic Worker Houses and farms in response to the crises of the Great Depression, emphasizing works of mercy, including housing and feeding the poor. Roundtable discussions, along with Houses of Hospitality and Farming Communes, comprised the three planks of Maurin and Day's thought, and today Catholic Worker communities bring together diverse populations to explore contemporary social issues (Day 1977). Peter Maurin also developed

the concept of the 'agronomic university', a pedagogy which would both provide the poor with marketable skills and dignify their labour (Anglada 2012).

The Catholic Worker Movement draws on Catholic Social Thought, a body of teachings that articulate the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on social and economic justice, but it has no official connection to the Catholic Church. In contrast to the Catholic Church, the Catholic worker movement is anarchist, meaning that each house and farm is different. There is no central structure or hierarchy, nor are there official requirements on what it takes to be a Catholic Worker house.

Like most Catholic Worker Houses, Cherith Brook feeds, and clothes those in need. According to the mission statement on their webpage,

[O]ur daily lives are structured around practicing the works of mercy as found in Jesus' teachings. We are committed to regularly feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, visiting the prisoner and the sick in the name of Jesus (<http://cherithbrookcw.blogspot.com>).

Cherith Brook also includes what I call a 'shower mission' in their hospitality program, and many guests, in fact, know the house as the Shower House (Tammeus 2013). Initially, the Catholic Workers planned to offer meals and roundtable discussions, as do most Catholic Worker Houses, but, one day, someone knocked on their door and asked if they could take a shower and change clothes. From this demonstrated need, Cherith Brook developed a morning program in which guests not only eat breakfast, but can shower and receive clean and fresh clothing. As co-founder Eric Garbison states,

'what I've learned from Dorothy Day (a founder of the Catholic worker movement) is that the world is a sacrament Part of volunteering here is taking turns eating with everybody, sitting down. That for us is Eucharistic', he said. 'And sometimes we talk about the showers being a baptismal experience because every morning, somebody says, "I feel like a whole new person. I feel like a human being again." Well, isn't that what baptism's all about?' (Tammeus 2013).

The shower mission exemplifies the Catholic Worker emphasis on serving and providing hospitality to the poor first, no questions asked, and on human dignity, recognizing that clean clothes are not only essential for our wellbeing but for full engagement in society. They also hold monthly women-only shower sessions that become sort of beauty parlour events.

Depending on their place in the shower line, guests ate breakfast before or after their showers. The Cherith Brooks gardens provide some food, but most of their supplies come from donations from stores, restaurants, and individuals. When I visited, Cherith Brook served breakfast five days a week and dinner on Thursday nights. Most of the donated food goes into the breakfasts and dinners served to guests, but the breakfast area also holds a shelf where guests can take vegetables, bread, or salad greens home. To the extent possible, the workers prepare healthy meals with salads and vegetables, and each table holds a bowl of fruit, including bananas, apples, and oranges. Nonetheless, since the bulk of their food comes from donations, they have far less control over their food choices than communities that grow their own food. For example, when we went to pick up

donations at Constentino's Market, a high-end grocery store in downtown Kansas City, we sifted through the carts and chose bread and bagels and rejected the piles of cakes, pastries, and doughnuts. They avoid foods that are high in sugar and fat, but must be mindful of the preferences of their guests who might choose white bread over whole wheat. When we returned, we stored the food in the industrial-sized refrigerators, moving the oldest donations to the front.

The refrigerators were packed with boxed salad greens, vegetables, and tomatoes, and part of my job in preparing breakfast was determining what produce was still fresh and edible. Breakfast at Cherith Brook often includes soup and salad in addition to more typical breakfast foods because some guests might otherwise not have access to fruits or vegetables. I opened and washed each of the plastic boxes of salad, tossing some in the salad bowl and some in the compost. At first glance, I wondered how many leaves would be good enough to eat, but as I sorted through the greens, I realized that most of the lettuce was fresh and edible. When I commented on how much edible food is thrown away, one resident recalled a similar experience with a group of student volunteers. They were amazed that they could make and eat a meal composed of what had been considered trash. One resident explained that

we get a lot of resources from the grocery store, things that they throw away. We really don't need to buy much food-wise, and a lot of resources are donated for our hospitality work. We try to encourage each other to use the resources that we have and not get new stuff, if it's not totally necessary.

While Catholic workers abhor waste, in part, due to their choices of voluntary poverty or voluntary simplicity, their efforts also reflect values of sustainable food systems. Residents of Cherith Brook do not buy meat, but will eat and serve meat that is donated to them, whether that meat is hunted or farmed. One self-described 'opportunivore' said the community felt best about the hunted meat donated to them each year. In this case, they must balance their goals of reducing food waste with those of eating sustainably produced foods. Recovering food wasted at the end of the supply chain, whether tossed out by stores or rotting in our own vegetable bins, is one step towards a sustainable food system.

Like the sisters of Brahma Vidya Mandir, the residents of Cherith Brook Catholic Worker eat, grow, and serve their food using Jesus' works of mercy and Catholic Social Thought as a frame for their actions. Their actions also reflect social-economic and environmental realities that disproportionately affect the poor and disenfranchised. For the third case study, we will turn to Sirius Community, a suburban community in western Massachusetts.

20.4 Sirius Ecovillage

In 1978, Bruce and Gordon Davidson and Corinne McLaughlin established Sirius Community as a spiritual community, ecovillage, and educational centre in western Massachusetts. The founders of this non-sectarian community emphasized meditation

and spiritual growth as a means to for healing the earth and human relations with the earth. As part of the spiritual and ecological practice, they aim to live sustainably and communally, sharing resources and reducing their ecological footprint to a fraction of that of the average north American. One resident stated that his food and sustainability goals were possible only in community: 'We're not off the grid, but we're close to it, and we grow much of our own food, and the garden is such an important part of our life here. I wouldn't have that if I wasn't in community. The main thing is the people but I also needed the lifestyle of being closer to the earth and a smaller carbon footprint'.

Sirius Community has four pillars: spiritual cultivation; Ecovillage Sustainability; Intentional Community; and Non-profit Education. Today, approximately 26 adults and children live on Sirius' campus, and a number of like-minded individuals and affiliate members reside in adjacent properties comprising the Hearthstone Collective. Sirius hosts frequent visitors on their monthly tours and community weekends, and guests desiring longer stays can enrol in one of several long-term visitor programs, including a month-long immersion program.

Sirius Community has established multiple gardens and orchards, and they produce a significant portion of their food, herbs, and medicinal plants. Their Garden Interns who generally stay for the entire growing season both gain experience and provide gardening labour for the community. Sirius Community grow figs and other semi-tropical plants in a small greenhouse attached to their community house and are building a larger greenhouse to extend their growing season. Over time, they have amended their soils and developed systems of crop rotation and companion planting which they see as necessary for successful organic gardening. Growing organically, that is without herbicides and pesticides, represents one aspect of their goal of repairing ecological rifts with the earth. Their agriculture and food system also links with their spiritual goals of creating healing and compassionate relations with the planet.

Sirius Community defines itself as a spiritual community, and the members I spoke with emphasized that spiritual growth was both a prime reason for their presence and a central focus of the community. One long-term member stated that 'when we say spiritual, we don't follow one particular doctrine or dogma or philosophy, more eclectic in our approach. Honoring the highest and best of most spiritual traditions'. Their webpage defines their spiritual basis as the following:

Our spiritual basis reflects awareness of a Divine Presence underlying all things. We regard this Presence of many names as the essence of who we truly are, and as supreme provider of the insight, inspiration and guidance that calls on us to awaken from purely material dreams. ... Living in harmony with Nature is pointedly emphasized, as our physical lives are seen as direct reflections of our relationship with spirituality, which is our primary concern. (<http://www.siriuscommunity.org/our-fourfold-purpose>)

For Sirius residents, spiritual cultivation includes recognizing the connections and interdependence among all beings, sentient or not. One resident said that

the underlying spiritual premise is that spirit, god, forest, fire, Buddha, nature, whatever you want to call it, exists in all things, including us. It is possible to come into deeper relation

with that presence through the way that you live your life, through the way that you develop your relationships with the people around you and the world around you.

During my visit, I participated in a Planetary Healing Meditation. For approximately 20 minutes, eight of us sat in chairs in the Octagon, the meditation room, circled around two stones and a candle, sending out healing energies to people and the planet.

Sustainable living and living harmoniously with the natural world including ecological practices such as sustainable foods, bio-diesel, and solar systems are understood as spiritual practices. Our tour guide stated that

many of our community practices reflect the ideas that all life is sacred and all life is interconnected. To really take that to a really, really deep, profound level then you don't go out and buy a lot of plastic junk and pollute the planet. You know where your energy comes from, where your food comes from.

Daily meditations, walking the labyrinth, and facilitated group discussions help them become 'attuned' to other humans, other beings, and the planet, that is, to cultivate a deep affinity between themselves and divinity. The founders, who had previously resided at Findhorn Community in Scotland, brought the concept and practice of attunement to Sirius Community. Through meditation and deep listening, practitioners are able to tune into the intelligence of nature and recognize that they are engaged in the process of co-creation. The inner source of wisdom they contacted daily included the intelligence of nature, and when they listened to and applied the wisdom they received, the garden flourished (<http://www.findhorn.org>).

At Sirius Community, residents credit the process of attunement with the garden's success, including protection from local deer. Over a three-year period, through meditation and communication with the deer, residents reduced the deer's nibbling to one small section of the garden. The process did not go smoothly at first though – the group meditations were having minimal effect. In the second year, however, our tour guide narrated,

There was infighting among the group and a lot of unresolved personal issues. It was difficult to get to the right state of consciousness to communicate with the deer. One regular guest actually recognized this and said 'you're asking the deer not to eat the lettuce out of the garden, the tender parts, but you're chewing on the tender parts of each other'. The third year, they came and only nibbled one, tiny, tiny corner of the garden.

Being attuned to the deeper connections among beings, people, and deer, in this case, helped repair broken relationships, and this situation suggests that rifts within communities lead to rifts among the larger biotic community. Further, in this case, the importance of attunement illustrates the dynamic reciprocity between *food-related religious practices and religiously-inflected food and agricultural practices*.

Cultivating spirituality at Sirius has pragmatic and material dimensions; it shapes food and agriculture, for example, in a dynamic and reciprocal process. Further, spirituality and personal transformations are lived and embodied in all aspects of life. According to a long-time resident,

You start changing how you relate to the world around you when you have an internal shift in consciousness. You can change all the laws and the government and all the regulation you want but if you aren't inwardly feeling this sense of the sacred and how we're easily connected then it doesn't always work. Every day, every ounce of life reflects the sacred. People don't want more philosophy, they want something concrete that they can see, touch, and feel. It's a potent way of teaching, more so than just having a philosophy.

He continued, stating that people 'get woken up' in different ways, through doing different things.

Like Brahma Vidya Mandir and Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, residents and visitors to Sirius Community participate in labour such as cooking, cleaning, and gardening where they learn from residents through conversation and practice. Many residents, but not all, participate in 'roto', or group meals, in which those eating communal meals rotate through the cooking and cleaning chores. Visitors, too, participate in these chores, giving visitors and potential members opportunities to visit with existing residents and learn more about the community. Most of the food we ate came from their gardens or from their extensive walk-in refrigerators, and the cooks offered a combination of salads, soups, and legumes, spiced according to the tastes and skills of the cooks. The shared meals are meat-free since many, but not all, members are vegetarian.

In addition to the daily chores, Saturday was Work Day when members and guests are expected to work for at least four hours on whatever chores are necessary at the time. My group spent the day splitting firewood, using both axes and a gas-powered wood splitter, then later adding it to the stacks of wood which provide for all of their winter heat. Later, on our group tour, our guide discussed the trade-offs and concerns regarding cutting trees and wood heat. Their buildings, mostly made of wood, are heavily insulated and thus energy efficient and shared spaces and resources reduced their energy needs drastically. Nonetheless, he said, cutting the trees 'wrecks ecological havoc' because 'trees don't like being cut', and although they meditate on the trees prior to cutting them down, the cutting still represents a problem when creating community with nature is one of the group's central goals.

These three case studies – Brahma Vidya Mandir, Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, and Sirius Community – differ religiously and geographically, but, in all three communities, food and agriculture represents important aspects of their religious practice. Investigating how these groups eat, grow, and share their food suggests questions about the body, relations with broader socio-economic structures, and relations with the environment. In the following section, I will use these case studies to explore how attention to the material conditions of their food and agricultural practices might prompt new lines of inquiry.

20.5 Body and Labour

All three communities emphasize the practice of bread labour, either explicitly or implicitly, that is, that each person should directly contribute to his or her own basic needs. Ideally, performing bread labour reduces hierarchical differences by closing

gaps between those who serve and those who are served and, in doing so, dignifies human labour. No one, for example, is elevated above essential tasks, such as cleaning. In particular, the residents of Brahma Vidya Mandir and Cherith Brook Catholic Worker understand bread labour and the labour of serving others as forms of social justice and mercy for the poor, and performing labour such as gardening emerges as a form of religious practice. The question of bread labour invites subsequent questions about labour and the body, that is, who and what body works; and who reaps the fruit of labour. The three communities under discussion are egalitarian in regards to labour, meaning that jobs, labour, and food are shared equitably among community residents. While inevitably, some discrepancies regarding division of labour exist, their labour and social structures are relatively flat – a distinction they note in relation to larger social structures. Looking more closely at Brahma Vidya Mandir's labour practices suggests questions about the effect of labour on bodies.

The sisters of Brahma Vidya Mandir work approximately four hours a day and produce a significant portion of their food needs, meaning that they own, or benefit directly from, the fruits of their labour. They eat a healthy diet, consisting of milk and yogurt, rice, whole grains, vegetables, and some sweets, and their work of gardening and sweeping, for example, provides them some exercise. Nonetheless, the sisters are an ageing population, and few sisters are younger than 50. For now, the shared labour ensures that the labour is not onerous; at some point, without an influx of new members, the sisters will not be able to continue their bread labour. As noted above, the sisters joined Brahma Vidya Mandir by choice, and bread labour represents an explicit and voluntary aspect of their religious practice. This point is especially important because much food and agricultural labour is neither voluntary or egalitarian, nor do all labourers gain access to what they have produced. In all three communities, the residents themselves determine what foods to grow, how they are grown and eaten, and have access to the foods they have grown.

For all religious (or spiritual) practices that involve food and agriculture, it is important to consider who produced the food and under what conditions. First, consider factors such as age and gender, reflecting anthropologist Ruth Meinzen-Dick's (CGIAR, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) research on agriculture and poverty alleviation (the 'livelihood' approach) that includes dimensions such as vulnerability, risk, social status and gender that go beyond quantitative economic measures (Adato and Meinzen-Dick 2007, pp. 20–55). Second, to what extent is the food and labour coerced, whether in a family context or in situations of forced labour. Do the labourers have access to – or can they afford – the foods they produced?

Our food embeds and often obscures the modes of its production and the effects on those who produced it. Passover Seder reiterates the historic and symbolic foods when the Hebrews escaped enslavement at the hands of the Egyptians, and these foods and symbols are primarily self or internally referential. These foods – meat, grains, and vegetables – also refer outwards to the conditions in which they are produced today. Understanding our food and its production illuminates the broader socio-economic realities that bind our religious practices.

20.6 Society

All three communities understand their food and agricultural practices in response and resistance to socio-economic regimes that privilege industrial agriculture and neo-liberal trade regimes, and their concerns fit with contemporary debates about the social, economic, and environmental effects of our current food system (Sanford 2013, 2014).³ They all grow their food organically and emphasize local food systems in order to support local farmers and producers. Samvad Farm, a farm affiliated with Brahma Vidya Mandir, in fact, refuses to sell their mango to distant cities because they do not want to export their food or profits to distant cities and markets. The ability of farms, communities, and nations to control their food supply is called 'food sovereignty'; food sovereignty incorporates criteria including rights to land; control of food production, including trade and export; and the power to decide what foods they will grow (Desmarais 2007; McAfee 2006, pp. 20–21). While issues including rights to rural land have been problematic for centuries, in some cases, agribusiness and neoliberal trade regimes exacerbated these problems; for example, trade policies such as NAFTA and agricultural technologies of the Global North have disrupted subsistence economies of peasants and small-scale farmers of the Global South who are forced to depend on the globalized food system. Transnational organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) have enacted trade policies that restrict the ability of nations to protect developing agricultural markets and thus cheaper imports of commodity crops have undermined local economies.

In 1993, La Via Campesina, a global peasants' rights organization, began to coordinate small-scale farmers to demand food sovereignty and resist trade policies that privilege large-scale agribusiness (Altieri 2009, p. 111). La Via Campesina and like-minded groups reject that notion that food is merely a commodity and instead view food in terms of livelihood or relationality, that is, food and seed are situated in multiple relationships within and between humans and the earth (Sanford, 2011, pp. 12–13; Shiva, 2011, p. x). Similarly, Vandana Shiva, founder of Delhi-based Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE), has become a prominent voice in food sovereignty movements in India and abroad. The 1998 'Monsanto Quit India' campaign against Monsanto's Terminator technology, for example, echoed Gandhi's 'Quit India' rhetoric of independence, and Shiva has framed her continued resistance to GMOs and industrial agriculture in India as *seed democracy* or *seed swaraj*, a trope that circulates globally as *food democracy* (Sanford 2011, pp. 218–219; Scoones 2005, pp. 305–306).

The sisters of Brahma Vidya Mandir juxtapose their agrarian practices with those of neighbouring farms in Maharashtra, many of whom have adopted the technologically-intensive practices of cotton production. The seeds and necessary technological packets, e.g. herbicides and pesticides, incur both massive debt and high ecological costs, and many cite the nutritional deficits that resulted when monoculture cotton crops replaced traditional systems of inter-cropping of food and cotton. The journalist Aparna Pallava, for example, has described efforts in rural Maharashtra to reintroduce traditional (and nearly extinct) inter-cropping methods in which women planted vegetables and pulses amidst rows of cotton (2008). Similarly, in neighbouring state Andhra Pradesh, in addition to environmental problems such as salinization of once arable land, high input

costs have driven farmers into overwhelming debt that has resulted in a dramatic rise in farmer suicides (Scoones 2005, p. 20; Weiss 2007, p. 110). Inter-cropping had two primary social benefits: first, women did this labour, maintained this knowledge, and controlled the planting as well as seed-saving practices. Second, the vegetables and pulses provided critical nutrition for the women and their families. Although the cotton provided cash benefits, those benefits often did not directly accrue to the women, and the families might not have purchased nutritionally equivalent foods.

Although industrial agriculture with its technological packets might produce higher yields of singular crops and more cash benefits, small-scale agricultural practices, though labour intensive, tend to produce more food. Natural farming advocate Bharat Mansata writes that

all over the world, it is the small land-holding around homes – thickly planted with polycultures – that are the most high-yielding per unit of land, for here the efficiency of using bio-wastes and human labour is the highest (Mansata 2010, p. 131).

Entomologist Miguel Altieri's work also demonstrates the productivity of small-scale farms, and he helped develop agroecology, a theory and practice that 'seeks the diversification and revitalization of medium and small farms and the reshaping of the entire agricultural policy and food system in ways that are economically viable to farmers and the general public' (Altieri 1995; Altieri 2009). A University of Michigan study demonstrates that such methods produce three times more food per acre, which is sufficient to meet global food needs (Badgely et al. 2007). Further, agroecology (or organic production) provides additional social and nutritional benefits. According to a study commissioned by the World Bank and the FAO, maintaining indigenous and traditional knowledge systems offered nutritional as well as environmental benefits such as soil health and biodiversity (Altieri 2009, pp. 109–110). Despite attempts to portray organic and alternative methods of food production as inadequate, or worse, unscientific and romantic, these alternate methods are viable, rooted, holistic, and more sustainable ways of relating to nature.

Small farmers and particularly vegetable producers have consistently critiqued the subsidies and price supports that provide inexpensive commodity crops such as cotton, sugar, and corn for US consumers resulting in vegetables such as broccoli being priced as luxury foods. Cherith Brook Catholic Worker House reaps the benefits of cheap commodity foods but struggles to provide healthier but more expensive alternatives. Cherith Brook offers daily breakfast and weekly dinners in their impoverished historic Kansas City neighbourhood. Their guests, many of whom are homeless, have few other options for food nearby, so they depend on the food choices offered by Cherith Brook. The residents and workers at Cherith Brook tend to prefer healthier (and, in some cases, vegetarian) foods, but in keeping with their Catholic Worker hospitality ethic, they must consider what their guests might like to eat in addition to nutritional concerns. For example, this midwestern population prefers the comfort food status of white bread over the healthier whole wheat bread. They receive the bulk of the foods, including vegetables and salad greens, as donations, but they could not afford to purchase greens if they did not receive them as donations. Considering what foods to offer elicits questions of

race and class, for example, to what extent are preferences for wheat bread imposing white middle-class values on populations with few options. One resident of Cherith Brook Catholic Worker wondered how guests, for whom meat is perceived as a luxury, viewed her vegetarianism which meant that she did not eat the same foods as her guests. Sociologist Julie Guthman pursues a similar question in an article that asks to what extent urban food projects inscribe white middle-class food values and practices on Latino and African American communities (2008, p. 434).

Brahma Vidya Mandir, Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, and Sirius Community recognize and respond to the global socio-economic food systems in which their food and agricultural practices are embedded. Small-scale farmers and advocates of alternative ways of eating and growing represent tiny, but significant, voices critiquing industrial agriculture and neoliberal trade regimes. These alternative voices and practices demonstrate different paradigms for how humans interact with the biotic community.

20.7 Environment

Scholars including Dana Jackson, Fred Kirschenmann, and Fred Magdoff have documented the environmental damages wrought by monoculture industrial agriculture, including loss of top soil, soil salinization, and water and soil rendered toxic by pesticides and herbicides and question our ability to continue food production in any meaningfully sustainable fashion (Steinfeld et al. 2006; Jackson and Jackson 2002; Kirschenmann 2011; Magdoff et al. 2000). As Fred Kirschenmann articulates in 'Spirituality in Agriculture', modern science and agriculture are situated in a Western scientific paradigm, a mechanistic system wherein the body and the earth are machines to be subdued and controlled, a view reflecting now classic Carolyn Merchant's work on the 'death of nature' (Kirschenmann 2005; Merchant 1990, p. 171; Sanford 2011). Kirschenmann and Wes Jackson, among others, argue for alternative paradigms emphasizing interdependence, regeneration, and reciprocity rather than control and submission (Kirschenmann 2005; Sanford 2011; Willard 2008).

Agrarian thinkers such as Wendell Berry, Fred Kirschenmann, and, more recently, Norman Wirzba have made us aware of the social consequences of contemporary food production, such as rural depopulation in the US Midwest. In response, they have asked us to think about our agricultural relations holistically, to move beyond profit and yields, questioning if higher yields result in less hunger. Where does all the food go, and who receives the food? Viewing our agricultural relations holistically would acknowledge our materiality, that all human beings are embedded in both human and natural processes, and that how we eat and produce our food has material consequences for ourselves and all members of the biotic community. Theologian John Cobb suggests that we focus on 'planetism' or reverence for the earth rather than economism, our current obsession with productivity and consumption (Cobb 1993; Zuzworsky 2001, pp. 187–188). 'Planetism' would evaluate agriculture on its effects of human bodies and the earth, not simply profit.

Brahma Vidya Mandir and Sirius Community, in particular, illustrate paradigms for human relations with the earth that emphasize interdependence and reciprocity in agricultural systems and between human and biotic communities. The residents of Brahma Vidya Mandir, for example, view their organic and natural farming practices as non-violent, a material application of their reading of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Sirius Community, for example, meditates to enhance communications between humans and plant species to encourage growth and harmonious relations between the species. These practical and religious responses are situated in holistic paradigms that integrate material, economic, social, and religious realms. These holistic worldviews reflect a new agrarianism that rejects reductionist, scientific agriculture with its modern separation of religious, economic, and scientific realms (Kirschenmann 2010; Wirzba 2003). Instead, this new agrarianism privileges a holistic understanding that integrates sustainable agriculture and religion and firmly acknowledges the material dimensions of agriculture and social equity, including health and nutritional benefits. Further, it reflects John Cobb's 'call for a justice that is better expressed in the Hebrew term *shalom*, a right relation to the land and all that dwell therein', again recognizing that all beings are ultimately connected and interdependent (Cobb 1993, pp. 184–185). This non-reductive concern for materiality is a processual reality that enlivens all of us: humans, non-human animals, plants, things, and landscapes.

These holistic systems demonstrate recognition that humans are integral parts of natural systems and are neither apart from or in control of these systems; The natural world is acknowledged as having agency and is not passive, a view reflected in agroecology and biodynamics (Sanford 2011, pp. 104–105). This view complicates our understanding of the individual as well, for individuals then must be seen not as autonomous but as participants in complex biological and social systems. This shift echoes dialogues in religion and ecology regarding the human role in relation to the natural world. For example, Christian thought has vacillated between interpretations of stewardship ranging from domination to forms of benevolent tyranny, and more recently, scholars and theologians, including Whitney Bauman, Forrest Clingerman, and Laurel Kearns, have explored human relations with the earth from the perspective of process theology, where the divine continues to be active in earthly processes (Kearns and Keller 2007; Santmire 1985). Similarly, Rose Zuzworsky critiques current factory farm abuses from a Christian perspective, and the Humane Society has an extensive program that bring multi-religious perspectives to animal protection issues⁴ (HSUS 2014; Zuzworsky 2001). Buddhist thought has tended to emphasize interdependence and our continuity with natural processes. As Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön states, 'somehow, in the process of trying to deny that things are always changing, we lose our sense of the sacredness of life. We tend to forget that we are part of the natural scheme of things' (Chödrön 2000, p. 74).

Communities like Brahma Vidya Mandir and the Sirius Community exemplify holistic agricultural systems that integrate social, ecological, and economic concerns, and these systems illustrate alternate frames for food and agriculture. All three case studies have created small-scale alternatives to the prevailing food system prescribed by industrial agriculture and offered material responses to the existing nutritional, economic, and ecological deficits.

20.8 Conclusion

Brahma Vidya Mandir, Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, and Sirius Community grow, eat, and serve food in ways that accord with their religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions. Exploring their ritual practices to see what they might reveal about these communities' belief systems is important and has represented one significant line of investigation by scholars of religion. Exploring the material conditions of these practices, though, prompts a different set of questions about the body, society, and environment. What bodies, for example, produce the food, and how is the food distributed? Or what socio-economic systems shape food production, and which communities bear the benefits and consequences of these systems. The questions I have raised about the material conditions of these communities' foodways are by no means exhaustive, but they do suggest alternate lines of inquiry regarding religion, food, and agriculture.

Exploring the material dimensions of religious communities through food and agriculture illustrates how religious traditions are lived, embodied, and emplaced. While values, ideas, symbols and narratives inform how Brahma Vidya Mandir, Cherith Brook, and Sirius Community grow, eat, and serve food, this is not a uni-directional, but dynamic and reciprocal, process. The material dimensions of food and agriculture practices – dynamically and reciprocally – inform values, ideas, symbols, and narratives in an iterative process. For example, Cherith Brook Catholic Worker developed their shower and food mission in response to demonstrated needs in their communities, and meeting these material needs has reciprocally shaped how they understand their own religious commitments. Food and agriculture are central in the lives of these three communities, but to understand how they are central we must focus inquiries on the material dimensions of what they eat, grow, and serve – the lived religion approach. By directing our inquiries to embodied and concrete food and agriculture practices, we can then better understand how these practices both shape and reflect belief, text, and narrative, and, perhaps more important, the dynamic process of their interactions.

Notes

- 1 Some portions of this chapter were previously published in 'Being the Change: Food, Nonviolence, and Self-sufficiency in Contemporary Intentional Communities', *Communal Societies* 34, 1 (2014): 28–53 and 'Gandhi's Agrarian Legacy: Practicing Food, Justice, and Sustainability in India', *Journal of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture* 7/1 (2013): 65–87.
- 2 Brahma Vidya Mandir Pamphlet; Sykes (2006, p. 119).
- 3 For a discussion and critique of industrial agriculture and the political economy of food, see Magdoff et al. (2000); Kirschenmann (2011); Sanford (2012); Weis (2007) and Wirzba (2003).
- 4 Questions of food, agriculture, and human relationships to the natural world inevitably bring up issues of farm animals, and this subject merits some brief attention. Religious studies scholars and environmental ethicists have done much work on ethics regarding rights of individual animals, especially in cases of companion animals, and preservation of animal species. See Peterson in this volume.

Works Cited

- Adato, M. and Meinzen-Dick, R. (2007). *Agricultural Research, Livelihoods, and Poverty: Studies of Economic and Social Impacts in Six Countries*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Altieri, M.A. (1995). *Agroecology: The Science of Sustainable Agriculture*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Altieri, M.A. (2009). Agroecology, small farms, and food sovereignty. *Monthly Review* 61 (3): 102–113.
- Anglada, E. (2012). Growing roots: Peter Maurin and the Agronomic University. <http://cjd.org/2011/04/01/growing-roots-peter-maurin-and-the-agronomic-university> (accessed 12 November 2018).
- Badgley, C., Moghtader, J., and Quintero, E. (2007). Organic agriculture and the global food supply. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 22 (2): 86–108.
- Bhave, V. (2007[1940]). *Talks on the Gita* (18th reprint), trans. Parag Cholkar. Wardha: Paramdham Prakashan.
- Boylston, T. (2013). Food, life, and material religion in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. In: *A Companion for the Anthropology of Religion* (eds. J. Boddy and M. Lambek), 257–273. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Cobb, J.B. Jr. (1993). Economics for animals as well as people. In: *Good News for Animals? Contemporary Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being* (eds. C.R. Pinches and J.B. McDaniel), 172–186. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Cohn, A., Cook, J., Fernández, M. et al. (eds.) (2006). *Agroecology and the Struggle for Food Sovereignty in the Americas*. London: IIED.
- Day, D. (1977). Peter Maurin 1877–1977. *The Catholic Worker* 6 May 1977, www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/articles/256.html (accessed 15 March 2019).
- Desmarais, A.A. (2007). *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants*. London: Pluto Press.
- Douglas, M. (2002). *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge.
- Durkheim, É. (1995[1912]). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (trans. K. Fields). New York: Free Press.
- Gandhi, M.K. (1962). *Village Swaraj* (ed. H.M. Vyas). Ahmedabad.
- Guthman, J. (2008). Bringing good food to others: investigating the subjects of alternative food practice. *Cultural Geographies* 15 (4): 431–447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474008094315>.
- HSUS (2014). Animals and religion: the Humane Society of the United States, <http://Humanesociety.org>. www.humanesociety.org/about/departments/fair/animals_and_religion.html (accessed 24 March 2018).
- Jackson, D.L. and Jackson, L. (2002). *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Kearns, L. and Keller, C. (2007). *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Kirschenmann, F. (2005). Spirituality in agriculture. Published talk, pp. 1–10. https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1011&context=leopold_conf (accessed 15 March 2019).
- Kirschenmann, F. (2011). *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience: Essays from a Farmer Philosopher*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Magdoff, F., Foster, J.B., and Buttel, F.H. (2000). *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Mansata, B. (2010). *The Vision of Natural Farming*. Kolkata: Earthcare Books.

- McAfee, K. (2006). Sustainability and social justice in the global food system: contributions of the Yale workshop. In: *Agroecology and the Struggle for Food Sovereignty in the Americas* (ed. A. Cohn), 9–21. London: IIED.
- Merchant, C. (1990). *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Sack, D. (2001). *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Sanford, A.W. (2008). *Singing Krishna: Sound Becomes Sight in Paramānand's Poetry*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Sanford, A.W. (2011). *Growing Stories from India*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- Sanford, A.W. (2013). Gandhi's agrarian legacy: practicing food, justice, and sustainability in India. *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture* 7 (1): 65–87.
- Sanford, A.W. (2014). Being the change: food, nonviolence, and self-sufficiency in contemporary intentional communities. *Communal Societies* 34 (1): 28–53.
- Santmire, H.P. (1985). *The Travail of Nature*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Scoones, I. (2005). *Science, Agriculture, and the Politics of Policy. The Case of Biotechnology in India*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.
- Shiva, V. (2011). Foreward. In: *Growing Stories from India* (ed. A. Whitney Sanford). Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- Steinfeld, H., Gerber, P., Wassenaar, T.D. et al. (2006). Livestock's long shadow. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM> (accessed 7 December 2018).
- Sykes, M. (2006). *Moved by Love: The Memoirs of Vinoba Bhave* (trans. M. Sykes. Wardha: Gram-Seva Mandal).
- Tammeus, B. (2013). Presbyterian-run Catholic worker house does things backward – like Jesus, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/small-catholic/presbyterian-run-catholic-worker-house-does-things-backward-jesus> (accessed 20 February 2018).
- Willard, T. (2008). The future is green. *Greenfuture*, <http://greenfuture.blogspot.com/2008/07/perennial-polyculture-farming.html> (accessed 29 July 2018).
- Weis, A. (2007). *The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming*. London: Zed Books.
- Wirzba, N. (2003). *The Essential Agrarian Reader*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- Zeller, B.E., Dallam, M., Neilson, R.L., and Rubel, N.L. (2014). *Religion, Food, and Eating in North America: Volumes 1 and 2 (Arts and Traditions of the Table): Perspectives on Culinary History* (eds. B.E. Zeller, M. Dallam, R.L. Neilson and N.L. Rubel). Columbia University Press.
- Zuzworsky, R. (2001). From the marketplace to the dinner plate: the economy, theology, and factory farming. *Journal of Business Ethics* 29 (1/2): 177–188.

CHAPTER 21

Vaishnava Vegetarianism

Scriptural and Theological Perspectives on the Diet of Devotion

Steven J. Rosen

There is no fault in eating meat, in taking intoxication, and in sexual intercourse, for this is the natural way of ordinary beings. But abstention brings great rewards.

—Manu Samhita 5.56

21.1 Introduction

Does vegetarianism have anything to do with the Hindu tradition? After all, this is a tradition that issued forth from a culture that included animal sacrifice, with a warrior class – and even a Brahmin elite – feasting on the flesh of animals.¹ Even cows, so sacred to Hindus today, were devoured as part of the sacrificial spoils.² What's more, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, which is arguably Hinduism's most sacred text, uses a battlefield and a massive war to make its point, leaving practitioners in a natural quandary: does non-violence and its associated diet play any substantive role in the Hindu tradition?³

The question is a meaningful one, particularly because, even in the modern world (or perhaps *especially* in the modern world), more Hindus eat meat than subscribe to vegetarianism.⁴ At the very least, it can be argued that Hindus are divided about a non-flesh diet (Jarow 2011). This is attributable, at least in part, to the fact that there is no one 'Hindu tradition' – an umbrella term for diverse Indic religions (e.g. Vaishnavism, Shaktism, Shaivism, etc.). Dietary diversity is further complicated by caste distinctions and economic conditions.

'Hindu vegetarianism' becomes more tenable if we define our terms. 'Vegetarianism' refers to a dietary preference that excludes meat, poultry, fish, and sometimes eggs and dairy. The most strict form of the diet is known as 'veganism', whose adherents only eat foods of plant origin, such as nuts, seeds, vegetables, fruits, grains, and legumes. 'Lacto-ovo-vegetarianism' includes both dairy and eggs, while 'lacto-vegetarianism' includes dairy, but

avoids meat, poultry, fish, and eggs. Regarding Hinduism, in this chapter we focus not on the tradition in general but on Vaishnavism, a theistic branch constituting the Hindu majority.⁵ It centres on the worship of Vishnu (or Krishna, Rama, or any of this deity's other manifestations or incarnations), and, to that end, embraces the process of Bhakti-yoga, or devotional love, elaborating on various techniques for awakening one's dormant love for God.

Bhakti includes all living beings in its all-encompassing love, since all creatures are part of the Supreme. The Vaishnava, then, sees a certain interconnectedness in all of existence, and apropos of this, lives according to a more inclusive ethic – 'the good of all' (*sarva-bhuta-hita*) – as opposed to merely 'the good of one's own species' (*loka-hita*). Thus, non-violence (extended to the point of vegetarianism) has always been an integral part of Vaishnava thought and practice.

21.2 The Scriptural Basis of Vegetarianism

A discussion of vegetarianism in the Vaishnava tradition necessarily begins with the *Vedas*, the ancient core texts of the tradition. While some practitioners find it disconcerting that animal sacrifice can be found in Vedic texts at all, a possible consolation lies in the fact that these are the *only* explicit references to animal slaughter in the Vedic literature.⁶ In other words, one was only supposed to eat meat as part of a religious sacrifice. Otherwise, all of God's creatures were to be honoured and protected.

In general, cows were referred to by the Sanskrit *aghnyā*, 'not to be killed', even if the barren ones as well as bulls were in fact offered as part of the Vedic ritual.⁷ The priests at such rituals were likely Shakta Brahmins of some sort, since, in the Shakta tradition, animals, such as goats, are used in religious sacrifices even in the present day. Suffice it to say, Vaishnavas were never specifically identified in these texts as taking part in the practice and have always revered the cow and other creatures as well, exhibiting a natural sense of loving kindness towards the Lord's creation.⁸

That there were in fact Brahmins with Vaishnava sensibility at this time can be seen in the earliest texts, wherein one finds a tension between those who avidly supported animal sacrifices and those who seemed to reluctantly go along with it. From as far back as the *Rgveda*, we find hymns indicating that special mantras were chanted so that the sacrificed creature would not feel pain and would, in the end, go to heaven.⁹ Some priests showed support for such mantras, while others did not, indicating that there were at least two diverse groups of Brahmins at the time.

In fact, certain texts reveal that there were Vedic Brahmins who never actually sacrificed animals at all, avoiding it altogether: 'We use no sacrificial stake', the *Sāmaveda* informs us, 'and we slay no victims – we worship only by repeating the sacred stanzas again and again'.¹⁰

That the overarching Indian tradition appears conflicted on these matters is well known. Yet esoteric stories about the origins of animal sacrifice, particularly as articulated in the Vaishnava tradition, may shed some light: the *Skandha Purana* begins its section on this subject by asserting that, while Vedic rituals were, in fact, ordained by the saints and sages of the past, such rituals were never encouraged, but instead were frowned upon.

As the Puranic story goes, a Brahmin once cursed the world with a devastating famine. The common people, unable to bear it, slaughtered animals to satisfy their hunger – to stay alive. But even at this juncture, it is said, the sages did not kill animals for food, even at the cost of their own lives. These sages would rather die, the *Purana* tells us, than feast on the remains of dead animals. Still, to accommodate the masses, the sages allowed meat eating – but not merely to stay alive. Rather, meat could only be eaten as part of a religious sacrifice; highly qualified priests would sacrifice very specific animals to the Supreme, and the common people would eat the remains. This became an established part of Vedic religion, *even though the spiritually advanced (sages) did not partake of the sacrificial carcasses*. Gradually the calamity subsided, but the animal sacrifices were already in place, and ritualists just continued the practice.¹¹

From a Vaishnava perspective, since animal sacrifice is authorized by scripture, proper procedure could lead practitioners to heaven. But as far as attaining the ultimate goal of life, say the Vaishnavas, it is far from the ideal process. Such sacrificial killing, they tell us, is described in the *karma-kanda* section of the *Vedas*, which espouses ritualistic activities leading to birth on heavenly planets. Higher than this are the practices described in the *jñana-kanda* portion of the *Vedas*, such as the Upanishads, performance of which will lead to liberation from material existence. In the Upanishads, too, we find the underlying meaning of these sacrifices: The idea was not merely to kill animals and thus sanction meat eating within a religious context. Rather, the purpose was to indulge already existing human tendencies in a regulated manner, which would eventually diminish these tendencies and, in the end, extinguish them.¹²

By the time of the *Manu samhitā*,¹³ things became much clearer: ‘Meat eating is only permissible when enacted as part of a religious sacrifice’,¹⁴ Manu tells us, ‘and one who does otherwise, that is, one who eats meat outside of a sacrificial context, will be slain lifetime after lifetime, for as many hairs as there are on the body of the slaughtered beast’.¹⁵

Manu gives us numerous verses highlighting the importance of a non-meat diet: ‘One who injures living beings for his own pleasure never finds happiness, whether in this life or in the next one’;¹⁶ one who permits the slaughter of animals, cuts them, kills them, buys them, sells them, cooks them, serves them or eats them is himself equal to the actual slayer of animals;¹⁷ one should never engage in meat eating because meat cannot be procured without injuring living beings;¹⁸ upon deeply considering meat’s origin and the cruelty involved in restraining and slaying embodied beings, one should abstain from eating flesh’.¹⁹

Manu also explains the etymology of the Sanskrit term for meat (*mamsa*), which is described elsewhere in Vaishnava texts as well: *mām saḥ* = ‘me, he’. That is to say, ‘the animal whose flesh I eat in this life will be allowed to devour me in the next one’.²⁰ Thus, the idea of karmic retribution, which will be discussed at greater length below, has a basis in the *Manu samhitā*.

In the Puranic and Epic period, sacred texts are firmer in their stand against meat eating. As a prime example, one need look no further than Grandfather Bhīṣma, wizened sage of the Kuru clan, who tells Prince Yudhishtira that compassion for all creatures is the highest religious principle, and that being a vegetarian is an important part of this principle – he devotes three chapters of the *Mahabharata* to explaining this point.²¹

The vegetarian portion of those chapters may be summarized as follows: Bhīṣma tells Yudhishtira that the flesh of animals should be considered the same as that of one's own son, and that, just as the union of mother and father produce offspring, so, too, does the union of meat and one's tongue produce attachment to material life (13.115.10–11). Those interested in spiritual advancement, says Bhīṣma, should never allow the two to meet. Bhīṣma further tells Yudhishtira that those who merely approve of animal slaughter are to be considered as violent and sinful as those who engage in the killing itself (13.116.39). He notes that both the killer and the eater are equally guilty (13.116.37).

There are many other Vaishnava scriptures that point to the vegetarian conclusion, even if they do not refer to the diet explicitly. Perhaps most popular is *Vishnu Purana* 3.8.15: 'O best among humans, Lord Keshava [Krishna] is pleased with one who is never an enemy to any soul, who does not harm or destroy any breathing, living creature (*prāṇino*)'.²² The non-meat diet is implicit. Having fully digested this and other, similar verses, Vaishnavas have always had clear dietary direction.

In fact, the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, a ritual text governing preferred behaviour for Gaudiya Vaishnavas, tells us that one who takes Vaishnava initiation 'should not eat fish or the meat of other animals' (2.144 and 2.169). Another conclusive statement is found at 8.164, where we learn that 'unalloyed devotion for Lord Hari does not manifest where meat eating takes place ...'. Still, the text includes other verses that appear to sanction the eating of meat, at least by virtue of omission on particular occasions. For example, we are told that 'a pious person should never eat fish and meat during the month of Kārtika' (16.189 and 16.194). The implication, of course, seems to be that Vaishnavas might eat meat during other months of the year. However, as the traditional commentary to the text points out, such statements are taken from older texts geared to a wider audience, including people and traditions that encourage the use of flesh foods (such as Shaktas and Shaivites). Vaishnavas, the commentary emphasizes, never indulge in such a tamasic diet. Thus, the author of the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa* clearly wants his readers to abjure the use of fish and meat, but, for those who can't, he has included verses suggesting that they at least avoid it on holy days, such as Kārtika.²³

Ultimately, the tradition had to accommodate the fact that Vedic sacrifices of ancient times included the killing of animals (even if most Vedic rituals focused on vegetal and other sacrificial substances). Although animal sacrifices are frowned upon in our current age, the Kali-yuga, known as *Kali-varjyas*, 'forbidden in Kali',²⁴ the tradition had to address certain scriptural anomalies, largely based on Vedic texts, in which prominent deities were found to indulge in meat eating.

21.3 Meat Eating in the Vaishnava Tradition

The idea of meat eating in Vedic texts and among Puranic deities and heroes, such as Rama and Bhima, respectively, tends to confound soft-hearted practitioners. For those unfamiliar with such references, I will cite just a few uncomfortable examples. In the *Krishna Janma Khanda* of the *Brahma-vaivarta Purana*, animal flesh as a food product is found in the house of Nanda Maharaja, Krishna's father; both the *Vishnu Purana* and

the *Harivamsa* say that meat was offered at the original Govardhana Puja festival, 5000 years ago; and the Valmiki *Ramayana* reveals that Rama, Lakshman, and Sita ate the fleshy results of hunting while exiled to the forest.

I should say at the outset that many of these references – if not all of them – could merely be interpolations. It was Christianity that introduced the concept of perfect, infallible, inerrant, revealed scriptures. In India, it has always been understood that pious scribes might add to specific texts, especially those that were not formally canonized. Religious adversaries have been accused of adding or deleting verses, too, attempting to create doubt and to win converts.

So, in the end, we must ask: Are scriptures like the *Ramayana*, the *Vishnu Purana*, *Harivamsa*, and, indeed, even the *Vedas* themselves, uncorrupted texts? This is a legitimate question. A Vaishnava authority no less prominent than Madhvacharya himself claimed that the *Mahabharata*, for example, was ‘thoroughly interpolated’,²⁵ and if this is the case with a major epic, why not with other sacred literature? But let us assume that these meat-centred interpretations have some validity. How might a practitioner deal with them?

Certain of these instances are easily explained: For example, the *Ramayana* tells us that Rama incarnated as a ‘human’ Kshatriya king, and it was expected that such a person would live on flesh foods while embarking on a solitary and austere life in the forest. Many practitioners are satisfied with this explanation, plain and simple. Nonetheless, in Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, *Ayodhya Khanda* (chapter 20), when Kaushalya first discovers that her son has been banished, he assures her in verse 29, ‘I will live like a sage in the forest for 14 years, as promised, avoiding meat and living on roots, fruits and honey’. Here, Rama clearly indicates his intention to be a vegetarian, for better or for worse. This stanza alone could effectively undermine several of the meat-centred interpretations of pertinent verses, since Rama, without doubt, is a man of his word. He repeats his commitment to the non-violent diet again in Valmiki 2.50.44 and yet again in 2.54.16. Thus, given his vegetarian predilection, it can easily be assumed that when various verses refer to meat (*mamsa*), it actually means the ‘flesh’ of a fruit, such as mango. This usage was common at the time of the *Ramayana*.

And yet other references cannot be explained away so easily, since, on Rama’s hunting escapades, specific types of animal fare are mentioned: spotted deer, antelope, boar, and so on.

Of course, when it comes to compromised behaviour, Rama’s meat eating is not an isolated occurrence. It is stated in the Valmiki *Ramayana* that he shot Vali in the back and also exiled his wife while she was pregnant – less than ideal acts coming from an ideal king. What is one to understand from all of this? Among other things, the epics seek to convey the overarching notion that the ways of *dharma* (i.e. religiosity, righteous duty) are subtle or complex (*dharma-susksmata*). If nothing else, Rama’s example shows that doing the right thing is not always possible, or, at the very least, that it is fraught with complications and contradictions. Nonetheless, he always does his best, with integrity and purpose, even when confronted with impossible situations. That is one of the major things we learn from Him: It is our intent that matters, our desire to go in the right direction. Thus, if God deems it necessary to set an example of how a king might live a righteous life in the forest – and if that example includes meat eating – then so be it.

In addition, we might ask ourselves: Who were the souls inhabiting the bodies of creatures killed by Rama? In the *Bhagavata Purana*, there is a description of Arjuna and Krishna hunting in Indraprastha (10.58.13–16). We know from the *Mahabharata* that demons had taken animal births in that forest (see 1.219.1, 1.219.9, and 1.219.30), and the *Bhagavata* (10.58.14) further mentions that the divine duo went to hunt ‘wicked/vicious animals’ (*vyala-mriga*) there, to liberate those so embodied. Might the case be similar with Rama and Lakshman? In fact, Tulsidas’s *Ramacharitmanas* (1.205.1–3) states that when Rama went hunting, killing game, the creatures struck by his arrows ‘went to the gods’ world’ (*surlok*) as a direct result of His act.²⁶ In conclusion, when Rama hunts or even ‘eats meat’, it is scarcely different from when He or Krishna kill demons (*asuras*), a phenomenon that is found throughout the sacred literature. Such killing procures liberation for souls who play the role of divine adversaries.²⁷

Along similar lines, some practitioners take recourse in the principle of *lila* (‘divine sport’). Here we learn that God enacts His specific pastimes in this world for purposes of His own, and that He is free to abrogate standard modes of morals and ethics while giving higher teaching or accomplishing higher ends. Drawing on such conclusions, practitioners often refer to the example of Shiva. Sometimes, when fledgling practitioners want to enjoy material pleasures in the spirit of Lord Shiva, seniors in the community will say, ‘When you can drink an ocean of poison, as Shiva did, then you can enjoy in the same way that he did, too.’²⁸ The implication here is that the *lila* of God is beyond the common person, and if God chooses to include meat eating in His divine pastimes, it should not be taken that this is to be followed by ordinary people in everyday life.

The *Bhagavata Purana* (1.17.38), a central text for Vaishnavas, tells us that in the current age sinfulness abounds in four specific ‘locations’, that is, wherever there is gambling (*dyutam*), intoxication (*panam*), sexual misconduct (*striyah*), and animal slaughter (*sunā*). Considering this latter location, the text specifically forbids meat eating (see 11.5.11 and 13, for example), even if it includes the usual concession for purposes of Vedic sacrifice. It is clear that the *Bhagavata*, at times, seeks to wean its readers off of animal sacrifice altogether, establishing the Vaishnava religion in its place (see especially 3.25.7–8 and 7.15.7–8). As Lance Nelson writes:

The *Purana* attributes awareness of human intentions – as well as feelings of fear – to animals confronted by the threat of sacrificial death: ‘Seeing someone about to sacrifice with material offerings, beings are filled with dread, fearing “This self-indulgent [human], having no compassion, will slay me”’ (BhP 7.15.10).... Slowly, the *ahimsa* ethic triumphed over the ancient sacrificial *cultus*, and animal sacrifice came to be condemned as a practice no longer permissible, especially among followers of the *bhakti* (devotional) traditions.²⁹

Bhagavata 11.5.14 puts a cap on it: ‘Those misled persons who are ignorant of actual religious principles, yet consider themselves to be pious, without hesitation commit violence against innocent animals who are fully trusting in them. In their next lives, such wayward persons will be eaten by the same creatures they have killed in this world’. The *Bhagavata* (10.1.4) tells us that of all people, only the person who kills animals (*pashu-ghnat*) will lack attraction for life’s highest end: hearing and chanting the glories of Lord Krishna.

Significantly, the *Bhagavata* is known as the Amalam ('spotless') Purana and speaks of itself as embodying '*parama dharma*, free of *kaitava*' (highest religious truth devoid of compromised principles). Thus, it is accepted as giving the ultimate formula for supreme attainment (1.1.2). In this way, the *Bhagavata*'s teaching of vegetarianism, compassion for all beings, and non-violence is considered higher than compromised teachings found in other sacred texts. Indeed, it is said that Vyasa wrote the *Bhagavata* in his 'spiritual maturity' (1.1.3 and 1.5.13), and therefore the text promotes the most developed of spiritual practices.

In addition, echoing the *Bhagavad Gita* (4.2), the *Bhagavata* endorses the principle of *guru-parampara* (see 10.1.4), indicating that to really know the truth – and to reconcile all disturbing 'facts' and questionable traditions – one must sit at the feet of a self-realized master (*upa-ni-shad*, literally 'sitting down beside'). By so doing, while inquiring submissively and rendering service, one can know for certain which scriptural stories are true and which are interpolations, which can be taken at face value, and which must be interpreted metaphorically or perhaps discarded altogether.

21.4 Five Components of Vaishnava Vegetarianism

Despite any factual data to the contrary, vegetarianism is, in the end, an undeniable component of the Vaishnava tradition. This can be gleaned from an abundance of sacred texts, the living tradition as a whole, and as a result of studying in any established lineage. I will now attempt to show this by briefly enumerating five aspects of Vaishnava practice that imply vegetarianism and animal rights. First, I will list them in ascending order, from least to most important, and then elaborate on how each of them plays a significant role in the Vaishnava tradition:

- (1) **Karma** (action-reaction schema). Lowest rung reason for Vaishnavas to be vegetarian, based on self-interest. One does not want the harsh reactions (*karma*) awaiting those who kill and eat animals and therefore either avoids eating meat or performs devotional acts to counteract such harsh behaviour.
- (2) **Sattva-guna** (mode of goodness). A Vaishnava aspires to live in goodness, which assures happiness and peacefulness. Like all components of the material world, foods are divided into three modes – goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and ignorance (*tamas*) – with *sattvik* foods (vegetarian) offering an optimal chance for good health, and those in *rajas* and *tamas* (meat) leading to disease. Thus, like the first category (Karma), this component of Vaishnava diet can be largely self-centred, with the focus on one's own wellbeing.
- (3) **Ahimsa** (non-violence, non-aggression). This is the beginning of selflessness, an important quality in the Vaishnava tradition. Here, one steps outside of self-interest and feels for the suffering of others. As per Vaishnava teaching: One should minimize causing harm to all sentient beings, knowing full well that meat eating maximizes it. This leads to the related concept of ...
- (4) **Jiva-daya** (compassion for souls). This is the positive side of *ahimsa* – one should not only refrain from causing harm but should also exhibit loving kindness to

all, by rendering service, offering knowledge, and by helping one move forward in spiritual practice.

- (5) **Naivedya** (offering of food to the deity). *Prasadam*, literally ‘the Lord’s mercy’, refers to the sacrificial remnants of vegetarian foods offered to the Lord. Eating such food spiritualizes the consciousness, enhancing one’s devotion to the Supreme. Distributing such food is an ultimate act of mercy, helping all souls who consume it to progress in spiritual life. This is the culminating or ultimate reason for Vaishnava vegetarianism.

I will now further elaborate on each of these categories.

21.4.1 *Karma*

Just as the Bible teaches the Golden Rule – ‘Do unto others as you would have others do unto you’ – the same teaching exists in the *Mahabharata*.³⁰ Vaishnavas extend this notion to its logical limits, showing kindness to all species of life. Naturally, this would include vegetarianism. In fact, the teaching of ‘do unto others’ is reflected in the origins of the Sanskrit word for meat, *mamsa*, mentioned earlier. Again, the term means ‘me-he’, implying, ‘The fate of this animal will also be *my* fate’. In other words, the karmic reaction for eating a living being is evident in the language itself: ‘I will one day be eaten in the same way that I today eat others’.

There is other linguistic overlap between meat eating and the severe karmic reactions awaiting those who kill animals for food. For example, the Sanskrit noun *pashughna* (‘he who kills the body’) can apply to both a meat eater and to one who commits suicide, thus underlining the notion that consuming flesh is tantamount to destroying one’s own body. Here one sees a correlation between killing animals and killing humans. The renowned sage Narada, glorified in Puranic texts, tells us something similar in his instructions to King Prachinabarhi, a ruler from the Vedic era who was enamoured by opulent animal sacrifices:

O ruler of the citizens, my dear King, please see in the sky those animals that you have sacrificed in the sacrificial arena, showing no compassion or mercy. All these animals are awaiting your death, for at that time they will give back to you the injuries you have inflicted upon them. Once you are dead, they will forcefully pierce your body with iron horns and eat your flesh. (*Bhagavata Purana* 4.25.7–8)

Consequently, Vaishnavas oppose killing animals – and among their many reasons, we find the fear of dire consequences. They know that every action holds an unavoidable reaction, and with the idea of reincarnation – in which we take repeated births commensurate with our deeds – humans run a great risk in eating meat. In other words, killing begets killing, and since there are many lives through which we can reap what we sow, violence and killing eventually return to us in an appropriate way, if not in this life, then in the next.

21.4.2 *Sattva-guna*

The *Bhagavad Gita* (14.5) explains that souls in the material world are conditioned by three modes (*gunas*) of nature – goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and ignorance (*tamas*). To understand these modes and their impact on our lives, we can compare them to the three primary colours (yellow, red, and blue), and our consciousness to clear light. Upon passing through a prism, white light is separated into its component colours, and, similarly, through the modes of nature, our consciousness becomes conditioned in various ways. In this analogy, the colour yellow parallels *sattva-guna*, which is pure, illuminating, and instigates clarity and an aversion to wrong-doing. It conditions the soul with a sense of happiness and knowledge, though not necessarily with attributes of spiritual attainment. The colour red, to complete the analogy, represents *rajo-guna*, the mode of passion, and tends to awaken longing and desire. Because of passion, the conscious soul aspires for material gain, becomes greedy, and knows endless frustration. Finally, the colour blue represents *tamo-guna*, the mode of darkness, which is the source of pain, illusion, ignorance, and lethargy. In the same way that the three primary colours combine to produce a vast spectrum of tints, the three modes work together to produce the unlimited variety of conditioned beings that walk among us.

In addition, these modes give us broad defining categories for all components of the material world. We are told, for example, that higher beings (*devas*), like Brahma and Shiva, are situated in *sattva-guna*; the human species (*nara-loka*), in *rajo-guna*; the animal (*pashu-loka*), in *tamo-guna*. To cite one other example, the modes give us perspective on dwelling places: generally, a rustic, wooded environment brings to mind *sattva-guna*; large industrial cities are more indicative of *rajo-guna*, and brothels, places of intoxication, and slaughterhouses are considered to be in *tamo-guna*. Association with any person, place, or thing in any of the respective modes has a commensurate effect on the consciousness, so that, a person associating with a *deva*, for example, will feel the purifying effects of *sattva-guna*; or, to cite another example, if one visits a slaughterhouse, this too would have an effect on the consciousness, this time favouring *tamo-guna*. It is not difficult to see how the world can be understood in this way.

What does all of this have to do with vegetarianism? In the *Bhagavad Gita* (17.8–10), Lord Krishna divides food into the various modes of nature, too: ‘Foods in the mode of goodness’, He tells Arjuna, ‘increase one’s duration of life, purify his existence, and afford strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such nourishing foods are sweet, juicy, fattening and tasty’. He continues to describe foods in the other modes: ‘People in the mode of passion are inclined to foods that are bitter, sour, salty, pungent, dry and hot. Such foods cause pain, anxiety, and disease. Finally, people in the mode of ignorance prefer food that is cooked more than several hours before being eaten – these are edibles that are tasteless, stale, putrid, decomposed and unclean’.

Those who are predominantly in goodness, passion, or ignorance will be attracted to a corresponding food group. Further, regardless of what mode predominates in one’s life, eating foods in any particular modal group will affect one’s consciousness accordingly. In other words, *sattvik* foods will have a positive effect. Those in the lower modes will have a negative one. By Krishna’s description, we learn that diet is an expression of consciousness, and that flesh foods, implicitly, are indicative of the lowest form (*tamo-guna*).³¹

If meat is procured by a hunter, eaten soon after the hunt, it may qualify as food in the mode of passion, but most meat is taken from an animal long dead, packaged and waiting in the supermarket. Such ‘food’ is in the mode of ignorance. In either case, whether passion or ignorance, meat isn’t desirable by those in the mode of goodness, nor is it advantageous for progress in spiritual life. Rather, Krishna recommends a *sattvik* diet, which is necessarily vegetarian.

Incidentally, foods in the mode of goodness, as per *Bhagavad Gita* (17.8), are usually sought after because they ‘promote health’ (*arogyā*), ‘increase the duration of life’ (*ayuh*), and ‘afford strength’ (*bala*).³² While there is nothing wrong with desiring these attributes, they represent the lesser reasons for Vaishnava vegetarianism, focusing on bodily concern rather than love of God. That being said, *sattva-guṇa* is an essential platform for reaching *śuddha-sattva*, or advancement in spiritual life, but this must be pursued under the guidance of a self-realized soul.

21.4.3 *Ahimsa*

Although *ahimsa* is usually associated with Buddhism and Jainism, it has a long and abiding history in the Vaishnava tradition as well. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (8.15.1) offers early evidence for this, asking practitioners to avoid violence against ‘all creatures’, promising, as a result, freedom from the cycle of birth and death. The *Mahabharata*, too, teaches the principle in no uncertain terms: *ahimsa paro dharmo* – ‘Nonviolence is the highest duty’ (*Mahabharata* 1.11.1.2 and 3.198.69). Non-violence and compassion (for all living beings) are qualities promoted by the *Bhagavad Gita* as well, which says that *ahimsa* is a component of true knowledge (13.8); is a part of the divine nature, as opposed to the demonic (16.2); is always a desirable activity (17.14); and that its opposite, *himsa*, is action necessarily performed in ignorance (18.25).

Ancient yoga texts also espouse *ahimsa*, lauding it as being among the most important practices for those on the spiritual path. The very first of Patanjali’s ‘restraints’ in his famous *Yoga-sutra* (2.30) is *ahimsa* – and the traditional commentaries on his text make it clear that animals are also to be included within its scope.

The whole idea behind *ahimsa* is to recognize the genetic and spiritual bonding that humans have with all of God’s creatures: we are brothers and sisters under God’s fatherhood. ‘The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge’, Lord Krishna tells us in the *Bhagavad Gita* (5.18), ‘sees that a learned and gentle Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater are on an equal platform’. Because of this equal vision, the sage feels a sense of oneness among all beings, with *ahimsa* manifesting as a natural byproduct. Such a person becomes dear to God: ‘One who is not envious but who is rather a kind friend to all living entities ... who is always satisfied and engaged in loving devotional acts with determination and whose mind and intelligence are focused on Me – he is very dear to Me’ (*Bhagavad Gita* 12.13–14).

In recent times, Mahatma Gandhi articulated *ahimsa* principles in a variety of ways, leading to a wider understanding of the concept among people in general. Gandhi’s support of *ahimsa* even had an impact on Western thinkers, not least on Martin Luther King, Jr. For those trained in Western traditions, *ahimsa* is reminiscent of the Latin

phrase, *primum non nocere*: 'First, do no harm'. This is, of course, the basis of the Hippocratic Oath, a principle that all physicians and healthcare professionals consider primary when caring for others. For Vaishnavas, this same principle extends to animals. On a related note, *ahimsa* is inseparable from cow protection, which is a central concern for Vaishnavas. There were practical reasons for this in rural India: *panchagavya*, the cow's five natural products, namely milk, yogurt (or curd), *ghee* (clarified butter), urine, and dung, was considered extremely purifying for people in general. To this day, milk and yogurt are believed to promote *sattvic* qualities, while *ghee* (clarified butter) is used in religious ceremonies and in cooking offerings for the deity. Cow dung is used as fertilizer, fuel, and as a disinfectant in homes, and her urine is said to have medicinal properties. Overall, however, it is the bovine association with Krishna, the divine cow-herd boy, that really distinguishes the cow among God's creatures.³³

21.4.4 *Jiva-daya*

This is yet another aspect of *ahimsa*. Whereas *ahimsa* emphasizes not harming others, *jiva-daya* emphasizes doing good to others – opposite sides of the same coin. In the *Bhagavata Purana* (3.25.21), Vaishnavas are described as *titikṣavaḥ kārūṇikāḥ* (tolerant and merciful) as well as *suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām* (friendly to all living entities). More than anything else, these qualities define the very essence of Vaishnavism. The only characteristic that supersedes this is *bhagavan bhakti*, or devotion to the Lord. That being the case, it should be noted that the qualities of compassion and friendliness are a part of one's devotion to God and thus not separate from it.

The word 'compassion' comes from the Latin, *compati*, meaning 'to suffer with' or 'co-suffering'. It is more than empathy – it is actually feeling another's pain. This is *jiva-daya*. Traditional Vaishnava poetry elaborates in diverse ways: *Vaishnava jana to te ne kahte je pīda parāi jāne re* – 'He alone is a Vaishnava who feels the suffering of others as if it were his own'. *krpambudhir yah para-duhkha-duhkhi* – 'He is an ocean of mercy and compassionate to all souls'.

There are numerous Sanskrit terms that convey the various nuances of *jiva-daya* as well: *anukampana* (sympathy, compassion); *anugraha* (kindness, offering solace, graciousness); *kripa* (mercy, compassion, tenderness, and pity). A well-known Vaishnava prayer sums up: *vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca, kripa-sindhubyas eva ca, patitanam pavanebhyo, vaishnavebhyo namo namah*: 'I offer my respects to all the Vaishnava devotees of the Lord. They can fulfil the desires of everyone, just like desire trees, and they are full of compassion for the fallen souls'.

Overall, the general tenor of *jiva-daya* can be found in the prayers of Vasudeva Datta, a Vaishnava saint from sixteenth-century Bengal. He prayed to Sri Chaitanya in the following way: 'My dear Lord, You incarnate out of compassion for conditioned souls, but I have one further request, which I pray You will consider. My Lord, You are certainly able to do whatever You like, and You are indeed merciful.... My Lord, my heart is saddened by the suffering of the world's many conditioned souls. I therefore request You to let me suffer the karma that they have accrued due to their sinful lives. My dear Lord, let me perpetually live in a terrible condition, accepting the sinful reactions of *all living entities*.

Please give them liberation and allow me to suffer in their place'.³⁴ In the Vaishnava tradition, Vasudeva Datta is known for taking on the *karma* of every living being – humans, plants, and animals – because his mercy is so all-encompassing. Vaishnavas seek to invoke his mood in their dealings with all creatures, human or otherwise.

21.4.5 *Naivedya*

Naivedya comes from *ni-vid*, 'to offer or present [oneself]'. It is from this word that Vaishnavas derive the idea of [*atma*]-*nivedana*, 'offering oneself' to the Lord. So *naivedya* refers to that which is offered or presented to the deity. The *Bhagavad Gita* (9.27) stresses the importance of these offerings, 'All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give to others, as well as all austerities that you perform under any circumstances – all should be done as an offering unto Me [God]'. Or further: 'Devotees of the Lord are released from sinful reactions because they eat food that is first offered in sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, imbibe only impurities' (3.13). In terms of food, the deity only accepts vegetarian fare, at least in the Vaishnava community. This is a longstanding practice and is implicit in the traditional usage of the word, *naivedhya*. Once *naivedhya* is offered to Lord, it comes back as *prasadam*, or 'mercy', the remnants consumed by devotees. This food is considered nondifferent from Vishnu, or Krishna, containing His essence and thus purifying for all who partake. *Prasadam*, in this sense, can be compared to the Eucharist in the Roman Catholic tradition, which is nondifferent from the body of Christ.

Most Vaishnava temples freely distribute this sanctified vegetarian food (*prasadam*) to all who walk through their doors. It has mystic potency, say Vaishnava stalwarts, offering spiritual accomplishment to all who prepare, serve, sell, or eat it. Narada Muni, the Puranic sage mentioned earlier, was famously inspired to embark on the spiritual path merely by tasting such food offered to the Lord. *Prasadam* is usually conceived in terms of a three-tiered approach to mercy, engaging the well-known trope of exchange, reciprocity and redistribution. To make this clear: Offering *prasadam* is at the heart of the devotee's loving exchange with the Lord. It helps the devotee recognize that God initially offers food to us, through the Earth and through mother cow, i.e. through nature, and that we can show our appreciation by making a gesture – by offering it back to Him with love and devotion through carefully delineated rituals (reciprocity). He then allows us to imbibe the remnants as His special mercy and share it with others (redistribution). It is this loving exchange with God and with all other living beings that represents the main reason for Vaishnava vegetarianism.

21.5 Conclusion

Krishna Himself summarizes these ideas in the *Bhagavad Gita* (3.14) when He says that 'all living entities subsist by eating' (*annad bhavanti bhutani*). Whether vegetarian or meat eater, life would cease to exist without God-given edibles. The *Bhagavatam* (7.14.7) elaborates: 'The natural products created by the Supreme Lord should be utilized for the

bodily maintenance of *all living entities* [italics added]. The necessities of life are of three types: those produced from the sky, beginning with rainfall; from the Earth, including that which comes from the mines, the seas, or the fields; and from the atmosphere, from which we also get nourishment.' From the Vaishnava perspective, this abundance of natural bounty is a gift from God, meant to be used for our personal survival and, more importantly, in His service. By so doing, all living beings are protected and maintained, including animals.

Vaishnavas believe that the entire ecosystem works under God's direction, and when properly utilized, produces more than humans need in day-to-day life. Proper utilization, Vaishnavas say, consists of offering nature's riches back to the Creator, who gives these riches to us in the first place. Thus, the *Gita* (9.26) says, 'If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it'. Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977), the founder-*acharya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, comments on this verse as follows:

Here Lord Krishna, having established that He is the only enjoyer, the primeval Lord and the real object of all sacrificial offerings, reveals what types of sacrifices He desires to be offered. If one wishes to engage in devotional service to the Supreme in order to be purified and to reach the goal of life – the transcendental loving service of God – then one should find out what the Lord desires of him. One who loves Krishna will give Him whatever He wants, and he avoids offering anything which is undesirable or unasked. Thus, meat, fish and eggs should not be offered to Krishna. If He desired such things as offerings, He would have said so. Instead He clearly requests that a leaf, fruit, flowers and water be given to Him, and He says of this offering, 'I will accept it.'³⁵

Prabhupada's commentary is unique in saying that this particular verse endorses vegetarianism. He is clearly elaborating according to the needs of his main audience – Western seekers in the twentieth-century, many of whom were accustomed to meat as a dietary norm. Indeed, the traditional commentaries on this verse focus instead on the Lord's quality of *saulabhya*, or being easily attainable, i.e. He doesn't ask His devotees to engage in complex or costly Vedic rituals, only to make a simple offering, with love. Prabhupada's predecessor commentators usually bring out the importance of the non-meat diet later in the *Gita* (Chapter 17), when discussing the three modes of nature.

Of course, this particular verse (9.26) is mainly about the spirit in which an offering should be made – with 'love and devotion' – and while it does mention water and fruits, it also refers to items that have a non-edible component: leaves and flowers. These are also offered for their simplicity, beauty, and, in the case of flowers, fragrance. Still, as Prabhupada points out, Krishna advocates a simple plant-based diet here as well. Leaves and flowers, in fact, represent the entire natural world. Vegetables, it should be remembered, come from various parts of any given plant, including the leaves, roots, flowers, stems, and seeds. Leaves appear in the form of cabbage, lettuce, spinach, collard greens, kale, and others. Flowers, although not often associated with food products, also give us some important edibles, such as broccoli, cauliflower, artichoke, and various spices. Honey, too, comes from flowers, since it is produced from bee-processed flower nectar. In other words, Srila Prabhupada, as an emissary of an age-old Vaishnava lineage, is

reading this verse in a particular context, and in conjunction with a long established tradition that sees what Krishna is actually asking for: all natural products of the Earth, offered with love and devotion.

One may notice that grains and dairy, though also typically included in the Vaishnava diet, are not mentioned in this verse.³⁶ Thus, for devotees in this tradition, the verse is meant to be taken in tandem with other, more complete verses about desired offerings, specifying the vast gamut of lacto-vegetarian fare. For example, in the *Vamana Purana* (68.21), we read, 'Barley, wheat, rice, sesame, mung beans, black lentils, and other, similar foods, all cooked in *ghee*, are dear to Lord Krishna'. And in the *Bhagavata Purana* (11.27.34), Krishna tells us: 'Having sufficient means, [the devotee] should offer Me sanctified meals consisting of sugar candy, sweet rice, *ghee*, rice-flour cakes, sweet cakes, sweet rice-flour dumplings, other special sweet cakes, yogurt and vegetable sauces, including other appropriate offerings (*naivedyam*)'. There are many such verses, and if one is familiar with the Brahmanical tradition from which these verses arise, it becomes clear that a vegetarian offering is being referred to, as is implied by the word *naivedyam*.

The main reason for Vaishnava vegetarianism is that, according to scripture, God (Krishna, Vishnu) asks His devotees for vegetarian offerings, and *only* for vegetarian offerings – and devotees do not eat anything without first offering it to Him as a religious sacrifice, as stated earlier. The massive scriptural tradition affords us not only a philosophical and practical explanation for the vegetarian diet but also includes recipes that Yashoda (Krishna's mother) and others actually fed the Lord when He walked the Earth.

In the *Bhagavata*, especially, Krishna is quoted as saying exactly which foods He likes best – foods that partake of the mode of goodness, cow's milk, and so on, conforming to a lacto-vegetarian diet. He never eats food that comes from violence, particularly if that food would cost an animal its life. In other words, Vaishnavas naturally prefer to offer God those foods that He Himself, in the scriptures, says He would like to eat, from His natural bounty, and then they accept the remnants as His mercy.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank several devotees and scholars for their assistance with this article: Vasudha Narayanan, Graham Schweig, Hridayananda Dasa Goswami (Howard Resnick), Martin Gansten, Rupa Vilasa Dasa, Philip Lutgendorf, Ramdas Lamb, Pankaj Jain, Ann Gold, Michael Beloved, Edwin Bryant, Vic DiCara, Mark Oppenheimer, Thomas Klugh, Kathryn McClymond, Mans Broo, Annette Yoshiko Reed, Greg Jay, and Angela Burt.

Notes

- 1 See Bryant (2006). The scholarly view is that non-violence and vegetarianism, as a coherent teaching associated with Hindu *dharma*, arose after the Vedic period, originating with Buddhism and Jainism. It is claimed that such teachings were not part of the original Vedic paradigm. Traditionalists, however, will argue that it was very much a part of that paradigm but was given additional emphasis with the birth of these specifically non-violent traditions.

The *Mahabharata* (see 3.148.10–37 and 12.270.73–76) and other Vaishnava texts explain it as follows: in Satya-yuga, the Golden Age, animals were not killed in sacrifice and the entire world adhered to the *ahimsa* principle, living in peace and happiness. Then, in Treta-yuga, humans suffered a slightly diminished existence, with a shorter lifespan and various forms of degradation beginning to emerge. At this time, animal sacrifice was created by the sages, and it continued into Dvapara-yuga. Eventually, due to lack of qualified Brahmins, the sacrificial system fell into disuse, mainly because, in Kali-yuga, Buddha, and Mahavira preached against the horrors of animal slaughter. For more on this, see Bryant's (2006, p. 199).

- 2 See Jha (2002). Also see Houben (1999). For an excellent comparison of animal sacrifices in Biblical and Vedic traditions, see McClymond (2008).
- 3 See Rosen (2002).
- 4 For evidence of meat-eating predominance in India, see www.hindu.com/2006/08/14/stories/2006081403771200.htm (accessed May 2013). Despite the subcontinent's clear association with a non-meat diet, the Indian majority consumes flesh, with some studies, such as the one cited above, opening up to 60%. Of course, many in India will claim to be meat eaters because such a diet would indicate economic success and adherence to much-cherished Western standards; conversely, others will claim to be vegetarian because it associates them with upper castes, since most Brahmins adhere to flesh-free diets. Consequently, it is nearly impossible to reach an accurate conclusion.

Brahmins generally profess vegetarianism, even if they eat meat on occasion. Kshatriyas and Shudras are known to eat meat as well. Moreover, unique peculiarities in diet are often affected not only by caste but by how caste plays out in specific regions. For example, Bengali and Oriyan Brahmins, who live near the ocean, often eat fish, referring to them as 'sea vegetables'. Thus, as Luis Dumont suggested many years ago, social standing and living environment play significant roles in diet. See *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago press, 1966, reprint, 1980), pp. 146–151, see especially page 151.

Pankaj Jain points out that meat consumption is actually quite low in India relative to its population, despite statistics to the contrary. Those who eat meat, he writes, do not eat it every day, and when they do eat it, portions remain small. Meat is relatively expensive, and for most of the population it is a rare luxury. See Jain (2011). Jain writes, '[I] that India remains the most vegetarian country in the world, even in the twenty-first century. Although only a minority of Indians practice asceticism ... the main diet of [the] majority of Indians largely consists of rice, wheat, pulses and vegetables. Even those who are classified as "non-vegetarians" depend largely on vegetarian food as the chief components of their diet, while egg, meat and fish are consumed [only] occasionally.' See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pankaj-jain-phd/environmental-sustainability-indian-spirituality_b_3313059.html (accessed May, 2013).

- 5 It is said that Vaishnavism constitutes the Hindu majority. See Klostermaier (1987). Of the 850 million Hindus today, 75% are Vaishnavas, accounting for almost 640 million people. Of course, there are 'pukka' Vaishnavas and then there are those who embrace various forms of Hinduism, merely including Vaishnava tenets as one part of their religious understanding.
- 6 Some texts suggest that meat eating in the Vedic period was common (see *Rg-Veda* 10.68.3, for example). And a sage no less renowned than Yajñavalkya famously said that he preferred 'tender beef' to other forms of meat. Nonetheless, it is likely that even if flesh eating was widespread, and indulged in by certain sages, it occurred solely within the sacrificial context, or, beyond that, only by hunters and warriors in the forest, who also used it in sacrifice. In fact, this is what is indicated by the vast majority of Vedic texts on the subject, and it is certainly the version that has been passed down in later Hindu traditions.

For further proof that meat eating occurred in Vedic culture only within the confines of sacrifice, see Schmidt (2010).

- 7 *R̥gveda* 10.91.14; 10.27.2. See also Walker (1968).
- 8 Some scholars may argue that this point is moot since Vaishnavism, as we know it today, came into being at a later period in history. But Vaishnavas themselves do not accept this, saying instead that their tradition is ancient (if not eternal), and while it may not have had all of the characteristics we find in the tradition today, with the same rituals and practices, there is evidence of a prehistoric 'Bhagavata' religion and other early manifestations of Vaishnava *dharma*. More, as we point out here, there was definitely a disparity between different types of Brahmins in the Vedic period, which may harken to differences between Vaishnava and Shakta sensibilities in ancient times. With all due caution and respect for the perspectives of modern scholars, then, we choose to proceed with the traditionalist understanding.
- 9 *R̥gveda* 1.162.21.
- 10 *Sāmaveda* 1.176.
- 11 For context see *Skandha Purana* 2.9. The story is also recounted in Edwin Bryant (2006, p. 200).
- 12 Accordingly, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada elaborates on the explanations found in the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* section of the *Vedas*, 'In the *karma-kāṇḍa* sections of the *Vedas* animal sacrifices are mentioned. Even in our *Srimad-Bhagavatam* you can see the *ashvamedha* sacrifice [horse sacrifice] is mentioned. So it is even there in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. But Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu stresses that these animal sacrifices were not meant for killing the animals. It was a test to prove that the *brahmanas* were chanting the mantras properly. They would chant the mantras and the horse or other animal would enter the sacrificial fire and on the other side of the fire come out in a young rejuvenated body. So that was the proof that the *brahmanas* were chanting the mantras properly.... So the *Vedas* accept that there will be men who want to eat meat and these animal sacrifices are a way of limiting it. They can only kill a goat and only on the dark moon night and while cutting its neck they have to chant a mantra into the ear of the goat that "I am killing you now but I know that in the future I will take the birth of a goat and you will take the birth of a man and you will kill me." So the idea is that gradually he will realize this animal killing is not a good idea.... [T]he recommendations for animal killing in the *Vedas* are not to encourage it but to control it and limit it'. [See <http://www.iskcondesiretree.net/profiles/blogs/why-vyasdeva-included-animal-sacrifice-in-karma-kanda-section-of> (accessed June 2013). Ultimately, one must go beyond both *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* to the point of *upāsana-kāṇḍa* (worship in devotion). This, the Vaishnava tradition tells us, is the ultimate goal of life.
- 13 As is the case with many early Indic texts, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the dates of the *Manu-saṃhitā*. It is usually dated as early as 1500 BCE or as late as 500 CE. We simply do not know.
- 14 *Manu-saṃhitā* 5.31; 5.36.
- 15 *Manu-saṃhitā* 5.38.
- 16 *Manu-saṃhitā* 5.45.
- 17 *Manu-saṃhitā* 5.51.
- 18 *Manu-saṃhitā* 5.48.
- 19 *Manu-saṃhitā* 5.47–49.
- 20 *Manu-saṃhitā* 5.55. See also *Mahābhārata*, *Anuśāsana-parvan* 116, *Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa* 2.63.24, and *Vishnu-smṛiti* 51.78.

- 21 *Mahabharata*, *Ashvamedha-parvan* 114–116, especially 115.1–16 and 116.1–76. In this regard, see Chapple (1996).
- 22 *Vishnu Purana* 3.8.15: *na tādāyati no hanti prāṇino na ca himṣakaḥ/ yo manuṣyo manuṣyendra toṣyate tena keśavaḥ* // Interestingly, according to M. Monier-Williams (in *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*), *prāṇino* refers to any ‘breathing, living sentient being, animal or man’. Again, vegetarianism is implied.
- 23 Glossing *Hari-Bhakti-Vilasa* 16.187–189, Sanātana Gosvāmī, the commentator, explains these statements by saying that eating meat at any time leads to hell, but doing so during the sacred month of Kartika leads to a particularly terrible hell. Additionally, it is mentioned that meat products are sometimes prescribed in Ayurveda as medicine for diseased or weak patients. Sanātana argues that in general such medicinal use is not to be considered ‘meat eating’ as such, but, still, he writes, even this healing utilization is to be prohibited during Kartika. See *śrī Hari Bhakti Vilāsa of śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī with the Dig Darśinī ṭīka of śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī*, trans., śrī Hari Dāsa Sāstri (śrī Gadādhara Gaurahari press, śrī Hari Dāsa Nivās, Kālī dah: Vṛndāvan, India, 1986, reprint), Vol. 2, Chapter 16, Verse 189, p. 1071.
- 24 ‘In this Age of Kali, five acts are forbidden: the offering of a horse in sacrifice, the offering of a cow in sacrifice, the acceptance of the order of *sannyāsa*, the offering of oblations of flesh to the forefathers, and a man’s begetting children in his brother’s wife’ (*Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, *Kṛṣṇa-janma-khaṇḍa* 185.180). Each age engenders its own form of recommended sacrifice. The texts tell us that in the Kali-yuga, our current age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the chanting of the holy name is especially recommended: *yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ* (*Bhagavata Purana* 11.5.32).
- 25 See Madhva’s *Mahabharata-tatparya-nirnaya* 2.3–8.
- 26 Special thanks to Philip Lutgendorf for this *Ramacharitmanas* reference, personal conversation, 22 May 2013.
- 27 In regard to Rama and other divine incarnations eating meat, it should be pointed out that none of the three texts mentioned in this paragraph – the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavata*, or the *Manas* – refer to them as actually doing so. This, of course, doesn’t mean that they never did. But even if one were to assume that heros and *avatars*, under certain circumstances, ate meat, devotees need not be disturbed: since God is the one who gives life, He, and He alone, has the right to take it away. In the end, of course, God devours us all, for He appears before us as death personified. In the *Gita* (10.34), Krishna tells us: ‘I am all-devouring death...’ And Arjuna (11.29) confirms: ‘I see all people rushing into Your many mouths, just as moths hurry into a blazing fire’.
- 28 See *Bhagavata Purana* 10.33.30: ‘One who is not a controller should not imitate those who are, nor should they even think in this way. Destruction comes to those who foolishly imitate such behavior, just as destruction comes to those who imitate Lord Shiva (who drank an ocean of poison)’.
- 29 See Lance Nelson (2006).
- 30 For an Indic equivalent of the Golden Rule, see *Mahabharata* 5.39.57, in the context of Vidura’s famous speech. It again appears later in the *Mahabharata* (13.113.8).
- 31 When glossing *Bhagavad Gita* 17.10, the commentator Ramanuja (1017–1137) writes, ‘Partaking of foods in *tama-guna* such as meat, fish, fowl, eggs, wine, alcohol, etc. breeds dark nescience and great ignorance’. Similarly, referring to the same verse, commentator Sridhara Swami (c. fourteenth century) writes: ‘Food cooked more than three hours before, that is cold, tasteless, without aroma, stale, decomposed and foods that are *amedhyam* or forbidden for

- offering to the Supreme Lord, such as meat, fish, fowl, eggs, wine, alcohol, garlic, onions and mushrooms... and are impure are preferred by those in *tama-guna* the mode of ignorance'. Both quotes can be found online at <http://www.bhagavad-gita.org/Gita/verse-17-07.html> (accessed June 2013). Gaudiya Vaishnava philosopher Vishvanath Chakravarti (1643?–1730?), commentating on 17.10, also identifies meat eating (and tobacco) as being in the mode of ignorance, i.e. not for Vaishnavas, but adds that devotees should not eat anything that is not first offered to Krishna (See http://nitaaiveda.com/Shrimad_Bhagavad_Gita/Gita_By_Acharyas/Gita_17_Sraddha_Traya_Vibhaga_Yoga.htm (accessed June 2013)).
- 32 The sages of ancient India declared that a *sattvik* diet, e.g. vegetarianism, was healthiest for humans, as expressed in the *Bhagavad Gita*. This is interesting because Western nutritional science has since proven this to be true. Research will confirm that modern considerations will reinforce the Vaishnava ethical and dietary ideal in several ways. According to the American Dietetic Association (ADA), for example, vegetarians are less likely to develop heart disease; colorectal, ovarian, and breast cancers; diabetes; obesity; and hypertension (high blood pressure) (Brown University Health Education online: http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/nutrition_&_eating_concerns/being_a_vegetarian.php (accessed June 2013)). Or, in the words of T. Colin Campbell, Professor Emeritus of Nutritional Biochemistry at Cornell University, 'the vast majority, perhaps 80–90% of all cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and other forms of degenerative illness can be prevented, at least until very old age, simply by adopting a plant-based diet' (T. Colin Campbell, *Healthcare Foodservice* (March/April 1992), p. 15).
 - 33 For more on *ahimsa*, see Tahtinen (1976). Also see Rosen (2011). For more on cows and cow protection, see Chigateri (2008). Also see Rosen (2004).
 - 34 See Krishnadas Kaviraja Goswami, *Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila*, Chapter 15, verses 160–163. Italics added.
 - 35 His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-gita as It Is* (Los Angeles, California: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1989, reprint), Chapter 9, Verse 26, pp. 487–488.
 - 36 There are, to be sure, devotees who stretch the definition of fruits and leaves to include grains and dairy, respectively, though this is the exception rather than the rule: grains are sometimes known as fruits, and are botanically verifiable as such (when derived from the carpel tissue of a flower all edibles are referred to as fruit. But a small, one-seeded fruit derived from a cereal grass is a grain, also called *caryopsis*). Milk is the transformed blood of the cow, who subsists on grass (i.e. leaves).

Works Cited

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>Bryant, E. (2006). Strategies of Vedic subversion: the emergence of vegetarianism in post-Vedic India. In: <i>A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics</i> (eds. P. Waldau and K. Patton). New York: Columbia University Press.</p> <p>Chapple, C.K. (1996). <i>Ahimsa in the Mahabharata</i>. <i>Journal of Vaishnava Studies</i> 4 (3): 114–123.</p> | <p>Chigateri, S. (2008). "Glory to the cow": cultural difference and social justice in the food hierarchy in India. <i>South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies</i> 31 (1): 10–35.</p> <p>Houben, J.E.M. (1999). To kill or not to kill the sacrificial animal (<i>yajña-paśu</i>): arguments and perspectives in Brahminical ethical philosophy. In: <i>Violence Denied: Violence, Non-violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History</i> (eds.</p> |
|--|--|

- J.E.M. Houben and K.R. van Kooij), 105–183. Leiden: Brill.
- Jain, P. (2011). *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*, 225–227. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Jarow, R. (2011). The Yoga of eating: food wars and their attendant ideologies. In: *Food for the Soul: Vegetarianism and Yoga Traditions* (ed. S.J. Rosen). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Jha, D.N. (2002). *The Myth of the Holy Cow*. New Delhi: Matrix Books.
- Klostermaier, K.K. (1987). The response of modern Vaishnavism. In: *Modern Indian Responses to Religious Pluralism* (ed. H.G. Coward), 83–109. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- McClymond, K. (2008). *Beyond Sacred Violence: A Comparative Study of Sacrifice*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Nelson, L. (2006). Cows, elephants, dogs, and other lesser embodiments of *Atman*: reflections on Hindu attitudes toward nonhuman animals. In: *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (eds. P. Waldau and K. Patton), 184. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rosen, S.J. (2002). *Holy War: Violence and the Bhagavad Gita*. Newport News, VA: Deepak Heritage Books.
- Rosen, S.J. (2004). *Holy Cow: The Hare Krishna Contribution to Vegetarianism and Animal Rights*. New York: Lantern Books.
- Rosen, S.J. (2011). Vaishnava Hinduism: Ahimsa and vegetarianism. In: *Call to Compassion: Religious Perspectives on Animal Advocacy* (eds. L. Kemmerer and A.J. Nocella II), 27–36. New York: Lantern Books.
- Schmidt, H.-P. (2010). *Ahimsa and rebirth*. In: *The History of Vegetarianism and Cow-Veneration in India* (ed. L. Alsdorf) (reprint and translation from the German by Willem Bollee, 131. London: Routledge.
- Tahtinen, U. (1976). *Ahimsa: Non-violence in Indian Tradition*. London: Rider.
- Walker, B. (1968). *Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism*, vol. 1, 256. London: Allen & Unwin.

CHAPTER 22

Prasāda, Grace as Sustenance, and the Relational Self

Andrea Marion Pinkney

22.1 Introduction: *Prasāda* as Sacred Hindu Food

Across time and place, the idea of *prasāda*, translated provisionally here as 'grace', connects a vast range of intangible and material things that, in Hindu terms, are deemed to be beneficent, superabundant, and endowed with blessing. In this chapter, I explore one of the most significant subsets of *prasāda*, 'grace as sustenance', in Hindu food systems, paradigmatically understood as blessed, sacred food. I begin by introducing the contexts that give *prasāda* its meaning, the rules that govern its creation, times when food may be considered *prasāda*, and times when it is not.

In classical Hindu scriptures, the category of food is characterized by totality (Khare 1992; Patrick Olivelle 2002a; Om 1961; Smith 1990). Within this universe of signification, *prasāda* is a specially conceived category of Hindu sacred food, emplaced within an interrelated web of Hindu socio-religious norms. Linguistically, the idea of *prasāda* is found across the centuries in most stages of Indic literature – from late Vedic (*praśad*), classical Sanskrit (*prasāda*), to almost all modern South Asian languages, including Bengali (*praśād*), Hindi and Marathi (*prasād*), Punjabi (*parśād*), Tamil (*piracātam*), Telugu (*prasādamu*), and so on. With such a range of contexts for its elaboration, *prasāda* cannot be adequately captured in one English word. However, we can begin by observing that the idea of *prasāda* is encountered in two main ways: in contexts of exchange, mutual identification, and beneficence across a spectrum of South Asian languages, cultures, literary contexts, epochs, and geographical regions; and as a term applied to a potentially infinite category of materials blessed in ritual, including (but not limited to) food. In Sanskrit texts, we find clues to how these two domains mutually inform one another in accounts of *prasāda*, both edible and non-edible, generated between devotees, divinities, and other interconnected beings. Grammatically, this is because the meaning of

the root form of the concept, *pra√sad*, allows for both intangible and instantiated referents, so that *prasāda*, just one of the many words derivable from the concept, means both ‘happiness’ and ‘sacred Hindu food’ (among many other things). Further, we find the idea of ‘beneficence’ (*prasāda*, *prasannatā*), expressed through the grammatical structures of *pra√sad*, in reference to a range of abstract intangibles and physical materials that, in contemporary Hindu theological terms, are deemed to be beneficent, superabundant, and endowed with blessing (see Pinkney 2013).

Broadly, divine ‘beneficence’ or *prasāda* is the emotion that results when Hindu gods and saints are propitiated by their devotees’ domestic and temple *pūjā* (rituals of worship). Secondarily, that beneficence can be found in material forms and is then also known as *prasāda*, in everyday reference to the material leftovers of *pūjā*, as produced in ritual actions in Hindu communities around the world. In this chapter, I focus on instantiated *prasāda* as food, specifically, the blessed food that results from domestic and temple *pūjā*. As I discuss, *prasāda* as sustenance is a charismatic medium that can be used to affirm and renew one’s self in relation to others and, conversely, to declare social distance. Reflection on *prasāda* as food, therefore, has valuable potential to illuminate the constitution of self in inter-religious and inter-caste relations in South Asian societies, through *prasāda*’s ability to reflect and express religious ideals ranging from caste-based exclusion to caste-blind egalitarianism.

With a mutual identification between food, life, and the identity of the eater, and a perception that people and materials are both agents and recipients of beneficial and harmful flows of substance, Hindu food is subject to a highly particularized system of classification based on unique cultural principles. It is to this system that I first turn in order to contextualize *prasāda*’s particular power as sustenance.

22.2 Commensality, Community, and *Prasāda*

From the perspectives of both customary practice and doctrine, Hindu food may be governed by complex commensality rules that influence who can eat with whom based on factors such as caste (*jāti*), gender, age, marital status, and so on. Beyond the factors of one’s own personhood, food is social – it is grown, prepared, and consumed within communities. As such, Hindu food exchanges must be further qualified by questions such as: who eats first and who eats second? Who can give food and who can receive food? Who accepts food and who rejects food – from whom, and at which times? And, crucially, when can feeders and eaters ignore or transcend these rules? In exploring the contexts that give *prasāda* meaning and the rules that govern its creation, I hope to heighten appreciation for a vital category of material Hindu religious practice. As I contend, reflection on the ways in which eating *prasāda* and feeding it to others as emplaced within Hindu food systems is an important pathway to understand self-expression and social relations in Indic civilization more broadly.

As discussed by P. Olivelle, ideal Hindu food may be seen as lying in the crosshairs of many classificatory concerns, so that food is evaluated as being ‘fit to eat’ (*bhojya*) or ‘not fit to eat’ (*abhojya*) relative to any given eater’s ritual status (Olivelle 2002b, p. 346). A food’s ‘fitness’ for consumption is determined in multiple ways, such that food perceived

to be fit for one person's consumption may not be suitable for anyone else to eat or even "forbidden" (*abhakṣya*). Moreover, food items are also seen as possessing inherent and differing degrees of substance 'conductivity'. This susceptibility of different foods to substance flow can be altered by using particular cooking techniques or following a process of preparation that combines ingredients in a given sequence. In what follows, I briefly outline some basic principles of Hindu food classification that give religious meaning to *prasāda* upon a relative scale of purity and impurity. Against this backdrop of Hindu food classification, we will be able to question the potential and significance of *prasāda* as 'universal' food – as well as reflect on instances when *prasāda* is used to accentuate social inequalities and interpersonal distance.

In orthodox Hindu contexts, commensality rules can be extremely complex, and can potentially govern all aspects of food preparation, serving, and consumption. They may dictate who can and who cannot eat together; who is designated as a consumer or giver of food and who is a receiver of food (and from whom); who has the right to prepare food; which foods are permitted and prohibited for particular types of people; and so on. These rules are highly 'context-sensitive', and qualified still further in different settings based on relationships, such as marriage, status within a family, caste, gender, professional status, and so on (Ramanujan 1990, p. 41).¹

To understand the place of *prasāda* within Hindu food systems, I introduce here some fundamental classifications of Hindu food.² One way of understanding a Hindu community's socio-religious status is in relation to its perceived vulnerability to pollution, and to the number of restrictions its members must negotiate in accepting food prepared and served by others. Since substance can be transmitted between people through food, concern for purity and pollution and the issue of permeability theologically guides which foods can be exchanged between which people. According to orthodox ideals of commensality, Brahmins can give food to everyone while, conversely, they are restricted to the smallest circle of inter-caste food givers since their ritual status would be compromised by taking food – and thus imbibing substance flow – from lower-caste people. That is to say, Brahmins can accept food from almost no one (essentially, only from other similarly or higher-ranking castes). It is their dual identity as 'universal feeders', conversely reinforced by their status as 'exclusive eaters', that is one of the sources of Brahmins' religious status. This is because 'high' ritual status is theoretically related to members' adherence to a relatively restrictive set of commensality rules limiting potential exchanges of water, food, vessels, and utensils to those of other 'twice-born' (*dvija*) castes (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya). This means that the people at the upper end of the ritual spectrum are subject to the most restrictions in being fed, and the least restrictions in feeding. In other words, highest status in terms of ritual purity implies that one is a universal 'feeder' of all others. At the other end of the ritual spectrum, low-caste people can be universally fed – but are restricted in that their food may only be accepted by members of similarly- or lower-ranking caste groups. This means that 'low' ritual status can be enforced through high-caste peoples' rejection of low-caste attempts to become feeders.

To illustrate how the notion of contact purity and pollution is applied, it is instructive to consider the different substances of vessels and their relative 'vulnerability' to pollution. First of all, both food and drink are perceived as possessing extremely high substance

conductivity. When the need arises to purify something, water is the most effective medium of purification. In order to ensure that the water for purification is itself pure, water vessels are subject to the strictest standards of ritual purity. This is because any vessel used for food or drink is perceived as potentially vulnerable to pollution as its ritual status can be altered: if the vessel becomes polluted, the food or drink inside is perceived as ritually polluted in turn. Sensitivity to this concern can be observed in the everyday convention to drink from a shared vessel by pouring the contents directly into the mouth, in order to avoid making direct contact with the lips and polluting the vessels and their contents with substance, transmitted through saliva. Further, the material used to make a vessel imparts varying degrees of vulnerability or invulnerability to the vessel itself. Vessels of brass or copper, for example, are perceived as possessing a degree of innate ritual purity that can provide some protection for the vessel and its contents in case of any defiling contact, giving it a lower degree of vulnerability, relative to more highly conductive vessels such as those made of earthenware. In these examples, some things themselves are perceived as possessing differing innate qualities and varying degrees of substance conductivity while the qualities of purity and pollution are imparted from one substance to another through contact.

Substance exchange through contact brings about a material change that can be auspicious or inauspicious, understood not as hierarchical opposites but as points on a relative spectrum of pollution and purity. In this scale, Brahmins are most vulnerable to impurity because they are held to possess the greatest innate ritual purity. As Pauline Mahar's historical ranking of exchange showed, her Brahmin respondents differentiated 'external' pollution of personal touch (e.g. accepting water from the hand of someone of lower caste-status) as less harmful than internal pollution, when impure food and drink is consumed (Mahar 1960, p. 296). This is because external pollution was deemed to be superficial in contrast to internal pollution. Thus, Mahar ranked pipe smoking as less 'internally' polluting in comparison to eating boiled food, since the latter is more capable of carrying substance flows. Thus, to summarize so far, restrictions on everyday food exchanges and preparation especially apply to Hindus following high-caste conventions, while less rigidity and fewer exchange rules correspond to lower-caste status.

Since substance can flow between people through sustenance, the question of permeability theoretically informs which foods can be exchanged between which people. In the case of people, vulnerability to inauspicious or impure substance flow is conversely related to high ritual ranking so that susceptibility to harmful substance flow increases with an individual's ranking in the caste system; in the case of food items, a similar relationship exists—as with people, the more highly ranked a food item is in terms of ritual purity, the *more* susceptible it is to inauspicious substance flow. While this analogy between humans and objects can be helpful, it should not be taken too literally. For, as we will see, people's caste-derived religious status is far less malleable than that of food, which can gain (or lose) religious prestige through ritual and can rise in purity ranking through particular cooking techniques.³

Based on the connection between vulnerability and ritual purity, food used in worship has the highest ritual ranking, and can be prepared 'without fire', being understood as 'raw' or *kaccā* as opposed to 'cooked' or *pakkā*.⁴ Both categories can be subdivided based on cooking methods, ingredients, the sequence in which ingredients are used, and the main

food being cooked. Thus the opposition between *kaccā* and *pakkā* foods represents a system open to significant elaboration. Crucially, the full rendering of each category does not map easily to the 'raw vs. cooked' distinction implied by the conventional understanding of each term. For example, a great deal of *kaccā* food is cooked in some way. In this sense, the basic logic of the system is subject to a number of exceptions based on customary practice. An exemplar of *kaccā* food, a category that includes food boiled in water, is boiled rice. Its relatively high ranking is determined by the combination of the inherent neutrality of rice, which makes it highly susceptible to pollution, and its preparation by boiling with water, a cooking medium that does not safeguard from impurity. *Kaccā* food must be given by a twice-born caste member if it is to be considered ritually pure and is thus unsuitable for general inter-caste distribution. It is therefore ranked as ritually superior and features as temple food exactly because of its restriction to an exclusive group of high-caste feeders. An interesting example is found in *pañcāmṛta*, 'the five ambrosias', a liquid that is used to anoint divine images, is recaptured as run-off, and may be consumed by priests and devotees. Frequently used in temple ritual, *pañcāmṛta* is typically comprised of milk, ghee, honey, sugar, and Ganges water (*gaṅgājal*) or a ritual substitute.⁵ In this case, *pañcāmṛta* is exceptional because of its inherently purifying nature, which stems from the presence of Ganges water (if available), milk and ghee. The view that the latter two substances are innately sanctifying as a cooking medium stems from the respect accorded to the source of these products: the cow, a blessed animal in Hindu theology, so that ghee and milk are enumerated among the *pañcagavya* or 'five (sacred) products of the cow'.

In contrast to the vulnerable, and therefore exclusive, category of *kaccā* food is food categorized as *pakkā*, which is ordinary food transformed by being 'cooked with fire' (a culturally determined category), in a ritually-pure cooking medium such as ghee or milk. Such fried or boiled foods enjoy a degree of ritual invulnerability through the protective coating of ghee or milk. As *pañcagavya* products, both liquids exceed water in their powerful, purifying capacities and, like the brass or copper water-vessel, exert a protective influence in the event of exposure to impurities. Once cooked and thereby shielded by the purity of a *pañcagavya* cooking medium, *pakkā* food is less vulnerable to impurity and may be exchanged by a wider circle of caste groups. From a ritual perspective, *pakkā* food is therefore the 'safest' for inter-caste distribution and is less restricted. Yet even with this added protection to the food itself, the caste status of those who prepare and distribute food used for religious rituals is typically restricted to Brahmins, or members of sweet-making castes (*halwāī*). Again, as historically described by Mahar:

There is little inter-caste sharing of food except at the time of life cycle rites and religious festivals. At these times a Brahman cook is likely to be engaged, from whose hand any other caste may accept either *kachchā* or *pakkā* food or water. At such times and at fairs and bazaars, fried (*pakkā*) food is prepared either by Brahmins or castes of sweetmakers whose ritual distance is not great enough from most other castes for the food purified by *ghi* [ghee] or milk to be polluted when served by them. (Mahar 1960, pp. 301–302)

In short, *pakkā* food has been seen as most suitable for wide distribution but the ritual purity of the food preparer can be an equally important factor in determining who will accept such food.

This brief introduction to orthodox Hindu food ideologies shows how the belief that relative ritual purity innately adheres to individual persons necessitates an elaborate system of food classification to regulate the flow of substances through exchanges of food and drink. Since substances and objects have their own rankings of purity and their own vulnerabilities to the same substance flows that affect human beings, these materials are similarly ranked on a scale of relative purity and subjected to rituals to manipulate their status on this spectrum. Adherence to the norms of such food systems can create cross-sectarian affinities between the highest status groups, as seen, for example, among south Indian Brahmins, such as Vaishnava Iyengars and Smartha Iyers, for whom sectarian distinctions are perhaps less consequential than regional and caste-based similarities in diet and domestic ritual practices.

With the basic tenets of this system established, we are now in a position to consider *prasāda* as a potentially universal food, that is, as a food that can transcend orthodox rules for food exchange. This is not to say that *prasāda* as daily food is the first thing people think of when they think of *prasāda*. The opposite is true: *prasāda* is typically regarded as sanctified, extraordinary food.⁶ Specifically, we will be able to consider *prasāda*'s potential universality in two lights: either as the ultimate expression of orthodox food categories (*prasāda* at the apex of purity rankings) or as transcending orthodox food categories (*prasāda* as a food item that cannot be ranked). These two possibilities will be considered within the inherently relational system in which a food item is determined to be *prasāda*.

22.3 'Classical' Hindu Food Systems and *Prasāda*

Within the framework of orthodox Hindu food systems and their great concern with the exchange of substance between people and materials, there are two aspects of *prasāda* as food that make it special. In Hindu domestic and temple rituals, *prasāda* is made by performing rituals (*pūjā*) with offerings (*naivedya*). Through ritual, the object of worship and the ephemeral objects given in worship become equivalent after the offering has been tasted or 'enjoyed' (*bhoga*) by the one being propitiated. Subsequent to this, the offerings left over from worship are called '*prasāda*' to indicate that they have been in contact with the god or saint being propitiated and share substance. While food that is leftover by a first eater is generally regarded as unfit for further consumption or distribution by people of equal status, *prasāda* is special. It is viewed as imbued with purity and auspiciousness precisely because of the prior contact of a revered first eater, the one propitiated in *pūjā*. Second, once it is generated, *prasāda* is, in principle, suitable for the widest range of inter-caste distribution as a (quasi-) universal food.

To continue, let us contrast *prasāda* with the category of food described as *ucchiṣṭa*, meaning 'leftover' or 'remainder'. *Ucchiṣṭa* is the sacred and powerful remnant of sacrifice (*yajña*), the ritual at the centre of India's ancient Vedic religion while in contemporary terms, *ucchiṣṭa* (Hindi) can refer to the leftovers of a partially eaten meal. Given the belief that comestibles can be both repositories and conduits of an eater's substance, *ucchiṣṭa* is understood as food that has been transformed through contact with or proximity to a first eater and is therefore invested with the essence of that eater.

In the context of Hindu food systems' attention to purity and pollution, leftover food tends in practice to attain negative connotations as unfit for further consumption. This means that in everyday Hindi usage, any leftover food, *ucchiṣṭa*, is usually characterized as *jūṭhā*, or 'impure, spoiled', an adjective that can be applied also to plates, cooking vessels, and anything else that has come in contact with saliva. Items made *jūṭhā* through use in eating and drinking are disposed of or require purification through washing with water. For food that is leftover, however, there is the potential for it to be subsequently consumed by a second eater or group of second eaters, as an expression of the second eater's regard for the first eater. This is because leftovers, or *ucchiṣṭa*, may be viewed in one of two ways – as impure (*jūṭhā*), or blessed (*prasāda*), depending on the second eater's relationship to the first. In theory, then, when the first eater is deemed ritually inferior relative to oneself, the substance transmitted through leftovers is perceived as pollution; conversely when the first eater is revered, the substance transmitted through leftovers is perceived as grace. Ákos Östör, writing about Bengal, observed three cases that clarify how identifying leftovers as either impure or blessed (*prasāda*) is a means to express a relationship between first and second eaters, in orthodox Hindu terms:

Prasad (leavings of the goddess) are sacred (*pabitra*) because they were touched by the goddess. *Prasad* is the *eto* (polluted food) of the goddess, but for men [people] it is the most sacred food. In the same way, at home a wife may eat the *eto* of her husband, and children that of their elders. Sometimes the lowest castes take the *eto* of the Brahmins. (1980, p. 86)

In these examples, the second eater's approach to leftovers (*ucchiṣṭa*) as sacred or polluted can express reverence or revulsion, esteem or contempt, hierarchy or egalitarianism, and so on. As such, the characterization of the first eater's leftovers by the second eater can be a key mode of expressing different subjectivities, relationships, and degrees of (dis-)connection. In these instances, the leftover food is regarded as invested with the first eater's substance. Having obtained an equivalence with the source of the leftovers, the leftovers are recognized and consumed as *prasāda* to express respect and regard, interrelationships of love, honour, obligation, and so on. To unpack the example above, in the context of Hindu domestic and temple ritual, humans' consumption of *prasāda* expresses love and reverence for gods and saints; the wife who eats her husband's seconds affirms patriarchal social norms but also declares the intimacy of personal exchange that occurs in marriage; while a one-way flow of leftovers from Brahmins to members of lower-ranked social communities expresses and re-inscribes their positions relative to one another within caste hierarchy.⁷

When *ucchiṣṭa* is evaluated as *jūṭhā*, the evaluation marks separation, distance, and exclusion from self; when it is evaluated as *prasāda*, the evaluation marks honour, intimacy, proximity and identification with self. From this, it becomes clear that *prasāda* itself is an inherently relational concept. Any food that is left over by an extraordinary person or being can be conceived of as *prasāda* (and therefore not *jūṭhā*) by those who position themselves as eaters of such food. A wife who eats food partially consumed by her husband may consider it *prasāda*, but her mother does not; a vassal considers the

king's leavings as *prasāda*, but another king does not; a devotee considers the guru's leavings to be *prasāda*, but someone who is not devoted to that guru does not, and so on. In sum, upon encountering *ucchiṣṭa*, one can deem it *jūṭhā* or *prasāda*, and thereby declare one's attitude towards the first eater (the source of the *ucchiṣṭa*) in claiming – or disdaining – the role of second eater. As such, it is important to note that *prasāda* should not be read as reinforcing an absolute social hierarchy, made up of 'pure' and 'impure' selves. Instead, *prasāda* is made meaningful in unique relations with others.

To add to our picture of relationships expressed by the treatment of *ucchiṣṭa* as *prasāda*, the work of Lawrence A. Babb on the Radhasoami tradition of North India offers valuable perspective on *prasāda* and guru-devotion. Based on the writings of Babuji Maharaj, the last *sant* of the Soami Bagh lineage, Babb relates that devotees' perfect devotion involves the ability to put aside fully the concept of pollution and reaction of disgust (*ghrṇā*) in taking the leftovers of their spiritual masters, understood as gods in human form. Upon consumption of leftovers deemed to be *prasāda*, the devotee enjoys an intimate, yet transient, identification with the divine, which 'strikingly symbolizes human internalization of divine qualities and the "physiological engagement" between deity and devotee' (Babb 1986, p. 72). Here, cultivating the view of *ucchiṣṭa* as *prasāda* is seen as a critical aspect of personal religious practice, realized as an ego-effacing love for a human spiritual teacher that extends even to leftover food. According to Babb, only the most advanced devotees can avail themselves of the full benefits of consuming this *prasāda*, and upon acquiring this capacity, are defined as ideal devotees. Whether the relationship is between people and gods, or people and other people – and whether it is characterized by a sense of forced duty or pure spiritual attainment – its expression is achieved through the recognition of food as *prasāda*, understood as charismatic sustenance imbued with the substance of another.

To illustrate this in a memorable way, let me relate an example from the hagiography of Sai Baba of Shirdi, a popular Maharashtrian saint (d. 1918). On one occasion, the saint famously vomited his repast of sweet potatoes. One of his ardent devotees, Kusa, snatched up the regurgitated meal and fervently consumed it as the saint's *prasāda*.⁸ Normally, vomit in any form would evoke a sense of disgust, and would be considered inedible by most people. However, in recognizing vomit as *prasāda*, the devotee Kusa unmistakably declared his feelings of intimacy and reverence for its source – his beloved guru, Sai Baba. To be clear, this is an extremely particularistic and individually determined usage: vomit – even produced by a saint – would not score highly as a universal Hindu food. As such, this episode exemplifies the relational nature of *prasāda*: what is blessed *prasāda* to one person is merely bile to another. As such, the classification of *ucchiṣṭa* as *prasāda* or *jūṭhā* is an expression of how one relates to the producer of the *ucchiṣṭa*. As summarized by Nicholas Dirks, the nature of *prasāda* may be understood as 'transvalued' once it has been received from the gods:

The highlight of worship is the feeding of the god and then the return of some portion of that which was used in worship as *pracātam* (or *piracātam*), which means transvalued substance. This *pracātam* most typically consists of the leaving (*ucchiṣṭa*) of the food, which was first tasted by the deity and then returned to the devotees for their consumption and thus

ritual incorporation ... All of these presentations honor the deity, and all of the substances presented to the deity are transvalued by their contact with the deity.⁹

In approaching *ucchiṣṭa* as *prasāda*, a second eater expresses a supramundane relationship with the creator of that *ucchiṣṭa*. Potential sources of *prasāda* may be gods – but also kings, husbands, and Brahmins – so that contexts for *prasāda* certainly include religious settings such as temples but go well beyond, from the home to the palace. In sum, treating *ucchiṣṭa* as *prasāda*, is a standard inversion of orthodox Hindu food norms that serves, overall, to reinforce them.

The relational nature of *prasāda* helps underscore the basic relativity of hierarchy in Hindu contexts. Hierarchical relationships are relative constructions in which no one being can ever definitively occupy the top rank in every context. Even the rank of divinities is relative, as expressed in Hindu scriptures, where deities that are ‘supreme’ in one tradition may be found extolling the virtues of other deities, as in the example of Shiva praising Vishnu in the *Īśvara Gītā* (Nicholson 2014, pp. 20ff). According to Hindu theology, among humans and gods who all must eat, it is a truism to state that there is no being, even Brahman or the ‘ground of all being’ for whom there can be no *prasāda*, as all beings are relationally connected to one another through food – for even the greatest deity or king must eat and may consider someone’s food leavings as *prasāda* sometimes (Ramanujan 1992, pp. 223).

While the consumption of *prasāda* can express hierarchy, it is a dynamic and relational hierarchy with shifting reference points. In other words, while dyadic, hierarchical pairings such as ‘Brahmin’ and ‘non-Brahmin’ indeed find expression through the category of *prasāda*, the self expressed through caste is but one provisional, relational self among many. However dominant such a self may be in certain contexts, such as one’s professional and religious life, this self co-exists with other relationally conceived selves such as ‘student’ and ‘child’ at other times. Instead, it may be more illuminating to consider the designation of food as *prasāda* as signalling a uniquely contextual social orientation between the self and another. I turn now from doctrine and orthodoxy to explore how, in practice, *prasāda* is emplaced as food within these models.

22.4 *Prasāda* as “Universal” Food in Practice

Having considered some background issues of orthodox Hindu food norms and some crucial interpretations of *prasāda* within the context of ritual purity, impurity, and transvalued food items, we can now address the question introduced at the beginning of this chapter: can *prasāda* be regarded as a ‘universal’ food? As readers may anticipate, the answer requires qualification. In theory, a theology of *prasāda* suggests a claim to universality. Through the processes described earlier, edible *prasāda* is transvalued in such a way that it at once transcends mundane conceptions of pollution that might be associated with its creation, and is theoretically inviolable to pollution during subsequent distribution and exchange. As we examine empirical data on specific practices involving *prasāda*, however, we find that in all parts of the *prasāda* cycle (*naivedya*, *bhoga*, *prasāda*), the possibility exists for *prasāda*’s universality to be constrained. In fact, we find

that the universality of *prasāda* depends on the nature of the food used for the offering; the individuals involved in preparing it; the propitiated god or being responsible for transforming the offering; and the particular beliefs about inter-caste commensality and ritual purity held by a potential second eater.

In this reckoning, *prasāda*'s capacity to be distributed widely either elevates it to the top of the food ranking system or allows it to transcend the system entirely. In practice, there are many social qualifications to these two scenarios within different Hindu communities, depending on members' interpretation of how best to express their orientation towards the source of *prasāda*. Some caste-conscious communities view *prasāda* as top-ranking food based on their esteem for caste-based norms of ritual purity; other communities interpret *prasāda* as an extraordinary food that expresses devotional, egalitarian norms; while still others may regard *prasāda* as an exceptional food that serves to affirm caste norms in its ability to upend them temporarily. Further, in terms of ritual style, various communities' approach to *prasāda* practices can range from minimalist to highly elaborated.

Turning first to the theology of *prasāda* as universal food, it will be helpful to begin by introducing another 'universal' food, namely raw or unprepared foods – such as unpeeled fruits, unshelled nuts, and grains – considered to be in their original state, and relatively invulnerable to substance flows. Since they have not yet entered into a cooking cycle, such foods are protected from impure substance flows, and may be given and received by anyone without restrictions. Thus, a Brahmin may receive a gift of raw grains from a member of a lower caste; and fruits and unshelled nuts may be distributed to high-caste ritually observant Hindus in community settings (Marriott 1968, p. 143). Considering the category of unprepared or raw food as universal food at last highlights the radical and provocative nature of *prasāda* as sustenance. While raw food is universally acceptable for the fact of not having been prepared in any way, *prasāda* is food that has not only been prepared but has also been partially consumed through a process that, in principle, entails maximum exposure to substance flows.

As suggested in the first half of this chapter, the fundamental basis upon which *prasāda* can be claimed as universal food is its infusion with substance flow from a universally revered first eater. On account of this infusion, *prasāda* can be seen as temporarily equivalent to a god or saintly being through shared substance. This equivalence allows *prasāda* to share the invulnerability to pollution ascribed to the source of *prasāda*. It is in this sense that, according to R.S. Khare, 'staunch Vaishnavites' take the doctrinaire position that any post-offering comestible, or, 'anything offered to – and accepted by – a deity', is not only ritually pure but also incapable of being polluted (Khare 1976b, pp. 8, 99). Food is ranked only if it has *not* been offered to the deity. As such, transvalued, or 'post-prestation' food is seen in this idealized conception as invulnerable to impurity and as transcending the classification of pure or impure.

Interpretation of *prasāda* as universal food is commonly found among many Vaishnava devotional communities. Given the proper mindset of the devotee, it is normatively assumed that Vaishnava deities always accept offerings and are always pleased by them. A well-known verse from the *Bhagavad Gītā* aptly illustrates this dynamic, in which Krishna tells Arjuna that: 'whoever gives me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water with loving devotion, from (such a) pious one, I receive that loving gift', affirming that a

giver's piety can arise from devotion as well as adherence to caste-based norms of purity.¹⁰ Here, in an egalitarian theology of *prasāda*, any *naivedya* item devotionally offered is, as a matter of course, divinely enjoyed (*bhoga*), and is thereby transformed and sanctified (*prasāda*), without concern for ritual purity and impurity. Further, when food and other comestibles are viewed as *prasāda*, they are seen as not only inherently pure but also purifying, and possessed of the capacity to remove or nullify other impurities through contact. For example, a small quantity of *prasāda*, when mixed with ordinary food, has the power to transform an entire meal into *prasāda*. To extrapolate further, in theory, any food transformed into *prasāda* may not only be immune to pollution, but may be (in principle) indistinguishable and undifferentiated from all other items deemed to be *prasāda*. In the words of Narayana Maharaj, an ascetic *mahant* (temple leader), cited by Paul Toomey in his work on the Gaudiya Vaishnava community:

In the *Śāstrās*, *kaccā* and *pakkā* are not used to talk about *Mahāprasād*. This view is taken by members of our sect [Gaudiya Vaishnavas]. *Prasād*, food offered to the lord, defies inherent categorization or differentiation. How can it be differentiated when it is a form of God himself?¹¹

This egalitarian understanding of *prasāda* privileges the emotion behind the offering as sanctifying rather than the ritual status of the offering itself. In this way, *prasāda* practices can play a crucial role in materially expressing an ideological rejection of caste norms, by accentuating the purifying power of emotion and the supremacy of divine substance over any ritual orthodoxy. For example, in the Dalit *Rāmnāmī* community, Ramdas Lamb described how the distribution of *prasāda* (*prashad*) for the *Rāmnāmīs* is governed by unique community norms that starkly reject the orthodoxies described above regarding the handling of food (see Lamb 2002, p. 111). At the conclusion of the *Rāmnāmīs'* most important annual gathering, all edible food items remaining at the end of the festival are distributed to the community as *prasāda*, prepared by deliberately mingling dissimilar comestibles. In this sense, the universalism of some devotional Vaishnava communities is held in common with non-Hindu communities such as the Sikhs.¹² At the same time, by promoting the capacity of *prasāda* to transvalue any substance, no matter its origins, devotional Vaishnavism expresses the apotheosis of *prasāda's* core ideology: that *prasāda* is a uniquely pure and purifying food suitable for universal distribution that supersedes ordinary commensality restrictions. Having considered how the basic ideology of *prasāda* and certain community practices around it can make *prasāda* a truly universal food, we can now consider some of the many cases in which this universalism is deeply qualified. In these contrasting situations, *prasāda* exchanges can express difference, separation, and inequality through apparent concern for ritual purity.

In communities where *prasāda* is used to express social segregations, the most stringent qualifications tend to be applied pre-prestation, at the *naivedya* phase of the *prasāda* cycle, when the food offering has yet to be transvalued. For example, the *Puṣṭi Mārg* or Vallabhācārya community is led by a hierarchical class of religious specialists, so that its *prasāda* exchanges take place within a one-way framework that strongly reinforces

Brahminical commensality norms. In a list of the food items offered as prestations in *Puṣṭi Mārg* practice, Toomey describes the ritual ranking of food items, in which dried fruits and other *kaccā* items are given ritual precedence by being in closest proximity to the deity:

... sun-ripened fruits, rock sugar, and nuts of various kinds, which do not require cooking of any kind, are considered most pure ... [f]ruits, nuts, pickles, and preserves are placed in small silver plates in front of the deity.¹³

Interestingly, the *Puṣṭi Mārg* community exceptionally flouts its own norms on the occasion of *Annakūṭa*, a potlatch-style feast laid out without the usual priestly intermediaries. As discussed by Toomey, this festival is marked by striking reversals as, for example, in casting aside the usual protocol for interactions with the main image at the Govardhan temple (*Mukṣṭ Mukhāravind Mandir*). Yet rather than calling into question the community's basic attitudes towards purity and pollution, the exceptional nature of the festival is perhaps better interpreted as upholding them, as this authorized moment of transgression serves to validate systems of social comportment and ritual activity, respectively, by temporarily contravening them through ritual.

Toomey also noted that highly stratified Vallabhite society regularly experienced social tensions in disputes regarding *prasāda* (Toomey 1986, pp. 60–61). These points of conflict may involve the denial or granting of the right to receive *prasāda*; matters of personal honour and the manner of *prasāda* distribution; internal challenges to hierarchy and leadership; and refusing to recognize food presented as *prasāda* by social 'inferiors' as *prasāda*.¹⁴ For example, Toomey describes how Vallabhite pilgrims never attended the *prasāda* feasts put on by the Bengali Gaudiya community when they served *kaccā* food, as ... '[m]any *sadhus*, they claimed, are of low-caste origin and therefore are unsuitable as cooks for a feast' (Toomey 1986, p. 78).¹⁵ In this view, the deity is viewed as the first or 'highest-ranked' eater, so that the cooking area used to prepare food for divine offerings should be correspondingly exclusive in order to produce food that is ritually suitable for the gods and all devotees to eat. By ranking *prasāda* distribution to devotees, refusing *prasāda* felt to have been prepared under ritually dubious circumstances, and maintaining exacting standards of purity in the kitchen and at all stages prior to *pūjā*, the Vallabhites offer a prime example of how *naivedya* remain instantiated within community systems of food purity, pollution, and restricted exchanges between people of different caste status.

The ISKCON community presents another interesting case of constraints applied to the universality of *prasāda*. In general, ISKCON is a non-exclusive community that grew out of the Gaudiya Vaishnava devotional tradition of Bengal that emphasizes the universality of devotion to Krishna. Although ISKCON rejects key orthodox norms in accepting converts, the group maintains extremely high standards of ritual purity for *naivedya* materials prior to offering. For example, an ISKCON cookbook for an American audience warns cooks not to taste the food during preparation and to ensure that the plate used for offering is not used for any other purpose. It also stipulates that the offering should be vegetarian (ISKCON 1991, p. 77). Once the food offerings are transvalued through ritual (*pūjā*) they become available for universal distribution to all, including non-ISKCON members. This belief is enacted in one of ISKCON's major social

outreach programs to distribute *prasāda*, glossed as the ‘mercy of Krishna’ in the United Kingdom through the registered charity ‘Food for All’ (ISKCON UK).

In sum, whether ‘caste-conscious’, like the exclusive *Puṣṭimarg* Vaishnavas, or ‘caste-blind’, like the inclusive ISKCON community, we find qualifications on *prasāda*’s universality at various stages in the ritual process. The restrictions to *prasāda*’s universality based on the status of the *naivedya* offering are perhaps most expected in the context of generic Hindu food ideologies, since these offerings have yet to undergo transvaluation in the *prasāda* cycle. Indeed, if we follow the notion of the gods as inviolable and pure beings, it would seem to follow that, once *naivedya* offerings are imbued with divine substance and become *prasāda*, they would all attain an equivalent level of incorruptible purity, such that one type of *prasāda* would be considered just as good (which is to say just as pure) as any other type (Fuller 1979, p. 469). In practice, however, this does not prove to be the case. The individual subjectivities expressed by *prasāda* invariably mean that not all *prasāda* is viewed equally by all people. Instead, *prasāda* is more typically situated within an elaborate ranking of divine or supernatural eaters, in which some divinities do not produce leftovers for human consumption, while others are perceived as an exuberant source of divine substance whose food leavings are always suitable for human consumption. This point means that some *prasāda* is viewed as being charged with lesser or superior substance relative to other varieties of *prasāda* so that, in practice, *prasāda* too is subject to hierarchical rankings. Its universality, then, cannot be taken for granted outside of its instantiations within context-specific hierarchies that rank deities and other beings. Khare raised a fascinating example of a qualified approach to *prasāda*’s universality with the case of *pañjīrī*, a *prasāda* food offering which an orthodox Brahmin priest might offer to the gods yet refuse to eat himself:

Particularly in such a preparation as *pañjīrī* [a *pakkā* dish typically used as a *prasāda* item],¹⁶ which is commonly used as *prasāda* (deity’s leftover food) for widest distribution across caste groups, it is crucial that a *ghee*-base sautéing is secured to convert it into a *pakkā* food category. Still, the most orthodox and the scrupulous may discriminate between foods so prepared and the deep-fat fried, or between the cooked foods and the fruits, because the latter do not come in contact with the cooking fire at all. Accordingly, an orthodox Brahmin priest may offer to the deity the *pañjīrī* prepared by his low-ranking *jajmān* [sacrificer, client for ritual services] after, for example, a scriptural recital or a special worship, but he may *not* eat it himself. He may instead accept a whole (uncut or unpeeled) fruit as *prasāda* and eat it after peeling or cutting it with his own hands.¹⁷

Earlier, we noted the tendency to maintain attention to the ritual purity of *naivedya* offerings so that they are suitable to offer to the gods. In this case, however, the concern for the quality of the offering is not tied to honouring the deity, for it is not the deity who cannot be served the *pakkā* *pañjīrī* but rather the Brahmin priest who cannot consume it, even after the food’s transvaluation by the deity. In other words, in this example orthodox Brahminical norms of commensality here outweigh the generic invulnerability of *prasāda* to pollution, thus engendering subdivided hierarchies of *prasāda* that, at

least for the Brahmin priest in question, are more or less pure than other types of *prasāda*. This reflects the fact that some high-status castes may, in practice and theory, be more ritually discriminating than the divinities they worship.

As we have seen throughout this chapter, commensality restrictions on food exchanges generate considerable tension for those trying to feed others. In Hindu theory and practice, there are far more combinations of people who cannot or will not accept food from each other than pairings of people that do permit food exchanges. Both food and drink are seen as highly conductive agents of substance; consumption of either can have profound outcomes for the ritual purity of food consumers. In a system where people must give and take food from each other but are often constrained in doing so, it is perhaps not surprising that we find *prasāda* as a category of extraordinary food that, according to its most idealized definition, is theoretically always fit to give and receive. As such, it can provide a channel for people to exchange food while negotiating otherwise restrictive norms of everyday co-existence.

Interactions regarding daily food are thus subject to complex rules that exist in a framework of limited possibilities for consumption. Ordinary commensality norms are both affirmed and transcended by the variously expressed rules governing the giving and receiving of *prasāda*. In the ideal formulation, while not all food is *prasāda*, in theory, *prasāda* can be all food making it the most universalized – if not universal – category of food. However, even as *prasāda* can theoretically transcend commensality restrictions, it remains deeply integrated within caste-conscious Hindu communities. It is in this sense that we can appreciate some of the important qualifications to the proposition of *prasāda* as a universal food. As a food object, *prasāda* is never removed from the principles of caste, purity, pollution, and substance permeability that condition food exchanges in Hindu communities. While these limitations are perhaps most apparent in the pre-preparation phase of the *prasāda* cycle, depending on circumstance, they can remain operative throughout it; or viewed from the opposite direction, with respect to potential food consumers, a food's status as *prasāda* does not automatically efface individual subjectivity or caste-based purity concerns.

22.5 Concluding Reflections

The constraints upon *prasāda*'s ability to transcend its own status as food (and the food-based identities of those who prepare, distribute, and consume it) return us to the issue of relational subjectivity introduced at the beginning of this chapter. In theory, *prasāda* is universal food – emanating not from another mundane individual equal to oneself – but from a divinity or another being held in high regard. In practice, however, one's attitude towards *prasāda* depends on one's relative location within the system of food restrictions, a location that includes attitudes about what foods are appropriate to become *prasāda*, how *prasāda* should be prepared and offered, how capable the particular kind of *prasāda* is to transcend typical food restrictions, how one views the divinity or esteemed being responsible for transvaluing *prasāda*, and so on.

To conclude, while these principles are pervasive and well documented in Hindu communities, it is extremely important to stress that these idealized norms are – naturally – subject to resistance and change. For example, in Karimpur, Uttar Pradesh, Susan Wadley described how a low caste of shopkeepers (*Mahājans*) became prosperous enough over several decades that local Brahmins felt obliged to loosen their circle of commensality restrictions to accept a feast invitation from them. Validated by becoming food givers to the highest caste, the shopkeepers enjoyed a corresponding increase in social status in the community (Wadley 1977, p. 152). In this case, a caste group's circle of prospective food-receivers can shrink and expand in response to changing circumstances, such as a relative ebb or rise in fortune. Thus, while caste and commensality rules may delineate relationships of exclusion and inclusion between groups, the position of any particular group relative to another group is a crucial additional factor. Finally, Brahminical norms governing food exchanges may be contradicted or rejected altogether – by Hindus and non-Hindus alike.¹⁸ As recounted by Ann Gold in her research on food systems and beliefs in rural Rajasthan, members of all Hindu communities claim the right of producing *prasāda*. In linking food, divinity, and untouchability, Gold introduces the 'Grain God' who, despite being tardy, fly-covered, and filthy, is recognized by Vishnu as his equal (Gold 1998, p. 158). When the other gods complain that they are superior to the humble Grain God, Vishnu hides him in the underworld with a Dalit (Harijan) woman named Sati Churi. Once the gods begin to starve from lack of food offerings, they recognize the value of Grain God and beg Vishnu to restore order. He does so by paying a visit to Sati Churi and accepting a cooked meal of *pakkā* food from her: this very food is then subsequently fed to the 330 million gods, who now happily accept it. As Gold explains, 'the tale's unspoken implication is that all the food consumed in all three worlds is blessed leftovers (*prasād*) from the Harijans [Dalits]' (Gold 1998, p. 158). The moral illustrated here is that without farming, labour associated with non-Brahmins, there can be no food, no eating, and, as Gold argues, 'no religion' (Gold 1998, p. 158). Set against the basic principles of substance permeability and their attendant commensality restrictions, we can now appreciate how this narrative powerfully asserts the right of Dalits (and other non-Brahmins) to be universally recognized as feeders through the gods' acceptance of their food as *prasāda*.

Even accepting the qualifications outlined above, the rules governing the preparation and distribution of *prasāda* allow for an exceptional degree of universality. In terms of commensality, the logic of *prasāda* allows individuals who might otherwise be separated by caste restrictions to share a common repast as *prasāda* receivers. Since, in principle, any food can become *prasāda*, from the perspective of food objects themselves, the category of *prasāda* demarcates normally low-ranking substances that have been transvalued into high ranking ones through viewing the substance of a revered being as grace rather than pollution. Such are *prasāda*'s most important universal features. Yet despite the widespread currency of these aspects, to accept *prasāda* as a universal food requires not just a mutual esteem for the object of veneration, but also matching attitudes and practices towards ritual purity, commensality, and categories of food classification. In sum, *prasāda* as sustenance can unite differing subjectivities and different kinds of matter through overlapping relational frames, while being equally able to divide them. Recognizing how, when and, especially, whom *prasāda* connects and divides is an important pathway to interpret Hindu social relations and Indic civilization more broadly.

Notes

- 1 See A.K. Ramanujan's 'Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?', in *India through Hindu Categories*, ed. McKim Marriott (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990).
- 2 The scholarship of R.S. Khare illuminates the complexities and nuances of what he terms Hindu 'gastrosemantics'. He documents the predominant modes of Hindu food systems in central Uttar Pradesh and offers broad insight into North Indian Hindu food systems, defined as applicable to 'orthodox Hindus' who are 'devout', from the Brahmin, Kayastha and Thakur castes in Lucknow and Rae Bareilly districts (see Khare 1976b, pp. ix–x, 5–9, 28; Khare 1976a).
- 3 For example, in a recent judgment, the Supreme Court of India ruled that 'There cannot be any dispute that caste is determined by birth and the caste cannot be changed by marriage ...'. See Amit Anand Choudhary, 'Caste decided by birth, can't be changed by marriage: Supreme Court' *The Times of India* (New Delhi): <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/caste-decided-by-birth-cant-be-changed-by-marriage-sc/articleshow/62575668.cms> (accessed 19 August 2018).
- 4 Throughout India, there are regionally specific ways of categorizing food purity and vulnerability; terms of reference in this chapter are in Hindi, with broad reference to North Indian Hindu cultural practices.
- 5 Khare (1976b, p. 17). In some listings of the *pañcāmṛta* elements, *dahī* (milk curds or yogurt) replaces Ganges water.
- 6 For example, when set in terms of Hindi-speakers' usage, '...along the pure-impure axis *prasād* may stand at the apex, *bhojana* in the middle, and *khānā* at the bottom' (see Khare 1976b, p. 6).
- 7 In the case of the ideal wife's relationship to her husband's leftovers, ingestion affirms their intimacy and equivalence through shared substance flow. It is in this sense that Bennett describes the patriarchal model of *pati-sevā* ('serving the husband') in which a wife's consumption of a husband's leftover food is a 'token of his replenishment' within the ritually pure environment of the cooking area (see Bennett 1990, p. 197, footnote 14).
- 8 For example, Antonio Rigopoulos cites an account of a Sai Baba devotee, B.V. Narasimhaswami, who describes an incident when the saint's vomit was eaten as *prasāda*: 'Baba [Sai Baba of Shirdi] then vomited out sweet potato. Kusa Bhav, seeing the miracle, voraciously swallowed the sweet potato as *Prasad*. Baba beat him and said, "Rogue. Why do you eat the vomit?" But Kusa did not mind the blows. Baba's heart melted ... (placing his palm on Kusa's head) ... "I bless you. Think of me and hold forth your palms. You will have my *prasad*." Kusa Bhav now holds up his empty palms and warm *udhi* (Baba's *Prasad*) falls into them.' Antonio Rigopoulos (1993, p. 140).
- 9 *Prasāda* is transliterated as *pracātam* or *piracātam* from Tamil (see Dirks 1982, p. 668). In another example, Dirks attests to this dynamic in a vassal-sovereign relationship among a subcaste of kingly retainers, the Uriyakarars, centred in Pudukottai, Tamil Nadu. According to Dirks, this class of palace servants, ... 'used to wait for the Raja to finish his meals so that they could take his plate or leaf. It was considered a great job' (see Dirks 1993, p. 268).
- 10 *Bhagavadgītā* 9.26: *patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati | tad ahaṃ bhakty-upahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanah |* |.
- 11 Paul Toomey (1986, p. 74). In the terms of emphasis explored in this chapter, Toomey's interlocutor claimed here that the divine substance flow involved in the creation of *prasāda* overrides any normal differentiation between different food types. As a result of this orientation towards *prasāda*, food givers and food preparers among the Gaudiya Vaishnavas need only be initiated sect-members, so that low-caste *sādhus* (ascetics) may serve as cooks.

- 12 Conceptually, *parśād* in Punjabi fully expresses abstract and material senses. For example, the title of a *banī* (devotional song) attributed to Guru Gobind Singh is called *tva parśādi svaiye*, translated as 'by your grace'. For interpretation of *parśād* in the key scripture known as *Mul Mantar*, see Pashaura Singh (2003, p. 88).
- 13 Toomey (1992, p. 134). See also Carol Breckenridge (1986, pp. 48–49), who noted a distinct ranking system for types of foods used as *naivedya* offerings within patterns of Śrī Vaiṣṇava worship at Tirupati.
- 14 Similarly, Arjun Appadurai (1981) discussed how a South Indian Dalit community, denied access to *prasāda* on account of caste discrimination, launched a court case to redress their grievances and to re-establish their right to receive *prasāda*.
- 15 Toomey (1986, p. 78), footnote 11.
- 16 Recipe for *pañjīrī* by cookery blogger Nisha: 'Panjiri is a very popular prasad prepared all around north India. It is quick to make and tastes wonderful. I myself make this for Krishna Janmastami. Ghee (1 tsp); rava (2 tbsp); sugar (fine or powdered, 2 tbsp); dry coconut (2 tbsp, grated); chironi (3/4 tbsp, or any other nuts chopped). Heat ghee and add the rava and cook till the raw smell. Take care that you cook on medium heat and the rava does not change colour. Add the chironi and coconut and cook for another minute. Switch off the flame and add sugar and transfer to a cool container. And panjiri is ready' (Nisha 2018).
- 17 Khare (1976b, p. 23, note 6).
- 18 Norms associated with material *prasāda* in Sikhism, known as *kaṛāh parśād*, express a categorical rejection of caste hierarchy. W.H. McLeod describes its liturgical use and speculates on its origins and meaning as follows: 'The *kaṛāh parśād* had been brought into the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* when first reading was initiated, and now, as a part of the concluding order, it is distributed to all present. *Kaṛāh parśād* means "sacred food which is prepared in an iron pan." Its origins in the Panth [community] are not known, nor which Guru introduced it, but presumably it can be directly traced to the Hindu offering of *prasād* in a temple. The practice seems to have been carried over in a modified form from the Hindu custom, with the *Guru Granth Sahib*, as the divine Word, taking the place of the image where divinity is believed to dwell ... it is distributed amongst all present ... no consideration should be given to differences of caste, nor to those between Sikh and non-Sikh' McLeod (1997, pp. 141–142). The preparation and distribution of *parśād* thus embodies Sikhism's universalist theology and rejection of Brahminical food and exchange norms, as does the Sikh institution of the community kitchen, *guru kā langgar*.

Works Cited

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Appadurai, A. (1981). <i>Worship and Conflict Under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case</i>, Cambridge South Asian Studies, 27. New York: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Babb, L.A. (1986). Spiritual Recognition and the Radhasoami Faith. In: <i>Redemptive Encounters: Three Modern Styles in the Hindu Tradition</i>, 15–92. Berkeley: University of California Press.</p> | <p>Bennett, P. (1990). Baba's House: The Devotional Experience in Pushti Marg Temples. In: <i>Divine Passions: The Social Construction of Emotion in India</i> (ed. O.M. Lynch), 182–211. Berkeley: University of California Press.</p> <p>Breckenridge, C. (1986). Food, politics, and pilgrimage in South India, 1350–1650 A.D. In: <i>Food, Society, and Culture: Aspects in</i></p> |
|--|---|

- South Asian Food Systems* (eds. R.S. Khare and M.S.A. Rao), 21–53. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- Dirks, N.B. (1982). The pasts of a Palaiyakarar: the ethnohistory of a South Indian little king. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 41 (1): 655–683.
- Dirks, N.B. (1993). *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, 2e. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Fuller, C.J. (1979). Gods, priests and purity: on the relation between hinduism and the caste system. *Man* 14 (3): 459–476.
- Gold, A.G. (1998). Grains of truth: shifting hierarchies of food and grace in three Rajasthani tales. *History of Religions* 38 (2): 150–171.
- ISKCON (1991). *The Higher Taste: A Guide to Gourmet Vegetarian Cooking and a Karma-Free Diet* (ed. International Society for Krishna Consciousness). Los Angeles, CA: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
- ISKCON UK (2018). ISKCON: food for life. International Society for Krishna Consciousness, <http://iskconuk.com/?p=157> (accessed 19 August 2018).
- Khare, R.S. (1976a). *The Hindu Hearth and Home*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- Khare, R.S. (1976b). *Culture and Reality: Essays on the Hindu System of Managing Foods*. Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
- Khare, R.S. (1992). *The Eternal Food: Gastronomic Ideas and Experiences of Hindus and Buddhists*, Suny Series in Hinduism. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lamb, R. (2002). *Rapt in the Name: The Ramnamis, Ramnam, and Untouchable Religion in Central India*, State University of New York Press Series in Hindu Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Mahar, P.M. (1960). A ritual pollution scale for ranking hindu castes. *Sociometry* 23 (3): 292–306.
- Marriott, M.K. (1968). Caste ranking and food transactions: a matrix analysis. In: *Structure and Change in Indian Society* (eds. M. Singer and B. Cohn), 209–242. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Co.
- McLeod, W.H. (1997). *Sikhism*. London: Penguin Books.
- Nicholson, A.J. (2014). *Lord Siva's Song: The Isvara Gita*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Nisha (2018). Collection of Indian recipes from my family table. <http://nishaskitchen.blogspot.com/2011/08/panjiri.html> (accessed 19 August 2018).
- Olivelle, P. (2002a). *Food for Thought: Dietary Rules and Social Organization in Ancient India*. Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.
- Olivelle, P. (2002b). *Abhakṣya and Abhojya: an exploration in dietary language*. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122 (2): 345–354.
- Om, P. (1961). *Food and Drinks in Ancient India, from Earliest Times to c. 1200 a.d.* Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal.
- Östör, Á. (1980). *The Play of the Gods: Locality, Ideology, Structure, and Time in the Festivals of a Bengali Town*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Pinkney, A.M. (2013). *Prasāda*, the gracious Gift, in contemporary and classical South Asia. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81 (3): 734–756.
- Ramanujan, A.K. (1990). Is there an Indian way of thinking? In: *India through Hindu Categories* (ed. M.K. Marriott), 41–58. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Rigopouluos, A. (1993). *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Singh, P. (2003). *The Guru Granth Sahib: Canon, Meaning and Authority*. Oxford University Press.
- Smith, B.K. (1990). Eaters, food, and social hierarchy in ancient India: a dietary guide to a revolution of values. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (2): 177–205.

- Toomey, P., M. (1986). Food from the mouth of Krishna: socio-religious aspects of sacred food in two krishnaite sects. In: *Food, Society, and Culture: Aspects in South Asian Food Systems* (eds. R.S. Khare and M.S.A. Rao), 55–83. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- Toomey, P.M. (1992). Mountain of food, mountain of love: ritual inversion in the annakūṭa feast at mount Govardhan. In: *The Eternal Food: Gastronomic Experiences of Buddhists and Hindus* (ed. R.S. Khare), 117–145. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.
- Wadley, S.S. (1977). Power in hindu ideology and practice. In: *The New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia*, World Anthropology (ed. K. David), 133–157. The Hague: Mouton.

CHAPTER 23

To Eat and Be Eaten

Mesoamerican Human Sacrifice and Ecological Webs

Kay A. Read

23.1 Sacrificial Feeding

Human sacrifice is one of those things so shocking that it can become a culture's defining factor for outsiders, and pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican sacrifice is no exception. For many, the act of sacrificing humans alone characterizes ancient Mesoamerica even though sacrificing numerous and diverse non-human offerings to sustain the cosmos was ubiquitous. Perhaps because sacrificing humans seems so scary and incomprehensibly alien to many of us, we miss insights that might deepen our understanding of both Mesoamericans and ourselves. Unfortunately for us, Mesoamerican sacrifice tends to titillate, but not inform.

The problem has arisen, in part, from our over-reliance on written, historical documents, all of which come filtered through their sixteenth-century Spanish conquerors. Yet, ethnographic studies along with pre-conquest pictographic manuscripts and archaeological materials can serve to counter and expand that necessarily limited view of those first medieval interpreters, especially if combined with a reflexive approach. To demonstrate, we can look closely at one such codex, the fifteenth-century Borgia from the Mexican Highlands, south of today's Mexico City. This largely divinatory codex is a bit unusual because, unlike similar books, it offers an elaborate 18-page cosmogony depicting the Fifth Sun's creation, the current age in which its makers lived.¹

The star of this tale is the deity Quetzalcoatl ('Feathered Serpent'), supported by his brother, Tezcatlipoca ('Smoking Mirror').² Both are major Highland deities, participating heavily in multiple creation stories and rituals. Frequently taking different guises in the Borgia's tale, Quetzalcoatl moves from scene to scene, sacrificially structuring the Fifth Sun. Furthermore, Quetzalcoatl dresses himself in three different ways in this document: Black, Tricolours, and Striped-Eye (Boone 2007, p. 177). If his multiple

'costume changes' confuse the reader, it might help to understand that, in Mesoamerica, a god is not just a god. Deities shared characteristics and changed their attire to create specific effects, making any one god more like a bundle of potentialities than a single entity. Moreover, he shares his accoutrements with others like his partner Tezcatlipoca and numerous wind snakes that bring in creative forces. Each of his objects indicates the specific power needed for a particular task. Keeping this in mind, let us begin by focusing on four scenes in this complex document.

Centred in the first folio lies a large disc, inside of which seven figures are arranged, three on each side and one bottom centre (Figure 23.1). The middle pair consists of a deity, the Black Quetzalcoatl (left) and a spotted Sacrificial Human Offering (right); each is letting blood from his penis. This blood flows upward, directly into the mouths of the top pair, the Old Creator Couple.³ Below this busy foursome, two young maidens dance with the offering (Boone 2007, p. 200). Although much here may seem strangely foreign to an outsider's eye, once one understands that the Creator Couple play central roles in cosmic creation (already having given birth to this first human offering), it becomes easier to recognize blood's sustaining nature. The sacrificial liquid is replenishing their creative strength.

This sacrificial feeding is followed immediately by the first full-blown, human heart-sacrifice (Figure 23.2). Stripe-Eye Quetzalcoatl (right) cuts the heart out of the same sacrificial offering (centre) and feeds it to Tezcatlipoca (left). Then, the offering is eaten

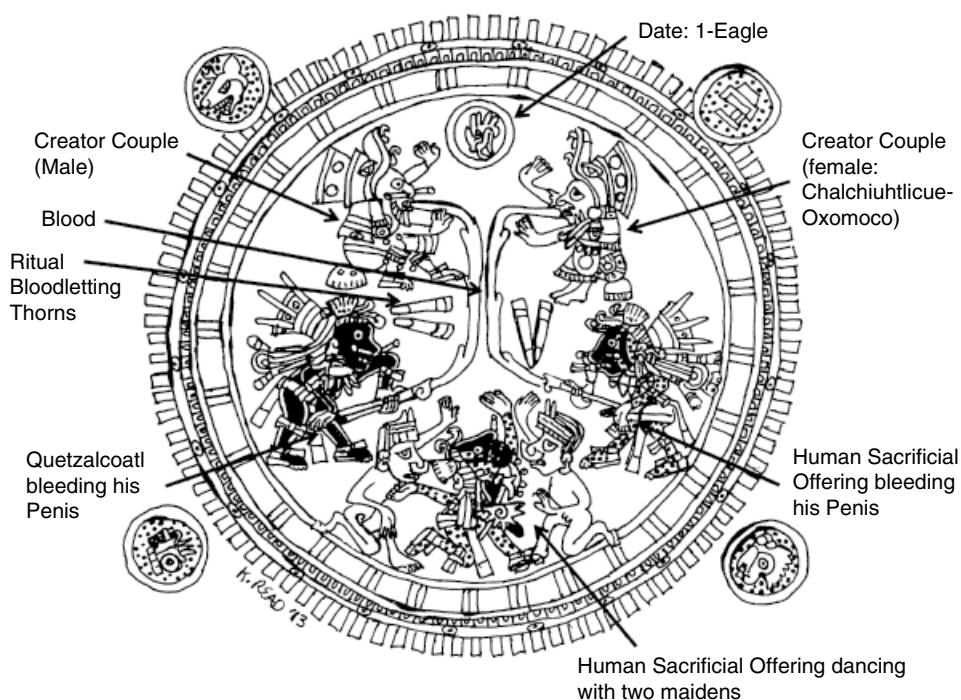


Figure 23.1 Preparation for the first human sacrifice, drawn from the Codex Borgia, folio 41 (1976; Díaz and Rodgers 1993).

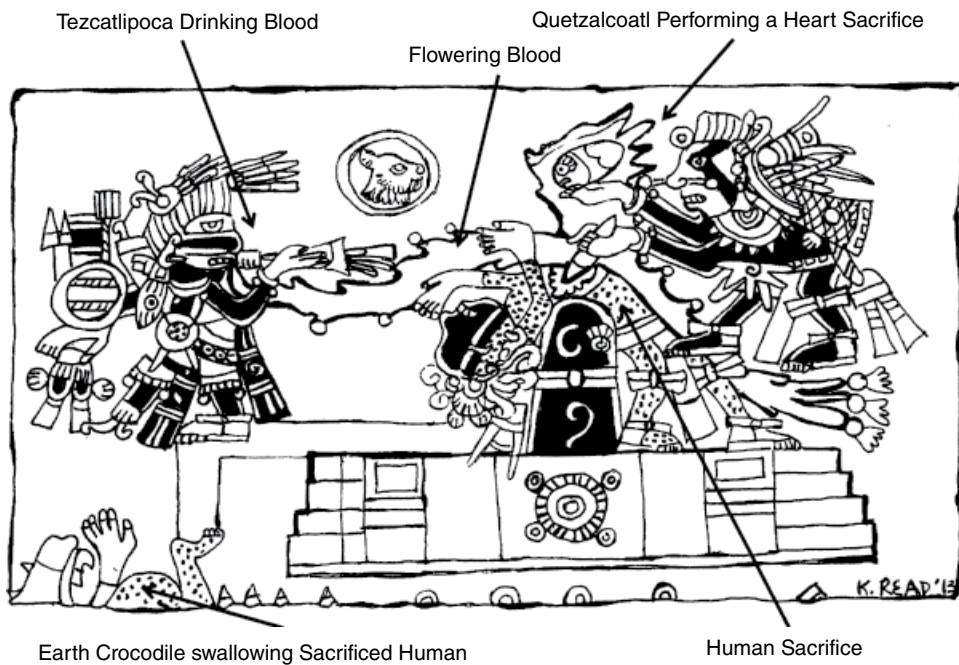


Figure 23.2 First human sacrifice, drawn from the Codex Borgia, folio 42 (1976; Díaz and Rodgers 1993).

by the underworld crocodile, in whose body he meets Mictlantecuhtli (God of Death). Inside the Underworld's belly, he also becomes a skeletal figure whose sacrifice yields six different animals and the Macuiltonaque (five directional deities associated with the sun's heat); and finally, two of those five are cooked in a pot and served to the Black (left) and Stripe-Eye (right) Quetzalcoatl (Figure 23.3) (Boone 2007, p. 200).

Now if those images seemed even stranger than the first, here is one that might seem even weirder. The Tricoloured Quetzalcoatl sits on a platform defecating flower producing, bloody faeces (Figure 23.4). A netted cape decorated with nine heads arches over him. In this form, Quetzalcoatl is Venus (the Morning Star) spreading his red-dawn liquid through the starry sky, thereby nourishing the rising sun with his excellent excrement (Boone 2007, p. 207).

What on earth can we make of this? At minimum, several of these images should raise questions. For example, while many have heard about human heart-sacrifices, what are all these other sacrifices? Isn't bloodletting also a form of human sacrifice (humans do it), and what does it mean to sacrifice gods by cooking them? Second, why all this feeding and eating and, since eating is clearly somehow central, why are deities, blood, and excrement the chosen foods?

These pre-conquest images convey a complex, intertwined, fertile, comestible cosmos. In what follows, I ask who eats whom by exploring sets of nourishing relationships communicated both visually and verbally and put in motion by ritual sacrifice. Moreover, once in motion, sacrifice continued to nourish all living entities in the cosmos from the

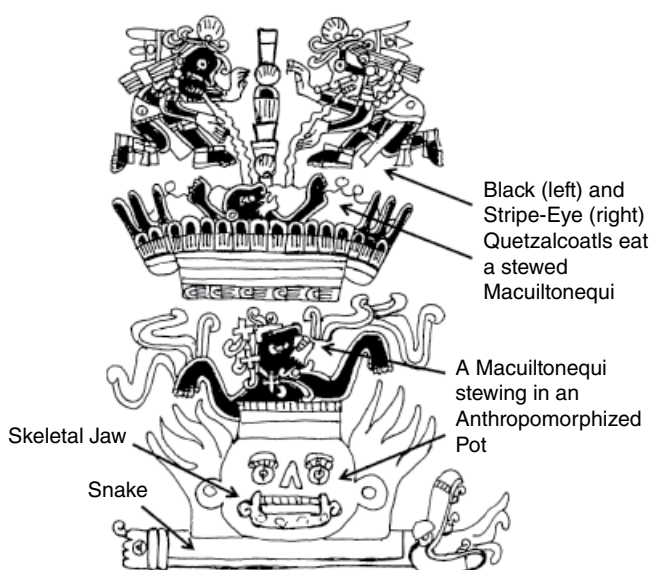


Figure 23.3 Deities eating deities, drawn from the Codex Borgia, folio 42 (1976; Díaz and Rodgers 1993).

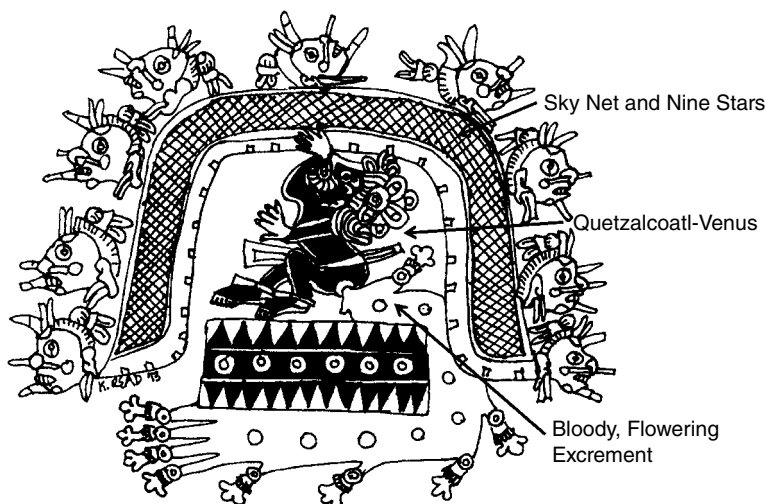


Figure 23.4 Venus defecating the Bloody Dawn, drawn from the Codex Borgia, folio 45 (1976; Díaz and Rodgers 1993).

cardinal directions and solar objects to plants, animals, humans, and gods (almost anything lived and ate). I will relate sacrifice to Mesoamerican 'trophic webs' (ecological food webs) by briefly examining some Mesoamerican agricultural practices; explore how an approach centred in materiality helps our understanding for why sacrifice provided food in light of those trophic webs; and ask how these explorations might prompt us to think through our own troubled relationships with the natural world. Focusing on

pre-Hispanic, Nahua (Aztec) sacrifice as the primary case-study, other past and present indigenous Mesoamerican groups will enhance the import of those relationships found among these incredible and incredibly ancient, nourishing webs.

23.2 Sustaining Blood

Mesoamerica is a culturally coherent area roughly extending from northern Mexico down to the mid-point of Nicaragua. Its current division into modern states obscures a cultural consistency, tracing as far back as the Paleoindian period (c. 20 000 years ago). Many of its characteristics such as a shared calendar, cosmological symbols like underground caves and a quartered cosmos, pyramids and platforms, large landscaping features, and agricultural practices existed by the early Preclassic (c. 2000–900 BCE), and many of those cultural traits continued in changing variations into the present, in spite of the arrival of the Spanish (1519) and their subsequent conquest. While this chapter focuses largely on Nahua speakers living during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Mexican Highlands, most scholars recognize basic continuities among the many distinctive groups in spite of linguistic, spatial, and temporal differences (Astor-Aguilera 2010, pp. 5, 184–187; Read and González 2000, pp. 7–11, 18–32). Much in Mesoamerica was widely shared, but regularly reshaped with localized twists (López-Austin 1996, pp. 33–38).

From a contemporary scholarly viewpoint, the Conquest's disruption makes such long-term cultural continuity central to understanding any one group's particularities. The conquerors destroyed books, architecture, and people, while also inflicting cultural damage by reinterpreting pre-conquest worldviews. They worked diligently to missionize indigenous peoples, generally preserving only those pre-Hispanic artefacts they deemed useful for either encouraging conversion or identifying undesirable heathen practices. Thus, written Nahua cosmogonies come highly fragmented and almost always reshaped to greater and lesser degrees by their Spanish collectors. Fortunately, however, such missionizing efforts never proved complete thanks to that continuity's power, making it possible to draw on the resources offered by Mesoamerica's enduring traditions to uncover something of value in spite of the losses. While the Borgia's full, pre-Hispanic cosmogony becomes quite valuable under these fragmented conditions, we still would be lost if it were not for cultural continuity helping us to unpack its pictures.

The Borgia probably comes from the Puebla-Tlaxcala region south of Mexico City. The document's somewhat mixed-style draws elements from Mixtec traditions, but carries greater affinities with those of the Nahua (Boone 2007, p. 227). This is probably due to its location in a vibrant area containing numerous urban centres, wherein 'Nahua, Mixtec, and many other peoples participated actively in economic and ideological exchanges'. Such regional exchanges led to 'a common script mutually intelligible across linguistic borders' that 'carried a symbol system' comprehensible to 'anyone trained in its visual conventions' (Boone 2007, p. 230). This screen-fold or accordion-like manuscript was meant to be set on a hard surface and read from right to left on one side, continuing around to the reverse side. A trained professional called a daykeeper,

would have dramatically presented its information, sometimes chanting a story from memory, at other times using its divinatory almanacks to help his clients with many daily needs. By sheer luck, these ancient pictures have been preserved and, although the Borgia's daykeepers are now dead, similar living practitioners are active among today's Maya.

Elizabeth Boone has argued persuasively that the Borgia's 18-page sequence presents a complex cosmogonic tale (2007, pp. 171–230). This cosmogony appears to begin not with the creation of the entire cosmos but with the Fifth Sun; four other ages having already preceded it. We see how life originated for the folk living in this Fifth Age. Many rituals are depicted on these pages, marking the fundamental importance of ritual sacrifice in the Borgia's world. The story's basic cosmological thrust also cannot be ignored. Indeed, four grand, interlocking themes repeatedly appear in the cosmogonic folios: sacrifice, cooking and eating, birth and fertility, and the right ritual relationships among those who must continue sustaining the Fifth Age.

A story recorded in Nahuatl might shed light on these four themes. This story describes how, as part of the preparation for the Fifth Age, Quetzalcoatl carried human bones he had stolen from the Underworld's Lord of Death to Quilaztli, a goddess in Tamoanchan. She then ground them like corn and he bled his penis on the flour so that the first humans could be formed from the dough. The story ends with Quetzalcoatl and other creator deities declaring together: 'The gods and commoners were born because they gave us [both] *merit*.'⁴ To explain a bit, merit (*mahceua*) describes the nature of particular powers (*teoyome*) flowing through almost all things. These powers are specific to an object (human or otherwise), giving it life and allowing it to exert certain pressures that influence others and shape events (Karttunen 1983, p. 130; Read, 1998, pp. 114–116, 151).

This passage makes several suggestions. First, the gods and commoners of the Fifth Age were formed simultaneously from this fertile act of bloodletting. Second, this happened because sacrificial bloodletting gave the original creator gods powers. Third, human merit resides in the edible bones and blood from which they were shaped. Fourth, since humans and gods were born from these freely offered corn-like bones and semen-like blood, their own food-like merit has incurred a debt that must be paid back. Indeed, the Nahuatl word *nextlahualixtli* means 'a payment of debt' and refers to similar ritual offerings.⁵

While not pictured with the exact same details, this culturally related story still can help add depth to sacrifice's meaning (Figures 23.1–23.3). Here lies the suggestion that blood from penises creates humans and gods out of that which nourishes them. Sacrificial blood is and begets nourishment; people and gods cook and feed each other out of debt for their own mutual existence. Just as gods nourished each other, so too is the merit of all humans. Quetzalcoatl and the first human fed their semen-like blood to that human's parents before his own sacrifice yielded animals and more deities, who then were cooked and fed back to Quetzalcoatl. Sacrifice was an obligatory exchange of nourishment; a debt that, when paid, provided energy to make things happen. If we are to eat, we must be willing to be eaten by others (Carrasco 1995).⁶

But, there is more to this set of relationships than just eating. While Quetzalcoatl bled his member to provide food, the feminine side of nourishing procreation also

appears among the Borgia's folios, this time (again) in the shape of pots and bowls. In the beginning of the Fifth Age's creation, wind beings pour from a dark, bubbling mixture cooking in an anthropomorphized pot (Figure 23.5). This pot wears a skull-like face and looks like a seated rump, its legs and arms ending in clawed feet. Sacrificial banners decorate the bubbling, writhing stew, while a skeletal deity hovers above this night-time, cooking project (Boone 2007, p. 179). All this seems suggestive for, when pregnant, a woman would become the goddess, Cipactonal (the crocodilian Underworld) wherein this particular pot bubbles. The Underworld is also where Quetzalcoatl found the corn-like bones for making humans. Moreover, an expectant mother became Oxomoco (the female half of the Creator Couple) who gave birth to the first human; her womb was called an 'ash pot' (*nexcomitl*), wherein corn soaked in lime to prepare it for cooking. While birth itself was called her 'moment of death', once the baby was safely born, the new mother became Quilaztli, the woman-warrior who shaped the first human. By repeating the sacrificial acts of those who created the first age, pregnancy became a cooking process at the end of which a battle occurred, and if successful, the woman warrior victoriously claimed her well-done meal, the baby (Read, 2006, p. 322, n.38; de Sahagún 1953–1982, Bk VI, p. 152–153, 160, 167).

War established cosmic relationships which, when well-cooked, nourished the Mexica People. 'Flowers' often served as a metaphor for sustenance, probably because edible plants produce flowers. But there is more; something called 'Venus Warfare' appears to have been initiated by Quetzalcoatl. Right after a Quetzalcoatl-Bat poured

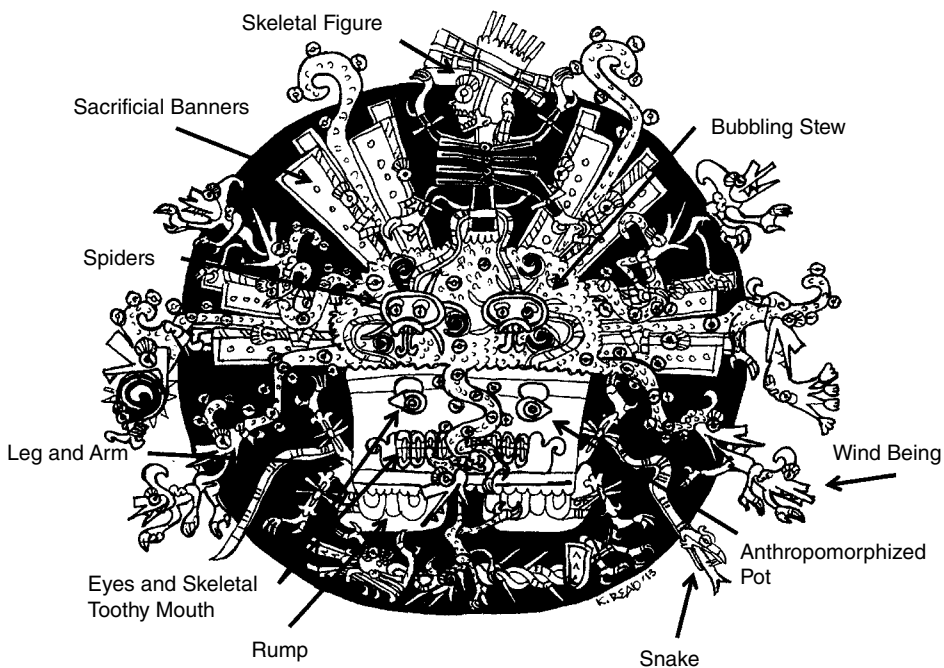


Figure 23.5 Wind snakes bubbling from a cooking pot, drawn from the Codex Borgia, folio 29 (1976; Diaz and Rodgers 1993).

sacrificial blood over Xochiquetzal (flower goddess), thereby producing flowers (fol.44; Boone 2007, p. 204), Quetzalcoatl himself initiated Venus Warfare (fol.45; Boone 2007, pp. 204–207) amidst a multitude of war imagery. Central Mexicans waged two kinds of wars: one, prearranged, ritualized battles, called ‘flowery wars’, meant to capture live human sacrifices needed for certain civic rituals; and another, aggressive conflicts, aimed at conquest. Imagery of flowers could imply either one, depending on the context. An example of the latter is the opening of a poem from Chalco that begins with women warriors (not yet pregnant) seeking flowers from the four directions of the earth. The poem, which was performed for Tenochtitlan’s Mexica ruling lord of the entire region, metaphorically links flowers, war, sex and poetic song in order to send a thinly veiled, Chalcan threat of outright war to the Mexica (Read 2006).

Finally, in the terminal scene of the Borgia’s cosmogony (fol.46, Figure 23.6), Quetzalcoatl initiates one of the most important civic rituals, the New-Fire Ceremony, which occurred every 52 years and gave birth to a new solar age in the life of the ruling city performing it. In Tenochtitlan, the region’s capital, the human offering, whose heart cavity housed the new fire, was a respected warrior captured in battle from another urban centre. The offering himself was named flower and likely had lived 52 years (Read 1998, pp. 170–175; de Sahagún 1953–1982, pp. 4:143–146 7:32).⁷ Thus, war (ritualized and actualized) netted sacrifices whose worth was in their fertile blood, which fed and sustained the living, Mexica civic and social body, helping it to blossom.

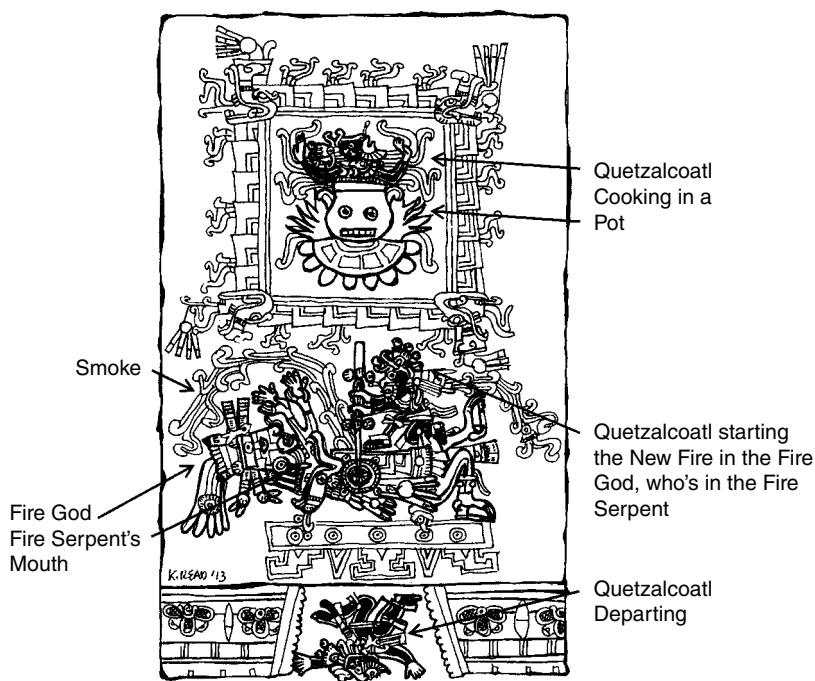


Figure 23.6 Quetzalcoatl simmering in a pot before performing the first New-Fire Ceremony, drawn from the Codex Borgia, folio 46 (1976; Díaz and Rodgers 1993).

Before sparking the new fire, Quetzalcoatl himself stews in a pot, preparing for his final cosmogonic performance (Figure 23.6; Boone, 2007, p. 208). This culinary incubation readies Quetzalcoatl for his ultimate cosmogonic act, the inauguration of the fifth and final age. Having become sustenance himself, he now has the capacity to nourish this crucial fire in Xiuhtecuhtli, who is himself being devoured by Xiuhcoatl, the fire serpent. Quetzalcoatl leaves immediately after, having now initiated the Fifth Sun and completed the tale. From there on, humans must connect with the age's powers through divinatory rituals utilizing a wide variety of sacrifices, many of them quite benign and some purely symbolic.⁸

Vessels appear throughout the Borgia's cosmogony. Although they point to different creative events, all are anthropomorphized in similar ways. Claw-footed, corn goddesses emerge from skull-faced vessels (folio 31); the vessel used to cook the Macuiltonaque wears a skull-face (Figure 23.3); and soon after that scene, Quetzalcoatl himself simmers in a toothy pot (Figure 23.6). Pots and bowls were where sacrificed things stewed before they emerged as fully cooked beings ready to perform their sacrificial duty again.

The Borgia's many images equating the preparation and consumption of food mound up; the message seems clear. Sacrifice is what creates the inhabitants of the Fifth Age and nourishes them so they will have creative energy to do what needs doing. But this appears to be an equal-opportunity cosmos; even the god Quetzalcoatl both sacrificed his semen-like blood and was sacrificially cooked in a pot before lighting the flame that would sustain the Fifth Sun. No one was exempt, neither gods, humans, nor anyone else. All living entities who ate must also sustain other living entities.

Moreover in the Borgia's cosmogony, all kinds of things appear to be living and therefore hungry. Almost everything seems personified with eyes, mouths, and teeth; many come with legs and arms, some ending in claws, some hands and feet. The list is long, including: deities, humans, animals, plants, trees, knives, vessels, winds, calendrical dates, the stars above and world below. If there is any sense of something being totally inanimate, we do not find it easily here; an overwhelming number of pictures depict animate beings existing in ritually proscribed relationships that ensure nourishment for all. To eat and be eaten is simply the way the world reproduces itself.

That sacrifice nourishes animate entities is not peculiar to just the pre-conquest Mexican Highlands. Such exchanges of sustaining energy happened all over Mesoamerica throughout its history. To offer just a few examples: the *Popol Vuh*, a Maya cosmogony, tells a story about how the gods created the first humans from corn, which they wetted with water to give humans flesh and blood. It is said that 'by sacrifice alone, by genius alone they were made' (Tedlock 1985, pp. 163–165). The *Popol Vuh* is a living tale recited among the Quiché of Guatemala, but it has lived for well over a millennium. In another image, Pacal, the Maya lord of Palenque (684 CE, Chiapas, Mexico), is shown at death sliding down into the Underworld's skeletal jaws; after having been eaten, he will travel through the wet underworld and rise, reborn as the sun. By so doing, he is repeating acts performed by the Hero Twins, creative, corn-like protagonists in the *Popol Vuh* (Schele and Miller 1986, pp. 268–269, 282–285; Tedlock 1985, pp. 103–160). Pacal's son, Chan Bahlum, will accede to the throne lit by the authority of his newly born solar father (Carlson 1976, p. 110). Just as gods and ordinary folk are made of comestibles; so too elite rulers, who one day will be eaten to become the sun.

Comparable ideas continue among contemporary Yucatek Maya where objects called 'talking crosses' live. Miguel Astor-Aguilera tells us that they only coincidentally look like Roman Catholic crosses, for they can be traced back for millennia. Today's crosses superficially mimic the Catholic ones, but serve their own non-Catholic purposes (2010, p. 49). They are considered alive because, as with many Maya objects, a kind of invisible being or 'soul' (*k'u*) has been 'tethered' to the cross by ritual means; an event that can happen either because a ritual practitioner has sought the connection or because the being itself decided to initiate contact. Such beings endow an object (like crosses and humans) with volition and energy, allowing the cross to communicate with its keepers, who shoulder the 'burden' of sustaining it. Similar to the Nahuatl idea of powers (*teoyome*), *k'u* animates its particular container with 'both good and bad agency or power'. While not all things are animated, they all have the potential. In other words, many objects ordinarily considered inanimate in the Western world, are sentient persons in Mesoamerica (Astor-Aguilera 2010, pp. 97–100, 114–115, 185, 205–207).

This means that humans and non-humans live in close relationships with each other; tethering *k'u* was not some magical transformation of inanimate objects into divine spirits who transcend mere mortals. According to Astor-Aguilera, neither deceased ancestors nor crosses are deified; they merely are placed or put themselves into everyday relationships with others depending on their 'particular ... skills, knowledge, ritual potency and power'. To break connections, a being need only untether itself or be untethered by someone else (2010, pp. 97–100, 114–115, 185, 205–207).

The talking cross at Chuukmuk Lu'um (Yucatán, Mexico), offers a vivid example of a living sacrifice. As 'centre over the earth', this stone cross forms the locus of a complex pilgrimage that, according to Astor-Aguilera's consultants, is centuries-old and was governed originally by an indigenous Maya calendar, the Chilam Balam.⁹ The renewal rite was done to set the stage for the annual burning of the cornfields, their planting, coming of rains, and eventual harvesting. Appropriately placed in a forest clearing, the ritual involves five days of continuous festivals, each dedicated to one of the five directions. Each day begins with the sacrificial offerings of pigs who are 'dramatically thrown on their backs onto a large, raised round altar just as dawn breaks'. As the pigs squeal loudly, one greets the rising sun, offering the screaming beasts to 'Great Father Sun'. A generation ago, the pigs would have been sacrificed directly in front of the cross, 'Lord Stone'; but this has changed because some now consider it too messy and moved the sacrifice to a nearby place. The hogs are butchered, cooked, and shared with everyone attending the festival, including Lord Stone and Father Sun. At the end of each day, participants perform dances with a pig's head making 13 counterclockwise turns, followed by 13 clockwise. Turning two ways undoes the power the cross has just received from having been fed so well; if some of that power is not undone, the cross may have too much and feel overly inclined to cause bad things like droughts and widespread illness (Astor-Aguilera 2010, pp. 124–131).

This is perhaps how we should understand the many and varied beings in the Borgia. They were ritually endowed with living powers, giving them personhood and special talents that could be employed for good or bad. A being could use or be used by pots, headdresses, plants, animals, or whatever in order for a particular event to occur, like either the birth or demise of a new solar age. As David Carrasco put it, all these 'Cosmic

Jaws ... were part of the underlying premises and orderings of the world that generated the everyday stuff for humans to work with' (1999, p. 187).

The Borgia's images present a multi-layered and intermeshed set of relationships all revolving around sacrifice, fertility, and food. Because all objects, from people to pots, potentially lived and needed nourishment, one owed a debt for having eaten, which one paid by feeding others. Cooking prepared and shaped everyone's meals – an activity likened to conception, pregnancy, and birth – which also prepared, shaped, and produced new food-like beings. All persons, human and non-human, necessarily participated because eating provided energy required by all; without it they would die and become food for someone else. War led to sustenance because all eating involved capturing and killing someone (whether corn or humans).¹⁰ Even flowers participated in this procreative, nourishing, alimentary process (Read 1998, pp. 130–137); few (if any) received special favours sparing them from someone else's jaws. From gods to people to plants, all lived, ate, died, and were eaten by someone else. Moreover, rarely does anyone express sentimentality over this consumptive process. As Phillip Arnold noted, constant consumption did not indicate a 'sad or pessimistic outlook on the world' because 'life was based on an interactive reality that food promoted between life and death' (2001, p. 164). I suspect that – as with today's Yucatek Maya – this pre-conquest food exchange also helped humans shape future events by controlling the powers the currently living acquired (Read 1998, pp. 32–44).¹¹

But for me, all this eating and being eaten still raises a few questions, mostly about ourselves. A look at some ecological examples might help introduce a few interesting, perhaps disturbing issues we need to consider, for this object-eat-object world sounds rather like the trophic (food) webs sustaining our own environments. To understand the import of this, we need to chew on Mesoamerican cosmological ideas within the context of their sophisticated, often well-managed agricultural practices like the rotational burning of those cornfields that the Yucatek pig sacrifice was renewing.

23.3 Sustaining Excrement

Mesoamericans have sustained and managed the beings in their fields, forests, and waterways for at least 6000–7000 years. Yet, ever since the Spanish arrived, Western interpreters too often have viewed pre-Columbian land management as unsophisticated, even though much of the land showed (and still shows) clear signs of prehistoric human impact. Dubbing Mesoamerica an 'untamed wilderness' – given by God for human use – masked the extent of pre-conquest impact for both Spanish conquerors and later investigators. Unfortunately, future generations of scholars, often relying on incomplete or misinformed colonial documentation, failed to find sophisticated techniques. For example, many assumed that Maya ceremonial centres must have held far fewer residents than suggested by their large, physical size because 'primitive' slash and burn (swidden) agriculture could not support large populations. Recently, such misguided interpretations have been exposed as wrong. The Maya often successfully supported quite dense, urban populations with intensive agriculture, including swidden (Dunning and Beach 2000, pp. 179–181).

Swidden is a complex rotational system. A plot is cleared, burned, planted, harvested for some years and then allowed to lie fallow for 5–15 years before clearing again; during which, other plots are farmed. This system is and was extremely efficient. The ashes from annual burning would have enriched the pre-conquest soils for planting; while fallowing provided habitat for medicinal and useful wild plants, game, building materials, and an acceleration of the forest's recovery. Every stage involved humans: fertilizing fields by spreading human and other organic waste, picking which plants to encourage or weed, cutting trees, clearing, and pruning. Multicropping corn and beans assured that when the corn depleted the soil of nitrogen, beans re-enriched it. Thus, one crop fed another (Lentz 2000, pp. 92–97; Peters 2000, pp. 205–211).

Equally efficient activities adapted wetland areas to human use. The Nahua reclaimed wetlands by constructing raised mounds ('chinampas') built of alternating layers of mud and aquatic plants, stabilized around their edges by willow trees (McClung de Tapia 2000, pp. 134). They refreshed these mounds annually by dredging up rich, decomposed muck from the lake's bottom and spreading the usual fertilizers, including human waste. Seven crops could be rotated through these plots annually, if conditions permitted; and chinampas included fish hatcheries, birds, animals, and a huge range of insects and reptiles westerners would not consider food, but Mexicans did. As Ortiz de Montellano noted, the Mexica ate just about 'every living thing that walked, swam, flew and crawled', whose growth the chinampas promoted (Ortiz de Montellano, 1990, pp. 94–97, 115; Read, 1998, pp. 6–7, 200).

People thus lived intimately with a material world that directly impacted their ideas. Central Mexican cosmological conceptions rooted themselves in and fed off of a physically real existence. Therefore, the fertilizer sustaining their fields proved critical to life. The sun surely needed a good breakfast before its strenuous skyward climb, so Quetzalcoatl-Venus excreted dawn's bloody nourishment (Figure 23.4). Like corn, neonatal babies grew in a container of fertilizing ashes; and the rotting, filthy underworld muck from the wetlands' bottom fed the fields. Detritus – decomposing, smelly, disgusting, dead stuff – sustained the living and sacrifice envisioned this rotten eating. This was how the world's beings connected to one another.

Coming from an environmental standpoint, David Lentz offers a potentially useful model for understanding the Borgia's cosmological relationships. He defines an 'anthropocentric trophic [food] web' as a 'set of populations whose interactions are intensely linked and act as a subunit of a larger ecological community, with loose connections to other subunits'. These webs include humans (their biggest consumers), domesticated and wild animals and plants, and a vast host of other organisms, often living in symbiotic relationships (2000, pp. 89, 92–97). Both swidden and chinampa systems exemplify managed trophic webs, and their human managers were well aware of what fed what.

However, no trophic web stays in perfect balance. According to Lentz, ecological stability remains only as long as outside influences avoid disturbing it; but because outside influences are almost constant, ecological communities are in constant flux. In a state of 'imperfect balance', ecological communities stay balanced awhile, but never forever. We humans both actively cause disturbances in and support trophic communities (2000, p. 2). From a human standpoint, our environments change, always have, and always will.

Sacrificial eating ritually depicts such imperfectly balanced trophic webs, rooted in centuries of human experience. Mexican Highlanders did not have to go further than their fields or waterways to figure this out; and given that they also seemed no more susceptible to grand disasters than any other group, it would seem that sacrifice was not fuelled entirely by some paranoia rooted in apocalyptic demolitions like massive droughts or widespread disease.

One unfortunately dominant perception of Mesoamerican sacrifice explains its horrors as a regrettable, albeit understandable way to deal with grand-scale, apocalyptic-like disasters. This interpretation – narrowly defined as human and often shaped by popular media (sometimes drawing from past scholarship) – appears so familiar that it seems rooted in human nature itself.¹² Nevertheless, this perception may come from imposing deeply rooted worldviews explicitly and implicitly structured by end-of-time scenarios found within Judeo-Christian traditions. It may feel comforting to wrap something so strangely shocking as human sacrifice within the bounds of old, familiar scenarios; but such unconscious swaddling of the unfathomable may hide viable alternatives.

Graham Harvey offers one such viable interpretation rooted in everyday life. For Harvey, no environment exists separate from the ‘lives we and all other species live’, for ‘[t]here is only ecology: the at-home acts of multiple related species’. To demonstrate this ordinary, relational rootedness, he offers the words of a contemporary Maori, words easily applicable to Mesoamerica: “‘The purpose of religion is to ... do violence with impunity,’” which means “‘enter the forest and do some milling for building purposes, to husband the plants and then to dig up the tubers to feed one’s guests’” (Harvey 2013, pp. 77, 99). As with the modern Maori, Mesoamerican sacrifice was (and still is) a daily affair striving to balance multiple, small and large, reoccurring, ecological imbalances among interspecies. Frightening, unusually horrible disasters did influence Mesoamerican experiences, of course; yet sacrifice also – even more powerfully – rooted itself in the ordinary flux of lives lived closely with many other non-human beings. What went on (all the time) in Nahua fields, waterways and forests also shaped their larger world. Thus, the cosmos itself mirrored the transitory, daily earthly destructions surrounding them; it too constituted a trophic web.

The Nahua were well aware that maintaining perfect balance within any trophic web was impossible. Nothing stayed the same in either their biological or cosmological realms. The Borgia’s Fifth Age followed four others; each populated by a particular people, lived a period of time and ate a particular food, their violent destructions transforming them into the next age; each was named for their smashing ends (the Fifth, called ‘Movement’, would die by earthquake). A Nahua story tells how the Fifth Age’s sun could not move until death (*Mictlantecuhtli*) first hunted down another frightened god, after which others sacrificed themselves. Only then could Quetzalcoatl gently puff its celestial flame into motion. As in the Borgia, nothing was created without killing, squashing, or reshaping something else (Read 1998, pp. 35–39, 47–88). All potentially living objects – including humans, gods, and ages – acted as vessels who violently munched down food before offering it to others. These images can remind us that, even in our own experience, beings do eat each other and that is how this imperfectly balanced, ephemeral world really works. Perhaps like the Spanish, we sometimes ignore an unpleasantly animated, material world requiring our attention.

Many in the developed world live totally divorced from the realities surrounding the production of the food they eat. Such a separation of lived, productive realities fosters not only ignorance; but also a sense of alienation from the very products that sustain them. Food can become equated with lifeless objects like dinnerware to be bought and sold; valued for its flavour, utility, convenience, or social prestige; but not as something equally in need of sustenance. This alienation helps mask not only the degradation of our food resources and potentially dangerous processing practices, but also our own discomfort with admitting the violence necessitated by our own lives. If we look too closely at either our naturally or mass-produced nourishment, we might find some disturbing images we would rather ignore because they might remind us just how animated our material world is and how intimately connected we actually are with our own violently ravenous cosmos.

Timothy Morton offers a sometimes disconcerting image of an 'ecological mesh' that mimics the Borgia's disturbing trophic web-like depictions. Morton's mesh involves all sorts of shifting, changing 'strange strangers' who become more 'ambiguous', the more we know them. No anthropocentrism versus biocentrism exists; nor any distinct animals, humans, or even non-humans because the boundaries separating those things are, in reality, indistinct in this flat ontology. We are bound intimately with 'strangely strange strangers' who are not easily classified (2010, pp. 40–41, 46, 96). Our own gut's microbes eating our food are not much stranger than the strange strangers in the Borgia. Are we the microbes or they us? Recently at a picnic, I attended, a woman brought an infant squirrel, which she nursed by holding it in her palm, dropping milk into its minuscule mouth. She then cuddled this pale, hairless, blind beast in her ample bosom until it slept. Amazingly (to me), adults and children alike reacted in one of two ways: either with absolute fascination or strong repulsion, calling the creature 'alien'. Nature can seem as radically foreign as Mesoamerican mythic beasts, perhaps because these sacrificial participants appear as alien as members of our own trophic webs, including those inside us.

How do we come to grips with an environment, which binds us together with such disturbing 'aliens and ghosts?' Intimacy can prove painful in what Graham Harman called our 'polypsychic' existence (Morton 2010, pp. 94, 100; Harman 2011, pp. 118–123). The Borgia creates a similar vision of intimately intertwined and frighteningly weird, sacrificial connections. Likewise, our own mesh incorporates necessarily transformative violence without which nothing can exist. We ourselves are in no better position than the Central Mexicans; we're just better at masking it as the Spaniards masked Mesoamerican land management with their God's pristine, perfectly unchanging, Edenic wilderness. No such comforting perfection actually exists, only materialized transformation. In reality, rotting, bloody excrement sustains us just as much as it sustained the Mesoamericans no matter how much we choose to ignore it (Harman 2011, pp. 8, 110, 112).

23.4 To Eat and Be Eaten

Pre-Hispanic Mexican Highlanders, in particular, and Mesoamericans, in general, lived and often still live within biological trophic webs mirrored within their cosmic visions. Sacrificial action, both actual and metaphoric, maintained these tightly intertwined,

yet shifting webs of complex relationships. What happened in the fields, forests, and waterways also happened in the homes, temples, and cities; no particularly sharp distinctions separated one living object from another. Sacrifice (human and non-human) simply made the necessary, consumptive connections in this imperfectly balanced universe and, because reality got its due, no 'person' could find excuses for not participating. All were bound by a naturally recognized sacrificial code. Even if one tried, one could not escape that inevitable exchange of food.

Nothing in this fully materialized cosmos could be understood without resorting to objects (many of which lived). Pictures communicated these realities accompanied by picture-painting words, for Nahuatl and other indigenous languages employed metaphors with a skill rivalled by few. Even when a daykeeper chanted out the stories behind the pictures, he used metaphoric words to convey his messages. Visualized verbalization has its own materialized logic that interconnects imagery rather than simply connecting the 'if-thises' and 'then-thats' of rational discourse. If this chapter offers that sort of reasoning (and I hope it does), then it is because its author is a Westerner, not a Nahua.

This Westerner also rather thinks that there is something to this Nahua materially logical world. We use imagery, stories, and performances as much as the Borgia's daykeeper did. The Borgia's forcefully active presentation created a highly organized storyboard that led the audience's eyes through its pages as though it were a silent movie, while the daykeeper provided a personalized, dramatic soundtrack. Its artist-scribe, trained in the codex's non-linguistic, mutually intelligible script, knew exactly what he was doing no less than a cinematographer today shaping a movie's images to send particular messages to and control the reactions of his/her viewers. Moreover, the artist-scribe and the daykeeper knew that performative imagery would be far more persuasive than reasoned argumentation, just as an advertiser creating a pharmaceutical advertisement knows that s/he must bombard the viewer with images of cheerful, healthy people having fun in happy places, while rapidly rattling off the horrible side-effects that might cause internal bleeding or death. For both the ancient Mesoamericans and ourselves, the images are likely to be remembered long after the words have died away.¹³ The Borgia's imagery presented an unavoidable, visual logic arguing for a sacrificial world populated by a gigantic range of living beings who necessarily ate each other.

Morton points out that, ecologically speaking, it is unhelpful to divide gods from humans, from animals, from plants, from rocks, microbes, viruses, atoms, etc. Our world is just as actively shifting, just as relationally interconnected, and just as imbalanced. So, what can we learn from this exploration into such an alien universe as the Mesoamerican sacrificially driven one? What follows are a few issues I think worth considering. Many of them are potentially both complicated and personal, some perhaps disconcerting; but if we are to live successfully in our own materialized world, then we must consider them.

What does it mean to accept such a materialized existence? We are hardly the only beings that matter for, as in both Mesoamerican and Morton's visions, many things live in highly intimate relationships some Western ontologies may not easily swallow. The mystical philosopher, Georges Bataille attempts to overcome such reticence by offering

a Western ontology that makes sacrifice a path to the intimacy denied by our fragmented, material world. For Bataille, we humans – as conscious beings – long for our earlier, lost state of ‘animality’, now completely closed to us. Animal eaters and eaten cannot be truly distinguished from one another; those violent, consumptive relationships exist as simply a ‘matter of circumstance’, governed unconsciously by ‘inevitable responses to stimuli’, for animals live in a state that is ‘like water in water’. Self-conscious, tool-making humans, however, live in a hierarchical world of utility that (unlike Morton’s) sharply distinguishes one object from another by its purpose, thereby alienating humans from the undifferentiated, intimate continuity of animality. Sacrifice, the ‘antithesis of [utilitarian] production’, creates an animality-like, momentary closeness because it consumes the intimate order, and by so doing, ‘dissolves the real [conscious, object-governed] order’, thereby revealing – through life’s negation – ‘life in its plenitude’. Bataille’s solution to having lost our animal intimacy is to experientially lose the self-consciousness dividing us from life’s undifferentiated watery depths (Bataille 1992, pp. 20, 23–25, 27–29, 47–49, 109).

Bataille’s poetic, experiential response, however, seems to reject any utilitarian path for dealing with the material world’s denial of our own self-centred importance. This rejection complicates our ability to negotiate with, what Harvey describes as, ‘other persons (most of whom are not human)’ (2013, p. 203). First, the more we know about animals, the more they look like us.¹⁴ It appears that animals also may display some consciousness of what they do; they may not eat or be eaten just because they are unconsciously responding to stimuli. Furthermore, humans unconsciously respond to stimuli way more than we think. As it turns out, we are not near as self-conscious and are way more animal-like than Bataille assumes (Aamodt and Wang 2010). Second, if intimate ‘animality’ never really existed either in human or animal lives, then animal lives are no more ‘like water in water’ than ours. How then do we understand Morton’s borderless, flat ontology, which sometimes sounds a bit like ‘water in water’ itself? Since neither Bataille nor Morton want a world governed by sharp distinctions or subordination, does ‘flat’ mean that we have eliminated all boundaries or just the hierarchies dividing the various personable objects of our world? How are we to consider the shifting, relational nature of our apparent differences, if no differences ‘should’ (as Bataille suggests) or ‘actually’ (as Morton suggests) exist? These authors offer two distinctive solutions, one rooted in Western mysticism, the other often rooted in Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁵ Harvey and Julian Droogan (2013) offer a third.

Morton, Julian Droogan, and Harvey all suggest we might address this issue of inter-being differentiation by moving towards a more animistic worldview. Droogan qualifies the term because Astor-Aguilera points out that tethering an invisible being to a container is not the same as transforming that container into an animate being itself. Yet, Droogan feels that ‘animism can be seen as an acknowledgment of the active role that non-human subjects take in structuring culture, as well as the tendency of many aspects of the material world to act as apparently autonomous agents’. Droogan also notes that Astor-Aguilera prefers the term ‘ecological’ to animistic (2013, loc. 3198–3207), something that appeals to both me and Harvey as well.

Harvey ecologically defines animism as 'pervasive multi-species interactional relationships' (2013, p. 19, 209). Based on 'mutuality', the Maori-tuber interactions fit here, as do those of Nahua beings. But these relations among many species become the meetings of 'strangers', and do not indicate 'sameness'. For Harvey, '[t]here is no return to such flatness and constriction' (2013, p. 106, 109). Quetzalcoatl, the first human, and all the beings of the Nahua world were species sharing intimately mutual moments that may break down their separations temporarily, but only for the utility of creating new, transient boundaries. There may be a sense similar to an equalizing 'life in its plenitude' for all (Bataille 1992, p. 47), but not sameness in the differing forms life's plenitude takes. Our real challenges lie not in obliterating boundaries, but in deciding which boundaries to sacrificially transform into which new ones. Existence itself fundamentally and continually demands questions concerning utility and value.

Clearly, little surpasses food's utility, but what does it mean to eat? The Mesoamerican world can get pretty violent and what we call the natural world is not particularly pacific; for that matter, nor is Western society. With our long history of seemingly endless warring, we hardly can judge the Mesoamericans for highlighting the violent nature of creative change, for we are probably equally violent, just in different ways. Besides, the Mesoamericans make sense. Change itself is a form of comestible, creative destruction, a potentially unpleasant transformation that no one escapes. Violence constantly alters our large and small realities, from a war-induced trauma eating up a soldier's mental state to chopping a carrot for soup. Besides, even by Western standards, things eat each other. Temporarily balanced trophic webs bind us all, whether we like it or not; our health depends on that carrot, while its health depends on our agricultural practices. We cannot even grow that carrot without murderously thinning its over-populated patch or ripping out threatening weeds. If we do not want to follow the sacrificially violent path of Mesoamerica, then we must figure out how to live comfortably and constructively with those necessarily violent elements in all creation. A new ontology is needed, as Bataille, Morton, Droogan, and Harman all suggest, but we need to face that challenge with our eyes wide open to both our own dismally destructive records and ecological realities. Everyone must eat, but whom and how?

Finally, what does it mean to be eaten? The Borgia presents us with a seamlessly participatory cosmic ecology; but how much of that social closeness can Western individualism stomach, no matter how pacific we might miraculously make it? Social living is often hard on individual desires and needs, and recognizing that we do not live alone carries tremendous responsibilities that one often fulfils neither to one's own or anybody else's satisfaction. The flip-side of sacrificially social creation is one's own inevitably transformative demise. When, in what form and how can we willingly accept that we too must sacrificially change, perhaps so radically that we cease to recognize ourselves.

The materialized, sacrificial world of the Borgia is not one in which I would want to actually live; however problematic, I prefer my own. However, the Mesoamerican sacrificial world demands us to look at our own sacrificial violence in order to grasp it both personally and ecologically. Who eats whom, when, how and why are all very worthy questions to consider for both Mesoamericans and ourselves.

Notes

- 1 I am drawing heavily from Elizabeth Boone's comprehensive work (2007) on calendrically determined divinatory codices. I also am grateful to Christine Skolnik and Ian Read who read and commented on this chapter, and several 'Ancesters' who responded thoughtfully in a session presenting the core of its content.
- 2 In the fourth scene of this creation story, Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca are born simultaneously of a mother, whose body is constructed from anthropomorphized sacrificial knives. Thus, these brothers embody their sacrificial inheritance, while the whole scene marks sacrifice as the primary mode of transformative creation (*Codex Borgia* 1976, folio 32; Díaz and Rodgers 1993, folio 32).
- 3 The Creator Couple is presented unusually, for only the male (left) implies the pair, while Chalchiuhtlicue (right), goddess of ritual groundwater, sweat baths, and procreation, is sitting in for his wife. Boone argues this is because the ritual occurs on her day, 1-Eagle (2007, p. 200).
- 4 *Codex Chimalpopoca* (Bierhorst 1992a, p. 89, 77/2; my translation). The whole story can be found in John Bierhorst's translation (1992b, pp. 145–146).
- 5 Sahagún (1953–1982, p. 2: 199), its root word is *ixtlahua*, 'to pay a debt' (Karttunen 1983, p. 120; Molina, 1571, p. 48r; Read, 1998, p. 154).
- 6 Many scholars have noted this sacrificial feeding exchange among gods and humans; for example: Arnold (2001), Carrasco (1995), and Read (1998, pp. 129–155).
- 7 Note how human feet and hands emerge from inside Xochiquetzal's own clawed appendages (Figure 23.6).
- 8 Not all sacrifices hurt or kill something. The Borgia's birth almanac, for example, shows three deities piercing the eyes of babies with bone awls (folio 15). However, they are not really stabbing babies; instead, the act ritually symbolizes when the Creator Couple animated the child by breathing on and boring into it, thereby opening the child's eyes (Boone 2007, p. 140).
- 9 Astor-Aguilera historically confirmed the crosses' ritual role in the Chilam Balam (2010, p. 125).
- 10 In Spring rituals, when the Nahua dedicated babies by letting a bit of blood from their ears and boys' genitals, their fathers captured corn from fields in mock battles (Durán 1971, pp. 423–424).
- 11 Phillip Arnold similarly suggests: 'the necessity of food required that humans have the ability to transform the world' (1999, p. 159). However, I would argue that this transformation was not from something profane to something sacred, but an expression of the constantly changing nature of all living things (1998, pp. 32–43).
- 12 While certainly not alone, I myself must plead guilty to the apocalyptic justification early in my career. In defence, all I can say is that, by the time of my first book, I had redirected that vision towards justification rooted more in ordinary life experiences (Read 1986, 1998).
- 13 The more we learn about how our brains work the more we realize how important non-verbal and non-rational modes of interaction are for our understanding of the world. See Aamodt and Wang (2010) for an entertaining beginner's introduction to how our brains work and Skolnik (2013) for a cognitively based application of imagery and performance to promoting ecological issues.
- 14 Two books questioning some divides between animals and people are Masson and McCarthy (1995) and Peterson (2001).

- 15 Morton roots his borderless world in a Buddhist-like recognition that, if things always change, then no firm distinctions between this and that can be established (2010, p. 62). Since Bataille's oft-repeated phrase, 'like water in water', also is commonly repeated in Hindu and Buddhist explanations of *mokṣa* or *nirvana*, I found it hard not to compare that to Morton's Tibetan Buddhist leanings.

Works Cited

- Aamodt, S. and Wang, T. (2010). *Welcome to Your Brain* (Kindle electronic ed. New York: Bloomsbury USA).
- Arnold, P.P. (2001). *Eating Landscape: Aztec and European Occupation of Tlalocan*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press.
- Astor-Aguilera, M. (2010). *The Maya World of Communicating Objects*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Bataille, G. (1992). *Theory of Religion*. New York: Zone Books.
- Bierhorst, J. (1992a). *Codex Chimalpopoca: The Text in Nahuatl with a Glossary and Grammatical Notes*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Bierhorst, J. (1992b). *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Boone, E.H. (2007). *Cycles of Time and Meaning in the Mexican Books of Fate*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Borgia, C. (1976). *As reproduced in Codex Borgia: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Messicano Riserva 28)*. Introduction by Karl Anton Nowotny. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt.
- Carlson, J.B. (1976). Astronomical investigations and site orientation influences at Palenque. In: *The Art, Iconography and Dynastic History of Palenque*, vol. III (ed. M.G. Robertson), 107–122. Pebble Beach, CA: Pre-Columbian Art Research, The Robert Louis Stevenson School.
- Carrasco, D. (1995). We eat the gods and the gods eat us. *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63 (3): 429–463.
- Carrasco, D. (1999). *City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Díaz, G. and Rodgers, A. (1993). *Codex Borgia: A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript*. Introduction and Commentary by Bruce E. Byland. New York: Dover Publications.
- Droogan, J. (2013). *Religion, Material Culture and Archaeology* (electronic ed.). London: Bloomsbury.
- Dunning, N. and Beach, T. (2000). Stability and instability in prehispanic maya landscapes. In: *Imperfect Balance: Landscape Transformations in the Precolumbian Americas* (ed. D.L. Lentz), 179–202. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Durán, F.D. (1971). *Book of the Gods and Rites and the Ancient Calendar* (trans. Fernando and Doris Heyden Horcasitas). Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Harman, G. (2011). *The Quadruple Object* (Kindle electronic ed.). London: Zero Books.
- Harvey, G. (2013). *Food, Sex and Strangers: Understanding Religion as Everyday Life*. Abingdon: Acumen Publishing.
- Karttunen, F. (1983). *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Lentz, D.L. (2000). *Imperfect Balance: Landscape Transformations in the Precolumbian Americas*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- López-Austin, A. (1996). *The Rabbit on the Face of the Moon: Mythology in the Mesoamerican Tradition*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

- Masson, J.M. and McCarthy, S. (1995). *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*. New York: Dell Publishing.
- de McClung, Tapia, E. (2000). Prehispanic agricultural systems in the basin of Mexico. In: *Imperfect Balance: Landscape Transformation in the Precolumbian Americas* (ed. D.L. Lentz), 121–146. New York: Columbia University Press.
- de Molina, F.A. (1571). *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana*. Preliminary study by Miguel Leon Portilla 1970. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa.
- Morton, T. (2010). *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ortiz de Montellano, B.R. (1990). *Aztec Medicine, Health and Nutrition*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Peters, C.M. (2000). Precolumbian silviculture and indigenous management of neotropical forests. In: *Imperfect Balance: Landscape Transformations in the Precolumbian Americas* (ed. D.L. Lentz), 203–223. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Peterson, A.L. (2001). *Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and Our Place in the World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Read, K.A. (1986). The fleeting moment: cosmogony, eschatology, and ethics in Aztec religion and society. *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 (1): 113–156.
- Read, K.A. (1998). *Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Read, K.A. (2006). The chalcan woman's song: sex as a political metaphor in fifteenth-century Mexico. *The Americas* 62 (1): 313–348.
- Read, K.A. and González, J.J. (2000). *Mesoamerican Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals and Beliefs of Mexico and Central America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- de Sahagún, F.B. (1953[1982]). *The Florentine Codex: A General History of the Things of New Spain* (trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson, and Charles E. Dibble), Monographs of the School of American Research, No. 14. Salt Lake City: School of American Research, University of Utah Press. 12 vols
- Schele, L. and Miller, M.E. (1986). *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*. New York: George Brasiller, Inc.
- Tedlock, D. (trans.) (1985). *Popol Vuh*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Section VI

Media and Material Religion

CHAPTER 24

Cinema

S. Brent Plate

Cinema is a medium, in the capacious sense of each of those terms. That is, *cinema* is not simply a term for a formal storyline expressed in audio-visual format, nor does it refer solely to the watching of a movie. Instead, cinema is a medium in the way that Marshall McLuhan's notions of the automobile are a medium: there is a two-ton metal and plastic object that is a 'motorcar', but this is inextricable from the automobile industry, the interstate highway system, a decentralization of urban life, and a reconceptualization of space and distance. Likewise, cinema connotes psychic, social, and religious environments surrounding the watching of the audio-visual film, all of which are imbricated in a network of perception and devotion. These are, at heart, material environments that engage particular material processes of mythologizing, ritualizing, symbolizing, and conceptualizing.

Strictly speaking, 'film' denotes the particularities of the physical medium: the strip of plastic material on which a series of still images are captured, processed, and eventually projected. Films are created by running a photographic substrate through a camera recorder, then developing that film, printing it, and running it through a projector which re-presents the scene captured by the camera. As a medium in the larger motion picture industry, as well as in indigenous, local creations, this has been almost completely replaced by digital image capturing technologies, and so 'film' is somewhat anachronistic. (Referring to the 'movies' allows a bit more media neutrality, though this term is itself shorthand for 'motion pictures', which was intended originally to distinguish them from still photographs, from which early cinema evolved.) Yet, even when moving images are digitally created and presented, material-based decisions are still made that effect production and reception.

Digital versus photochemical issues aside, my use of cinema here instead of 'film' opens several avenues for enquiry. By cinema, I follow a number of scholars who mean

to invoke the larger apparatus in which movies are created, watched, and continue to affect the lived lives of audiences. Theorists of early cinema, Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, argue that the late nineteenth-century invention 'formed a crucible for ideas, techniques, and representational strategies already present in other places' (Charney and Schwartz 2005, p. 2). Even into the early twenty-first century, cinema has continued to be part of a matrix of cultural, political, social, and religious technologies and meanings. At the same time, I will at times refer to the 'object' at the heart of it, and in this case I will use the inadequate-yet-pragmatic term 'film'.

As my interest here is in exploring the material dimensions of the medium and its relations to religion, I use cinema to stand for a three-part process, with each part relating in varying ways to the functions and practices of religious traditions. To highlight the mediated nature of cinema, and the material aspects involved therein, this chapter is divided into three main parts, after a short introduction to some previous scholarly work on 'religion and film'. The first main section below concerns the material production of cinema in terms of cinematography and editing; the creation of a film is physical work, generally undertaken by a large number of people who aim to represent and, as I suggest, 're-create' a particular world and make it accessible to an audience, triggering mythological and symbolic dimensions across those worlds. That audience then becomes the concern in the second section of this chapter: watching a film is a sensual experience done by actual bodies in actual space, and often with other bodies in a proximate space, an activity that becomes religious in its form. Finally, the material effects of cinema linger on long after the show is over, and people religiously reproduce the world of the film in other aspects of their lives. *Cinema is a material media practice* that is constantly embodied and re-embodied in and through bodies, time, and space.

24.1 Brief Background on 'Religion and Film'

As modern, Western societies have turned away from traditional religious practices, popular cultural practices and artefacts have arisen in their place. No matter how secular everyday life may be, no matter how many 'nones' (i.e. religiously unaffiliated) fill out surveys, people still find meaning, order, and purpose in material dimensions of life: autographed baseballs become relics; movie stars leave their handprints in concrete for us mortals to ogle and touch; music festivals become grand pilgrimage sites where the faithful arrive wearing regulated attire and singing context-appropriate songs; celebrities are 'icons'; companies brand themselves with 'logos', and television serials are watched in ritualized spaces (Laderman 2009).

For these reasons and others, over the past three decades, and especially since the turn of the millennium, many scholars of religion have turned their analytical gaze to segments of popular culture such as television, mass media, music, video games, and cinema. Films become quasi-sacred texts that provide meanings and values for great swaths of people. Christian preachers in need of an example of a 'hero' quickly summon William Wallace of *Braveheart* or Maximus Decimus of *Gladiator*. Meanwhile millions of people in polls in New Zealand, Australia, and Great Britain write in 'Jedi' as their religious affiliation. Scholars have followed suit, inquiring into the reasons

films have had such an impact on modern and postmodern cultures and religiosity (see Blizek 2009; Lyden 2003; Mitchell and Plate 2007; Plate 2003, 2009; Sison 2012; Watkins 2008).

Nonetheless, religious studies approaches still too often treat films as texts to be interpreted: there is a plot, some characters, action, and dialogue, and we can find the religious symbolism by attending to these literary-based analyses. This may not be surprising, considering the still-prominent methodologies in the academy that see the study of sacred texts as primary evidence for the understanding of 'religion'. Besides the faulty logic of applying literary approaches to an audio-visual 'text', many of these studies (like many academic studies of religion in general) have ignored the material dimensions of film. Even so, there are some who have begun to think about the important intersections of media that occur within the framework of a film, from orality to literacy, still photography to musical soundtracks, and such studies are on the increase (Nayar 2012).

For my purposes here, I begin to ask: What are the material processes that go into the creation of films in the first place? What are the material conditions involved with 'watching' a film, and its relation to the perceiving body? And how does cinema continue to shape the lives of people outside the theatre or living room? Each of these three questions is dealt with in each of the following three sections. In my analysis, I am not concerned with films as texts, and do not spend time delineating genres or national film programmes or offer comment on theological or religious themes *within* films. Instead, the following sections trace several of the material aspects of cinema, and are suggestive of further work in these areas.

My key contention is that through the material, cinematic processes of filmmaking, a world is created, a world both like the one 'off' screen' and unlike it. Through confluences and expansions of particular times, spaces, things, and bodies, a re-created reality is given over to and apprehended by audiences, who then reconstitute these new worlds in multiple ways back into life off screen. In the mid-twentieth century, French film theorist Étienne Souriau usefully delineated some of the layers that create and re-create these worlds, developing a layering of realities in and through cinema. A schematic outline of his layers looks like this:

1. afilmic reality (the reality that exists independently of filmic reality)
2. profilmic reality (the reality photographed by the camera)
3. filmographic reality (the film as physical object, structured by techniques such as editing – in the digital age, this corresponds to the computer files that hold audio-visual data)
4. screenic (or filmophanic) reality (the film as projected on a screen)
5. diegetic reality (the fictional story world created by the film; the type of reality 'supposed' by the signification of film)
6. spectatorial reality (the spectator's perception and comprehension of a film)
7. creational reality (the filmmaker's intentions) (Buckland 2000, p. 47; see also Souriau 1953)

Of course, these realities are interrelated and cross each other in many ways. To put the remainder of this chapter in Souriau's terms, the next section looks at the transitions

from the initial, afilmic reality into the profilmic, filmographic, diegetic, and creational realities. The section after picks up with the screenic/filmophanic reality and shifts into spectatorial reality. The final section loops back around from the spectatorial reality into the afilmic reality, suggesting that often times the afilmic is not quite achievable, and is in part already constructed by the filmic realities. Cinema as a medium encompasses these multiple layers.

24.2 Before the Show: The Re-Creation of the World

The late great narrating voice of movie trailers, Don Lafontaine, once stated the goals of successful film advertisements: ‘We have to very rapidly establish the world we are transporting them to ... That’s very easily done by saying, “In a world where ... violence rules.” “In a world where ... men are slaves and women are the conquerors.” – you very rapidly set the scene’ (‘Film Trailer Voice-Over’). Most people reading this can quickly conjure Lafontaine’s deep voice speaking, ‘In a world...’. We have heard it so often we know what we are getting into, and that offers some assurance. This assurance is part of the package: when we watch a film, we anticipate entering into another world, even though the place may be frightening, challenging, and not a little desire inducing.

Fontaine’s comments could readily be applied to religious mythologies and the worlds they help introduce. ‘In a world ... becomes, “In the beginning” ...’. The tale starts, with promise and peril surely to follow, as audiences are transported into another time and place. Likewise, religious traditions operate by connecting one world – let us call it ‘areligious reality’ – with a projected, cosmically ordered world, a world we are urged to attain to. There is the one world (afilmic, areligious) and there is another (profilmic, proreligious). Between the two are multiple connecting points, and these relations are achieved through creative means of cinematography, editing, and *mise-en-scène*, among other cinematic processes, just as they are achieved through myth, ritual, symbol, sacred spaces and texts, among other religious processes. In other words, the mediated nature of cinema is parallel to the mediated nature of religion. They are each involved with activities of world-creation.

Within cinematic creations, hundreds of technical details and decisions are manifested, including choices regarding lighting, colour, and saturation (beyond well-placed light bulbs, some film stock is more sensitive to light or particular colours than others, while lenses on digital cameras and editing software renders the colour and saturation of images differently), where to place the camera (up, down, and side to side and have spatial-cinematographic meanings, as we will soon see), which props should appear in a shot (some objects portray connections to the past, some point to the presence of other characters), the movement of the actors’ bodies within a set (showing poise, character, skill), and ultimately in the postproduction space through creation of soundtracks and the audio and visual editing processes. A few examples here help establish the relations between religious and cinematic worlds.

Watch the first minute of a great many films, and a similar thing occurs. The first shot portrays a sky, maybe clouds, maybe stars, maybe the tops of buildings. Then the camera moves, or a second shot is edited in, and this next image moves *down* and/or

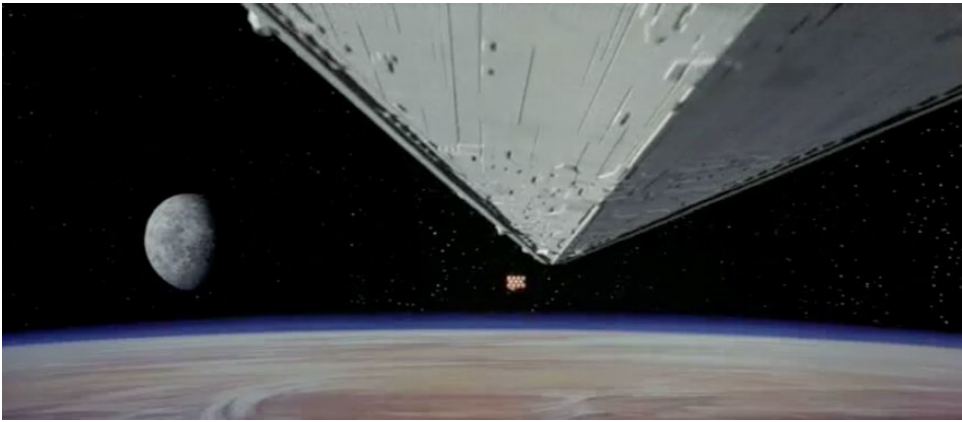


Figure 24.1 Film still from *Star Wars* (1977).

closer *in*. We begin in abstraction, in a sky that could be almost anywhere, but the second shot begins to provide some clues of the whereabouts of the world about to be entered. So, the great mythological film *Star Wars* puts the first shot in space, with hundreds of stars dotting a black sky. The firmament. The cosmos. An epilogue quickly scrolls up the screen, giving the viewers some verbal orientation, but just as the words fade from the screen, and the music swells up again, the camera tilts down showing two planets and then two spaceships firing lasers at each other (see Figure 24.1). The chaos. Cosmos is up; chaos is down. Stars are up; wars are down. Many scholars and others have long noted *Star Wars*' mythological dimensions (redeemer figures, heroes, The Force, etc.), but it is in a simple camera move downward in the first minute that the cosmic, mythological structures are established.

Science fiction is not a unique genre for mythological worlds. Take the opening to the film adaptation of the children's story *Charlotte's Web*. Here, in animated form, the first shot begins on a pleasant day, in the partly cloudy sky above some rolling hills (see Figure 24.2). No clear indicators let the viewer know the time or place. The camera then moves down to the countryside and begins to move horizontally, offering a flyover view of a farming community before eventually stopping at the site of one particular, 'special' farm where the story unfolds on a dark and rainy night. In each of these very different films, we find cosmos meeting chaos, in the beginning, with the protagonists acting out their lives somewhere in between.

We can see cinematic variations on this in mythological films of South Asia. The first shots of the 1975 superhit *Jai Santoshi Maa*, for example, depicts a family relation in the cloudy world of the gods (*devaloka*), where Ganesha, the patriarch, oversees his family, which includes sons but no daughters. Through a series of pleadings, Ganesha and his wives form a daughter as flames emerge from each of their bodies, and the young Santoshi Ma appears on a Lotus flower. The opening scene cuts to scene two, down on earth, where Santoshi Ma is enthroned as a *murti* in a temple as a group of worshippers perform a highly choreographed and stylized *puja* offering. On earth, the plot evolves through personal and communal conflicts, particularly surrounding the main character Satyavati, who has a special connection with Santoshi Ma (Lutgendorf 2003).



Figure 24.2 Film still from *Charlotte's Web* (2006).

It makes no difference whether it is the grand, intergalactic battles of *Star Wars*, the local struggles of a farm in *Charlotte's Web*, or the contrasting world of the gods and world of humans in *Jai Santoshi Ma*, all are framed within a cosmic point of reference. This is mythology, visually manifested in and through spatial orientations. Movie theatres and home entertainment rooms are the metaphorical fire rings in which we sit and hear the great stories. And the filmmakers, whether religious or not, borrow on the ancient and medieval cosmologies that indicate 'up' is good/the heavens, and 'down' is where chaos has some purchase. These films are fictional, and yet the material, spatial symbolism of ups and downs, side to side, becomes a touchstone for world construction (see the chapter, 'Visual Mythologizing' in Plate 2009).

If cinematography re-creates worlds through spatial means, then editing re-creates the world through temporal means. With editing, particular shots are placed next to other shots, thus chopping up the chronological flow of the afilmic world and fixing it in a different arrangement of time. Centuries are spanned from one cut to the next, or even just minutes, or ages past are brought to life again. In each case, time takes on varied meanings in these other worlds. Just as ups and downs have particular meanings, so do fast and slow pace, backward and forward chronologies.

Industrial filmmaking tends to work hard to eliminate the effects of editing, creating continuity between shots, or establishing sounds that help span the cut, so the viewers believe themselves to be watching a continuous unfolding of time. The reality is that most big-budget films have over 1000 cuts, and action adventure films two or three times that amount. Which means there are cuts about every two to three seconds of film. The 'pace' of a film is not simply determined by how fast the cars are driving in

their chase scenes (diegetic reality), but is equally created by the tempo of editing (filmographic reality).

Experimental cinema tends to challenge the industrial models. One of the key components of film form that filmmakers have experimented with is the *duration* of a shot. Famous examples include Michael Snow's 1967 *Wavelength*, a shot lasting for 45 minutes, with a mostly continuous forward zoom. (In reality, there are several cuts that are spliced together to give the feel of a continuous shot.) Snow's film begins with a broad shot of an entire room and slowly moves in to focus ultimately on a single postcard hanging on the opposite wall. A handful of odd 'events' occur during the time, but no narrative structure emerges as the overarching subject of the film. In a provocative claim, Snow himself said about the film: 'I wanted to make a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings and aesthetic ideas' (Snow, 1). The enigmatic nature of that statement may be taken in many ways, though one of the most promising suggests that such filmmaking is analogous to the religious contemplation of images, whether through use of yantras, icons, or mandalas. The perceptual apparatus of the human body is tightly bound to particular forms of film; the quotidian setting of the large room in which the 'action' takes place does not preclude consciousness-raising metaphysics. Indeed, in his classic book on avant-garde film, P. Adams Sitney suggests how shots like Snow's, with a fixed camera on a tripod, allows 'a mystical contemplation of a portion of space' (Sitney 2002, p. 350).

The filmmaker Nathaniel Dorsky has followed suit and worked with similar contemplative approaches, suggesting, 'film's physical properties seemed so attuned to our metabolism that I began to experience film as a direct and intimate metaphor or model for our being, a model which had the potential to be transformative, to be an evocation of spirit, and to become a form of devotion' (Mitchell and Plate 2007, p. 407; see also MacDonald 2006). While their films can be difficult to sit through, experimental and avant-garde filmmakers oftentimes create films that are closer to afilmic reality than big-budget commercial films. In so doing, these films offer potentials for renewed perceptions. And their work, though not for all, has been likened to the functions of a priest or shaman, as their films become ritualistic practices, both in their making and their viewing.

Looking more explicitly at particular religious traditions, we find similar cinematic workings in Buddhist themed films from Korea. Directors such as Kim Ki-Duk, Im Kwon-Taek, and Bae Yonggyun may be said to invoke a Chan Buddhist aesthetic in the creation and concomitant reception of their films. Bae's *Why Has the Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* evokes a koan with its title, but also in its stylistic creation. The film is flush with very long takes and a lot of silence. Drawing on the visual tradition of Chan landscapes, with attention to the raw and powerful beauty of mountains and streams, the film's visual mode creates a contemplative view of the world. This, in turn, 'provokes an experience of vivid presence' (Cho 1999, p. 190). Such cinema creates a contemplative setting, in time and space, allowing an engagement with film that is conducive to a perceptual transformation, as we will see in the next section.

It is more than coincidence that scholars who have examined rituals use language like 'framing' and 'focusing' to get at ritual processes. Mary Douglas, for example, suggests, 'A ritual provides a frame. The marked off time or place alerts a special kind of

expectancy' (Douglas 1992, p. 78). Or as Barbara Myerhoff says, 'The most salient characteristic of ritual is its function as a frame' (Myerhoff 1977, p. 200). Similarly, William Paden notes, 'The basic feature of ritual is its power of focus.... In ritual what is out of focus is brought into focus' (Paden 1994 pp. 95–96). Douglas, Myerhoff, and Paden did not have cinema in mind when they wrote those definitions, but the visual, photographic metaphors become a fascinating way to chart some of the similarities between the time and space of the cinema and the time and space of ritualizing, and other religion making processes. Rituals, like myths and symbols, proffer shifts in time and space, reorienting recipients to new creations of the world, and offering the potential for a transformed perceptual apparatus. Participants in rituals, like cinema audiences, are given a framed and focused profilmic world, carved out of the afilmic reality that exists beyond the confines of the camera frame.

There are many other examples that could be used regarding the ways films re-create the world by reconceiving time and space through the tools of cinematography, editing, and other filmic processes. The key point here has been to suggest some of the basic forms through which filmmaking might be seen to have parallel functions to religion making. These formal structures are then given to cinema audiences, as filmmakers trigger cosmic and devotional experiences through profilmic, filmographic, diegetic, and creational realities that re-create the world.

24.3 During the Show: The Body in the Cinema

Just as scholars use *framing* and *focusing* to indicate the processes involved with ritual, Peter Berger uses the language of *projection* in the construction of the 'sacred canopy': 'Whatever the historical variations, the tendency is for the meanings of the humanly constructed order to be projected into the universe as such' (Berger 1967, p. 25). Berger was drawing on Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud in his use of the term, though the material basis for the metaphor serves to show parallel structures between sacred worlds and the constructions of cinema. In cinema, images of a collectivity are screened in larger-than-life forms, allowing an audience to gaze on their now-objectified and dramatically enlarged hopes, dreams, and fears. In the modern age, cinema becomes embedded in personal, national, and spiritual mythologies. Cinema becomes its own sacred canopy.

In his famed 'Work of Art' essay, Walter Benjamin quotes filmmaker Abel Gance on cinema and myth: 'All legends, all mythologies, and all myths, all the founders of religions, indeed, all religions, ... await their celluloid resurrection, and the heroes are pressing at the gates' (Benjamin 2002, p. 104). Benjamin would go a step further though, for it wasn't merely the old myths that got retold and remediated, it was our everyday existence that was retold, rearranged, and projected large. Cinema changes the perceptions of the familiar, of everyday life, and hence the medium helps create the collectively conscious, and unconscious, mythic structures of modern life. As Benjamin put it, in psychoanalytic-inflected terms, what were once overlooked structures, 'our bars and city streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories' are brought into a new focus, from a new angle. 'With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. And just as enlargement not merely

clarifies what we see indistinctly “in any case,” but brings to light entirely new structures of matter’ (Benjamin 2002, p. 117). Benjamin saw the impact of the film camera, not simply on what people did in a darkened theatre, but on their work and leisurely lives outside the theatre, after the film is over. The afilmic world meets the profilmic world, and the two can no longer be distinguished.

In like manner, theorist Sidney Kracauer, in the wonderfully subtitled *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, notes how close ups in film, ‘blast the prison of conventional reality, opening up expanses which we have explored at best in dreams before’ (Kracauer 1997, p. 48). The argument being made is that media technologies such as cinema change human modes of perception and, as such, change the way of being in the world and change human collective organization. Kracauer and Benjamin, both working out of a Marxist orientation connected with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, helped lay the groundwork for media studies in the final decades of the twentieth century, a field that took it as truth that media are not merely add-ons to society, but are imbricated deeply within a society’s core structures. Kracauer’s, Benjamin’s, and Gance’s comments, from the present day perspective, may seem far-flung and over-reaching, but there are truths behind the hyperbole. Key among them is the contention that perception is historical as much as it is biological. We *learn* how to see (and smell and hear), and when we realize that perception is acquired, we begin to see how it can change, and how masses of people might be perceiving in highly constructed ways. We might then circle back around to Berger and realize that the sacred canopy is, in large part, a mediated construction. Our projectors succumb to the latest technological advance and our worlds, and the canopies under which we live, change shape and colour, expand and condense, trigger this sense and that, and reshape the structures of meaning and values in our lives.

The shift from *framing* to *projecting* between the previous section of this chapter and the present one, denotes a move from the profilmic and diegetic realities to the screenic and spectatorial realities of cinema, from ‘before the show’ to ‘during the show’. Of course, the audience has always been key to the medium of cinema. We know that the technologies for recording moving images, as well as projecting them, was around for some time before 1895, but the creation story most often told of cinema was that it was born on 28 December 1895, in the Grand Café in Paris. At that time, the Lumière brothers projected a few short films onto a cloth hung on a wall in the basement of the café to an awaiting audience who had paid a modest fee. Following this, many of the early screenings of films occurred in fairgrounds, existing alongside roller coasters and magic shows, as well as churches that saw devotional power in the screening of moving images – many of these were recreations of the Passion story, or images from the Holy Land. There is also some good evidence for the early screening of films in the chapels of prisons (Griffiths 2012). This is the birth of cinema as media. The technological apparatus is in place, while the product is here placed within a circulation of personal perceptions and social meanings.

The cinematic creation story gets told and retold, often with the twist that the film screened was the Lumières’ *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*. As spectators watched the screen, a train appeared in the distance and moved towards the audience. Many of those in attendance got up and ran for the doors, believing it to be a real train chugging

into the room. This account may be apocryphal, but like any good mythology, the longevity of the story makes for interesting theorizing. That is, part of the reason the mythology sticks is because 'movies' are not only motion pictures, but appeal to moving bodies: bodies as movies. The worn-out and dangerous concept that audiences are passive (unmoving) spectators is finally being surpassed by careful observations of the ways people actually do behave in front of screens. Again, scholarship on early film points out the key role that the human body played in the new medium. In a collection entitled *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (2005, p. 2) argue, 'perception in modern life became a mobile activity and the modern individual's body the subject of both experimentation and new discourses'. The picture moves and the body moves.

Within the first decade of its appearance, cinema provided (and still provides) what Tom Gunning calls 'magical possibilities'. By showing us a potential voyage to the moon, or a close-up of a prisoner, the audience sees this world, as well as an imagined world, in delightful new ways. Gunning coins the term 'cinema of attractions' to get at what went on in the making and watching of many films around the turn of the twentieth century. The cinema of attractions, Gunning says, 'directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle' (Gunning 1990, p. 58). Gunning argues that around 1906, through new editing techniques, narrative entered the mainstream and replaced the pure spectacle of the apparatus of cinema with time-based stories. Which is not to say such 'attractions' really ever left, though very often they went underground and into avant-garde film productions. People are still moved by the attractions of cinema, as the technologies evolve to ever-newer flights of fancy.

With this history in the background, it becomes important to register the link between the projected film and the perceiver, the human body that sits (and occasionally stands) and experiences the primarily audio-visual dimensions of the movies. Some of my own previous work has attempted to take such ideas and think through the religious implications. I have thought of this as 'religious cinematics':

Like the scientific investigations of its variant spelling 'kinematics', and more specifically with that of its etymological cousin 'kinetics' ('The branch of dynamics which investigates the relations between the motions of bodies and the forces acting upon them' [*Oxford English Dictionary*]) religious cinematics is concerned with the motion of the human body being acted upon by the audio-visual forces of film. My aim here is to look at the relation between motion pictures and moving bodies and some of the particular ways in which films can stir the body to action. Ultimately, I consider, there is a deep resonance to religious ritual found within this interaction. (Plate 2009, p. 62)

On a simple level, such cinematic movements can be noted at a horror film screening, as Jason/Freddy/the killer leaps out from around the corner and we collectively jerk back in our seats in the theatre, even though we knew he was there in the first place, and even though we know it is only a two-dimensional play of coloured light on a screen. (If you have ever experienced this, you might also realize how the story of the Parisians who frightfully fled the image of a train gliding into their café is not so unbelievable.)

On another level, as many experienced after screening James Cameron's *Avatar*, the parking lot outside the theatre felt strangely heavy, like we the viewers had gained significant weight while watching the film – this 'afilmic' reality outside the theatre was not light and airy like the world of Pandora that we were three-dimensionally allowed into just minutes earlier. The sights and sounds of the movies impact sensing human bodies. *Avatar* is particularly evocative of the moving body meeting the moving picture, as the two worlds meet and (almost) merge. *New York Times* film critic Manohla Dargis got at this collapsing worlds tendency: 'You can get lost in a movie, or so it seems, and melt into its world. But even when seated third row center and occupying two mental spaces, you understand that you and the movie inhabit separate realms. When I watched *The Dark Knight* in Imax, I felt that I was at the very edge of the screen. *Avatar*, in 3-D, by contrast, blurs that edge, closing the space between you and the screen even more' (Dargis 2009). Successful films, like successful myths and rituals, are able to blur the boundary between the two worlds, bringing their audiences/adherents across the divide from the moving picture to the moving body.

On another level still, our abilities to empathize with others can be directly bound to what we watch on screen, as theorists such as Kaja Silverman have suggested through an 'ethics in the field of vision'. She promotes a 'heteropathic identification', whereby the viewer takes a risk of identifying with a screened body of a person who may be identified as 'other'. Such a take often entails that the films watched are not those of industrial Hollywood productions, those that would prompt what Silverman calls 'idiopathic identification' (Silverman 1996, p. 23). In the latter case, one's own identity is merely reaffirmed, and does not enable a seeing of difference. Ultimately, heteropathic identification might lead towards empathetic relations in the worlds off screen. As ethnographic filmmaker and theorist David MacDougall has put it, 'Attraction to (and identification with) the bodies of others in the cinema remains a more multi-faceted matter than one of gender or even age, physique, nationality, sexuality, or class ... In the right context, the most loathsome character can be appealing and the plainest face beautiful... In films the close-up creates a proximity to the faces and bodies of others that we experience much less commonly in daily life' (MacDougall 2006, pp. 20, 21). There is an ethical component to cinema, a relation to others, even if on screen, an entering into another world not otherwise allowed. For MacDougall, ethics, the senses, and knowledge are bound to each other: 'Appearance is knowledge, of a kind. Showing becomes a way of saying the unsayable. Visual knowledge (as well as other forms of sensory knowledge) provides one of our primary means of comprehending the experience of other people' (MacDougall 2006, p. 5).

That cinema might express the inexpressible has been one mode for uncovering its religious capabilities. (The Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan organized a film series called 'The Hidden God' some years ago.) Theologically minded scholars and observers have pointed towards transcendent qualities of the audio-visual medium – people feel spiritually 'lifted up' during a screening and even, as is the case with the many devout Christians who watched Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, inspired by suffering. Meanwhile in India, certain devotional and mythological films (such as *Jai Santoshi Maa*) have prompted viewers to go and perform *puja* at the foot of the screen. And film producers around the world have used films for proselytizing and

propaganda. Cinema space is embodied space, and viewers are sensually stimulated to perform acts of piety there.

But as MacDougall begins to point out, there is another inexpressible dimension to cinema, and that is through its evocation of senses beyond the audio and the visual. In other words, cinema can also evoke the 'inexpressible' senses of smell, taste, and touch, to go deeply into the affects of the body, beyond recourse to verbal narrative. Film theorist Laura Marks has pursued such approaches in several works, particularly in *The Skin of the Film*, in which she argues how 'cinema itself appeals to contact – to embodied knowledge, and to the sense of touch in particular – in order to recreate memories'. Through the body, the senses become a conduit to past experience, 'cinema bears the marks of sense memories that do not find their way into audiovisual expression' (Marks 2000, p. 129). Neurologically, perceptual pathways from the differing sense organs can cross each other and trigger synaesthetic experiences (see, among other places, Cytowic and Eagleman 2009). Films like *Scent of the Green Papaya* portray a young girl named Mui (Lu Man San) fascinated by the sights, smells, and tastes of life all around her, and, as food is filmed in glorious colour, viewers salivate and the non-visual senses tingle.

As a medium, cinema is, in McLuhan's terms, an extension of humans: a prosthesis. And it is a sensual prosthesis. Cinema allows us to see farther and closer, to overhear, to be privy to experiences we cannot have in afilmic reality. Cinema creates a sensory experience that prompts the senses of vision and hearing, in the first instance, even as it triggers other senses. Along these lines, Birgit Meyer has looked at similar material operations and recrafted an understanding of media as 'sensational forms'. Meyer suggests that sensational forms 'are part and parcel of a particular religious aesthetics, which governs a sensory engagement of humans with the divine and each other and generates particular sensibilities that "are not something purely cognitive but are rooted in the experience of the body in its entirety, as a complex of culturally and historically honed sensory modalities"' (Meyer 2009, p. 13; inner quote from Hirschkind 2007, p. 101). Religious traditions have used these forms, put them to use in creating environments in and through which humans establish community and senses of sacrality. Through a larger social web, cinema as a sensational form has impacted the religious nature of modern humans.

Cinema is more than an 'audio-visual' medium; cinema is a material medium, affecting a full range of senses, emotions, thought patterns, and memories in the bodies of the audience. The sensual, often communal engagements of film viewing (and here we realize how inadequate the term 'viewing' is) become something akin to a religious ritual gathering; or, as others might put it, these experiences actually *are* religious rituals. As religious people connect with sensational forms, they are brought more firmly across the divide between the two worlds. The experiences are then brought beyond the space of viewing 'during the show', and linger on in the bodies 'after the show'.

24.4 After the Show: The Afterlives of Film in Afilmic Reality

In 2006, at the Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, Sylvester Stallone was honoured with the Boxing Writers Association of America award for 'Lifetime Cinematic Achievement in Boxing'. In fact, the first image that appears on the Hall of Fame's

website is that of Stallone with arms raised in the air, *Rocky*-style. There is something in this image that begins to jar our conception of reality, confounding those levels that Souriau outlined. But rather than trying to disentangle the 'real' from the 'cinematic', I want to begin by taking a step further into *Rocky* territory. At the top of the stairs leading to the Philadelphia Museum of Art – the same ones that 'Rocky Balboa' famously strode up in the 1976 film – one finds a square of cement with brass imprints of Rocky's Converse high tops. Standing at the bottom of those stairs is a bronze sculpture of 'Rocky', with arms raised in the air. Tens of thousands of people from around the world have come to these sites and stopped to have their pictures taken alongside the iconic boxer, arms raised in the air as they stand in the same place as Rocky once stood. Cinema, we might surmise, prompts people to behave in particular ways, to perform certain actions, and travel to specific places. We can stand in the shoes of our heroes, ritualistically reenacting the mythology.

The issue here is still more complex. The fact is, 'Rocky' is not a boxer. Rocky is not even a real person, and does not wear real Converse sneakers. Sylvester Stallone is an actor who played the role of a boxer named Rocky in a film made 40 years ago. As such, there is no such thing as a person named Rocky who could make imprints in a brass plate on top of some steps. And yet, such is the power of the medium of cinema, that it produces afterlives in the mythological conscious and unconscious of collectives of people. (I do not believe this necessitates a Jungian reading to say this is the case – the evidence is sociological more than psychological.) Films enter into the cultural repertoire, and ritualistic enactments and re-enactments are embodied through the lives of people. The 'Rocky Steps', as they are commonly called, are one of the most popular tourist attractions in Philadelphia, and TripAdvisor.com, among other tourist sites, is filled with accounts of people who came to get their picture taken at the place where 'Rocky' stood. (Many then go in search of a gift store where they can purchase some Rocky memorabilia, but become discouraged in only finding the Philadelphia Museum of Art gift shop, and their assortment of postcard reproductions of masterworks of fine art.) The play of light on a screen becomes materialized as masses of people take the story to the streets.

Rocky is not the only example of this. We can also look to the homepage of the official New Zealand tourist board. The start page there displays a picture of happy tourists walking through 'The Shire', the neighbourhood of Hobbits such as Frodo and Bilbo Baggins (newzealand.com). One tag on the site even indicates that New Zealand is 'Home of Middle-earth'. In this case, we find a mid-twentieth century British academic (J.R.R. Tolkien) who wrote a series of fantasy books loosely based on his scholarly studies of Medieval English, Germanic, and Norse mythologies. Tolkien's books were made into a series of very popular films by Peter Jackson (until then, known for making horror films) at the start of the twenty-first century, and were filmed in Jackson's home country, New Zealand. In a string of conflations, an actual country becomes the material actualization of a fictional land conjured in the mind of someone decades earlier on the other side of the world.

Other examples of such conflations could fill up chapters and chapters of interesting work. The film *Into the Wild*, for one, is based on Jon Krakauer's book of the same name about a real-life young man named Chris McCandless who went to Alaska to find

the 'wild', taking with him very little by way of supplies (save some choice books by Thoreau and Jack London) and starving to death as a result. In recent years, other young men have been inspired by McCandless, via Krakauer and most critically Sean Penn's film, to leave behind their home life and take long and arduous journeys into the wilderness to find alternative ways of living and being. Every once and a while news reports emerge across the United States about the search for a lost hiker who had gone 'into the wild' and was last seen in such and such a place, having seen the film *Into the Wild*. Some sort of wilderness experience is sought, and even though Jesus, Muhammad, and Siddharta each went to the wilderness to find something, contemporary young men are not following their lead, but McCandless's, brought back to life in audio-visual form.

While cinema has created new forms of rituals and pilgrimages (making an academic judgement on whether these are 'real' rituals and pilgrimages is somewhat misguided), old rituals have been transfigured by cinema. B'nai mitzvah and weddings, funerals and confirmations, have all been affected. A couple can get married in a *Star Wars* setting, a boy can have celebrity impersonators show up at his bar mitzvah, and movie themes are used for funerals. And the most tragic of events (like the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001) can no longer be seen apart from films: 'It was just like the movies' becomes a common response to international political events.

Cinema has found its way into some of the most intimate settings of modern life. Filmographic and spectatorial realities have circled back around to afilmic reality, making it clear that there is never a clear distinction between the afilmic and the profilmic. Modern life has erased the divisions. Then again, media of various sorts have never been separate from the cultures in which they work, have never been an addendum to the concepts and regulations and linguistic structures of society, but are always at the heart of culture, persuading people to act and behave in particular ways.

24.5 Conclusion: All the World's a Screen

The late film critic Roger Ebert gets at the role of cinema in modern life by quoting from and expanding on a comment by his longtime friend and sparring partner Gene Siskel: 'Siskel described his job as "covering the national dream beat," because if you pay attention to the movies they will tell you what people desire and fear. Movies are hardly ever about what they seem to be about. Look at a movie that a lot of people love, and you will find something profound, no matter how silly the film may be' (Ebert 2011, p. 159). Cinema is never just an escape, never just light on a screen, never just a world 'over there' or 'up there'. The profilmic realities of cinema constantly collapse into the afilmic world, supplying both form and content for humans' sacred strivings. They do this before the show, during the show, and after the show.

As we move more fully beyond film into digital, and beyond singular story lines projected large on screen, we have to come to terms with new forms of media transmission of religious traditions. Sacred texts, rituals, myths, and symbols are all transformed from the ground up. As Manohla Dargis put it, 'Perched between film and digital, *Avatar* shows us a future in which movies will invite us further into them and perhaps even

allow us to choose not just the hero's journey through the story, but also our own' (Dargis 2009). Just as photography and theatre were folded into the new medium of cinema in the late nineteenth century, so is film becoming a piece of a larger mediated format affecting cultural and religious life into the twenty-first century. This creates the opportunities for greater democratic access to the sacred (ourselves in the role of the hero), but also greater potential for control of the sensational forms that make and shape us.

Works Cited

- Benjamin, W. (2002). The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility: second version. In: *Selected Writings III* (eds. H. Eiland and M.W. Jennings), 101–133. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Berger, P. (1967). *The Sacred Canopy*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Blizek, W. (ed.) (2009). *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film*. New York: Continuum.
- Buckland, W. (2000). *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charney, L. and Schwartz, V.R. (eds.) (2005). *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Cho, F. (1999). The art of presence. In: *Imag(in)ing Otherness: Filmic Visions of Living Together* (eds. D. Jasper and S. Brent Plate), 169–196. Oxford: Oxford University Press/AAR-Scholars Press, Cultural Criticism Series.
- Cytowic, R. and Eagleman, D. (2009). *Wednesday Is Indigo Blue: Discovering the Brain of Synesthesia*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Dargis, M. (2009). Floating in the digital experience. *New York Times* (30 December 2009), www.nytimes.com/2010/01/03/movies/03dargis.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (accessed 1 November 2018).
- Douglas, M. (1992). *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge.
- Ebert, R. (2011). *Life Itself: A Memoir*. New York: Grand Central Publishing Kindle Edition.
- Film Trailer Voice-Over King Dies (2008). BBC News (3 September 2008), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/7595352.stm> (accessed 18 January 2019).
- Griffiths, A. (2012). Bound by cinematic chains: films and prisons during the early era. In: *A Companion to Early Cinema* (eds. A. Gaudreault, N. Dulac and S. Hidalgo), 420–439. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gunning, T. (1990). The cinema of attractions. In: *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (ed. T. Elsaesser), 56–62. London: BFI Publishing.
- Hirschkind, C. (2007). *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and the Islamic Counter Public*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kracauer, S. (1997[1960]). *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Laderman, G. (2009). *Sacred Matters: Celebrity Worship, Sexual Ecstasies, the Living Dead, and Other Signs of Religious Life in the United States*. New York: New Press.
- Lutgendorf, P. (2003). Jai Santoshi Maa revisited: on seeing a Hindu “Mythological” film. In: *Representing Religion in World Cinema* (ed. S. Brent Plate), 19–42. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Lyden, J. (2003). *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*. New York: New York University Press.
- MacDonald, S. (2006). *A Critical Cinema 5: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- MacDougall, D. (2006). *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Marks, L.U. (2000). *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Meyer, B. (2009). Introduction: from imagined communities to aesthetic formations: religious mediations, sensational forms, and styles of binding. In: *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion and the Senses* (ed. B. Meyer), 1–30. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mitchell, J. and Brent Plate, S. (eds.) (2007). *The Religion and Film Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Myerhoff, B. (1977). We Don't wrap herring in a printed page. In: *Secular Ritual* (eds. S.F. Moore and B. Myerhoff). Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Nayar, S. (2012). *The Sacred and the Cinema: Reconfiguring The 'Genuinely' Religious Film*. London: Continuum.
- Paden, W. (1994). *Religious Worlds*, 2e. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Plate, S.B. (ed.) (2003). *Representing Religion in World Cinema: Filmmaking, Mythmaking, Culture Making*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Plate, S.B. (2009). *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World*. London: Wallflower Press.
- Silverman, K. (1996). *The Threshold of the Visible World*. New York: Routledge.
- Sison, A. (2012). *World Cinema, Theology, and the Human: Humanity in Deep Focus*. New York: Routledge.
- Sitney, P.A. (2002). *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943–2000*, 3e. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Snow, M. (1967). A Statement on *Wavelength* for the Experimental Film Festival of Knokke-le-Zoute. *Film Culture* 46.
- Souriau, É. (1953). *L'Univers filmique*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Watkins, G. (ed.) (2008). *Teaching Religion and Film*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Filmography

- Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (1895). Auguste and Louis Lumière, directors.
- Avatar* (2009). James Cameron, director.
- Charlotte's Web* (2006). Gary Winick, director.
- Into the Wild* (2007). Sean Penn, director.
- Jai Santoshi Maa* (1975). Vijay Sharma, director.
- Rocky* (1976). John G. Avildsen, director.
- Scent of the Green Papaya* (1993). Tran Anh Hung, director.
- Star Wars* (1977). George Lucas, director.
- Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter ... and Spring* (2003). Ki-duk Kim, director.
- Wavelength* (1967). Michael Snow, director.
- Why Has the Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* (1989). Yong-Kyun Bae, director.

CHAPTER 25

Religion and Digital Media

Studying Materiality in Digital Religion

Heidi A. Campbell and Louise Connelly

25.1 Introduction

The study of material religion has permeated many disciplines, including media studies and religious studies and it saw significant growth in the 1980s and 1990s (Meyer et al. 2010; Morgan 2010) and is further demonstrated with the launch of the interdisciplinary journal, *Material Religion* in 2005. Traditionally, the study of material religion has been confined to the offline world. However, there is a growing interest in how material religion is manifesting online with emerging studies exploring this new dimension. Consequently, this highlights a greater awareness of the relationship between religion, technology, and culture and how material religion permeates both digital and physical spheres.

This chapter has four main sections, namely the historical rise of religion on the Internet; how materiality is manifest and negotiated in digital religion; key themes and challenges in studying materiality in digital religion; and the future study of digital material religion. A number of examples are presented in order to demonstrate the breadth and depth in which material religion can be found online. The following exploration takes into account the relationship among bodies, objects, places, and practices, which for Meyer et al. is presented as 'the meaning of an object is not understood to reside singularly in it, but also to draw from its circulation, its local adaptation, from what people do with it, and from the affective and conceptual schemes whereby users apprehend an object' (2010, p. 209). The discussion explores rituals in virtual worlds, new media devices, online memorial sites, digital artefacts and cyber-temples, and churches. The intention is to provide an insight into how material religion is presented online, how material religion is made possible by the materiality of the media engaged

with, as well as exploring the challenges that may arise for individuals, organizations, and researchers both now and in the future.

25.2 The Rise of Digital Religion

For almost three decades, the Internet has been used as a space where spiritual rituals are conducted and traditional religious beliefs discussed. Religious use of the Internet can be traced back to the early 1980s. Rheingold (1993), documents some of the first religious-orientated activity taking place at this time on Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs) under a 'create your own religion' on the discussion area of CommuniTree, which soon evolved into numerous BBS forums on religion. During this same period online religious discussion surfaced on Usenet. It was a time when religious computer enthusiasts began to explore 'ways to use this new means of communication to express their religious interests' (Lochhead 1997, p. 46). For example, at this time the 'net.religion' discussion list emerged as the 'first networked forum for discussions on the religious, ethical, and moral implications of human actions' (Ciolek 2004). Throughout the 1980s many other religious computer enthusiasts formed online groups, dedicated to their specific religion, such as the first Christian email newsletter 'United Methodist Information', and the 'net.religion.jewish' Usenet group.

In the 1990s, increasing numbers of religious groups and mailing lists began to emerge online, such as Ecunet an ecumenical Christian email listserve (www.ecunet.org), H-Judaic (<http://networks.h-net.org/h-judaic>), and BuddhaNet (www.buddhanet.net). Early in this decade, the first Christian online congregation *The First Church of Cyberspace* was established by American Presbyterians and for over a decade they held a weekly service via IRC chat and offered web interaction for participants www.godweb.org. In 1996, TIME magazine published a special issue on religion online, highlighting the dozens of religious websites and resources which could be found online: from the first monastic website, 'Monastery of Christ in the Desert' (www.christdesert.org) and the first Islamic e-periodical, 'Renaissance: A Monthly Islamic Journal' (www.monthly-renaissance.com), to the first Zoroastrian cybertemple (www.zarathushtra.com) and establishment of the 'Virtual Memorial Garden' tribute to people and pets (<http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/vmg>). The special issues also proved an important landmark, highlighting media recognition of religious activity online.

Throughout the 1990s, people from traditional and non-traditional religions experimented with creating new religious resources online. For example, Gospelcom (<http://www.gospelcom.net>) provided Christians with access to online Bible study tools and various interactive devotional or fellowship groups. Others experimented with altering and adapting ancient beliefs to this digital environment from Wicca to new religions such as technopaganism (Davis 1998). In the late 1990s, inter-religious information hubs such as Beliefnet (<http://www.Beliefnet.org>) emerged online offering thoughts for the day from the Dalai Lama and the Pope to inspirational screensavers and access to sacred texts from different traditions.

In the 2000s, religion online had become a common part of the Internet landscape, and as new forms and features of digital engagement began to emerge so did their

religious counterparts. In the early 2000s, as blogging platforms and hosting tools such as Live Journal and Blogger.com gained popularity so did religious blog hubs such as Jblog: The Jewish and Israeli blog network (<http://www.jewishpress.com/blogs/jblogs/>), Christian Bloggy Moms (<http://www.bloggymoms.com>), and Muslim bloggers (<http://hadithuna.com>). The rise of podcasting, also led to a revolution in 'godcasting' or audio and visual broadcasting of religious-style talk shows and from televangelists to home school mums (see *The Godcast network* <http://www.godcast.org> or *GODcasting.tv* <http://www.godcasting.tv>).

The rise of virtual world environments in the mid-2000s also birthed innovation in experiments in religious worship. For example, Church of Fools (<http://www.churchoffools.com>) – a short live online church experiment 3-D, sponsored by the Methodist Church of Britain and the satirical website Ship of Fools – and its offshoot St Pixels: Church of the Internet offering chat rooms and a 'live' online worship forum to its members. Both examples challenged the notion of what it means to be a church in a digital age. The emergence of Second Life (<http://secondlife.com>), a 3-D virtual world launched allowing residents to interact via a motional avatar to socialize, play, create, and do business with other online residents. This also enabled people to re-image a religious location in the digital sphere. By allowing residents to literally create a 'second life', online people soon began to import their religious practice into the digital space, which includes attending Shabbat services at the Second Life Synagogue-Temple Beit Israel for Shabbat services (<http://slurl.com/secondlife/nessus/18/146/103>) or participate in a virtual Hajj.

By the late 2000s, social media had replaced email as the number one activity online. Religious users began to populate spaces such as MySpace, then Facebook and later Twitter, using these new forms of social interaction as opportunities to publicize their faith or create novel forms of religious engagement. One can now find that Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and Mohammed all have multiple Facebook accounts. These creations are not without controversy, as debates over the imaging of the Prophet Mohammed on Facebook led to public protests, online demonstrations, and several Muslim countries threatening to ban Facebook due to such activities in 2009–2010. In the twenty-first century, the rise of even more social sharing sites like Instagram and Pinterest has generated more alternative spaces for sharing user created inspirational and religious images and messages. The popularity and spread of memes online have also created a new realm of digital religious humour with sites like Catholic Memes (<http://www.catholicmemes.com>) (site no longer active) and Tea and Cake or Death? (<http://anglicanmemes.com>), housing collections memes geared as specific religious sectors. For example, during the Pope's visit to the United States in fall 2015, numerous Pope memes were circulated on these sites and via social media. Popular memes included an image of the Pope riding on through the streets of Washington DC in an open car with his papal cassock flapping in the wind and the slogan 'like a boss'; and one with an image from the movie Zoolander of Will Farrell's character, Mugatu the fashion designer, saying 'That Pope Francis, He's so Hot right now', incorporating his character's catch phrase.

From this brief overview, we can see that religious practice online has adapted and developed as new forms of technology have become available, enabling unique forms of

spiritual engagement and reflection to emerge along with the creation of digital artefacts. As Castells maintains, 'Art, increasingly a hybrid expression of virtual and physical materials, may be a fundamental cultural bridge between the Net and the self' (2001, p. 205). With the rise of user generated content in the Web 2.0 era, we see that religious users have not only embraced the opportunities afforded for new ways for religious community building, but this has inspired the re-imagination of religious rituals and how religion is conceived in digital spaces. The following discussion highlights how media is providing a means in which to engage, interact, and be immersed in digital religion. Examples of rich media which provide such opportunities include meditation in the virtual world *Second Life*, as well as using smartphone apps which can provide the user with an immediate and direct encounter with different religions, such as Buddhism (Connelly 2015, p. 3878).

25.3 How Materiality Is Manifest and Negotiated in Digital Religion

Materiality is manifest and negotiated within the online sphere in a number of different ways, some of which have been highlighted in the previous section. Understanding how culture, audience and object co-relate online enables us to have a greater awareness of how to examine this dimension of material religion. For example, offline, the religious artefact is used within rituals, as an aide memoire, and to symbolize or represent the 'other' and online there are noteworthy similarities as well as differences. The following discussion focuses on the use of digital artefacts in every day culture, such as the iPhone or the integration of religious apps into daily activities, or the use of religious imagery on websites, and digital objects in online spaces. It can be argued that material religion is not just about the objects which are used in the religious context but also how 'religion happens materially' (Meyer et al. 2010, p. 209) and 'rather than marginalizing belief, we need a more capacious account of it, one that looks to the embodied, material features of lived religion' (Morgan 2010, p. 7). Therefore, the relationship between lived religion and materiality is no longer confined to the offline world, as the demarcation between online/offline is blurring.

The following section provides a number of examples which illustrate where materiality and digital religion can be found, specifically in relation to three areas: (i) translation and transportation of the religious via digital objects and artefacts, (ii) online ritual, and (iii) digital aesthetics and engagement with technological devices. Each section will include a brief overview of the theme as well as a more detailed discussion on Buddhism in the online world of *Second Life*, in order to explicate how material religion is manifest and negotiated in the digital context.

25.4 Translation and Transportation of the Religious Via Virtual Objects, Digital Artefacts and Online Spaces

Material religion looks at objects and how individuals and organizations engage with these objects within religions and religious/non-religious spaces. The same approach needs to be applied to the digital objects and online spaces so that unique attributes can

be identified and parallels can be drawn with traditional notions of material religion within every day culture.

Virtual objects and digital artefacts can enable a person to engage with religious practice and spaces. For example, a digital scripture may be read within a cyber temple (via audio or text); a religious app may allow tweets to be sent after a person dies; or an individual may visit a memorial website to pay their respects to the deceased, such as Virtual Memorials (<http://www.virtual-memorials.com>), and Christian Memorials (<http://www.christianmemorials.com>). If we look at this more closely, we begin to see a shift in cultural and religious practices. Traditionally, memorials are objects, such as headstones, plaques, sculptures, monuments, which are used to represent someone who has died and provide an aid to remember them. Unlike the offline memorial, the online memorial site is not constrained by geography or time, and therefore enables individuals to easily 'visit' and pay their respects and remember the deceased.

In addition to online memorial sites, an emerging area is the use of apps which provide the illusion that the individual is still alive, such as the Twitter app called LivesOn (<http://www.liveson.org>) which according to its website, will allow you 'to keep tweeting even after you've passed away'. It does this through programmed algorithms which identify tweets and links which you might have liked and will tweet them for you. It could be argued that memorial sites and social media allow us to live on beyond death, and so provides a material culture of transcendence which is unique to the online environment. Unlike traditional memorials, the digital memorial could have implications for how we understand death and dying, especially where our presence appears to 'live on' after our death. Coldwell questions whether the ghost in the machine will have implications for how we experience bereavement and how religion negotiates our digital legacy (2013). Exploration of this topic is still in its infancy but is an area which demands further consideration.

As illustrated above, the virtual object plays a significant role in the translation and transportation of religion online. However, the online religious space which hosts these objects also requires consideration. There are a number of examples of online religious space, such as cyberchurches, which have developed in different formats including email discussion lists, websites, and in virtual worlds. An example is the Church of St Pixels (<http://www.stpixels.com/wp>), an online space where religious objects such as altars and liturgy and practices are transported online. Hutchings argues that replicating offline contexts into the online 'then reproducing symbols online signals expectations of behavior, reduces creative demands, and frames the space as an "authentic" Christian church' (2013, p. 164). These online communities and developed cultures include the sharing of gifts and books via websites. Furthermore, the recording of audio files and images to share with the community online provides a negotiation between the offline and online material culture (Hutchings 2013, p. 165).

In addition to cyberchurches, there are cybersanghas or cyber Buddhist temples found in online in spaces such as *The Buddha Center* in Second Life which was founded in 2008 and by 2010 had more than 2500 participants (in-world address 137, 130, 21) (Connelly 2010, p. 14). *The Buddha Center* has virtual pagodas, large prayer wheels, a library and shops selling religious artefacts. Its creators state that they designed the *Buddha Center* to imitate artefacts and architecture found offline. In doing so, they wish

to create a sense of authenticity, as visitors will recognize the objects, purpose, and meaning – thus creating a digital material culture. These examples illustrate that the creators of digital spaces want to ensure authenticity by replicating offline artefacts and spaces. In doing so, for some, there is a perception that this legitimates the online space as an authentic sacred space. Consequently, rules and practice can become problematic if they challenge the normative practices and principles of the religious tradition.

25.5 Online Ritual as Negotiation Between Online and Offline

Ritual is a complex and often contested term and will be discussed further in this chapter (Helland 2013, p. 26). For the purpose of this section, we will focus on online ritual as an expansion of materiality in the digital environment, and explore how ritual manifests online as well as alluding to the purpose it serves.

There are a vast number of places online or via mobile devices which facilitate or provide access to religious ritual, including text-based chat, websites enabling Hindu worship known as *puja* (Scheifinger 2013), cyber-pilgrimage or real-time experience with places such as the Western Wall in Jerusalem, (<http://www.aish.com/w/46127727.html>) (i.e. Helland 2013, p. 33) or Buddhist meditation in virtual worlds (i.e. Connelly 2010, 2013, 2015). In many of these contexts there will be religious objects, such as musical instruments, scriptures or shrines, all of which may be used in a religious performance and located in a sacred space, such as those discussed in the previous section. What becomes problematic, for many, is accepting whether the online ritual has the same purpose and outcome as those found offline.

To explore this further, we focus on the meditation in the main temple and the spinning of digital prayer wheels at the *Buddha Center*. Participants can engage with frequently scheduled meditation sessions in the main temple and silent meditation is offered to visitors which ‘will appeal to a wider audience’, including Buddhists and non-Buddhists (Connelly 2013, p. 129). The meditation ritual is enacted by an avatar in a similar manner to meditation found offline, including sitting crossed-legged on a meditation cushion and being led through the practice by a facilitator (in some cases this is an ordained Zen priest). In many meditation sessions, virtual objects are used, such as a singing bowl, incense, or a meditation cushion. The digital artefacts and associated belief structures contribute to the religious practice and experiences. By imitating the environment that would normally be found offline, it provides a recognizable and purposeful setting in which associated religious rules and expectations can be applied. Based on interview findings, many of the participants are synchronizing their meditation offline at the same time as their avatar is meditating online (Connelly 2013, p. 134). This negotiation between offline and online space broadens our understanding of what it means to practise religion in the twenty-first century.

In addition to online meditation sessions, there are also a number of other religious practices and rituals at the *Buddha Center*, including the act of giving (*dana*) via a donation of linden dollars or spinning a digital prayer wheel, a familiar artefact in many Buddhist cultures. There is an expectation that by spinning a prayer wheel the prayers held inside the object are released into the atmosphere and as a result of this action the

person will incur merit, which in turn will hopefully result in rebirth (reincarnation) or the release from the birth and rebirth cycle (*samsara*). Online, there is an absence of physical touch. Therefore, the avatar must 'touch' and spin the digital prayer wheel as a result of the person (offline), using the computer keypad or mouse. Unlike the traditional relationship between the practitioner and the prayer wheel, it is unclear whether there can be the same meritorious outcome from engaging with digital artefacts. This question has been posed to the creators of the *Buddha Center* and they maintain that merit 'can be obtained from a virtual object as long as it is done with the same intention' (Connelly 2010, p. 18). If this proposition holds true, then digital material culture is significant for understanding lived religion as 'materiality mediates belief... material objects and practices both enable it and enact it' (Morgan 2010, p. 12). The virtual object helps to transcend the real/virtual paradigm and blur the boundaries between the offline and online spheres in order to negotiate both. However, it may be more complex than first perceived. Falcone (2015) argues that there are two categories of individuals in *Second Life*, the student/follower and the devotee/teacher. The student/follower are 'more likely to see holy objects as symbols' and the objects are perceived in a similar manner to those offline (p. 179), whereas, the devotee/teacher has a varied and more complex understanding of the digital artefacts and the resulting merit gained. For them, the object has efficacy but this differs from those found offline and the merit gained may vary to a similar ritual offline, depending to how much 'effort' is involved in the online ritual. With that said, Falcone argues that there are more students than devotees in *Second Life* (p. 179). Therefore, the Buddhist ritual or engagement with material objects, for some, results in a similar experience and outcome to those found offline and for others it is more complex and the degree of merit gained may not be equivalent to that gained offline. Consequently, this highlights the nuances of the social, cultural, and psychological differences of not only engagement with digital objects but how the individual perceives and values the object and engagement.

25.6 Digital Aesthetics and Our Engagement with Technological Devices

Digital aesthetics entices many users to engage with different technologies as an attempt to connect with religion in a new territory. This section introduces the topic of digital aesthetics by focusing on religious smartphone apps and the classification of the iPhone as a religious artefact, known as the 'Jesus Phone'. Furthermore, the discourse will again focus on the *Buddha Center* in *Second Life* in order to illustrate how digital aesthetics are manifest online and how they are a key aspect of digital religion.

Recently, the intersection between technology and religion has come to the fore with the introduction of mobile devices, and for many people, there has been a significant change in how they communicate and engage with religion. Ranging from mini-music players to tablets to smartphones, the use of such devices enables information to be easily accessible and shared. Recent studies have provided a greater insight into how mobile apps and devices are being used (Campbell 2010; Wagner 2012). Wagner outlines six different categories of religious mobile apps, which enables us to define app

usage in relation to how they are used and what they are used for; the six categories are (i) prayer apps, (ii) ritual apps, (iii) sacred text apps, (iv) social media apps, (v) self-expression apps, and (vi) focusing/meditation apps (2012, pp. 102–105). Examining the relationship between technology and religion can indicate where there are possible cultural or technological shifts, one of which is highlighted by Wagner, who argues that the use of religious mobile apps can result in a more individualistic type of religious interaction (2012). The potential shift from community-based religion to individualistic religion could impact on traditional forms of authority, community, identity and ritual. Moreover, new or diluted forms of religion may develop and challenge traditional religion (Campbell 2010). Furthermore, it may be useful to refer to social shaping of technology approaches such as Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (ANT) to better understand digital religion and modern societies 'in terms of nodes that have as many dimensions as they have connections' (1996, p. 370). ANT also overcomes the geographical constructs of scale and place by replacing it with 'the notion of networks' (p. 371) and the 'actant' 'can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action' (p. 373). Therefore, this theory can be used when discussing digital religious networks and how users engage with technology, such as the use of online forums or virtual worlds in order to build and maintain religious communities, as well as the development of the associated social and religious constructs therein. Accordingly, the discussion of digital material religion can be enriched by theories such as ANT, as it can help us understand that the 'network is not a thing, but the recorded movement of a thing' (p. 378). In addition, it may enable us to consider how religious experiences occur and what value they have when they are as a result of engaging with technology.

Another example of the way aesthetics are expressed within digital culture can be seen in the language and images revolving around the iPhone, which was framed as the 'Jesus Phone' in the run up to its official launch in 2007. Gizmodo tech blogger Brian Lam coined the term in a late 2006 blog post while offering playful retort to Pope Benedict XVI's Christmas Speech on the limits of technology,¹ as Lam described the potential transformative power of the 'Apple-Cellphone-Thingy, as the true Jesus Phone' (Lam 2006) 'The Pope says worship not false iDols: save us, oh true Jesus phone'. International media and Apple fans quickly picked up the Jesus-Phone terminology as a way to describe the hype and hopes surrounding this 'revolutionary', 'divine', and 'Messianic' new technology. Framing the iPhone as divine also inspired the creation of a diverse range of religious imagery, including a blogger modifying a religious icon of the Virgin Mary to holding an iPhone instead of the baby (<http://rafaelpay.typepad.com/rafa/2007/06/jesus-phone.html>), as well as the *Washington Post* publishing a cartoon picturing Steve Jobs as Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai holding two iPhones instead of the Ten Commandments (Nick Anderson, 24 June 2007, image no longer available). The framing of the iPhone as the Jesus Phone illustrates the culture shift in how some individuals engage with the devices, as the device itself becomes the digital aesthetic and can be imbued with religious significance (Campbell 2010).

While religious apps and digital artefacts provide examples of the digital aesthetic, there are also the aesthetics present in online rituals. Noticeably the meditation ritual at

the *Buddha Center*, discussed earlier, imitates aesthetic elements found offline, such as participants sitting on meditation cushions, and the circulation of a scripture or Zen koan (via a digital notecard). The aesthetics are most noticeable in the main temple where the audio includes, the sound of the chimes above the entrance, the trickling of the water in the pond, and the voice of the facilitator leading participants through the practice. In addition, the visual aspect encapsulates what would be found in many offline temples, such as incense, plants, and Buddha statues. The visual dimension is important both online and offline, as 'visual practices help fabricate the worlds in which people live and therefore present a promising way of deepening our understanding of how religion works' (Morgan 2000, p. 51). The scene setting for the online meditation relies solely on visual and audio, which is to be expected as typically three of the five senses are absent online. Therefore, the participant relies heavily on sight and sound to provide a complete sensory experience (Connelly 2010). In this particular example, there is no actual 'touch' or 'sensation' when engaging with the online meditation artefacts, although, that is not to say that the user is not simultaneously engaging with artefacts offline. However, with the rise of new devices such as the Oculus Rift or Oculus Touch (<https://www.oculus.com/en-us>), this will provide 3-D virtual experiences and potentially the sensation of the users' hands being 'present'. Online experiences such as meditation may result in future digital religious experiences becoming equivalent to those found offline.

These examples illustrate the importance of the digital aesthetic within the religious context. Furthermore, understanding the relationship and negotiation between the online and offline sphere is crucial, if we are to understand how digital materiality is being transformed and embedded into everyday life. Campbell proposes that the theoretical framework of the religious-social shaping of technology provides an approach for examining how communities and individuals negotiate new media (Campbell 2012b, p. 84). By using this framework, it can help to identify why certain media is chosen and as a result the success, failure, and possible repurposing of that technology within the religious-social context.

25.7 Key Themes and Challenges in Studying Materiality in Digital Religion

Beginning in the mid-1990s, scholars interested in religion and media gave serious attention to the influence the Internet was having on religious communities and culture. Early studies such as O'Leary's 'Cyberspace as sacred space' (1996), identified how online rituals were performed in digital text-based environments and Schroeder et al.'s study of prayer in a multi-user virtual reality environment (1998) drew attention to how computer users sought to import their religious sensibilities online and share these experiences with others. The Pew Internet and American Life Project also drew attention to the importance of these phenomena in their 'Wired Churches, Wired Temples' (Larsen 2000), 'CyberFaith' (Larsen, 2001), and 'Faith Online' (Hoover et al. 2004) reports, offering empirical evidence about the religious use of the Internet.

Since 2000, the study of religion online has been taken up by scholars in a variety of discipline from Sociology, Religious Studies, to Communication, Psychology, and Political Science. Even in this relatively young field, a number of key texts have emerged. Hadden and Cowan (2000) offered a comparative approach to key early descriptive case studies of religion online, within the initial wave of Internet research that is often contextualized as evaluating utopian or dystopian discourses around the Internet. Dawson and Cowan (2004) marked a move towards more detailed analysis on the common forms of religious Internet practice and Hojsgaard and Warburg (2005) highlight the theoretical and methodological turn in scholarship about what studies of religion and the Internet demonstrate about the nature of social relations and the practices of religious communities within wider cultural spheres. More recent work such as Cheong et al. (2012) and Campbell (2013) has focused on the relationship between online and offline religious practice in order to contextualize how the integration of the Internet in society is shaping religious trends and culture. In summing up the past two decades of research on religion and the Internet, an article in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (Campbell 2012) noted several common areas of research inquiry explored by scholars. These include how the Internet contributes to the construction of religious identities, supports new forms of community, highlights changing understandings of authority, encourages the mixing of traditional and new forms of social practice, and recognizes the interconnectedness between online and offline contexts. A number of these trends illuminate important issues and tensions related to the study of material religion in digital contexts. Most noteworthy are questions of authenticity, authority, and definitions of religious experience, which are explored in detail in the following sections.

25.8 Question of Authenticity and the Authentic Form Online

The question of what constitutes religious authenticity has become a key issue when considering the manifestation of religion in digital contexts. Concerns are often raised about whether 'disembodied' or mediated interactions online can ever truly allow for an authentic religious expression and experience online. Radde-Antweiler (2013) investigates such debates and considers whether peoples' experiences and digital bodies (i.e. one's textual body or avatar), can be considered authentic or real online and the extent to which the Internet or 'cyberspace' can be considered a 'real' place that can function as a sacred space. Framing digital religion in terms of the binaries of real and virtual, leads to a reductive (or one-sided) stance that considers only offline encounters as authentic, while digital ones are inherently false or unreal. This binary, of whether the online space or body is seen authentic or as mere simulation, is contentious and problematic. It evokes larger debates that have occurred throughout religious studies over the implications of the mediation for religious encounters, such as whether the words of the gods delivered via a prophetic medium or spiritual media are seen as authentic. In the digital context, the key concerns raised are the authenticity of the religious body and space online, as well as the extent to which authentic religious identity can be expressed and develop online.

Thus, a challenge emerges in how one draws a line between or connects online and physical bodies, spaces, and practices. Scholars have investigated how these can be

judged as authentic forms of religious expression and what extent they can be seen as separate or interconnected forms of religiosity. For example, Scheifinger (2013) explores the performance of puja, the ritualistic worship of a Hindu deity, which can be performed online. He compares the giving of digital sacrifices before an Internet icon with traditional puja rituals that necessitate fully embodied interaction. He carefully considers the extent to which a puja online is constituted and evaluated as a valid form of religious expression and ponders how such online ritual can raise issues for offline Hindu communities. Scheifinger concludes that 'darshan', the gazing into the eyes of the deity and truly 'being seen by the deity' so the devotee's soul can be cleansed, can be achieved online if one follows with integrity the traditional ritual practice that have been transposed online. Similarly, scholars have suggested an online church may help to mirror standard elements and practices of offline churches and provide us with a feeling of familiarity that gives them security and sense of authenticity, which allows them through the mediated symbolism to, 'participate in their perceived "authenticity"' (Hutchings 2010, p. 82). As Chidester (2005) suggests, authentic religious practice is perceived as something which can be achieved through the efficacy attributed by its practitioners, and so may be experienced through interactions and communal meaning making online as well as offline.

Religious practice in digital realms also raises debates over the credibility and authenticity of the transmission of religious identity. Scholars of religion and the Internet have approached the notion of religious authenticity by reflecting on the trueness and trustworthiness of religious actors and what can be considered or judged to be authentic religious identity online. Echchaibi (2013) explores how *Alt-Muslim.com*, an online forum for progressive Muslims, can act as a transformative space facilitating the presentation of authentic, modern Muslim identities. He examines the site's attempt to function as an alternative to conventional authority structures within Islam and the veracity of its claims that it creates a counterculture for Muslims around the world. Echchaibi demonstrates that authenticity is expressed not as a 'pure form of Islam that lives in a body of doctrines, but rather as an active investment of faith to transform both the self and society' (2013, p. 196). The Internet provides online resources that build new forms of religious identity, which may be seen as problematic for religious communities because they encourage personalized over traditional or institutional religious identities, yet they are still valid expressions of religiosity. Thus questions of what constitutes authenticity in digital religion cause scholars to consider how the religious self and its associated artefacts are presented and performed online and evaluate their accuracy and efficacy in digital environments.

25.9 Questions of Authority and Boundary Making Within Digital Realms

One of the clearest examples of digital material religion is in the manifestation and practice of rituals online. As noted above, online rituals provide an opportunity for re-imagination of accepted and established religious practice, and even space for innovation, which may have interesting consequences for the community or tradition. Helland (2013) suggests that rituals online are part of wider cultural meaning-making systems

and therefore can play a tangible role in human experience online. Yet he also argues that the study of online ritual challenges scholars to carefully consider the boundaries of what it means to 'do' religion and even 'be' religious in a digital realm. As discussed above, regarding the transference of Buddhist rituals into *Second Life*, Connelly's (2013) work on Buddhist rituals in virtual worlds demonstrates Buddhist meditation online incorporates the elaborate digitization of religious material objects along with the use of both voice and text in order to negotiate and connect offline and online rituals. However, because the transference of these rituals online is often driven by specific Buddhist practitioners and groups, they may not be widely accepted, which is suggested by Falcone (2015). The time and care taken to create the vivid and rich smartphone apps, as well as the environments and artefacts in *Second Life* would suggest that the intention is for users/participants to engage with these and potentially have an embodied experience of the sacred. Anthropologically, 'the objects have a material quality' and cultural significance (Falcone 2015, p. 187). In addition, according to Damasio (field of neuroscience) there is an important relationship between an individual, object, and cognition, as this may manifest an (religious) experience (2000). This is significant, if some of our senses are absent online and we are heavily relying on the sense of sight and sound to incur an experience. With that said, there may be many who engage with or perhaps 'dabble' with digital religion and they do not expect to experience the sacred and they perceive the digital objects with little value. This is perhaps due to a perceived lack of authenticity and authority online and for them the objects do not hold the same value as to those found offline. The creation of digital religion and in this case, digital Buddhism, suggests that the practice of Buddhism online could have ramifications for Buddhist doctrine and practice both offline and online and is in need of further exploration.

Key to evaluating online ritual is considering who has the authority to define, carry out, and sanctify particular religious rituals in digital contexts. Scholars have noted that the Internet both gives rise to new forms of religious authority and leadership, as well as provides a space for traditional authorities to re-establish their influence within religious and wider culture. Pauline Cheong (2013) highlights how early framings of the Internet as a decentralized space lacking hierarchical control, suggest that traditional religious authority would be disrupted or undermined by digital technologies. Yet, more recent observations and studies have shown religious authorities are also developing strategies online that enable them to regain the legitimacy and oversight in the religious sphere. Thus, for Cheong, the Internet is characterized by paradoxes when it comes to authority online: the Internet and digital culture in general, becomes a space which can simultaneously empower and challenge new and traditional forms of religious authority.

One illustration of this online-offline tension created by digital materiality is seen in the work of Golan (2013) who explores Chabad Jews' development of an Internet presence since the 1980s and the offline, transnational implication their online innovation has within the ultra-Orthodox community, which has had a fraught and largely resistant relationship to the Internet. He demonstrates how tensions can emerge between online religious entrepreneurs who seek to develop digital resources for religious study and missionary outreach and traditional rabbis who perceive the Internet as a purveyor of secular and sinful content into their sacred community. This shows the Internet may unintentionally give rise to new classes of religious authorities or

religious outlets that challenge community boundaries and patterns. Thus questions of religious authority online require consideration as to how the boundaries of religious ritual are drawn and monitored both by online and offline religious groups.

25.10 Questions of How the Digital Shapes and Changes Understandings of the Religious

In the broad sense, the manifestation of material practice of religion in the digital realm raises important questions about what constitutes religion in such contexts. Religion is a complex concept that holds many different interpretations. However, if we, as Grieve (2013) suggests, approach religion in terms of its worldview myths, rituals with mythic significance, and possessing core faith or beliefs, we can investigate how those features are translated or lived out when applied to digital media. Grieve further argues that the unique features of digital media, including the connectivity and convergence of new media, generates particular technological ideology and offers a workaround for the conditions of a modern life. For him digital religion 'represents a distinct cultural sphere of religious practice that is unique but not dichotomous with other forms of religion' (Campbell 2013, p. 4). In other words, religion that is lived out and practised online, offers a workaround helping religious Internet users' dynamic opportunities to navigate the problems created by the fluid nature of 'liquid modern life', as Bauman (2000) suggests, which challenges previous definitions of religion and traditional patterns of religiosity. This understanding of digital religion suggests scholars must look at religion online as an innovation occurring in a unique media space, to how religious practice online is a vital expression of the religious in contemporary culture.

The complexity of studying and defining religion in a digital world is then explored in relation to new religious movements (NRMs) engagement with the Internet. Baffelli (2013) in her study of the use of the Internet by Aum Shinrikyō, a Japanese NRM, demonstrates how a group's understanding of religion and the role of religious leaders is negotiated online. She shows how the incorporation of digital media such as websites and social networking services can become a vital tool to help inform and extend the practices of a religious community. Baffelli further suggests that embracing 'Net Religion' can transform a religious group's idea of 'sacred space' and traditional rituals, potentially creating an understanding of 'religion in which the physical presence of participants is secondary to the achievement of spiritual goals' (2013 p. 213). Similarly, Miczek (2013) in her investigation of New Age practitioners' framing of the Internet as a spiritual technology argues that new agers actively go online because of the unique opportunities the Internet provides for creating a personalized assemblage of their spiritual beliefs. She suggests this shows that the Internet offers a unique opportunity for religious users to make visible their personal religiosity, and allows them to create dynamic presentations of traditional religious beliefs and formations. Both studies highlight the freedom and new flexibility and opportunities that the Internet offers religious practitioners for re-thinking their religious patterns and spiritual meaning making as individuals and groups. Thus digital practice can invigorate and inform definitions of what is considered the religious in various communities and traditions.

25.11 The Future for Studying Digital Material Religion and Culture

This chapter introduces a range of examples of digital materiality along with the potential challenges and impact that may arise for religious, groups and individuals. Trends indicate that digital materiality, both online and offline, enables individuals and communities to practise religion in unique ways, some of which challenge traditional forms of authority, community, identity and ritual (Campbell 2010, 2013; Cheong et al. 2012). In addition, cultural and technological shifts may change how we engage with digital artefacts and how we could transform communal activities into a more individualistic approach (Wagner 2012). This is illustrated in the practices and construction of the *Buddha Center* in *Second Life* which shows the breadth and complexity which digital material religion manifests online. Owing to the multiple dimensions such a phenomenon involves, the scholar of digital religion must take an interdisciplinary approach to explore the visual, textual, and experiential aspects of online religiosity and their implications (Dawson and Cowan 2004). This includes the continual development and refinement of existing research frameworks and approaches (Campbell 2012). Much research has already been undertaken, as demonstrated here. However, the study of digital materiality in religious contexts calls scholars to further examine a number of key areas. This includes the engagement with mobile devices for religious purposes, the negotiation of online/offline religious spaces and practices, and additional methodologies to address a constantly changing environment. While the study of materiality within digital religion has been a part of many recent studies, it is still an area in need of more focused development. Future work would do well to consider new multimodal and comparative approaches that push beyond current ethnographic and visual analysis approaches, in order to consider new perspectives such as cognitive research on aesthetics as well as mapping of visual sensorial engagement of digital artefacts in human-computer interaction; ultimately, helping us interpret material religious media making in digital environments.

Note

- 1 Pope Benedict XVI (2006) 'Urbi et Orbi' message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI 25 December, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/urbi/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20061225_urbi_en.html.

Works Cited

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Baffelli, E. (2013). Japanese new religions online: Hikari no Wa and "net religion". In: <i>Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds</i> (ed. H.A. Campbell), 207–214. London: Routledge.</p> <p>Bauman, Z. (2000). <i>Liquid Modernity</i>. London: Polity Press.</p> | <p>Campbell, H.A. (2010). <i>When Religion Meets New Media</i>. London: Routledge.</p> <p>Campbell, H.A. (2012a). Understanding the relationship between religious practice online and offline in a networked society. <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> 80 (1): 64–93.</p> |
|---|--|

- Campbell, H.A. (2012b). How religious communities negotiate new media religiously. In: *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture* (eds. P. Cheong, P. Fisher-Nielsen, S. Gelfgren and C. Ess), 81–96. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Campbell, H.A. (ed.) (2013). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. London: Routledge.
- Castells, M. (2001). *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cheong, P. (2013). Authority. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 88–103. London: Routledge.
- Cheong, P., Fisher-Nielsen, P., Gelfgren, S., and Ess, C. (2012). *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Chidester, D. (2005). *Authentic Fakes*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ciolek, M.T. (2004). Online religion: the internet and religion. In: *The Internet Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (ed. H. Bidgoli), 798–811. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Coldwell, W. (2013). Why death is not the end of your social media life. *The Guardian* (18 February 2013), <http://www.theguardian.com/media/shortcuts/2013/feb/18/death-social-media-liveson-deadsocial> (accessed 13 November 2018).
- Connelly, L. (2010). Virtual Buddhism: an analysis of aesthetics in relation to religious practice within second life. *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ojs/index.php/religions/article/view/9383> (accessed 13 November 2018).
- Connelly, L. (2013). Virtual Buddhism: Buddhist ritual in *Second Life*. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 128–135. London: Routledge.
- Connelly, L. (2015). Virtual Buddhism: online communities, sacred places, and objects. In: *The Changing World Religion Map: Sacred Places, Identities, Practices and Politics* (ed. S.D. Brunn), 3869–3882. New York, London: Springer.
- Damasio, A.R. (2000). *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. London: Vintage.
- Davis, E. (1998). *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information*. New York, NY: Harmony Books.
- Dawson, L. and Cowan, D.E. (eds.) (2004). *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*. New York: Routledge.
- Echchaibi, N. (2013). Alt-Muslim: Muslims and modernity's discontents. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 88–103. London: Routledge.
- Falcone, J. (2015). Our virtual materials: the substance of Buddhist holy objects in a virtual world. In: *Buddhism, the Internet, and Digital Media: The Pixel in the Lotus* (eds. G.P. Grieve and D. Veidlinger), 173–190. New York: Routledge.
- Golan, O. (2013). Charting frontiers of online religious communities: the case of Chabad Jews. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 155–163. London: Routledge.
- Grieve, G. (2013). Religion. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 104–118. London: Routledge.
- Hadden, J.K. and Cowan, D.E. (eds.) (2000). *Religion on the Internet, Research Prospects and Promises*. Amsterdam, London and New York: JAI Press.
- Helland, C. (2013). Ritual. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 25–40. London: Routledge.
- Hoover, S., Clark, L.S., and Rainie, L. (2004). Faith online: 64% of wired Americans have used the Internet for spiritual or religious information. Pew Internet and

- American Life Project, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2004/04/07/64-of-online-americans-have-used-the-internet-for-religious-or-spiritual-purposes/> (accessed 18 January 2019).
- Hojsgaard, M. and Warburg, M. (2005). *Religion and Cyberspace*. London: Routledge.
- Hutchings, T. (2010). The politics of familiarity: visual, liturgical and organizational conformity in the online church. In: *Special Issue on Aesthetics and the Dimensions of the Senses* (eds. S. Heidbrink and N. Miczek), 63–86. Heidelberg: Institute of Religious Studies, University of Heidelberg <http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/11298> (accessed 13 November 2018).
- Hutchings, T. (2013). Considering religious community through online churches. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 164–172. London: Routledge.
- Lam, G. (2006). The Pope says worship not false idols: save us, oh true Jesus phone, <http://gizmodo.com/224143/the-pope-says-worship-not-false-idols-save-us-oh-true-jesus-phone> (accessed 26 December 2016).
- Larsen, E. (2000). Wired churches, wired temples: taking congregations and missions into cyberspace. Pew Internet and American Life Project (20 December 2000), <http://www.pewinternet.org/2000/12/20/wired-churches-wired-temples/> (accessed 18 January 2019).
- Larsen, E. (2001). CyberFaith: how Americans pursue religion online. Pew Internet and American Life Project, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2001/12/23/cyberfaith-how-americans-pursue-religion-online/> (accessed 18 January 2019).
- Latour, B. (1996). On actor-network theory: a few clarifications. *Soziale Welt* 47 (4): 369–381.
- Lochhead, D. (1997). *Shifting Realities: Information Technology and the Church*. Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Meyer, B., Morgan, D., Paine, C., and Plate, B. (2010). The origin and mission of material culture. *Religion* 40: 207–211.
- Miczek, N. (2013). “Go online! Said my Guardian angel” the internet as platform of religious negotiation. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 215–222. London: Routledge.
- Morgan, D. (2000). Visual religion. *Religion* 30: 41–53.
- Morgan, D. (ed.) (2010). *Religion and Material Culture: A Matter of Belief*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- O’Leary, S. (1996). Cyberspace as sacred space: communicating religion on computer networks. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64: 781–808.
- Radde-Antweiler, K. (2013). Authenticity. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 88–103. London: Routledge.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The Virtual Community*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Scheifinger, H. (2013). Hindu worship online and offline. In: *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (ed. H.A. Campbell), 121–127. London: Routledge.
- Schroeder, R., Heather, N., and Lee, R.M. (1998). The sacred and the virtual: religion in multi-user virtual reality. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 4 (2) www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol4/issue2/schroeder.html#LANGUAGE (accessed 30 November 2018).
- Wagner, R. (2012). *Godwired. Religion, Rituals and Virtual Reality*. London: Routledge.

CHAPTER 26

Aural Media

Rosalind I.J. Hackett

Sound and hearing constitute one of the optimal entry points for exploring materiality and immateriality in relation to religion.¹ Sound is commonly (mis)perceived as immaterial due to its invisibility, untouchability, and temporality, yet sound is unique in needing a medium for its transmission, whether air, water, or another material (Taylor 2000, p. xxviii). Light, in contrast, can travel in empty space, and touch, taste, and smell require physical contact. Compared to other material objects, ‘sounds are ephemeral and transitory, striking with potentially great visceral intensity, yet dissipating quickly’, with their effects often more visible and tangible (Weiner 2011, p. 10). Jonathan Sterne, one of the leading experts on studies of sound, culture, and technology, describes sounds as a class of vibrations that are perceived, in other words, ‘the hearing of the sound is what makes it – placing human beings at the center of any meaningful definition of sound’ (Sterne 2003, p. 11). Sterne’s research on the origins of sound reproduction reveals that it was not until the modern period that sound and hearing were objectified, reconceptualized, commodified, and mass-produced (Sterne 2003).

Over the last three decades or so there has been a boom in interdisciplinary studies of sound and hearing (Feld and Brenneis 2004; Novak and Sakakeeny 2015b; Pinch and Bijsterveld 2012; Samuels et al. 2010; Sterne 2012), helping to offset the longstanding visualist bias of Western thought. The field of sound studies is in part an ‘intellectual reaction to changes in culture and technology’ in our contemporary era, as well as an expression of the need for transdisciplinary collaboration – as occurred with material and visual culture studies (Sterne 2012, p. 3; see Keeling and Kun 2012 on American Studies).² If the goal of sound studies, according to Sterne, is to stimulate the sonic imaginations of our colleagues – as is my goal here – that should not be at the expense of the other senses (Sterne 2012p. 3; see, also, Erlmann 2004; Howes and Classen 2014; Mitchell 2005; Stoller 1997). Moreover, Sterne argues that in becoming modern,

Western culture did not move away from a culture of hearing to a culture of seeing but that ‘sound, hearing, and listening are foundational to modern modes of knowledge, culture, and social organization’ (2003, pp. 2–3). Treating the ear as both physical reality and cultural construct avoids its erasure in constituting knowledge, Veit Erlmann claims, as well as undue emphasis on the interiority of the listening experience (Erlmann 2010, p. 24). Given the recent dominance of constructionism in the humanities and social sciences, the idea that sound re-introduces a salutary dose of realism, while preserving the notion of mediation, makes a valuable contribution to the study of religion. Likewise, there exists a productive tension between sound as public event/performance summoning, or at least rendering possible, particular experiences of the sacred and transcendence on embodied practitioners, and the variety of individual affects that, in a feedback loop, render the soundscapes efficacious.³

26.1 Working with Sound

Scholars, writers, and artists who think sonically operate with broader notions of sound to include silence and noise, as well as musical sounds. Douglas Kahn’s definition captures the complexity:

By sound I mean sounds, voices, and aurality – all that might fall within or touch on auditive phenomena, whether this involves actual sonic or auditive events or ideas about sound or listening: sounds actually heard or heard in myth, idea, or implication; sounds heard by everyone or imagined by one person alone; or sounds as they fuse with the sensorium as a whole. (Kahn 1999, p. 3)

Precisely because of the complex nature of the phenomenon of sound, Sterne notes there are different paths into sound studies (Sterne 2012, p. 7) with various authors privileging vibration, auditory culture, vocality, or aurality, for example, as their categories of analysis. Scholars of religion have been slow to engage, either empirically or theoretically, the auditory and acoustic dimensions of religious worlds. This ‘silence’ can be attributed to various factors, namely textualist and visualist biases in Western scholarship on religion, predomination of tradition-specific studies of music in liturgical settings, perceived secularist and technological orientation of modern-day studies of sound, along with the specific challenges of studying and writing about the sonic (Beck 2009 [1993], 2006; Hackett 2011; Harrison 2013; Weiner 2009; cf. Samuels et al. 2010).⁴ The focus of the present chapter will be on aural media – the sounding objects, cultural forms, and materialities of hearing in religious settings.

Despite the primacy of the visual in material religion studies (Morgan 2005; Promey 2014), there is much to draw on for any student of aurality in relation to religion, not least the concern to embrace an approach that links religion, sensation, and materiality, and the lived experiences of religious practitioners (Promey 2014, pp. 3–4; Meyer 2009).⁵ This is echoed in philosopher and musician Marcel Cobussen’s advocacy of a reorientation to a concept of the spiritual that is more material and corporeal (Cobussen 2008). Drawing on the ideas of Ruud Welten,⁶ he refers to music as an ‘art of sound’ which is

dependent upon matter, since sound always involves vibrating air generated by human or non-human bodies. Or more theologically put, 'there is no music without incarnation' (Cobussen 2008, p. 432). As he tellingly notes, '[e]very musician knows that music implies embodiment; not only transcendence, but also immanence and materiality' (Cobussen 2008, p. 433). He cites the case of Buddhism whose rituals of meditation and chanting require extreme focus on concrete bodily activities. This non-dualistic perspective is also emphasized by Leigh Schmidt in his compelling religious and cultural history of hearing in the American Enlightenment (Schmidt 2002). He contends that '[t]he very corporeality of hearing needs to be materialized, snatched out of an airy evanescence through the rituals, disciplines, performances, mechanisms, and commodities that make up the sounding body as well as the attentive ear' (Schmidt 2002, pp. 35–36).

A further methodological consideration regarding the study of sound and religious material culture is offered by religion scholar Isaac Weiner, who argues that if we only focus on sound as a secondary characteristic of discrete material objects then we lose the way a 'sound's meaning always emerges through the interplay of broadcaster and receiver, of noise-maker and listener, situated within particular historical and social contexts' (2011, p. 110). So to study the materiality of sounds, Weiner argues, means that we need to be attentive to both 'their physical properties and to the historically specific processes through which broadcasters and perceivers invest sounds with significance' (Weiner 2011).

Studies of religious aural media can also be informed by research on religion and media that has generated some important new thinking on mediation and immediacy over the last three decades. Perhaps most importantly, the move from studies of religion and media as two separate entities to a more integrated perspective has resulted in media being treated as intrinsic to broader practices of religious mediation that are believed to link the human and divine worlds, as well as people with one another (Meyer 2011, p. 23; Stollow 2012). There is also attention to how the use of electronic and digital media shapes religious transformation (Vries 2001) and is integral to the manifestation of religion as a lived practice (Meyer 2011, p. 23; cf. Campbell and Connelly chapter on Digital Religion and Materiality, this volume). In the words of one of the leading thinkers in the field of religion and media studies, Birgit Meyer, this more 'material take on mediation', (Meyer 2012, p. 26, 2013, p. 9) serves to challenge perduring understandings of religion – generally attributed to the Protestant, post-Enlightenment legacy – that devalue the outward expressions of religion (Meyer 2012, pp. 10–11; Houtman and Meyer 2012, pp. 9–12; cf. Promey 2014). The material and media turns in the study of religion give new emphasis to how language, bodies, pictures – *and we must add sounds* – matter in a concrete, sensorial sense, rather than as mere vehicles of abstract meaning (Meyer 2012, pp. 40, note 13).

Another salient outcome of recent work on religion in/as media is a more nuanced understanding of the paradoxes generated by the newer media technologies. For example, anthropologist Patrick Eisenlohr addresses the 'oscillation between mediation and immediacy' or the dialectics of concealing and revealing of techniques of mediation in the production of the immediate and real (Eisenlohr 2011, p. 4; cf. van der Port 2011). In his judgement, media are not only 'in-between' and parasitical, but also independent, generative forces (van de Port 2011, p. 2). For Meyer, mediation and immediacy are intertwined in that the achievement of 'a sense of immediacy and divine presence

depends on authorized mediation practices' through which 'media may disappear, be present and contested or "hyper-apparent"' (2011, p. 27). We might argue that aural media *exemplify this paradox* as the technologies of sonic production, reception, amplification, reproduction, and transmission may be readily hidden from public view or openly celebrated as agents of the mediation process and the production of 'a transcendent real' (van der Port 2011, p. 87).

26.2 Case Studies

Religious traditions vary in terms of whether they privilege vocalized forms of expression, such as recitation in Islam, and chanting in Buddhism, or they prefer drums and other sound-producing instruments for ritual communication, as in Siberian shamanism and Santería. Some traditions, such as Tibetan Tantric Buddhism combine chanting with musical instruments. In Hindu ritual life, a variety of instrumental and vocalized sounds are heard simultaneously. Since many ritual instruments serve as devices to summon deities, spirits, or ancestors in a range of traditions, they are often percussive rather than melodic, with gongs, drums, bells, cymbals, conches, and rattles being the most common forms. Microphones and loudspeakers may amplify the call to prayer, as in Islam, or be integral to heightening religious experience, as in many charismatic-Pentecostal churches. Electronic music has become popular in Western culture for individualized contemplative practice and mass spiritual raves.

Bearing this complexity in mind, the examples discussed in this chapter were chosen according to three desiderata: (i) their diversity in terms of objects/media, and historical, cultural, and religious contexts, (ii) their theoretical and methodological salience for sound-oriented research on religion, especially engagement with newer research techniques, (iii) their capacity to clarify and/or problematize the relationship between aurality, materiality, and the mediation of religion. We need to be curious about how some aural media come to be configured as religious media, since this is not intrinsic to a medium, but 'subject to social processes that shape religious mediation and authorise certain sensational forms as valuable' (Meyer 2011, p. 31). Meyer's concept of a 'sensational form' or 'configuration of religious media, acts, imaginations and bodily sensations in the context of a religious tradition or group' is productive for understanding how these forms induce particular practices and dispositions, or aesthetic styles, and are believed to effectuate or make present the transcendent or the other world (2012, p. 26). In sum, the examples discussed below – under the productive, but far from exhaustive, rubrics of body and voice, ritual instruments, and space – call for a thick descriptive approach that addresses the intersections of humans, objects, and environments (Houtman and Meyer 2012).

26.3 Body and Voice

It makes sense to begin with the body because of its perceived triple role as a 'producer, transmitter and receiver of the transcendent' (Meyer 2012, p. 28). Plus, as Cobussen rightly suggests, it is the 'force of the corporeal and the sensory that always exceeds the

cognitive structures of signification' (2008, p. 131). Recent studies of the voice exemplify this emphasis. In her review of anthropological approaches to voice and voicing, Amanda Weidman underscores the need to be attentive to the multiple registers of the voice – it is a sonic phenomenon, with timbre or vocal quality that is socially meaningful, as well as being material in the sense that vocal sounds are produced through bodily actions and particular practices (Weidman 2014, p. 235). This is well instanced in Greg Urban's study of Amerindian ritual wailing in Brazil, where he provides interesting physical details on how the various vocal sounds, such as cry break, voiced inhalation, creaky voice, and falsetto vowels, are produced to signal sadness and grief (Urban 1988). John Burdick analyses the embodied and racialized vocal sounding practices of Afro-Brazilian gospel musicians (2013) and Ashon Crawley is interested in how the aesthetic practices of hooping, shouting, noise-making and speaking in tongues of Black Pentecostalism allow for the emergence of alternative modes of social organization (2016). For those in the field of sound healing, the vibrations generated through chanting, singing, and singing bowls are held to be the means of recalibrating the diseased body.⁷

The belief in the creative and transformative power of sacred utterances, particularly mantras, is widespread not only in Hinduism and Buddhism, but also in Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism. Here we mean especially the 'numinous' power of words to create the world, to bring forth space, time, and material reality (indeed to be reality itself), as well as to meditate, purify, and for healing purposes, as mentioned above. The work of Guy Beck on the concept of sacred cosmic sound or *Nāda Brahman* is particularly apposite here (2009), as is Vasudha Narayanan's study of the dual unity of the visible and audible aspects of the concept of revelation in the living Sri Vaishnava tradition of South India and its implementation in the Tamil cult of *bhakti* (1994). Understanding the 'ontogenic' and revelatory power of sound, which many traditions advance, further challenges the predominance of the visual in the study of materiality and in seeking more integrative, multi-sensorial approaches, which also include embodied movement.

German medieval mystic and musician Hildegard of Bingen believed her body to be the vestment of the spirit, which has a living voice; thus she considered it proper for the body, with its soul, to use its voice to sing praises to God. Singing for Hildegard was an embodied performance that reflected both the pleasures and suffering of devotion. Her chants were characterized by an immense range (more than two octaves) that Bruce Holsinger explains as a 'sonorous acknowledgment of the simultaneously devotional and sexual pleasures, aspirations, and "openness" of the musical body as she conceived it' (Holsinger 2002, p. 131). Relying too much on a strictly formalistic analysis of this medieval mystic's compositions and musical expression, Holsinger contends, would miss her understanding of music as a somatic, erotic, and often gendered aspect of her visionary life (Holsinger 2002, p. 102).

Vocalized forms of expression mediate historical and natural contexts. Jeff Todd Titon has been interested for more than three decades in the way special sounds signify a spiritual presence through chanted and sung sermons and prayers in both the black and white Baptist traditions in the American South (see, e.g. Titon 1988). Tuvan throat-singers draw on the natural sound sources of their 'overtone-rich ambient environment'

to please the local spirits (Levin 2006, p. 38). Linguistic anthropologist Nicholas Harkness examines how Korean Christians 'strive through vocalization to exhibit certain idealized qualities of contemporary Christian personhood, using European-style classical singing as their model' (Harkness 2014, p. 6). He describes how they cultivate a 'clean', healthy voice that is associated with a Christian aesthetic of peace and progress, and suppress sounds of suffering and hardship heard in the voices of older generations. Based on her study of nineteenth-century Colombian inscriptions of listening practices, ethnomusicologist Ana María Ochoa Gautier finds that 'ideas about sound, especially the voice, were central to the very definition of life' (Gautier 2014, p. 5). The question of how to distinguish between human and non-human sounds, and what counted as proper forms of voicing and cultural expression, for different peoples in Colombia, took on greater importance in a colonial, then nation-building context (Gautier 2014, pp. 3–5). Importantly, she emphasizes the role of the 'nonliterate' peoples, as well as the 'lettered elites', in cultivating audible techniques that served to constitute the Latin American public sphere (Gautier 2014, p. 4).

Anne Rasmussen's ethnomusicological study of Islamic performance in Indonesia also addresses how vocal sounds, in this case, qur'anic recitation, index Arab-influenced Islamic musical styles and genres, notably from Egypt (Rasmussen 2010). This Arab aesthetic combines with local musical discourses and practices in the archipelago, mediating the interplay of multiple Islamic identities. The voices of women are a distinctive feature of Indonesia's rich soundscape and Rasmussen's rich research focuses on how women embody, encode, and enact the sound of the recited Qur'an in public and private settings. Despite the apparently transient nature of recorded music in this context, Rasmussen discusses how audio cassettes 'created significant space for women as composers, performers, and producers in the field of Islamic musical arts' (Rasmussen 2010, p. 192). She suggests that the process of making the music may be more important than a lasting product; moreover, the material media could serve as souvenirs of live music events and become a commodity of exchange (Rasmussen 2010, pp. 188–189).

Further examples demonstrate the salience of aural media technologies not just for the reproduction and amplification of ritual vocal performance but because they may also be considered as ritual instruments, discussed below. Vicki Brennan (2012) conducted ethnographic research on the musical recordings done by the members of a branch of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church Movement in Nigeria. She examines how these 'religious sound artifacts' – in the form of record albums and music videos – play an important role in the everyday religious practices of this Nigerian independent church community.⁸ The 'recontextualized' recordings do not supplant live musical performance but they reproduce and circulate ethical and aesthetic values, nurturing 'disciplined forms of emotion and embodiment' (p. 413). Along with Meyer and Eisenlohr (Eisenlohr 2007; Meyer 2011), Brennan is interested in the paradox of how processes of mediation are rendered invisible by the materiality of technology and generate immediacy in religious settings. She pays particular attention to what she calls the 'labor of immediacy' (Brennan 2012, p. 411) or the practical techniques that go into allowing choir members in particular achieve 'affective and effective spiritual experiences' (Brennan 2012, p. 425). These might include singing along to the choir's

recordings either at home or in the car as part of their daily religious praxis. Some members claimed that listening to the music helped alleviate stress in their lives by reminding them of God's presence.

In his study of the call to prayer in Singapore, Tong Soon Lee examines the impact of modern technology on the production of Islamic space (Lee 1999). In the rural past, the acoustic space generated by the amplified call to prayer (*adhan* or *azhan*) served to define the surrounding Islamic community. However, with the urbanization and resettlement of the 1970s, the call to prayer was not so welcome in the new multiethnic neighbourhoods. As part of a noise abatement campaign, a decision was taken to orient the speakers of newer mosques inward and reduce the amplitude of loudspeakers in existing mosques. This was interpreted in some quarters as a move to suppress Islam. However, there was also an agreement to broadcast the call to prayer five times a day over the radio. Lee notes that this electronic mediation served to decentralize and individualize the act of worship, but it also created a new imagined, communal Islamic space – providing the Islamic community with 'a means of cultural self-production in the collective, non-Islamic context of Singapore' (Lee 1999, p. 205). In particular, it meant that women, previously displaced from the physical community, could be positioned equally with men in terms of their reception of the call to prayer.

The religious use of amplified voices and loudspeakers is also the subject of Brian Larkin's recent research in the city of Jos, northern Nigeria (Larkin 2014). He is interested in how this medial form, which he emphasizes is both aural and visual, technologizes urban space and daily living. It is used in markets by hawkers of cassettes of religious preaching and music, in streets by impromptu praise sessions organized by Sufi followers, and on the tops of vehicles by Muslim movements relaying their message. Churches make extensive use of speakers to amplify their services to the surrounding neighbourhood and the Muslim call to prayer or *azan* is also mediated by this form of technology. As an anthropologist, Larkin examines how the residents of this city – the site of many outbreaks of religiously related conflict in recent times, often sparked by the use of loudspeakers – generate cultural techniques to live with these ubiquitous, ephemeral sounds. Drawing on Jonathan Sterne's notion of 'audile techniques' or practices of listening that distract people or call them to apply, Larkin links these to both religious discipline (cf. Hirschkind 2006) and the medial quality of the loudspeaker. This auditory technology has an aggressive, transgressive, even assaultive, quality that can derive from the 'content of what is transmitted, from both the sheer loudness of the messages relayed and the distortion of the messages produced' (Larkin 2014, p. 1004). So because of the 'complex ecology of religious sound' in a city such as Jos and the violence attached to it, Larkin contends, people cultivate skills of inattention when they identify that the message is not aimed at them.⁹

In a predominantly Hindu village in Tamil Nadu, ethnomusicologist Paul Greene writes about how cassette devotional music became a prominent feature of daily village life (Greene 1999). With the advent of low-cost audio-cassette technology in the 1980s villagers were able to select songs suitable for a particular deity's festival or an important family event, or that marked the beginning of a day for a business, such a tea shop. In some instances, women went into trance when listening to a song about a goddess

approaching, even though they were aware it was not live music. Greene notes that the villagers treat this 'refunctioned' cassette music as a type of 'auspicious sound' or offering to the deities (Greene 1999, p. 465). The playback of this prestigious music cultivates a sense of 'shared, communal devotion', and allows villagers to exercise power over sound in cultural life as sound engineers, in an affordable and convenient manner (Greene 1999, p. 477). In particular, its amplification during festival days means that the presence of the goddess, Muttumariamamma, 'becomes especially palpable and inescapable' (Greene 1999) and, over time, increasingly central to goddess-worship in the village in general, and even further afield.

26.4 Ritual Instruments

Composer R. Murray Schafer suggests that the notion of God as an 'omniscient microphone, hearing or overhearing everything', is at least implicitly present in many religious traditions (Schafer 2003, p. 26). So why he asks are bones rattled, horns blown, and church bells rung to announce our readiness for communication?¹⁰ Beyond the claim by tribal societies that the gods were often sleeping and needed awakening, he proposes that the ritual (sounding) object has a complex function. A case in point would be the role of percussion in summoning the ancestors, the orixas, or lwas in African and African-derived religions and in enabling their presencing in the dancing bodies of the initiates.¹¹ Similarly, the church bell can be centrifugal in that it is believed to scare off evil spirits and centripetal in the sense that it draws people together for religious observance, maintaining the ritual regimen. Alain Corbin's study of bells in nineteenth-century France demonstrated how they served as auditory and defensive markers (Corbin 1998). He notes that no sounds in the rural setting could compete with the bell tower. In addition to their apotropaic virtue, bells were also believed to have the power to summon angels. Steven Feld was also interested in how village bells, like rainforest birds, 'habituate local listeners to a sense of place and produce consciousness of space and time' (Feld 2012, p. xxviii). This turned into a multi-CD project on the worldwide culture of bells that sought to counter the notion of sound as ephemeral, such as how one can hear history and transformation in European bells.¹²

Historian Christopher Marsh considers the 'supernatural' power of bells in many cultures to derive from both from their sheer size and their 'peculiar and somewhat dissonant sound' (Marsh 2013, p. 465). Bells were regularly baptized and given names in medieval England. Their music was believed to be able to carry prayers to heaven, where they might facilitate the passage of departed souls through purgatory (Marsh 2013, p. 466). Marsh notes that Protestant hostility to the sounds of 'popish' bells in early modern England resulted in restrictions on smaller bells, while the larger bells were difficult to displace. He attributes the persistence of church bells to their 'unmistakable loudness' (Marsh 2013, p. 499) and the fact that their messages could be received and interpreted in various ways. He offers this insightful analysis: 'Older beliefs in the power of bells were in practice permitted to co-exist with more rigorous reformist attitudes (rather like the combination of discordant partials that characterised the sound itself)' (Marsh 2013, p. 501, emphasis added).¹³

The earliest use of bells can be traced back to ancient China. Early writings discuss the tone qualities of the bells and the marvellous powers ascribed to them, based on theories of the essence of sound as a transcendental power.¹⁴ In his masterly study of bells across history and cultures, Percival Price provides several examples of the changing uses and significance of particular bells, such as wind-bells in Japanese Buddhism, which were hung from pagodas and whose mysterious sound was believed to scare off evil spirits (Price 1983, p. 43). In time, they became heavier, more visually attractive, but acoustically impractical. Bell making is generally considered to be an art and a founder has to be a metallurgist with knowledge of the resonating properties of various alloys (about 80% copper and 20% tin) (Rossing 1984). Church bells are sometimes cast using metal from the previous ring as in the case of Worcester Cathedral in England that is considered to have one of the finest rings of bells in the world.¹⁵ The haunting sound of the Harmonic Minor 10 can be heard on Good Friday, Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday, and New Year's Eve. Sonic modification can occur when a leather pad is strapped to one side of the clapper ball. Half-muffled bells are rung on Remembrance Sunday, Good Friday, and for funerals, and are only ever fully muffled for a sovereign. The force of the sound of large bells means that they have to be rung at a distance using mechanical devices. Most worshippers never see the bells but only experience their arresting and distinctive sounds.

In contrast, the metal objects – mainly bells and rattles – used in ritual in ancient West Mexico were valued because of two key material properties: sound and colour (Hosler 1994). In her study of metallurgical technology in this region, archaeologist Dorothy Hosler notes that the proportion of metal objects created for ritual, symbolic, and status purposes is unusually high compared to other zones where bronze alloys were also available. She links the belief that metal was sacred and animate to their creation myth that the first humans were formed by the creator out of ash and particular metals, and to the linguistic connections between bell sounds and metallic colours. Golden and silvery colours were associated with the solar and lunar deities in many regions of the Americas. The sounds of bells and composite bell instruments played a major role in rituals celebrating human and agricultural fertility and regeneration, in warfare as protective devices, and in the sacred paradise, created through song and sound. According to Hosler, it was resonant bell sounds in particular that were associated with 'shimmering, colorful, singing birds and with human voices that represented deities and their human transformations' (Hosler 1994, p. 233). They also were believed to replicate the sounds of thunder, rain, jaguars, and rattlesnakes. While evidence is incomplete, Hosler suggests that rattles, bells, and other rattling instruments are used presently or in the recent past in the context of shamanic activity.

Another example of an ancient sound-producing instrument that is used in contemporary healing practices is the Tibetan singing bowl. Long used as a signal to begin and end periods of silent meditation in Tibetan Buddhism, it is now the subject of publications, websites, and weblogs. According to tradition, the bowls are made of seven metals – one metal for each of the planets (Jansen 2002, p. 23). Each metal produces an individual sound, including harmonics, and together these sounds produce the unique singing sound of the bowl as the rim is struck or rubbed by a padded mallet. They also produce a physical vibration that can be felt. The emphasis is on finding a bowl that harmonizes with each individual and his or her body.

Materiality clearly matters for those serving as experts in or purveyors of these sounding objects in accounting for the perceived spiritual and healing powers of the bowls.¹⁶ A case in point is Joseph Feinstein, who provides this type of metallurgical information on the bowls that he uses, collects, records, and markets through his 'Himalayan Bowls' enterprise.¹⁷ He describes how singing bowls, whether the antique or newer handmade versions, are made from bell metal bronze, an alloy of 77–80% copper and 20–23% tin. The technique has remained consistent over four millennia. He explains that the high percentage of tin improves the tone and resonance of the bronze. The majority of singing bowls are made from the same high quality bell metal bronze which is difficult to make, very hard to work with, and expensive, according to Feinstein. He notes the slightly more metallic and sharp tone of the new bowls, and their longer and more powerful vibration. However, he warns potential customers about cheap machined singing bowls that are made from less refined brass, and purportedly full of impurities, thereby lacking the wonderful tone of bell metal that some would claim is 'another secret to the special sound of singing bowls'. For others, the authenticity of these objects is linked to the belief that prayers or mantras were recited as the metals were hammered into the ancient bowls, emerging later when the bowls were played. The owners of a crystal mine in Quebec claim that their 'Crystal Vessels', with their pure, resonant sound, adapted from high-tech use, possess a 'unique ability to transport awareness into an expanded state, bringing an experience of profound well-being'.¹⁸ New discourses of authentication now come from the scientific world with studies of the bowls' natural vibrational modes (Terwagne and Bush 2011).¹⁹ These types of valuations of sonic material efficacy point to new avenues of research in the study of religion.

26.5 Space

Sound's immersive and spatializing capacities feature prominently in sound studies scholarship, notably through the concept of the soundscape (Eisenberg 2015, 2013; Schulz 2008).²⁰ In their valuable article 'Soundscapes: Towards a Sounded Anthropology', Samuels et al. (2010) discuss the potential of the concept of the soundscape or acoustic environment (Schafer 1994) for the new possibilities it offers for thinking about the enculturated nature of sound and listening practices, as well as the material spaces of performance that are used or constructed to propagate sound (Samuels et al. 2010, p. 330). They also claim that the soundscape concept partially addresses the challenge of the temporality or ephemerality of sounds, as compared to images, by providing a means to materialize sounds (Samuels et al. 2010, p. 338). It also has the potential to demonstrate how spaces used for sonic performance, whether caves, churches and cathedrals, or concert halls and theatres 'both shape and are shaped by ideologies of proper aural practices and listening' (p. 338). To counter the overemphasis on the immersive quality of the soundscape, anthropologist Stefan Helmreich proposes the analytic of 'transduction', which refers to how sound changes as it traverses media, to think about how space, presence, and soundscape are produced (Helmreich 2015). He does admit, however, that the concept may not be so helpful in

understanding how distance and presence are materialized in rainforest sound worlds, such as those studied by anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Steven Feld.

Inspired by Colin Turnbull's sonic descriptions of Mbuti music in *The Forest People* (1961) and R. Murray Schafer's work on the transformations of sound environments through history (Feld 2003, p. 225), Steven Feld began his lifelong work on the materiality and sociality of sound (Feld and Brenneis 2004, p. 462). He came to call this 'acoustemology' or one's sonic way of knowing and being in the world (Feld 1996). The idea of place as sensed and place as sensation, according to Feld, proceeds through a complex interplay of the auditory and the visual, as well as other intersensory perceptual processes (Feld 1996, p. 98). Based on his field experiences in the rich aural environments of the Bosavi people (in particular the Kaluli group) in Papua New Guinea during the 1970s (Feld and Brenneis 2004), he understood this as a sonic way of knowing place, a way of attending to hearing, a way of absorbing that would do justice to the layered complexity of the human and environmental world of sound.²¹ Importantly, he notes that '[t]he mediation between this rainforest ecology and Bosavi music turned out to be cosmological, for Kaluli consider birds not just singers but spirits of their dead' (Feld 2003, p. 225). Feld's brilliant analysis also brings out the tension between 'acoustic revelatory presence' and 'visual hidden presence' in the tropical forest, which also adheres in Kaluli poetic concepts and expressions of emplacement (1997, pp. 98–99). One of their central metaphors is *dulugu ganalan* or 'lift-up-over-sounding' which conveys the spatial 'lift-up-over' and temporal 'sounding' axes of Kaluli experience and the staggered alternations and overlaps of their interlocked and seamless sound world (Feld 1996, p. 100). Their musical practices and ritual dances reflect this idea of being in synchrony but out of phase (Feld 1996, p. 101).

Also worthy of mention in this connection is Marina Roseman's anthropological study of the healing sounds of the Temiar people of Malaysia (Roseman 1993). She evocatively conveys how their songs and the playing of bamboo tubes give form to a 'cultural configuration that links ritual and everyday life', mediating between 'the rainforest's pulsing sounds and the body's beating heart, bringing nature spirits into conjunction with the human spirit, collapsing the boundaries between nature and culture' (Roseman 1993, p. 183).

Musician Jennifer Berezan (Berezan 2000, cited in Blesser and Salter 2007, p. 178) explored the use of a subterranean environment for her recording of *ReTurning*.²² The Oracle Chamber in the Hypogeum at Hal Salfieni (3300–3000 BCE) in present-day Malta is believed to be the only known prehistoric underground temple in the world. Berezan, who leads tours to sacred goddess sites, describes her experience as being 'inside the earth, inside the body of the goddess'. She talks of feeling that she was in an altered, but also deeply authentic state. To her, it was 'obvious that the people who built it had an incredible understanding of acoustics, and of the value and power of sound for healing'. The acoustic equivalency of these underground ritual and burial chambers with the 'overpowering and enveloping acoustics' of Gothic cathedrals and their hard, reflective stone surfaces is noted (Blesser and Salter 2007, p. 89). The sonic properties of ancient ritual sites, such as Stonehenge²³ and Mayan temples, are the subject of the field of archaeoacoustics (Scarre and Lawson 2006) or auditory archaeology (Mills 2014), as well as more general works interested in the acoustic mysteries of holy places

and ancient monuments (Devereux 2002; Hale 2007). The latter authors are particularly interested in the purported capacity of some materials (such as stone) in these natural and/or constructed spaces to propagate infrasound, for example, generating 'supernatural' effects for the listeners.²⁴

Alternatively, the material structure of a particular monument can transform a human sound into a non-human sound. This is the case of the famous Mayan site of Chichen Itza in Mexico's Yucatan, where the human sound of clapping at the foot of the tall, narrow steps in front of the Kukulcan pyramid turns into a chirp echo that resembles the song of the sacred quetzal bird. Sound scientist and consultant David Lubman attributes this to the periodic reflections from the plaster-covered limestone step faces (Lubman 2010). Steven Waller, an expert in rock art acoustics, relates the ambiguous sounds that can reflect off solid rock, particularly in caves and canyons, and that were interpreted as echo spirits by prehistoric and indigenous peoples, to ancient petroglyphs (Waller 2006).²⁵ Descriptions of these spirits can be found in ancient myths that match prehistoric petroglyphs. Moreover, his acoustic measurements have demonstrated that the artists chose to place their art precisely where they could hear the strongest echoes.

Acousticians have also been able to reconstruct the aural environment of Stonehenge using impulse responses at a replica site in Maryhill, Washington State, United States.²⁶ They conclude that such a space does react to acoustic activity such as speech and chanting. Because Stonehenge was a circular structure, with many stones creating diffusion and refraction, this multi-directional sonic effect would have been noticed by people as they used the space. Based on their research on the 'Stone Age eyes and ears' of archaeological sites in south-west Wales, Paul Devereux and Jon Wozencroft encourage the use of natural sensory source material, such as visual and acoustic mapping, in conjunction with digital work on the sonic properties of prehistoric sites, such as dolmens and ringing rocks or lithophones (Devereux and Wozencroft 2014). They underscore that much of this research is speculative and in its early stages.²⁷

In contrast to the likely intentional acoustic design of many prehistorical sites (Mills 2014), Devereux and Wozencroft 2014, p. 16), Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter contend that the acoustic properties of Christian cathedrals and basilicas were a by-product of developments in building technology to avoid fire and to support large heavy ceilings (2007, pp. 92–93). So forms of church music and liturgy, in their judgement, were a response to the long reverberations occasioned by the increasing grandeur of these evolving religious structures. Gregorian chant, with its simpler monophonic and unaccompanied music, developed as a more aurally effective response to these highly reverberant spaces.²⁸ Theological meaning was eventually attributed to the reverberation and sense of sound arriving from all directions. Along similar lines, the work of medieval art historian Bissera Pentcheva explores the way sight and sound work together in the sixth-century interior of the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople to afford the worshipper a multisensory aesthetic experience (Pentcheva 2011). Using liturgical texts, Byzantine ekphrasis or poetic language, and modern digital technology, particularly computer auralizations, she uncovers how the optical shimmer of the marble (together with gold sheaths) is linked to its acoustical capacity to reflect sound waves. Marble was also linguistically and culturally linked to water adding to the sensual materiality of the space (Pentcheva 2011, p. 96). Pentcheva contends that the

psychoacoustics of the distant, non-intimate type of sound generated by human breath in the reverberant acoustical space of Hagia Sophia could be perceived in metaphysical terms. Worshippers experienced the 'bodiless voice' of Hagia Sophia as 'indwelling spirit' or *pneuma* through the building's dynamic optical and aural effects.

The work of art historian Nina Ergin is particularly attentive to the acoustic and material qualities of mosques and their religious significance. In her study of the soundscape of sixteenth-century Istanbul mosques, she uses archival documents to demonstrate that Ottoman architects used acoustic technology and design to optimize the sensual, especially the acoustic, experience of the performance space of the Qur'anic 'text-as-event' (Ergin 2008, pp. 212–214). In that connection, she cites the sixteenth-century master architect Mimar Koca Sinan who creatively used domed ceilings and structural and decorative elements, such as sounding vessels, tiled walls, and soft carpets, to balance sound reflection and absorption (Ergin 2008, p. 214). He even factored in the sound-absorbing qualities of the worshipper's bodies in the quest for a 'very reverberant, "live" space that gives the audience a feeling of majesty and grandeur' (Ergin 2008, p. 215). Ergin makes a cogent case for closer analysis of sonic phenomena by architectural historians, contending that this could explain the physical appearance of some mosques (Ergin 2008, p. 218) and do more justice to the mosque as an experiential space. She vividly describes the mosque, in its original context before 'misguided restorations', as a 'finely tuned acoustic instrument, meant to sound the word of God in the form of melodic Qur'an recitation to the believers' (Ergin 2008, p. 217). Since sound is integral to many buildings in the Islamic world, she proposes that such a sonically aware approach would be more sensitive to the original cultural context. It would also bring new understandings to studies of space in relation to Middle Eastern gender history, as attested to by her research on Ottoman royal women's spaces (Ergin 2014).

Some of the newer, theoretically rich, research on contemporary Islamic urban spaces has relevance to the present chapter (see, also, Lee and Larkin 2014, discussed above). In his research on Sufi Muslim rituals in the Western Balkans, Peter McMurray has explored the ways in which sound articulates difference in cities, thereby mediating notions of place (McMurray 2012). He advocates a sound-based approach since 'sound and music have a complicated relationship in Islam' (McMurray 2012, p. 235; see, also, Rasmussen 2010). He reflects on the challenges for ethnomusicologists of mapping sound in heterophonic urban contexts and balancing the 'fixity' of sounding objects and structures in a place (such as architecture and city spaces) with the movement between places, sometimes conveyed by the more fluid notion of the 'soundscape' (2012, p. 248). Andrew Eisenberg's research focuses on what he calls 'communitarian privacy' in the public spaces of Muslim-Swahili Old Town, in Mombasa, Kenya, and how this is generated by habituated modes of sounding, listening, and responding, through affective, bodily practices (Eisenberg 2013). Not insignificantly, the Swahili-style mosques lack minarets, and the *adhans* or calls to prayer are close to ear level. He contends that sacred sound *creates* sacred space, for in an Islamic cosmology, 'sounded sacred words link the material world to the immaterial realm of God' (Eisenberg 2013, p. 194). Relatedly, Charles Hirschkind's landmark book on listening practices among Muslim communities in Egypt demonstrates how the soundscapes produced through the circulation of the Qur'an and sermon tapes reshape moral aptitudes and the moral economy of revival in Cairo (Hirschkind 2006).

26.6 Final Reflections

This chapter has sought to redress the neglect of the aural dimension in studies of material religion. Some of the cases discussed complement existing analyses in the material study of religion while others have produced fresh understandings of religious practices, places, and experiences. Beyond describing how religion is expressed in aural form, the more productive questions that have been broached here but require further research are (i) what makes aural media significant or religious, and according to whom; (ii) what constitutes the materiality of aurality in relation to material religion (cf. Engelke 2012, p. 209); (iii) how do objects (or vocalities, technologies or architectures) make present/audible the inaudible²⁹; (iv) how does religion happen or work aurally (cf. Meyer 2013, p. 9; Morgan 2007, p. 1).

While this chapter has provided an opportunity to explore the material and historically contingent aspects of a form of religious mediation primarily perceived as immaterial, it may also be argued that an attention to aurality might bring to the fore the ‘nuances, relativism, and plural nature of both materiality and immateriality’ called for by anthropologist Daniel Miller (Miller 2005, p. 41). Indeed, the case of aural religion may be particularly instructive in terms of the tensions and alliances, as well as entanglements, of the material and immaterial (Miller 2005, p. 42). Is there less of an antagonistic relationship between aurality and religion, we might ask, than has been the case with visuality? Is this because sound may be perceived as less of an ‘incarnation’ of religion – perhaps because of its immersive and acousmatic characteristics? By the same token, is sound considered an ally, or more suitable vehicle or expression, of the sacred when the latter is framed in terms of the transcendent (cf. Houtman and Meyer 2012)? Are not sound and hearing prime examples of ‘deeply material processes that involve both human and non-human actors’ (Hazard 2013, p. 68). Such a litany of questions can only be answered by more multidisciplinary engagement with the acoustic and auditory instantiations of religion.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Peter McMurray, Vicki Brennan, and Ernst Karel for valuable feedback on this chapter.
- 2 While commending the breadth of sound studies, Steven Feld also rightly notes the relative absence of research on non-Western topics (2012, p. xxvi).
- 3 Thanks to Manuel Vásquez for this further reflection.
- 4 It is important to note the pioneering work of historian of religion William A. Graham on the oral aspects of scripture (Graham 1993).
- 5 Cf. McMurray (2012, pp. 235–236) on the merits of visual anthropology, and its introduction of new modes and media of representation, for ethnomusicological studies of sound- and music-worlds.
- 6 In an unpublished essay, ‘Whether Angels Can Sing’.
- 7 See, for example the work of Dr. Mitchell Gaynor <http://gaynoroncology.com/services/mind-body-spirit> (accessed 16 April 2015).

- 8 Brennan's article on hymns and the hymnal in Cherubim and Seraphim churches reminds us that material technologies are not solely electronic (Brennan 2013).
- 9 Cf. Omar M. McRoberts's notion of the weekly 'sonic battle' of the churches with the profane streets in the Four Corners area of Boston (McRoberts 2004, p. 81).
- 10 Rodney Needham's article posed similar questions regarding the relationship of percussion and transition rituals (Needham 1967).
- 11 See, for example, the work of Katherine Hagedorn (2001), Yvonne Daniel (2006), and Kenneth Schweitzer (2013).
- 12 See his CD series, 'The Time of Bells' with VoxLox.
- 13 On shifting perceptions of bells in the US context see Chapter 1 in (Weiner 2014) and (Novak and Sakakeeny 2015a).
- 14 (Price 1983, p. 3) citing Laurence Picken in D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* London 1958, p. 86.
- 15 <http://worcesterbells.org.uk/ringing-towers/worcester-cathedral> (accessed 12 April 2015).
- 16 Cf. (Connor 2013) on the agency of instruments and instrument makers.
- 17 www.himalayanbowls.com (accessed 15 April 2015).
- 18 http://minecristal.com/?page_id=36&lang=en-us (accessed 5 April 2015).
- 19 <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-13976598> (accessed 15 April 2015).
- 20 Francois Augoyard and Henry Torgue (2006) propose an intermediary term 'sonic effect' to offset the overly broad 'soundscape' concept and overly specific 'sound object' (Augoyard and Torgue 2006).
- 21 See his *Voices of the Rainforest: A Day In the Life of the Kaluli People* (1991), The World (Rykodisc/Mickey Hart Series).
- 22 <http://www.edgeofwonder.com/music/returning> (accessed 11 April 2015).
- 23 See, e.g. <https://soundsofstonehenge.wordpress.com> (accessed 4 April 2015).
- 24 Neuroscientific studies may provide new insights into how patterns of sounds in certain locations can 'induce configurations of brain function that are associated with altered or mystical states' (Hill and Soroka 2010).
- 25 See, also his website, <https://sites.google.com/site/rockartacoustics> (accessed 4 April 2015).
- 26 www.salford.ac.uk/computing-science-engineering/research/acoustics/architectural-and-building-acoustics/acoustics-of-stonehenge (accessed 5 April 2015). See, also, <http://www.sonicwonders.org/stonehenge-replica-maryhill-usa> (accessed 5 April 2015).
- 27 See, Adrienne Lafrance, 'Hearing the Lost Sounds of Antiquity'. *The Atlantic*, 19 February 2016 <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/02/byzantine-angel-wings/470076> (accessed 23 February 2016).
- 28 Cf. the research done by the Icons of Sound project at Stanford University, <http://iconsofsound.stanford.edu>, on the acoustics and aesthetics of Hagia Sophia. Because of the extremely large nave, with its marble floors and walls, and centralized dome, with echoes lasting just over 10 seconds, the 'wet' acoustics of this sixth-century architectural wonder 'make words sound like emanation, emerging from the depth of the sea'. As a consequence, much of the ritual in of this former Eastern Orthodox Church involved chanting and not recitative speech.
- 29 Space did not permit attention to contemporary electronic music (such as minimalist, glitch, or ambient) that is nothing short of a treasure trove for research into the interactions of the sonic, the sensory, and the material-generating listening encounters some would term 'spiritual' (see Cobussen 2008, p. 131f.).

Works Cited

- Augoyard, J.-F. and Torgue, H. (2006). *Sonic Experience, a Guide to Everyday Sounds*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Beck, G. (2006). *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Beck, G. (2009 [1993]). *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*, 2e. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Berezan, J. (2000). ReTurning: recorded in the oracle chamber in the hypogeum at Hal Saflieni, Malta. *Grace Millennium* 1 (1) <http://creation-designs.com/gracemillennium/winter00/html/berezan.htm> (accessed 13 November 2018).
- Brennan, V.L. (2012). Take control: the labor of immediacy in Yoruba Christian music. *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 24 (4): 411–429.
- Brennan, V.L. (2013). “Up above the river Jordan”: hymns and historical consciousness in the cherubim and seraphim churches of Nigeria. *Studies in World Christianity* 19 (1): 31–49.
- Blessner, B. and Salter, L.-R. (2007). *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Burdick, J. (2013). *The Color of Sound: Race, Religion and Music in Brazil*. New York: New York University Press.
- Cobussen, M. (2008). *Rethinking Spirituality Through Music*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Connor, W. (2013). The role of the instrument maker in popular music studies. *Ethnomusicology Review* (18) <https://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/content/role-instrument-maker-popular-music-studies-will-connor> (accessed 18 January 2019).
- Corbin, A. (1998). *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-Century French Countryside*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Crawley, A.T. (2016). *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Daniel, Y. (2006). *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Devereux, P. (2002). *Stone Age Soundtracks: The Acoustic Archaeology of Ancient Sites*. London: Vega Books.
- Devereux, P. and Wozencroft, J. (2014). Stone age eyes and ears: a visual and acoustic pilot study of Carn Menyn and environs, Preseli, Wales. *Time and Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* 7 (1): 47–70.
- de Vries, H. (2001). In media res: global religion, public spheres, and the task of contemporary religious studies. In: *Religion and Media* (eds. H. de Vries and S. Weber), 3–42. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Eisenberg, A.J. (2013). Islam, sound, and space: acoustemology and Muslim citizenship on the Kenyan coast. In: *Music, Sound, and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience* (ed. G. Born), 186–202. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Eisenberg, A.J. (2015). Sound. In: *Keywords in Sound* (eds. D. Novak and M. Sakakeeny), 193–207. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Eisenlohr, P. (2007). Technologies of the spirit: devotional Islam, sound reproduction and the dialectics of mediation and immediacy in Mauritius. *Anthropological Theory* 9 (3): 273–296.
- Eisenlohr, P. (2011). Introduction: what is a medium? Theologies, technologies and aspirations. *Social Anthropology* 19 (1): 1–5.
- Engelke, M. (2012). Material religion. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*

- (ed. R.A. Orsi), 209–229. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ergin, N. (2008). The soundscape of sixteenth-century Istanbul mosques: architecture and Qur'an recital. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67 (2): 204–221.
- Ergin, N. (2014). Ottoman royal women's spaces: the acoustic dimension. *Journal of Women's History* 26 (1): 89–111.
- Erlmann, V. (2004). *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity*. Wenner-Gren International Symposium. New York: Berg.
- Erlmann, V. (2010). *Reason and Resonance: A History of Modern Aurality*. Zone Books.
- Feld, S. (1996). Waterfalls of song: an acoustemology of place resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea. In: *Senses of Place* (eds. S. Feld and K.H. Basso), 90–135. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Feld, S. (2003). A rainforest acoustemology. In: *The Auditory Culture Reader* (eds. M. Bull and L. Back), 223–239. New York: Berg.
- Feld, S. (2012). *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (3rd ed. with a new introduction by the author). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Feld, S. and Brenneis, D. (2004). Doing anthropology in sound. *American Ethnologist* 31 (4): 461–474.
- Gautier, A.M.O. (2014). *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Graham, W.A. (1993). *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Greene, P.D. (1999). Sound engineering in a Tamil Village: playing audio cassettes as devotional performance. *Ethnomusicology* 43 (3): 459–489.
- Hackett, R.I.J. (2011). Auditory materials. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (eds. M. Stausberg and S. Engler), 447–458. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hagedorn, K. (2001). *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Harkness, N. (2014). *Songs of Seoul: An Ethnography of Voice and Voicing in Christian South Korea*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Harrison, C. (2013). *The Art of Listening in the Early Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hazard, S. (2013). The material turn in the study of religion. *Religion and Society* 4 (1): 58–78.
- Hale, S.E. (2007). *Sacred Space, Sacred Sound: The Acoustic Mysteries of Holy Places*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.
- Hill, J.D. and Soroka, K.S. (2010). Sonic patterns, spirituality and brain function: the sound component of Neurotheology. *NeuroQuantology: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Quantum Theory and Neuroscience* 8 (4).
- Hirschkind, C. (2006). *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Helmreich, S. (2015). Transduction. In: *Keywords in Sound* (eds. D. Novak and M. Sakakeeny), 222–231. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Holsinger, B.W. (2002). *Music, Body and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (ed. B.W. Holsinger), 7–136. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hosler, D. (1994). *The Sounds and Colors of Power: The Sacred Metallurgical Technology of Ancient West Mexico*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Houtman, D. and Meyer, B. (2012). *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Howes, D. and Classen, C. (2014). *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society*. New York: Routledge.

- Jansen, E.R. (2002). *Singing Bowls: A Practical Handbook of Instruction and Use*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Kahn, D. (1999). *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Keeling, K. and Kun, J. (2012). *Sound Clash: Listening to American Studies*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Larkin, B. (2014). Techniques of inattention: the mediality of loudspeakers in Nigeria. *Anthropological Quarterly* 87 (4): 989–1015.
- Lee, T.S. (1999). Technology and the production of Islamic space: the call to prayer in Singapore. *Ethnomusicology* 44 (1): 86–100.
- Levin, T. (2006). *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing: Sound, Music, and Nomadism in Tuva and Beyond*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Lubman, D. (2010). Acoustical solutions to archaeological mysteries at Chichen Itza's Temple of Kukulcan. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 128 (4): 23–29.
- Marsh, C. (2013). *Music and Society in Early Modern England*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McMurray, P. (2012). Urban heterophony and the mediation of place. *Urban People Lidé mĕsta* 14 (2): 244–254.
- McRoberts, O.M. (2004). *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Meyer, B. (2009). *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses, Religion/Culture/Critique*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Meyer, B. (2011). Mediation and immediacy: sensational forms, semiotic ideologies and the question of the medium. *Social Anthropology* 19 (1): 23–39.
- Meyer, B. (2012). *Mediation and the Genesis of Presence. Towards a Material Approach to Religion*. Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht.
- Meyer, B. (2013). Material mediations and religious practices of world-making. In: *Religion across Media: From Early Antiquity to Late Modernity* (ed. K. Lundby), 1–19. New York: Peter Lang.
- Mills, S. (2014). *Auditory Archaeology: Understanding Sound and Hearing in the Past*. Abingdon: Left Coast Press.
- Miller, D. (2005). *Materiality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (2005). There are no visual media. *Journal of Visual Culture* 4 (2): 257–266.
- Morgan, D. (2005). *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Morgan, D. (2007). *The Lure of Images: A History of Religion and Visual Media in America*. New York: Routledge.
- Narayanan, V. (1994). *The Vernacular Veda: Revelation, Recitation, and Ritual*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Needham, R. (1967). Percussion and transition. *Man* 2: 606–614.
- Novak, D. and Sakakeeny, M. (2015a). Introduction. In: *Keywords in Sound* (eds. D. Novak and M. Sakakeeny), 1–11. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Novak, D. and Sakakeeny, M. (eds.) (2015b). *Keywords in Sound*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Pinch, T. and Bijsterveld, K. (eds.) (2012). *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pentcheva, B.V. (2011). Hagia Sophia and multisensory aesthetics. *GESTA* 50 (2): 93–111.
- Price, P. (1983). *Bells and Man*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Promey, S. (2014). *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rasmussen, A.K. (2010). *Women, the Recited Qur'an, and Islamic Music in Indonesia*.

- Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Roseman, M. (1993). *Healing Sounds from the Malaysian Rainforest: Temiar Music and Medicine, Comparative Studies of Health Systems and Medical Care*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Rossing, T.D. (1984). The acoustics of bells: studying the vibrations of large and small bells helps us understand the sounds of one of the world's oldest musical instruments. *American Scientist* 72 (5): 440–447.
- Samuels, D.W., Meintjes, L., Ochoa, A.M., and Porcello, T. (2010). Soundscapes: toward a sounded anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 329–345.
- Scarre, C. and Lawson, G. (2006). *Archaeoacoustics, McDonald Institute Monographs*. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.
- Schafer, R.M. (1994). *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester: VT: Destiny Books.
- Schafer, M. (2003). Open ears. In: *The Auditory Culture Reader* (eds. M. Bull and L. Back), 25–39. New York: Berg.
- Schmidt, L.E. (2002). *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schulz, D.E. (2008). Soundscape. In: *Key Words in Religion, Media, and Culture* (ed. D. Morgan), 172–186. New York: Routledge.
- Schweitzer, K. (2013). *The Artistry of Afro-Cuban Batá Drumming: Aesthetics, Transmission, Bonding, and Creativity*. Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi.
- Sterne, J. (2003). *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sterne, J. (ed.) (2012). *The Sound Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Stolow, J. (2012). *Deus in Machina: Religion, Technology, and the Things in Between*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Stoller, P. (1997). *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Taylor, C. (2000). The physics of sound. In: *Sound* (eds. P. Kruth and H. Stobart), 34–64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Terwagne, D. and Bush, J.W.M. (2011). Tibetan singing bowls. *Nonlinearity* 24: R51–R66.
- Titon, J.T. (1988). *Powerhouse for God: Speech, Chant, and Song in an Appalachian Baptist Church*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Urban, G. (1988). Ritual wailing in Amerindian Brazil. *American Anthropologist* 90 (New series) (2): 385–400.
- van der Port, M. (2011). (Not) made by the human hand: media consciousness and immediacy in the cultural production of the real. *Social Anthropology* 19 (1): 74–89.
- Weiner, I.A. (2009). Sound and American religions. *Religion Compass* 3 (5): 897–908.
- Weiner, I. (2011). Sound. *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 7 (1): 108–115.
- Weiner, I. (2014). *Religion Out Loud: Religious Sound, Public Space, and American Pluralism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Weidman, A. (2014). Anthropology and voice. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43: 37–51.
- Waller, S.J. (2006). Intentionality of rock-art placement deduced from acoustical measurements and Echo myths. In: *Archaeoacoustics* (eds. C. Scarre and G. Lawson), 31–39. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

Section VII

Economies and Governmentalities of Religion

CHAPTER 27

Colonialism, Orientalism, and the Body

Sylvester A. Johnson

27.1 Introduction

This chapter explains materialities and ideologies of the body as special problems that emerged within the political and noetic structures of Western colonialism. The creation of Europe's trans-oceanic empires induced disciplinary practices and knowledge paradigms that racialized a global array of peoples. This was achieved partly through encoding philosophies of matter, corporeal norms, and sexual regimes in accordance with the political imperatives of European colonialism. Accounting for the structural dimensions and historical derivations of this process is essential to understanding the institutions of power that have enabled and constituted the study of global religions. In what follows, I explain the emergence of the corporeal body as a central, paradigmatic function of racialization within the formations of Western colonialism in Atlantic geographies and in South Asia.

Orientalism emerged as a central and expansive aspect of Western colonialism. No discussion of Orientalism, of course, can dispense with the foundational and keen insight of Edward Said. In his highly influential interpretation of Western colonial history in the East, Said (1978) emphasized that Orientalism was a noetic formation that produced a structure of fictive 'knowledge' about the East whose mysterious ethos could be unpeeled by the trained Western eye to reveal its mystical essence. He foregrounded the dynamic reciprocity of European imperial domination of Eastern polities and the intellectual, disciplinary formations of White European expertise about the varieties of populations in these regions. Napoleon's conquest of Egypt yielded the intellectual field of Egyptology, as British colonialism in South Asia gave rise to philological expertise in Sanskrit and the study of Hindu religion. Egyptology, philological studies of Sanskrit,

and Western expertise in the Eastern mind that produced the religions of India justified, in turn, the exploitative regimes of Western rule.

Said identified four major forces that enabled the emergence of Orientalism: expansion, historical confrontation, sympathy (with the radical other *qua* romanticism), and classification. One can observe repeatedly how the intellectual manifestations of Orientalism proceeded from colonial practices of conquering, governing, and rendering the East legible through the lens of European supremacy (Said 1978). This was why the Orient, insofar as it was constituted through European colonial practices of intellectual distortion, was a fiction, a fantasy of European colonialism. Said underscored, however, the compelling nature of Orientalism and the effects of its seeming truthfulness. One should not presume, in other words, that the dissembling nature of this intellectual production was less efficacious as a distortion. As Said repeatedly emphasizes, the colonial matrix of political domination and noetic formation was highly generative and productive, albeit to problematical ends. In this way, one can appreciate that Orientalism wed intellectual practices to the politics of racial conquest.

27.2 Colonialism and Racialization

Western colonialism was pre-eminently a system of racial governance. By extending *imperium* throughout a global array of populations in Atlantic, Pacific, and Mediterranean geographies, Europeans exerted a system of political order by which they governed non-European peoples as racial populations. This meant that Western metropolises subjected peoples throughout Africa, the Americas, and the rest of Eurasia to political domination while making them external to the political body conceived through European sovereigns; they were estranged from the political community through which the metropolises were constituted. This colonial means of governing extended as well to peoples living within the physical territories of European metropolises (e.g. Madrid, Granada, London, Lisbon, Paris, and Amsterdam). Within European territories, Muslims and Jews were the most common populations to be governed as perpetual political outsiders. Their very constitution was understood by European Christians to be structured through an assemblage of essential differences that distinguished them radically from White or Christian Europeans. This much is clear from the records of the Inquisitions and the extensive juridico-political system of *limpieza de sangre* that extended throughout the empires of Iberia (Martínez 2008; Schorsch 2009).

The relationship between Western colonialism and European regimes of corporeality should be apprehended with rigorous attention to how racialization is actually effected. The political theorist Barnor Hesse has critiqued what he describes as the fallacy of treating race as thinking or as mere concepts. Although certain ways of thinking can and do result from race, Hesse explains, *race is not 'thinking'*. Race is a colonial process that has constituted 'Europeanness and non-Europeanness' through material, discursive, and non-corporeal domains. Encoding race through phenotypic difference, he cautions, 'is but one historical symptom and political formation of race through modernity' (Hesse 2007). Given the scale on which racial governance was articulated through reference to 'territory, climate, culture, history, [and] religion', it appears that

the body was not so much the 'ubiquitous metaphor' of race so much as its 'privileged metonym' (Hesse 2007, p. 653). This means racialization has been a *governing* formation – it is a process that has structured the *political rule* of Europeans over non-Europeans. Racialization becomes articulated, thus, as 'a series of onto-colonial taxonomies of land, climate, history, bodies, customs, language' and religion – 'all of which became sedimented metonymically, metaphorically, and normatively as *the assembled attributions of "race"*' (p. 659). The range of these onto-colonial taxonomies undergirding racial formation are evident from Portuguese claims during the 1500s, for instance, that the *sexual behavior* (not bodies per se) of Blacks set them apart from Europeans; from British and French assertions (during the 1600s and 1700s) that so-called fetish *religion* (later branded as animism) was the quintessential Black religion; from German assertions (in Kant and Hegel, for instance) that Jews were racially unsuited to inhabit the ontological *habitudes* of modernity because they could not accord with existential freedom; and from Anglo-American assertions that Indigenous Americans could not *govern* themselves and were thus unsuited for democracy.

This point is of paramount importance, because otherwise one might erroneously conclude that there existed some actual biological differences *qua* a priori racial differences that instigated the Western racial system of governance. It was the opposite, rather, that prevailed. Race was fundamentally a *political* system, not a phenotypic one. It has always been so. And the politics of governing to engineer differential statuses is what led Europeans to socially construct racialized bodies – i.e. encoding selective phenotypic differences as metonymic of essential differences.

There is yet another dimension of Western colonialism to consider. This system of racial governance emerged through the *political* and *cultural* apparati of Christendom. As a consequence, the imagination of membership in the political body of European metropolises proceeded through formulations of proximity to Christian subjectivity. And the cultural grammar, practices, and formations of bodily discipline that inhered to colonial regimes devolved through practices of bodily discipline within Christianity. In the first instance (conceiving of political membership or alienation, its other), there obtained the imbrication of Europeanness with the perceived capacity for Christian subjection (how easily one might enter into subjection under the lordship of Jesus-the-sovereign). This imbrication cohered as racial Whiteness. In the second instance, European colonialism normalized the Christian abnegation of the flesh, which had been undertaken to fortify spiritual cultivation in the age-old system of ascetic discipline. It did so by effecting the apotheosis of White Europeans as spiritual, rational subjects par excellence. Through a necessary, radical alterity, those outside of this political community or racial subjectivity were encoded as people-of-the-body, normatively and pre-eminently, as unable to inhabit the subjectivity of the modern age, as incapable of practising political governance under the sign of freedom and liberal democracy, or some combination of these (Biddick 2003; Carter 2008; Heng 2011; Kelley 2002). Europeans even debated the human status of non-Whites by asserting that colonized peoples had no souls and were merely non-human animals (Wynter 2003).

Although phenotypic difference was but one of several onto-colonial categories for constituting the assemblage of essentialized difference (Heng 2011; Hesse 2007), it is nevertheless significant to observe that corporeality functioned within this system of

racial governance to ascribe an exceptional role to reason and the spiritual apprehension of monotheistic truth as particularly amenable capacities exemplified by Europeans. By contrast, the body and the lower desires of the flesh were racialized as the special preserve of putatively inferior, non-European populations. In its most secular articulation, governing peoples as racial populations was very much an accommodation to the putatively natural order of things.

27.3 Matter and Spirit in Western Christianity

One of the enduring legacies of the Christian regime of bodily discipline was its deep misogyny, which arrogated to men the sublime acquisition of *ratio* and transcendence over that most decadent stumbling block of the flesh – sexuality (Ruether 1993). By this logic, men were exceptional in their capacity to approximate divine subjectivity, whereas women were represented as naturally more biological and less spiritual. The exclusion of women from the priesthood was just one of numerous consequences of this rationality. It is imperative to observe, thus, that not all Europeans were represented as equally capable of embodying rationality and the renunciation of the flesh. For this reason, gender became a central element in the tactics of racialization and colonial subject formation (Ruether 1993). Most simply, Europeans were a masculine race, and European women were like inferior races. This pattern was stridently asserted by the nineteenth-century anthropologists. As White male scientists probed more deeply into the body – skeletal structure, cranial capacity, and musculature – to pursue the footprint of race and gender, they discovered intriguing parallels. The prognathous jaw, which supposedly extended further in darker races, was found to be common in European women. As a further example, since White females were also found to possess less cranial capacity than White males, White women were viewed as possessing a feminine essence that was integral to the constitution of both men and women in the darker, colonized races (King 1999; Schiebinger 2000; Sharpley-Whiting 1999).

The derision of the body that became so common in the noetic structures and disciplinary practices of Western colonialism, furthermore, was not so much idiosyncratic as systematic. This was because the reigning logics of Western scholars that problematized the body were of a piece with the larger complex of ideas about the nature of *things as things*. Christian materiality – the philosophy of matter – was a fiercely contested complex of claims about whether and how material objects might have efficacy of the kind associated with living beings. Could statues weep? Did relics respond to veneration? Was all matter vibrant? Or simply inert and ineffectual, devoid of life and spirit? There was no single materiality within Western Christianity, to be sure (Bynum 2011; Freeman 2011). However, at the point that European metropolises began to establish trans-oceanic empires (the Portuguese and Spanish in the fifteenth century, then the Dutch, English, and French in the sixteenth), an insurgent Protestantism had radically altered the official dictates and sensibilities of European elites. At the very moment when European merchants, missionaries, and colonial administrators became caught up in exchanges with political elites, militarists, and commercial agents in South Asia (India) and China and in the Americas and in West-Central Africa, Christian materiality

was undergoing cataclysmic shifts under the weight of at least two major movements: the prosecution of what was commonly called witchcraft (this became incorporated into some of the Inquisitions, particularly in the Americas) and the Protestant effort to reform Christendom. These two movements eventually became conjoined to some degree, and the invective of ecclesiastical officials who condemned illegitimate manufactures of material objects was soon adopted by Europe's growing minority of Protestants to vilify the status quo of Catholicism (Bynum 2011; Freeman 2011; Keane 2007; Pietz 1987; Sansi-Roca 2007).

Christianity's secular formation as scientific inquiry offers an important dimension as well, on this score. For many centuries, Christian philosophy was concerned with controlling or influencing the phenomenal world through interpreting the mysteries of allegory and the symbolism of the material world (Pennington 2005). But the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of European colonialism were fundamentally shaped by multiple changes in academic practices. European philosophers like René Descartes (1596–1650) sought to understand not only what could be known but also *how* one could know something. This problem of epistemology generated important methodological approaches to accounting for materiality. Among its most important consequences was the widespread adoption of mind–body dualism as a method for scientific inquiry. One would be mistaken to think in terms of a strict uniformity of opinion; far from it. The ideological terrain of scientific inquiry in Europe was varied and characterized by dissent. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), for instance, sought to account for the phenomenon of mind by appealing to a materialist, mechanistic understanding of the universe. Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), by contrast, asserted a more nuanced approach that was informed by a monistic conception of the cosmos, a view that Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) also embraced (Bales 2008, p. 322; Vásquez 2011, p. 45).

Nevertheless, a reductive materialism that conceptualized matter as an inert, mechanical reality distinct from, and even opposed to, the creative human spirit did triumph as the most powerful and influential paradigm for executing scientific research and for formulating methodology. As Copernicus, Galileo, and Isaac Newton moved physics and astronomy to the centre of scientific research, they forced the disenchantment of Christian cosmology onto the throne of public respectability. Increasingly, Europe's intellectual elites rejected the notion that celestial bodies (planets and stars) possessed properties different from earthly ones. Instead, their movement in the heavens could be explained using the same physical 'laws' that applied to earthly objects (Bales 2008; Vásquez 2011).

With the triumph of this rationalist materialism came a sharp departure from the established modes of legitimate religious worship. This development, moreover, was wed to another: the explosive growth of textualism as both a mode of pursuing religious cultivation and cultic performance. The development of printing technology became a vehicle for a cultural shift towards making Christianity a religion of the book in a sense it had never been before. For ages, Christian devotees had encountered the divine through veneration at private altars and public shrines, by participating in the Eucharist, and through a host of material practices of the faith. But now, the reading of scripture with the aim of achieving some rational apprehension of Christian truth became the central pivot in a new paradigm of legitimate religious behavior. Protestant reformers,

specifically, began to promote a textual regime of spiritual discipline and cultic practice. The deep significance of this transformation can be appreciated by considering the changing semiotics of Christian scripture. Before the advent of print, the canon of scripture was never a single volume – it was impossible to fit all the scriptures into a single codex. But printing technology made it possible to reproduce Christian scriptures on a scale that could be reduced to a single volume. For the first time, the Bible literally became a book. And that book became a focal point for changes as sweeping as removing statues and other images from Protestant churches, displacing altars from the centre of church sanctuaries, and putting in their place a preacher who read from a book in the vernacular of the attendees (Schniedewind 2005; Sheehan 2005). The mantra of *sola scriptura*, popularized by the famed Martin Luther, represented the larger cataclysm of recoding Christian materiality itself. What had been legitimate Christian worship – communing with deceased heroes of the faith, visiting shrines for healing and worship, maintaining personal altars, attending to relics – was now targeted for derision and branded idolatry (Bynum 2011; Keane 2007).

27.4 Colonial Encounters: Problems of Materiality and the Body

27.4.1 *The Americas*

This paradigm shift had overwhelming implications for the religious exchanges and practices that ensued under colonial regimes. Most importantly, idolatry *qua* the worship of things instead of the deity enjoyed an exceptional status as the chief means of representing religion among non-Europeans. European colonizers fixed upon sensuality generally and sexuality particularly as the most abominable sign of the body, as evidence of human depravity (Wiesner 2000).

The Anglo-American settler colonies were consistent as well in their response to how Native Americans administered sexuality. Western Christians were fully immersed in the sexual regime of virginity, a system that effectively rendered women's sexuality as a commodity in which men (specifically fathers and husbands) held rights of ownership and exchange, to the exclusion of women themselves. Quintessentially, women had no right to employ their own sexuality outside of marriage. But North American Indians institutionalized a radically different approach to the administration of sex and its agency. Every individual of each gender (men, women, and third-gender peoples) controlled their own sexuality as an agency to be exercised and not as the foundation for an essential self (something that Michel Foucault (1978) described as a 'perverse implantation' and that is more generally referenced as the 'social construction' of sexuality). In these terms, sex was *not* a nature, nor was it a commodity to be preserved, exchanged by men, and exclusively consumed within patriarchal marriage. For this reason, Indigenous American sexuality functioned not as a property but as a conduit of agency. So, Native American women, like peoples of other genders, were expected as a matter of course to be sexually active. Sex, moreover, was by no means anchored to the institution of marriage. As a result, professional sex workers in Indigenous societies were publicly respected and highly marriageable. Most significantly, whereas American Indians

practised war, slavery, torture, and other forms of brutality, there is no evidence that sexual violence (particularly) was part of these societies prior to the European invasions, a fact that becomes conceivable in light of the agential construction of sexuality (Castañeda 2002; Perdue 2002).

It would be difficult to imagine a sexual regime in starker contrast to that of European colonizers. Europeans employed rape against Native Americans as an element of colonial domination and military conquest, and the consequences were fundamentally devastating to Native societies throughout the Americas. At the same time, Europeans uniformly claimed that Native American sexuality was diabolical in origin, sensuous in the extreme, and entirely decadent in execution. Even clothing practices became an occasion in the Western colonial imaginary for representing Indigenous societies as evil and immoral. During the warm months of summer, for example, the minimal clothing style of the Virginia Indians dictated that peoples of all genders were usually shirtless wearing only small loincloths and jewellery, moreover. The breasts of adult women were seen as sources of nutrition for any children they might birth; for this reason, they were associated with fertility. But strictly speaking, breasts, whether clothed or unclothed, were not sexualized. Not even complete nudity was condemned or vilified. The public display of genitalia could be part of ritual function, teasing, or merely innocuous – e.g. in preparation for bathing. But sex particularly, and the body generally, were not symbols or signs of moral depravity in America's Native cultures (Castañeda 2002; Perdue 2002; Wiesner 2000).

Nor were Native regimes of sex without nuance. So, for instance, it was common for men to be forbidden to have sex when preparing for war, since sex was believed to dissipate the vitality needed for military victory. And copulating on sacred burial grounds was a major breach of taboo, since it was seen as disrespectful to the dead. So, sex was not literally unregulated. But its administration was by no means a moralistic one rooted in the construction of sex as evil. Sex was embraced generally as a positive phenomenon in its own right. The common use of abortifacients, furthermore, ensured the practicality of decoupling sex from marriage. Thus, the *pleasure* of sex was culturally and institutionally affirmed (Cott 2000; Perdue 2002).

European observers could scarcely have disagreed more, however, with this Indigenous sexual imaginary. Christianity's longstanding institutions of discipline invested in marking sex as the most extreme symbol of the body, and the body as a moral problem in its own right; from it issued the fleshly desires that posed a fundamental challenge to moral purity and fidelity to the Christian deity. Since the early history of Christianity, in fact, Christian theologians had made this theological problem of the body into an elaborate foundation for what Foucault described as 'pastoral power', a complex of moral strictures, practices, and institutions that regulated the everyday conduct of individuals with a remarkable scale of exactness and immanence (Foucault 2007, pp. 115–134).

Spanish missionaries established scores of missions throughout the Americas over the long history of colonization. From the earliest period (i.e. the 1490s), these missions aimed to extirpate idolatry and the sexual regimes of Native polities. Throughout the viceroyalty of New Spain, for instance, the Spanish Crown administered the Inquisition with a zealous aim of repressing and vanquishing Native religion (marked as diabolical)

and so-called witchcraft (Martínez 2008; Schorsch 2009). African and Native healers were regularly targeted, as they were simultaneously reviled and respected for their medical knowledge; they competed with Christian authorities for respect and influence over Christians. The Christian mission of course functioned in multiple modes – as a labour-concentration camp, as a site of detention for Native youths abducted from their parents in hopes of deracinating their Indian ‘nature’ to instil Christian governance, as an educational facility to endow the intellectual formation of Christian theology within the rational faculties of potential Native emissaries, etc. But as a colonial institutional, the mission was especially prized by Europeans because it promised the means to disable and refashion the sexual economy of Indigenous Americans and to inculcate discipline of carnal desire (Castañeda 2002; Erickson 2007; Lake 2006).

27.4.2 *West-Central Africa*

This same pattern obtained in the encounters between Europeans and the various peoples of West-Central Africa. As was the case for the Americas, it was commercialism – specifically, abducting and enslaving Africans in the Atlantic (and Indian Ocean) slave trade to exploit and racially dominate them – that grounded the exchanges between Europeans and Africans in the region of what came to be called ‘Guinea’ Africa. The term was itself a coinage of radical exoticism – like guinea ‘pig’ and guinea ‘fowl’ – and was deployed by Europeans to denote strangeness and the bizarre. Even the more secular merchants and militarists of Europe, in contrast to missionaries, bemoaned the politics of sex and the body that circulated among the peoples of West-Central Africa. Since Africans did not hypersexualize the body, women and men typically wore relatively little clothing. Polygamy, moreover, was the established norm, although only those men who could afford to support multiple wives actually participated in this system (Morgan 2004; Wiesner 2000).

It was this particular genealogy of colonial encounter – the trade relations established between African states and those of Europe – that generated the most influential body of cultural grammar and theory: the discourse of the fetish. The very term *fetish*, of course, derived from the Portuguese *feitiço*, referring to a manufactured object thought to possess spiritual power (Pietz 1987; Sweet 2003). It was the merchants of Lisbon who first described the materialities of these African societies through recourse to the legal-theological grammar of the fetish; the term had been used to mark as illegitimate the varieties of material manufactures within European Christianity. African themselves soon adopted this grammar of the fetish to name and explain their own materiality and objects. Christian theology had previously dealt with the problem of witchcraft and idolatry. Both of these were distinct from the fetish problem because both witchcraft and idolatry categories (i.e. theologies) were unconcerned with any sense that matter itself could become the locus of spiritual power. With idolatry, there was a god whom the pagan worshipped. In the case of witchcraft, there was the manufacture of potions or binding oaths with the devil. Neither conceived of matter itself as a problem in quite the same fashion that Europeans encountered in West Africa (Masuzawa 2000; Pietz 1987; Sansi-Roca 2007; Sweet 2003).

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, what emerged among European authors was a theoretical formulation of matter and the spirit that at once racialized African materialities (and those of Europe). In other words, the fetish was no mere error of material practice, nor was it simply the sinful predilections of peoples who happened to live beyond the pale of Christian knowledge. In the European colonial imagination, the fetish was, rather, the archetype and paradigm of racial Blackness. It was both the product and symbol of a deep materiality that derived from the distinctive racial nature of Africans. European merchants such as Willem Bosman, who worked at the Dutch-controlled Elmina fort, considered the material manufactures of Elmina's Native Black merchants to be inanimate material. Yet, it appeared that Africans interacted with these products as if they possessed their own power and were capable of safeguarding individuals, instigating harm, and responding to human subjects with an interpersonal agency. This was, in Bosman's estimation, a delusional orientation to material objects (McNally 2011; Pietz 1987).

Interestingly enough, Bosman argued against many of his contemporaries that Africans were not worshipping Satan, the arch-villain of Christian mythology. Instead, he insisted, they worshipped *things*. This was a secularized account of religious pathology. Their religion, he supposed, was not like the idolatry of ancient Europeans and the celebrated pagans of ancient Rome. Those ancient peoples had sculpted idols of wood and stone in majestic imitation of physical creatures like birds and dogs. The religion of Blacks, in the colonial imaginary of Europeans, seemed instead to derive from a more fundamental confusion about the constitution of spirit versus matter (McNally 2011).

In an especially seminal work *Du culte des dieux fétiches* (*Concerning the Cult of the Fetish Gods*), which he published in 1760, the French author Charles de Brosses drew on and departed from Bosman's work to explain fetishism as the essential religion of the Black race, and he examined it as a present-day manifestation of the materiality that shaped religions of antiquity, particularly that of the ancient Egyptians. De Brosses asserted that fetishism was rooted in a crass, delusional fascination with material objects, with things as things. Fetishism, for this reason, lacked even the refinement of the forms of idolatry that manifested through the worship of deified humans. He conceded that some Blacks of Africa had a faint idea of a supreme being, to the extent they might have experienced 'a veneer of Mohammedism' (*une teinture de Mahométisme*). But even this religion of monotheism, he ventured, became in the cultic imaginary of the Blacks nothing but a cacophony of devotion to 'lower spirits and charms'. So great was their urge to imagine that inanimate objects possessed agency and the power to change the phenomenal world, that they would make a fetish of 'the first creature they encounter – a dog, a cat, or the most vile animal' (de Brosses 1760, p. 20).

What resonated so powerfully with de Brosses's readers was his argument that human history was fundamentally stadial and developmental. Human beings, he presumed, had undergone a long process of cultural evolution, from savagery to civility. In fact, fetishism, this quintessential religion of the Blacks, owed its birth to 'the times when the people were unmitigated savages steeped in ignorance and barbarism'. But whereas most of the world's people had progressed beyond the level of fetishism, he mused, it was in Africa that one could yet witness this 'grotesque cult established among stupid minds, influenced by this pathos and root itself as a custom among savage people

who spend their lives in perpetual childhood'. The primitive origins of fetishism, in other words, was evidence for de Brosse that the very people who continued to remain devoted to this savage system possessed a *primitive* essence. They were a race of people literally child-like in their capacity to understand and account for agency and causation in the phenomenal world. They were inclined by their very nature to abide in a system of base sensuousness and materiality that commanded their servility and unthinking devotion to inanimate objects (de Brosse 1760, pp. 13–15).

The colonial pedigree of de Brosse's tome was richly textured by the elaborate histories of commerce through the company forts that dotted the West African coast; the will to political domination and extension of imperial control at the hands of colonial corporation like the Royal African Company, and the Dutch West India Company; and the political architecture of ordering populations and governing these through differential statuses contingent on racial assignment. It was through de Brosse, moreover, that a range of European authors were to find utility in the theoretical capacity of fetishism to convey colonial rationalities. The racial backwardness of Africans, for instance, was said to justify their domination by Europeans. The trafficking of roughly 12 million African people as chattel in the Atlantic system of slavery was rationalized as preferable to life within the racial system of cultural backwardness that Europeans repeatedly ascribed to Africa. And the cultural destruction and religious hatred against Indigenous religions that Christian missionaries imposed throughout West-Central Africa was explained by ecclesiastical activists as an essential, even ineluctable advance over the fetish religion of the Blacks (Pietz 1987).

These racializing strategies of European colonialism extended to not only the social systems of so-called Guinea but also the bodies of people living in these regions. The seventeenth-century English cleric and Virginia Company official Samuel Purchas characterized them as an 'ugly' people, a 'beggarly, theevish, lying, trecherous nation' who dressed their hair with fish oil and 'emitted a putrid odour'. Repeating a common trope of White observers, he wrote that their breasts descended to their navels, so that they could suckle their children by slinging a breast over the shoulder (Purchas 1625, p. 712). And the lip-plate, a popular fashion item in West Africa at the time, was merely evidence for Purchas of relativism's decadence – 'opinion can give loathsomenesse the prize of beautie' (Purchas 1626, p. 710).

True to the ideology of his sources, Purchas framed the early history of West Africa by informing his readers that the people of Guinea Africa were 'discovered' by Muslim missionaries and conquerors about 400 years after the rise of Islam (380 AH), at which time the Blacks lived 'like beasts, without King, Lord, Common-wealth, or any government' (Purchas 1626, p. 710). They wore animal skins, and the men held their women in common (for purposes of sexual congress). In their early, pre-Islamic religious environment, the people worshipped the rising sun or even fire. Others worshipped the new moon or sacrificed to trees (he attributes this practice to the Mandingo nation). But Purchas claims this uncivilized, untamed nature of the Blacks perdured even after the rise of commercial relations with Europe and their contact with Christianity. The attractions of the undomesticated life, he continues, were sufficiently seductive to ensnare European settlers, in support of which claim Purchas cites Portuguese narratives that lament how the natives of West Africa had corrupted the Portuguese settlers (frequently

Jews fleeing Europe's anti-Semitism) among them. These were called *tangosmaos*, and they became important in the larger network of Afro-European trade relations. According to Purchas, they had 'turned wilde and barbarous' once exposed to the African societies, going about naked and tattooing their skin with intricate designs. And the mulatto women cut their hair 'for bravery' instead of wearing their hair long in the common European style (Purchas 1626, pp. 711–719).

As they had done with Indigenous Americans, European colonial writers set upon the sexuality of West African women to advance their own claims about corporeality and race. Both the physiognomy and child-bearing capacities of African women repeatedly featured as evidence of a fundamental, racial alterity and moral wantonness. In his sixteenth-century account of West Africa, the English author John Lok claimed first-hand knowledge of the lack of marriage among the Africans he had encountered. The women, he insisted, did not value chastity but instead engaged in sex with multiple men with a whim and voraciousness unknown in Europe (Morgan 2004, p. 179). William Towrson, a contemporary of Lok who travelled in West Africa around the same time, generated similarly derisive reports, even asserting that African men and women were indistinguishable except by the low-hanging breasts of the latter, which he compared to 'the udder of a goate' (Morgan 2004, p. 181). The Dutch author Pieter de Marees produced a widely-circulated account of his travels in West Africa in the early seventeenth century. Spewing the racial invective so characteristic of colonial anti-Blackness, de Marees characterized the region's inhabitants as greedy drunkards, naturally inclined to theft and uncleanness. Their practice of polygamy was, in his estimation, evidence of moral debauchery. And African women, he observed, were far less restricted in their sexuality than European women. Furthermore, the fact that these women gave birth to their children in the company of entire families – women, men, and children gathered in support – was a sure sign that Blacks lacked bodily shame and revelled in moral perversity (Morgan 2004).

This absence of bodily shame because of nakedness was among the most oft-repeated charges of European authors who described Africans and Native Americans within colonial contexts. And it strikes at the heart of the rationalities of corporeality that operated in these colonial encounters. Europeans claimed that bodily shame differentiated humans from 'beasts' (i.e. non-human animals). It was true that Africans did not vilify the unclothed body, nor did they encode it as a sign of moral evil. Rather, they took the body, clothed or unclothed, as unproblematic in its own right. The coda of embodiment and corporeality, in West Africa, differed distinctly from that of European Christendom. The ease with which Europeans asserted that Blacks were beasts or savage 'brutes' is a disheartening index of the colonial antagonism towards the sociality of human embodiment (Johnson 2012).

By the nineteenth century, the anti-Black tactics of colonial representation would find repeated expression in the scientific study of racialized bodies. The French naturalist Georges Cuvier dissected the body of Sarah Bartmann, a young Black woman from South Africa who had been taken to London, then Paris. Upon her arrival there, Bartmann's White handlers exhibited her in a cage as if she were an exotic beast. When Cuvier met her, he immediately arranged to have her portrait drawn in the nude – he was enthralled by her unusually large buttocks. When he learned of Bartmann's

untimely death shortly thereafter, Cuvier gained possession of her body and dissected her remains. He also made a cast of her body and preserved her genitalia in a jar. It was Cuvier's fixation on Black sexuality that is most telling of the perversity of colonial regimes of corporeal knowledge, for he produced a scientific report that claimed Bartmann's genitalia were more similar to that of an ape than to that of a human woman. Cuvier argued, moreover, that Bartmann was not an anomaly but exemplified a racial type – that of the Black race, a population whose sexuality was beastly and justified their classification beneath the level of humans proper, at least insofar as Europeans embodied normative human physiognomy (Sharpley-Whiting 1999).

Cuvier's efforts to render Black women as bestial through attacking their sexuality was a common strategy of justifying colonial domination of Blacks by White settlers in Africa, of rationalizing racial slavery, and of defending the racial apartheid that had become uniform in Western polities like the United States. In his own argument for removing Blacks from the United States and preserving its political body as one exclusively rooted in racial Whiteness, Thomas Jefferson claimed that male apes preferred sex with Black women to sex with female apes. The champion of White liberalism flaunted his credentials as an enslaver of hundreds of African women, men, and children to proffer his first-hand knowledge of Black bodies, asserting they did not even smell human and were aesthetically repugnant (Jefferson 1787, pp. 230–236). The colonial relation of governing racial population, thus, ensured considerable recourse to rendering the bodies and sexuality of Blacks as a common template for the rationalities of European colonialism. At the same time, this racial system of brutally dominating Blacks to deny their humanity co-existed with extensive practices of interracial sex through which White men such as Jefferson himself enjoyed sexual licence with African-descended women. By this arrangement, Black women and their Black families were subjected to routinized sexual trauma while being denied the legal recognition of familial inclusion with those who enslaved them. White slavers throughout the Americas and the Caribbean, in this way, practised a system of concubinage that revealed the perverse pleasure these racists actors derived through sexual access to the very humans whose coeval ontological status they denied.

27.4.3 *Asia*

Anthropologists tended to dominate the study of religion in the Americas and in Africa. But with the rise of Orientalism, a somewhat different pattern emerged. Orientalism was a complex of knowledge systems and governing practices rooted in European colonial rule over the peoples and polities of South Asia, East Asia, and the lower Mediterranean lands (i.e. North African polities like present-day Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria). The inscription of these knowledge systems obtained through what are widely recognized as the humanistic disciplines of knowledge – scholarship in the fields of religion, literature, philology, and ethnology. The Orient that emerged through this colonial purview, as Edward Said astutely observed, was not so much an objective reality 'out there' as it was the particular social construction European specialists and observers operating through the frame of Western empire. It is for this reason that Said empha-

sized the study of the Orient as fundamentally being the study of Europeanness and its derivation through the social construction of radical alterity – in this case, racial otherness in Mediterranean lands (Said 1978). Orientalism, furthermore, did not emerge as knowledge for the sake of knowledge in some abstract sense of existentially unburdened science. Nor did it suddenly appear as an unfractured, finished project of intellectual totality. Rather, the Europeans who composed the Orientalist frame of racial subjectivity did so under the weight and thrust of empire, both devoted to and caught up with its material exigencies and political imperatives.

In multiple ways, Orientalism exemplified its fundamental concern with elaborating the meaning of European subjectivity through the rationalities of taxonomies and the social orders that derived through colonial governance. Colonialism, in fact, has been foundational to the structure and content of Orientalism. Among the Western colonial metropolises, those of England and France have been most important for the rise of Western governance in the Orient. In 1600, the English (later British) East India Company was given a royal charter. Unlike the merchant caravans and the Portuguese *estado* that preceded it, Britain's East India Company accepted investor capital with the stipulation that returns would be realized over the long term. The mode of collectivizing capital prioritized the corporate entity itself and the conditions of its thriving, rather than short-term profit. This meant, among other things, that the East India Company could invest in wars, standing militias, foreign policy, and structures of governance to ensure the long-term prospects of profitability rather than short-term gain. This effective permanent capitalization meant that the company functioned literally as a state (Stern 2011). Like the other European companies that would follow (most notably the Dutch United East India Company or VOC), Britain's East India Company engaged fully in the business of governing in India. The result was that the administration of British colonialism in South Asia emerged under the aegis of the corporation, not the crown until the company's dissolution following the Indian Rebellion of 1857–1858. At that point, South Asia came under the formal rule of the British empire-state (Stern 2011).

The Orient has for several centuries functioned as the domain of exotic sensuality and intensively scripted bodies in the Western colonial imaginary. In the accounts of Orientalist scholarship, in fact, the body has held a special place in the formation of religious systems and in the constitution of religious subjectivity. It has done so, according to the Orientalist frame, by serving as the template on which theology has been hammered out, as the subject-entity through which religious agency has been conceived, and even as the target and apparatus (simultaneously) of religious discipline.

European intellectuals and colonial administrators invested richly in an elaborate chain of binaries to render the Orient as a coherent formation of non-Europeanness in sharp contrast to essential markers of Europeanness. By the 1800s, for instance, mysticism had been refashioned among European scholars of religion as an exceptional genius of Oriental religion. The very idea of 'the mystic East' became a powerful symbol of the racial character of religion in South Asia and also East Asia (King 1999). Mysticism, in fact, began to function as a major pillar of knowledge about the nature of Hinduism and Buddhism. Western Christians had long understood mysticism to concern interpreting hidden meanings or intentions of the Christian deity. By studying historical events and entities (*allegoria in factis*) or through studying texts (*allegoria in*

verbis), it was supposed, one might uncover the deeper meanings of divine rhetoric. But with the ascent of Enlightenment paradigms and secularizing practices, new binaries – literature versus prose, science versus theology, etc. – came to shape Europeans' interpretation of culture. Whereas mysticism had previously been central to discerning how the physical world functioned, it was, by the seventeenth century, typically relegated to the realm of religion. The scientific paradigm achieved an unparalleled status as the domain of reason and the evidence of its reward. European scholars, moreover, increasingly claimed that mysticism was uniquely emblematic of the Orient's religious nature (King 1999; Pennington 2005). Max Weber's (2011) assertion that other-worldly mysticism was endemic to 'the East' is exemplary of this trend.

There were other textures in this symbolism of Oriental religion, however. Especially indicative is the way Western missionaries and scholars employed the concept of devotion or worship (*pūja*) to the many gods of India's religions. Throughout the hundreds of missionary accounts of Indian religion, one theme overwhelms all others – the fundamental ubiquity of devotion to images and statues. This was, in missionary parlance, 'idolatry'. This concept was the most efficacious and consequential means whereby Christian missionaries began to construct a unifying architecture for the varieties of religious formations throughout India. Idolatry, in other words, and its supposedly crass materiality, became for Christian missionaries the essential framework that gave coherence to something that could be called Hinduism proper (Pennington 2005). This development stands in clear parallel with the consensus among Europeans that fetishism (as crass materialism) was the definitive religion of the Black race. Western colonial observers claimed that idolatry in the Orient, like fetishism throughout Africa, was no mere combination of rituals and devotionism gone awry. Rather, it also revealed the racial nature of its practitioners by functioning as a type of external evidence for the internal constitution of the Oriental mind, of the Hindu's psychological nature.

The European construction of a grand Hindu religion, furthermore, paralleled the Western imagination of a timeless animistic religion of the Black race. At the same time, however, the Hinduism imagined through Orientalism was distinguished by several factors. For instance, unlike fetishism, the social construction of Hinduism exploited the rich lineage of scriptures that had emerged among the religions of India over several centuries. Through studying these Sanskrit texts, European intellectuals developed illustrious careers as experts of an Eastern 'world religion' that served as contrast against the elevated nature of the Western religious mind. The profound antiquity of Sanskrit texts easily lent itself to structuring an orthodox form of Hindu religion that stretched over thousands of years. Given the bias that European scholars held for textual approaches to defining and locating religion, true Hinduism became the religion reflected in Sanskrit scripture. This move to recognize an overarching religion of Hinduism anchored in scripture, of course, benefited upper-caste religious devotees in India, who exclusively occupied the priestly class (Brahmins). Not surprisingly, these Brahmins gladly contributed to the colonial enterprise of constructing a Hindu religion with ancient roots and massive contours that became recognized as the true religion of India (King 1999).

At the same time, Sanskrit also provided what Western scholars with a claim to ancient scriptures in what they branded an 'Indo-European' language that represented

vindication against the antiquity and expansive scope of Semitic scriptures – those of Jews and Muslims in Hebrew and Arabic, respectively. By the nineteenth century, the status of philology as a racial science was on full display as Europeans began to theorize that ancient Sanskrit speakers were a superior people of European stock who had invaded and conquered dark-skinned Dravidians and subsequently established an ancient literary tradition to undergird a Brahmanical religion. The European ‘discovery’ of Sanskrit fueled German nationalism, providing a clear template for locating a common racial identity among Prussians and Austrians in language. It was with this racial enterprise in mind that the German religion scholar Max Müller accumulated years of linguistic training in Sanskrit to produce his famed translation and commentary of the *Rg Veda*, arguably the most venerated of Indian scriptures. Müller even helped to popularize it using the term ‘Aryan’ to denote ancient Sanskrit speakers and, eventually, Europeans more broadly (Robinson 2016).

During the eighteenth century, Christian missionaries to India consisted mainly of Catholic agents of religious expansionism. Especially notable was J.A. Dubois, a French priest, who arrived in South Asia during the 1890s and remained for over three decades. Although he defended the character of Indians against the derisive claims of other European missionaries that they lacked basic civility and honesty, Dubois latched onto the material practices of Indian worship as the root cause of evil. It was idolatry, in other words, that in his estimation subsumed the general nature of Hinduism. This was the most common refrain among other Christian expansionists in South Asia. The British chaplain James Hough, who authored *The History of Christianity in India* in 1839, served in India under the auspices of the English East India Company. The British missionary was exemplary in his claim that elevating the spiritual over the sensual was the chief insight of Christianity. Hough advanced that India’s sensuality, stemming from the same foibles to which all peoples were susceptible, was so cultivated and institutionalized with its devotion to images, its highly iconic temples, and its sensual rituals, that the Christian gospel was required to effect a fundamental reformation of the entire culture (King 1999; Pennington 2005).

These Orientalizing gestures and strategies so replete in missionary discourse were expanded and elaborated through missionary efforts to dominate and extirpate Indian religion. It is clear, however, that the sensibilities of Christian missionaries to the material dimensions of religious culture were already shaped by a thriving anti-Catholicism nurtured in the religious wars and conflicts throughout Europe. Of no less importance was the weight of biblical traditions that politicized the materiality of cultic practice to privilege the cult of Judean religion (in the case of the Hebrew scriptures) and its messianic sect that emerged through the Jesus movement (in the case of the Greek New Testament). So, missionaries could revel in the denunciation of so-called Canaanite religion (of which ancient Israelite religion was actually one form); the Exodus story of Moses condemning the golden calf is representative. These missionaries found much inspiration in St. Paul’s strident derision of Gentile religion – he characterized it as worshipping the creation rather than creator. And of course, the unparalleled influence of the North African Bishop Augustine was an ever-ready source of ammunition as well. His famous *City of God* included generous ridicule that targeted veneration of the Roman pantheon. In other words, biblical invectives that maligned the material

practices of religion among 'others' while eliding similar or related formations of materiality within its own orbit was a highly cultivated strategy of the Christian tradition, and it found ready use in the aspirations of missionaries to render Indian religion as a perversion of spirituality (Pennington 2005).

Despite the importance of strident assertions against the corporeal nature of Indian devotion, there was yet another dimension of Indian religion even more derisively attacked by Western missionaries and secular scholars: Tantra. The ascendant scholarship on Eastern religion, not surprisingly, was characterized by an abiding assault on what was perceived as the foundational structure of Tantra. Whether feared or revered, it is patent that Tantra has long been the object of an Orientalist obsession (López 1995).

The Orientalist preoccupation with sensuous bodies and the over-determined corporeality in colonial representations of the Orient featured with particular force and scale in the British representations of India. For decades, the British East India Company assigned numerous missionaries throughout the regions of South Asia under its control. Throughout the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries and secular Orientalist scholars found Tantrism to be the most debased form of Indian religion, as the British crown eventually assumed formal control over South Asia. The scholar James Talboys Wheeler, highly lauded for his historical studies of Indian religion and society, declared in 1874 that 'so-called Tantric religion' was a decadent cult in which 'nudity is worshipped in Bacchanalian orgies which cannot be described' (Urban 2010). Such exotizing descriptions were reductive to the degree they equated Tantra with sex and derisive insofar as they regarded sexuality itself as strictly incompatible with any system of moral discipline or spiritual cultivation.

The Western construction of the Orient continued to find utility through a variety of contexts in twentieth-century scholarship. In his genealogical account of sexuality, Michel Foucault keenly embodied the enduring allure of Orientalist inscriptions rooted in an over-determined corporeality. In the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault proffered that human sexuality had undergone a fundamental shift towards a disciplinary regime that extracted the truth of sex – in this frame, scientific knowledge of sexuality – from the body of clinical subjects of study. He argued – rightly – that this was a specifically Western formation. In an effort to explicate the architecture of this Western formation of sexuality, Foucault set it in contrast to what he described as the Orientalist frame of sexual discourse. He did so by juxtaposing what he called *ars erotica* to *scientia sexualis* – the erotic art versus the sexual science. The renowned Kama Sutra of South Asia stands in for the Orientalist mode of sexual discourse. It is, in essence, a corporeal knowledge of sexual pleasure, the mastery of which is passed from teacher to pupil in a linear fashion of discipleship. As an art of pleasure, it is distinct from what Foucault describes as the scientific knowledge of the West. Although Foucault correctly discerned the transformational impact that Western clinical studies of sexuality produced, his account falsely elides the fact that sexuality in Eastern societies has long been an object of medical, scientific study and not merely of expertise in pleasure. Science has never been the exclusive preserve of Europeans, but the Eastern mysticism of Foucault's narrative obfuscates this fact. Foucault did not aim to glorify the Western discourse of sexuality so much as he intended to map it and problematize it as the provenance of what Western social scientists mistook to be the natural ontology of

sexuality. The Western discourse of sexuality, nevertheless, represents both a different regime of knowledge and a distinct temporality in Foucault's universal history of sexuality. It constitutes the disciplinary regime that implants sexuality within the human subject while evidencing a temporal advance of Europeans who represent modernity vis-à-vis the Orient. Thus, the Orient functions as a fundamental, civilizational type. It is in every sense a racial subjectivity, one whose coloniality is predictably and conventionally Orientalist in Foucault's account of sexuality (Foucault 1978).

By the early twentieth century, a 'positive' Orientalism resurgent in Western popular culture was finding expression among the work of professional scholars (Geertz 2004; Urban 2010). The most important themes of this development concerned the critique of Western disparagement of the body, the denigration of women, and attending stereotypes negatively associated with corporeality (versus rationality), and the vilification of sexuality that governed authoritative claims in the West about morality, health, and hygiene. Sigmund Freud's scholarship is instructive on this score. Freud did more than any other intellectual of his time to draw attention to what he described as the repression of sexuality in the West. It was, he claimed, the root cause for an expansive array of pathologies and social ills (Freud 1949).

It was in this context that one can recognize the significance of Carl Jung, whose study of collective psychology emphasized the importance of religious motifs (the influential norms and values manifested at a cultural level); Jung gestured towards Eastern societies as a corrective to what he viewed as the less admirable aspects of the West. Of equal importance was the famed historian of religion Mircea Eliade. He asserted a strident affirmation of corporeality in religions of the Orient. Tantra, most notably, was emblematic of the instructive capacity of the East to redeem what had gone wrong in the West. Eliade demonstrated the deep and lasting influence that Romanticism and Orientalism would effect on Western scholars whose gaze towards the Orient was critical of the moralizing invective that previous scholars had turned against the religions of India. It was Western religion, he asserted, and not that of the East that needed reform. And the corporeal and sensuous paradigms of Tantra offered a way forward to those Western subjects who desired to create a more balanced and wholistic existence (Pennington 2005; Urban 2010). Eliade's was not, however, a wholesale enthusiasm for Hinduism. Rather, he identified the corporeal norms of Tantra as more fundamental and more ancient than the Vedic (early scriptural) traditions. The latter was a patriarchal institution that functioned to exclude women from cultic leadership (since men generally permitted only other men to study the Vedas). The Vedas also privileged textualism and rationalism. To this extent, Vedic adumbrated what both admirers and opponents of Tantra essentialized as the Western religious ethos. In stark contrast stood Tantra, which Western scholars claimed proceeded from the Mother Goddess. For this reason, the Tantric traditions of the Orient promised to redeem the misogyny and anti-corporeal ethos of the West. The religion scholar Heinrich Zimmer proffered, for instance, that Tantra was a much needed valorization of femininity and womanhood. And it elevated motherhood to such a respectable realm as to make it a divine type of quality. Western religion, by contrast, employed the grammar of 'fatherhood' exclusively to articulate divine qualities (Urban 2010). Starting in the nineteenth century, this positive Orientalism also manifested through popular movements like that of the

Theosophical Society and promoters of sexual magic, the latter under the leadership of Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825–1875) and Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). The influence of this popular formation would manifest in the popularity of Tantra and in the continuing esoteric movements that became lasting elements of Western religious trends (Granholm 2012).

27.5 Conclusion

Since the early centuries of Europe's trans-oceanic colonialism, the political structures of domination that obtained through militarism, the rise of European settler states, the tactics and instruments of capitalism, the commercial profits and normative brutality of human trafficking (Atlantic slavery), and the genocidal militarism and displacement of Indigenous peoples cohered as a synthesis of means for governing peoples as racial populations; White Europeans were at the centre of political community, and non-Europeans without. The material excesses of empire accrued along a racial order to benefit some at the expense of colonized others. This larger colonial enterprise relied significantly on constructing and deploying an array of ideologies of materiality – philosophies of matter and spirit – and human corporeality. In the former instance, non-European materialities became legible within the grammars of Western colonialism as perversions of truth, as uncomprehending gestures that failed to rationally apprehend material causality and its limits; the fetish was the most elaborate and encompassing discourse of these tactics. In the latter instance, Europeans racialized the bodies of Asians, American Indians, Africans, and Europeans themselves to encode both biological supremacy (cf. aesthetic norms), a hierarchy of moral orders, and regimes of bodily discipline. It was under the sign of sexuality that this assemblage of corporeal regimes appeared most vociferously.

The relationship that these two formations – the material and corporeal regimes of empire – have borne with religion persisted through a thick and dynamic linkage of reciprocity. The architecture of Christendom was particularly responsible for structuring rationalities of bodily discipline. Western Christianity was highly practised in cultivating *contemptus mundi* through the abnegation of sex as uniquely and especially iconic of evil. And the Platonic heritage of Christianity's high-intellectual traditions easily accommodated and nurtured the mind–body dualism that proliferated and dominated in European metropolises and their colonies, a period of scientific revolutions marked by the celebrated Enlightenment figures.

It is true that Western Christians venerated the powerful dead; employed material objects (like relics and consecrated water) as vibrant and powerful; and encountered an array of extraordinary, celestial beings (angels, saints, and deities) through material objects like altars, statues, and incense. Nevertheless, the 'Reformation' of European cultures vilified these longstanding material practices of veneration, healing, and liturgy that had been embraced by elites and popular devotees alike (Bynum 2011). As textualism ascended the throne of normativity, moreover, it constituted the proper form of studying European religion *qua* the study of Jewish and Christian scriptures and the refinement of their critical editions. As the concomitant contacts and exchanges of

imperial venturing foregrounded the incredible diversity of global religious and cultures, Europeans employed ethnography of material cultures to interpret and assess non-European religions. Protestants attacked the materiality of Catholicism as idolatry while eliding their own material practices. Ultimately, this unmitigated textualism and unbridled denigration of Christian materiality was racialized to structure the European as an essentially differential, racial type. And the progressive conquest and political domination of non-European peoples and cultures was continually articulated by Western missionaries, colonial administrators, militarists, and agents of commerce not as a particular imposition of the political will to power but rather the realization and subjection to a natural, inherent order of things.

Works Cited

- Bales, E.F. (2008). *Philosophy in the West: Men, Women, Religion, Science*. Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris.
- Biddick, K. (2003). *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bynum, C.W. (2011). *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*. New York and Cambridge, MA: Zone Books (distributed by the MIT Press).
- Carter, J.K. (2008). *Race: A Theological Account*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Castañeda, A. (2002). Sexual violence in the Spanish conquest of California. In: *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality* (ed. K. Peiss), 47–55. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Cott, N.F. (2000). *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- De Brosses, C. (1760). Du culte des dieux fétiches.
- Erickson, B.A. (2007). Gender and violence: conquest, conversion, and culture on New Spain's imperial frontier. In: *Gender, Race and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas* (ed. N. Jaffary), 29–38. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality*, (1st American ed)e. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978* (trans. Graham Burchell). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Freeman, C. (2011). *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Geertz, A. (2004). Can we move beyond primitivism? On recovering the indigenes of indigenous religions in the academic study of religion. In: *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity* (ed. J. Olupona), 37–50. New York: Routledge.
- Granholm, K. (2012). The serpent rises in the west: positive orientalism and reinterpretation of Tantra in the western left-hand path. In: *Transformations and Transfer of Tantra in Asia and Beyond* (ed. I. Keul), 495–520. Boston: Walter De Gruyter.
- Heng, G. (2011). The invention of race in the European middle ages I: race studies, modernity, and the middle ages. *Literature Compass* 8: 315–331.
- Hesse, B. (2007). Racialized modernity: an analytics of white mythologies. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (4): 643–663.
- Johnson, S.A. (2012). The rise of the Nacirema and the descent of European man: a response to manuel A. Vásquez's *more than belief*. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 24: 464–481.

- Jefferson, T. (1787). *Notes on the State of Virginia*. London: J. Stockdale.
- Keane, W. (2007). *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kelley, S. (2002). *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology, and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (Biblical Limits. London and New York: Routledge.
- King, R. (1999). *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lake, A. (2006). *Colonial Rosary: The Spanish and Indian Missions of California*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press and Ohio University Press.
- López, D.S. (1995). *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Martínez, M.E. (2008). *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Masuzawa, T. (2000). Troubles with materiality: the ghost of fetishism in the nineteenth century. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2): 242–267.
- McNally, D. (2011). *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism*. Leiden: Brill.
- Morgan, J.L. (2004). *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. Early American Studies. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Pennington, B.K. (2005). *Was Hinduism Invented?: Britons, Indians, and Colonial Construction of Religion*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Perdue, T. (2002). Columbus meets Pocahontas in the American south. In: *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality* (ed. K. Peiss), 39–46. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Pietz, W. (1987). Problem of the fetish, II: the origin of the fetish. *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13: 23–45.
- Purchas, S. (1626). *Purchas His Pilgrimage*. London: Henry Featherstone.
- Robinson, M.F. (2016). *The Lost White Tribe: Explorers, Scientists, and the Theory that Changed a Continent*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ruether, R.R. (1993). *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology: With a New Introduction* (10th anniversary ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon.
- Sansi-Roca, R. (2007). The fetish in the Lusophone Atlantic. In: *The Cultures of the Lusophone Atlantic* (ed. R. Sansi-Roca), 19–40. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schiebinger, L.L. (ed.) (2000). *Feminism and the Body*. *Oxford Readings in Feminism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schniedewind, W.M. (2005). *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schorsch, J. (2009). *Swimming the Christian Atlantic: Judeoconvertos, Afroiberians and Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century*, *The Atlantic World*, vol. 17 (1–2). Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Sharpley-Whiting, T.D. (1999). *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sheehan, J. (2005). *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stern, P.J. (2011). *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundation of the British Empire in India*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sweet, J.H. (2003). *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Urban, H.B. (2010). *The Power of Tantra: Religion, Sexuality, and the Politics of South*

- Asian Studies*. Library of Modern Religion 8. London and New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Vásquez, M.A. (2011). *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. (2011). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Stephen Kalberg. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wiesner, M.E. (2000). *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice, Christianity and Society in the Modern World*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wynter, S. (2003). Unsettling the colonality of being/power/truth/freedom: towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation –an argument. *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3 (3): 257–337.

CHAPTER 28

Dharmaśāstra

Materiality in and of the Hindu Code

Patrick Olivelle

There are several religious traditions in which law plays a central role; Judaism and Islam are obvious examples. Davis has recently argued, correctly I think, that Hinduism too should be viewed similarly.¹ Viewing Hinduism as a legal tradition places it squarely within society and social institutions and provides a significant lens for the study of the place of materiality in the study of religion. This also provides a sharp contrast to the way Hinduism has been studied over the past century or so where asceticism and the renunciation of social institutions played the central role.

Of course, Hinduism, just as these other traditions, cannot be contained strictly within the category of law,² but in most of its domains Hinduism has traditionally been constituted by rule-governed activities, whether they are ritual, moral, familial, ascetic, or civil. The very structures of society and the forms of governance are viewed as religiously sanctioned. The term that captures this central feature of Hinduism is 'dharma', and the system built around this concept constitutes Dharmaśāstra. This system is undoubtedly a legal system. The very vocabulary and methods of argumentation employed by scholars within the system, whether Dharmaśāstra or the tradition of exegesis and hermeneutics called Mīmāṃsā, attest to this. Dharma is said to derive from *codanā* (command, order),³ and it is expressed in *vidhi* and *niṣedha* (injunction and prohibition). These Hindu jurists and hermeneuts argue that only sentences containing verbs with an injunctive meaning, such as the optative and the gerundive, can contain dharma and legally binding rules.

In spite of the title of this chapter, however, there is no single 'Hindu legal code' that governs the activities of all Hindus. The term 'Dharmaśāstra' refers not to a single paradigmatic code but to the genre of legal literature and to the expert tradition of religious jurisprudence that produced numerous legal codes written in different parts of India at different times.⁴

There are eight extant codes composed over a period of a millennium, from the third century BCE to the seventh century CE. Four of them – ascribed to Āpastamba (third century BCE), Gautama (second century BCE), Baudhāyana (second to first century BCE), and Vasiṣṭha (first century BCE) – are written in aphoristic prose called *sūtra*, and are therefore referred to as Dharmaśāstras. The best-known and most influential of Hindu lawcodes is ascribed to Manu. It is written in verse, a style that will be followed by most later codes, and can be dated to the middle of the second century CE. It is followed by codes ascribed to Yājñavalkya (fourth to fifth century CE), Nārada (sixth century CE), and Viṣṇu (seventh century CE). We know, however, that there were numerous other codes composed during this period that are now lost. The early Dharmaśāstras refer to or cite from 17 authorities, and medieval commentaries and legal digests cite from over 100 codes. It is a fair assessment that in all likelihood close to 90% of all the literary products of the legal tradition between the third century BCE and tenth century CE has been lost. The reasons for this large-scale extinction of texts are unclear. The voluminous commentaries and digests of the medieval period, which present topically arranged citations from the ancient codes, may themselves have made experts less dependent on the original texts. We know that, given the climate of tropical India, manuscripts written on palm leaves or birch bark deteriorate fast, and if a text is not transcribed within a century or two it is likely to fall victim to decay and insects. The very material on which the legal codes were inscribed significantly affected the history of that very legal tradition.

I will take the code of Manu as paradigmatic and organize the material of the 'Hindu Code' around the structure provided by it. This is justifiable on two counts. First, Manu expanded the areas of dharma covered by his predecessors by incorporating material on civil and criminal law from the parallel legal tradition of Arthaśāstra that dealt with statecraft. Second, we can clearly see the dependence of later jurists on Manu; they can be seen as commenting on and reformulating Manu's work. Manu is thus central to the entire juridical tradition of Hinduism. A later jurist Bṛhaspati pays the ultimate tribute to the authority of Manu when he dismisses any other text that is opposed to Manu, whom he takes as the ultimate authority in matters of dharma.

Donald Davis (2010, p. 1) calls law 'the theology of ordinary life. It is both the instrument and the rhetoric by which the most familiar, repeated, and quotidian of human acts are first placed in a system or structure larger than the individual experience'. Ancient Indian jurists defined dharma or law as rule-governed activity where the rules precede logically and temporarily the activities they govern.⁵ It is the fact that certain activities are patterned after the rules of dharma that makes those activities 'religious', or in the Hindu vocabulary 'dharmic': they produce religious merit. These rules are given in the Dharmaśāstras. The rules presented in their sections on proper conduct (*ācāra*) govern the most quotidian and ordinary activities of Hindus – how to clean up after going to the toilet, how to bathe, how and what to eat – as also some of the momentous events of an individual's and community's life such as marriage and death.

The individual who is governed by the laws of the Hindu legal codes is principally the married male householder, the 'man-in-the-world' rather than the 'world-renouncer', who has often been viewed as the paradigmatic 'holy man', the *homo religiosus*, of India in scholarly literature. The ascetic, in fact, is marginal to the Hindu legal system as presented in the Dharmaśāstras; the *homo religiosus* of Hindu law is the

married householder. The codes thus present rules by which a young male becomes a married householder, and in the process presents material also on how a young female becomes his consort and the mother of his children. So, the codes are primarily intended for males, and the dharma of women (*strīdharmā*) is primarily an adjunct.

The male-centred orientation of Hindu law codes is further complicated by the central role played by the hierarchically arranged social groups. The codes are principally concerned with the four *varṇas* or social classes: Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra, even though the ideology expressed there is equally applicable to the broader social division of caste (*jāti*), which are viewed within the codes as sub-divisions of the four *varṇas*. The primary target of Hindu codes is not just the male but also the Brāhmaṇa male, the argument being that what is said with reference to the Brāhmaṇa can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Kṣatriya and Vaiśya males. The Śūdras, who are not entitled to Vedic initiation, are a marginal presence more as objects than subjects of law.

Hindu law as articulated in the codes, therefore, is 'individual-specific' in the sense that most rules do not have universal applicability, in spite of the lip service given to 'universal dharma' (*sāmānya* or *sanātana dharma*). The 'individual', however, is defined and constituted not in terms of the modern 'individualistic' ideology but as a member of a larger social group, be it gender, caste, region, family, or age group. This ideology is articulated most succinctly in the expression *svadharma*, the dharma specific to 'me, you, him, her, them'.

28.1 Proper Conduct (*ācāra*)

The process by which an individual becomes a married head of household is long and ritually marked. A young boy of 8, 11, or 12, depending on his social class,⁶ undergoes the rite of Vedic initiation (*upanayana*) that establishes him as an individual subject to the norms of dharma. He is separated from his natal family and spends several years of study at a teacher's house, where he serves his teacher almost like a servant. This liminal period ends with the conclusion of studentship and the young adult's return home marked by a ritual bath; hence he is called *snātaka*, the 'bathed one', or bath-graduate. The interval between his return home and his eventual marriage is devoted to selecting a suitable bride. The rite of marriage itself is the most central and most significant rite of passage for a Hindu, both male and female. Here is Manu's brief description of the process of selecting a suitable bride:

After he has taken the concluding bath with his teacher's permission and performed the rite of returning home according to rule, the twice-born should marry a wife belonging to the same class and possessing the right bodily characteristics... He should avoid these ten families when contracting a marriage alliance...: families negligent about rites, deficient in male issue, without Vedic learning, and with hairy bodies, as well as families prone to haemorrhoids, tuberculosis, dyspepsia, epilepsy, leukoderma, or leprosy.

He must not marry a girl who has red hair or an extra limb; who is sickly; who is without or with too much bodily hair;⁷ who is a blabbermouth or jaundiced-looking; who is

named after a constellation, a tree, a river, a very low caste, a mountain, a bird, a snake, or a servant; or who has a frightening name. He should marry a woman who is not deficient in any limb; who has a pleasant name; who walks like a goose or an elephant; and who has fine body and head hair, small teeth, and delicate limbs. A wise man must not marry a girl who has no brother or whose father is unknown, for fear that the law of “female-son” may be in force.⁸ (MDh 3.4–11)

A married man along with his wife constitutes the religious and ritual persona in the ideology of not just the law codes but also of the Vedic ritual texts: ‘A full half of one’s self is one’s wife. As long as one does not obtain a wife, therefore, for so long one is not reborn and remains incomplete. The wife is one half of the husband, because so long as a man is without a wife he remains childless and incomplete’ (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 5.1.1.10). For most Hindu rites, especially the Vedic sacrifices, the physical presence of the wife is essential. The ritual fire that is lit at marriage is extinguished if the wife happens to die; the husband then reverts to the unmarried state without a ritual fire. It to this composite and complete ‘husband-wife’ person that the rules of daily living apply, even though their main subject is always the man.

Hindu law takes it for granted that the central purpose of marriage is procreation, especially to father a son who will continue the ancestral line by making ancestral offerings (*śrāddha*). The importance of fathering offspring is the moral of the story of Jaratkāru in the Sanskrit epic, *Mahābhārata* (1.13). Jaratkāru had taken to celibate asceticism and one day sees his ancestors hanging heads down in a cave with their feet tied with a grass string that is being gnawed by a rat. The ancestors explain their predicament: Jaratkāru is the last descendant, their final string, and time in the form of a rat is cutting that string. Their fate is in the hands of Jaratkāru, who then decides to give up asceticism and to father a son to continue the line.

Close attention, therefore, is paid to the sexual union between husband and wife. The onus of fathering a son falls on the husband, who is legally obliged to have sex with his wife during her ‘season’, that is, the fertile period soon after her monthly period. This obligation is considered so fundamental that the opening episode of the epic poem *Raghuvamśa* by Kālidāsa, the foremost Sanskrit poet, entails a curse that king Dilīpa endured when, in his rush to get back home from Indra’s heaven to his wife on earth who had just bathed after her monthly period, he did not notice the heavenly cow, Surabhi, and failed to pay her respect, a curse that made his wife barren. At the onset of her period, the wife withdraws from all family activities, including the preparation of food; she is impure and technically an untouchable, and lives and eats separately. The bath at the end of this period signals her return to normal life and her readiness to engage in sexual congress. Here is Manu’s description:

Finding his gratification always in his wife, he should have sex with her during her season. Devoted solely to her, he may go to her also when he wants sexual pleasure... The natural season of women, according to tradition, consists of sixteen nights, together with the other four days proscribed by good people. Of these nights, the first four as well as the eleventh and the thirteenth are disapproved; the remaining ten nights are recommended.⁹ Sons are born when he has sex on even nights, and girls on odd nights. Desiring a son, therefore, he should have sex with his wife on even nights during her season. (MDh 3.45–48)

A central focus of the rules governing a householder, however, is his daily routine from sunrise to sunset. Medieval legal digests dealing with the daily routine (*āhnikā*) begin with the householder waking up in the morning and conclude with his going to sleep in the evening. He is expected to rise 'at the time sacred to Brahman', interpreted as the time just before dawn, and void urine and excrement. Detailed rules are given for answering calls of nature: he should do so seated and facing the north during the day and the south during the night, and after spreading some grass on the ground (no mention of toilets is made); he should do so in a spot away from ploughed land, water, houses, and the like. For cleaning himself after toilet, he uses water and soft earth,¹⁰ and detailed rules are given with regard to the kind of earth and the places from which it should be obtained. Water and earth are applied to the penis and anus until the smell and stain are gone. But texts give more specific rules with regard to the size of each lump of earth and the number of times they are applied: for example, seven times to the anus, twice to the penis, twenty to the left hand (because that is the hand used to clean oneself), and then fourteen to both hands. This kind of detail shows the importance given to the act of cleansing by the legal codes.

The next act in the morning ritual is cleaning the teeth. It is done with a small twig, which is chewed at one end to make a brush. Meticulous rules are given with regard to the trees from which such twigs may be taken, and their length and diameter. Next follows the morning bath, although ideally he is supposed to bathe also at midday and late afternoon. Bathing is the single most important act of purification. It is classified into several varieties, such as the daily bath, a bath on particular occasions, and for a particular purpose. Some texts present up to six varieties. All forms of bath involve ideally using flowing water, such as a river, or a body of water, such as a pond or lake. The body is scrubbed using again soft soil, and ritual formulas are recited during the process of bathing.

It is only after the bath that one is ritually pure enough to eat. Eating also is governed by numerous rules, both with regard to the preparation and serving of the food, and with regard to the manner in which one eats. I will discuss the dietary rules later, as also the entertainment of guests that is intimately connected with the family meal. Before sitting down to eat one washes the hands, feet, and mouth. The meal is served while those eating sit in a line or in a circle on the floor. Rules are given with regard to the plates used: copper, silver, gold, and a variety of leaves. Eating is done using the right hand, just as purification after toilet is done using the left. Eating, like evacuation, makes one impure. So there is a detailed procedure for cleaning the hands, lips, and mouth after eating.

Two central ritual acts performed every day are the offering of ghee in the ritual fire (*agnihotra*) at sunrise and sunset, and the worship of the sun at the morning and evening twilights (*sandhyā*). These, however, pertain solely to Brāhmaṇa males.

Early writers on dharma codified the daily obligations of a householder using the metaphor of sacrifice, thus homologizing these daily religious acts with the paradigmatic Vedic sacrifice. These religious acts are called the five great sacrifices (*mahāyajña*) already in Vedic texts.¹¹ Manus says that they atone for the inevitable injuries and sins caused by household life:

A householder has five slaughter-houses: fireplace, grindstone, broom, mortar and pestle, and water pot. By his use of them, he is fettered. To expiate successively for each of these, the great seers devised the five great sacrifices to be carried out daily by householders. The

sacrifice to the Veda is teaching; the sacrifice to ancestors is the quenching libation; the sacrifice to gods is the burnt offering; the sacrifice to beings is the Bali offering; and the sacrifice to humans is the honoring of guests. If a man never fails to offer these five great sacrifices to the best of his ability, he remains unsullied by the taints of his slaughter-houses in spite of living permanently at home. (MDh 3.68–71)

These ‘sacrifices’ connect the householder to all the inhabitants of the Hindu universe, including gods, seers, ancestors, fellow human beings, and a assortment of creatures who are the object of the Bali offerings. A significant element of this ritual cycle is the centrality of guests, defined not in the modern sense of a friend or acquaintance paying a visit but a person who comes to one’s house unannounced. Hospitality is a central virtue of household morality,¹² and a constant refrain is that one should never cook only for oneself; such food turns into poison. The householder is the only owner of food within this ideology, and he is obliged to distribute food to all, especially to the religious mendicants, who are the paradigmatic guest. He eats what is left over after feeding guests and dependents, and such leftover food is said to be ambrosia.

Given the centrality of food both in domestic life and, as I have argued elsewhere, within the ideological underpinning of the Hindu social structures,¹³ considerable attention is devoted to dietary laws in Hindu law codes. They use two terms to refer to food that may not be eaten: *abhojya*, food that is inedible because it has come into contact with something or someone that makes it unfit for consumption; and *abhakṣya*, food that is prohibited because it is derived from a plant or animal that one is forbidden to eat. Lists of unfit food items contain not food sources but food that is actually served at a meal. I cite here an extract from Gautama’s (GDh 17.9–18) list:

Food into which hair or an insect has fallen; what has been touched by a menstruating woman, a black bird, or someone’s foot; what has been looked at by an abortionist or smelt by a cow; ... food given by someone who has been disowned by his parents, a harlot, a heinous sinner, a hermaphrodite, a law enforcement agent, a carpenter, a miser, a jailer, a physician, a man who hunts without using the bow or eats the leftovers of others, a group of people, or an enemy.

Abhojya takes on a secondary meaning referring not directly to food but to a person whose food is unfit to be eaten, some of whom are listed by Gautama. Clearly, these prohibitions reinforce social divisions, especially those pertaining to caste.

But the most extensive repertoire of laws pertaining to diet pertains to forbidden plants, animals, and milk. I will here focus on animals, because rules relating to them are the most complex and significant with respect to social structures. Animal prohibitions are directly related to animal classifications. These classifications are based on three factors: anatomy, diet, and habitat. Legal codes lay down general rules regarding prohibited animals based on these classificatory principles. With regard to anatomy, the focus is on teeth and hooves. Animals have either paws with five nails or hooves; and the latter have either single or double hooves. With respect to teeth, animals are classified into two groups: those with incisor teeth in both jaws, and those with incisor teeth in only one jaw (for example, cows). Animals that can be eaten have only one row

of incisor teeth and have cloven hooves. An animal lacking these characteristics becomes forbidden. On this basis, the paradigmatic edible animals are cattle and goats. Likewise, the horse and donkey with single hooves, and animals with five nails instead of hooves, such as cats and dogs, are forbidden.

With respect to diet, all carnivorous animals are forbidden. Classification in terms of habitat is more complex. In general, animals whose domicile is the village are forbidden, while those living in the forest are permitted. So, a village pig and a village fowl are forbidden, while their wild counterparts are not. The case of farm animals is more complex; they are neither in the forest nor in the village. Indeed, being from the farm (neither close nor distant), they are the paradigmatic food. The last two classificatory principles, diet and habitat, apply also to birds. But the classificatory principles governing specifically birds are somewhat vague. Birds classified as 'peckers' (*pratuda*), that is, those who seek food by pecking, such as woodpeckers, are forbidden, while the 'scratchers' (*viṣkira*), that is, those who seek food by scratching the soil with their feet are permitted.

Milk is the most restrictive of all food items. The milk of most animals – women and other five-nailed animals, single-hoofed animals such as mares, and even most animals with cloven hooves, such as sheep and deer – is explicitly forbidden. The only permitted milk is that of cows, buffaloes, and goats.

I want to mention at least in passing the issue of vegetarianism. Today, vegetarianism is the norm among Hindus, especially Brāhmaṇas. Vociferous objections are made when scholars point out that this was not the case in Hinduism as reflected in the Hindu codes. The minute prescriptions relating to permitted and forbidden animals would have been unnecessary if vegetarianism was the norm. However, the growing influence of vegetarianism is evident in some of the rhetoric of Manu. There was a growing unease about killing animals in order to eat their flesh.

One can never obtain meat without causing injury to living beings, and killing living beings is an impediment to heaven; he should, therefore, abstain from meat. Reflecting on how meat is obtained and on how embodied creatures are tied up and killed, he should quit eating any kind of meat. ...The man who authorizes, the man who butchers, the man who slaughters, the man who buys or sells, the man who cooks, the man who serves, and the man who eats – these are all killers. (MDh 5.48–51)

We have seen that maintaining the ritual connection to deceased ancestors by offering food and drink is an important duty of a householder. Simple food offerings are made every day, and more formal ancestral offerings (*śrāddha*) are offered periodically. Law codes specify the kinds of food offered at such offerings. The best food is meat, as Manu explains:

By offering sesame seeds, rice, barley, beans, water, roots, and fruits according to rule, ancestors of men rejoice for one month; by offering fish, for two months; by offering the meat of the common deer, for three months; by offering sheep meat, for four months; by offering here the meat of birds, for five months; by offering goat meat, for six months; by offering the meat of the spotted deer, for seven months; by offering the meat of the Eṇa antelope, for eight months; by offering the meat of the Ruru deer, for nine months; by offering boar or buffalo meat, they are satisfied for ten months; by offering rabbit or turtle meat,

for eleven months; and by offering beef, milk, or milk-rice, for one year. The satisfaction from the meat of a Vārdhrīṇasa horn-bill lasts for twelve years. The Kālaśāka herb, Mahāśalka crustacean, the meat of the rhinoceros and the red goat, and honey, as well as every type of sage's food are efficacious in perpetuity. (MDh 3.267–272)

One day the householder will also die and be counted by his sons and grandsons as an ancestor. Death of the father and the funerary rites, therefore, are important elements of Hindu legal codes. The cremation of the deceased father is called the 'last fire offering' (*antyēṣṭi*) in which his body itself becomes the ritual offering. Death of the father creates a new dispensation within the extended family. This is generally the time for the partitioning of the paternal estate; I will deal with that below.

Death also triggers a state of impurity for the family and close relatives of the deceased. Purity and impurity are central concerns for the law codes,¹⁴ and they devote a lot of space to the topic. It is not only death that produces impurity; a birth in the family does so too, as also other bodily functions such as going to the toilet, eating, sexual intercourse, menstruation, and the like. A person in a state of impurity has to undergo a process of purification (*śauca*), which normally requires the passage of time (ten days usually for death and birth) and/or washing and bathing. Impurity is very much a bodily phenomenon, as indicated by the avoidance of touch through which impurity can be transmitted. Manu presents the bodily excretions that cause impurity: 'Body oil, semen, blood, marrow, urine, feces, ear-wax, nails, phlegm, tears, discharge of the eyes, and sweat – these are the twelve impurities of man' (MDh 5.135).

Impurity of a person is distinguished from that of articles used by an individual through the use of two distinct Sanskrit terms: *aśuci* for a person and *aśuddha* for an article. The codes also have minute prescriptions regarding the purification of articles in common use. Here is a sample from Manu:

The wise have determined that metal objects, jewels, and anything lapidary are cleaned with ash, water, and earth. When they are unstained, gold vessels are cleaned with water alone... The cleaning of copper, iron, brass, pewter, tin, and lead is done using as appropriate alkali, acid, and water. All liquids, tradition tells us, are cleaned by straining; solids, by sprinkling water; and wooden articles, by planing. (MDh 5.111–115)

These sources also show the need for flexibility in actual practice with regard to purity: it is impractical to throw away a large quantity of rice just because a crow may have nibbled a few grains. So Manu says: 'The rule is that large quantities of grain or clothes are cleaned by sprinkling them with water, whereas small quantities are cleaned by washing them with water' (MDh 5.118). Some things are statutorily marked as 'pure', because the alternative would make normal life impossible. So, the ground one walks on is pure even if an outcaste or a dog has just walked over it. Manu presents a series of such things: 'The hand of an artisan is always pure, as are goods displayed for sale; the almsfood received by a student is always ritually clean – that is the settled rule. A woman's mouth is always pure; so is a bird when it makes a fruit to fall, a calf when it makes the milk to flow, and a dog when it catches a deer' (MDh 5.129–130).

A final issue relates to how the Hindu law codes deal with individuals who do not live at home as householders, that is, with ascetic modes of life. Early codes, the Dharmasūtras,

describe the rules for two kinds of ascetics – the forest hermit and the wandering mendicant – within the context of the orders of life (*āśrama*; Olivelle 1993). These codes contain the earliest extant rules governing the lives of these ascetics, rules that were probably derived from pre-existing ascetic codes. Gautama presents them succinctly. First, the forest hermit:

A hermit shall live in the forest, living on roots and fruits and given to austerities. He kindles the sacred fire according to the procedure for recluses and refrains from eating what is grown in a village... He may also avail himself of the flesh of animals killed by predators. He should not step on plowed land or enter a village. He shall wear matted hair and clothes of bark or skin and never eat anything that has been stored for more than a year. (GDh 3.26–35)

And for a wandering mendicant:

A mendicant shall live without any possessions, be chaste, and remain in one place during the rainy season. Let him enter a village only to obtain almsfood and go on his begging round late in the evening, without visiting the same house twice and without pronouncing blessings. He shall control his speech, sight, and actions; and wear a garment to cover his private parts, using, according to some, a discarded piece of cloth after washing it. He should not pick any part of a plant or a tree unless it has fallen on its own. Outside the rainy season, he should not spend two nights in the same village. He shall be shaven-headed or wear a topknot; refrain from injuring seeds; treat all creatures alike, whether they cause him harm or treat him with kindness; and not undertake ritual activities. (GDh 3.11–25)

Manu also presents these modes as orders of life (*āśrama*), but he pushes them to the end of his discussion of the proper conduct for a Brāhmaṇa. But already we get hints that these modes of life were beginning to be considered penitential lifestyles to be adopted only in old age. Yājñavalkya is the first to associate these two ascetic lifestyles explicitly with expiation and penance, discussing them within his section on penance (*prāyaścitta*).

28.2 Law (*vyavahāra*)

I use the term ‘law’ in this section in a somewhat narrow sense to cover the meaning of the Sanskrit *vyavahāra*. This term has a broad range of meanings, but the sections devoted to it in the law codes focus on two: legal procedure and substantive law, both of which are dealt with in the codes within the context of dispute resolution and court proceedings. Legal procedure refers to the rules a judge and court officials must follow during a trial and in reaching a verdict. Substantive law refers to the legal grounds for bringing a lawsuit in the first place. I will take up for discussion the latter.

Law and the administration of law both inside and outside the court are considered part of the duties of the king around whom, according to the Hindu codes, revolve the entire structure of governance within a society. The codes consider the king not simply as a political figure but especially as the head of society with an essentially religious

function in safeguarding dharma. It is the protection afforded by the king that makes it possible for people to observe the dharma proper to them (*svadharma*); without the king society disintegrates into anarchy and the 'law of the fish' – big fish eating the small fish – prevails.

Looking at the structure of Manu's code, we see that Manu has organized his material around a simple structure in three parts. The first part (MDh 7.1–142) deals with the origin of the king; the organization of the state machinery, including the appointment of officials; the construction of the fort; the king's marriage; the conduct of foreign policy, including war; and finally taxation. In the second part (MDh 7.145–226), Manu changes his narrative scheme to span a single day, from the morning when the king wakes up until nightfall when he goes to bed. Manu squeezes into a single day the description of all the duties of a king.

The third part, which is my focus here, deals with the justice system and comprises the 18 subjects of litigation (*vyavahārapada*, often translated as 'Titles of Law'). They are:

1. *ṛṇādāna*: non-payment of debt
2. *nikṣepa*: deposits
3. *asvāmivikraya*: sale without ownership
4. *saṃbhūyasamutthāna*: partnerships
5. *dattasyānapākarma*: non-delivery of gifts
6. *vetanādāna*: non-payment of wages
7. *saṃvidvyatikrama*: breach of contract
8. *krayavikrayānuśaya*: cancellation of sale or purchase
9. *svāmipālavivāda*: disputes between owners and herdsmen
10. *śīmāvivāda*: boundary disputes
11. *vākpāruṣya*: verbal assault
12. *daṇḍapāruṣya*: physical assault
13. *steṇa*: theft
14. *sāhasa*: violence
15. *strīsaṃgrahaṇa*: sexual crimes against women
16. *strīpuṇḍharma*: law concerning husband and wife
17. *vibhāga*: partition of paternal estate
18. *dyūtasamāhvaya*: gambling and betting

The number 18 became standard in later codes, even though the order in which the subjects are enumerated differ. Manu appears to have followed a logical method, which can be presented schematically:

- A. Individual and group disputes (=1–10)
- B. Criminal law (=11–15)
- C. Personal and family law (=16–17)
- D. Public order and safety (=18)

Manu begins with disputes between individuals and between groups. Such disputes must have been the most common reason for litigation and cover the first ten subjects.

The first nine for the most part deal with individual disputes, with the possible exception of the fourth, on partnerships, where the dispute is between an individual and a partnership of which he is a member. Likewise, disputes in the seventh, on breach of contract, may happen between individuals and between an individual and a corporate body. Disputes over boundaries – the tenth – can happen between individual landowners, but the typical dispute discussed by Manu concerns boundaries between villages.

The next category is criminal law, involving verbal and physical assault, theft, robbery/violence, and sexual crimes. Unlike in modern law, however, lawsuits for such crimes were not initiated by the state but by the injured parties, even though the suppression of such crimes, especially theft, was considered the primary duty of a king.

The third category is personal or family law. The first ground for litigation under this rubric is disputes between a husband and a wife, although much of what is discussed relates to laws and conventions governing marital relationships. The second and clearly the more significant is the partition of inheritance.

The final category is gambling and betting. One would have expected Manu to present rules for the orderly conduct of these practices, as is done in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* (see Olivelle 2013). Manu, however, was strictly opposed to gambling and betting. For him, these areas of social practice should be suppressed rather than regulated. It is, therefore, natural for him to follow his brief discussion of gambling with the important topic of the 'eradication of thorns' (*kaṇṭakaśodhana*), that is, the suppression of criminal activities, especially theft, in the kingdom. This is a topic found in all *artha* and *dharma* texts, but it falls outside the subjects of litigation. Litigation, according to ancient Indian jurisprudence, is initiated by private individuals; the king and his officials are explicitly barred from initiating lawsuits. The eradication of thorns, on the other hand, is one of the principal duties of a king; it is a police activity and falls outside the judicial process. Nevertheless, Manu sees the eradication of thorns and the suppression of gambling as part of the same administrative process.

Within the brief compass of this chapter, I want to highlight family law, which intersects also with much of what is stated in the sections on proper conduct under marriage, family, and the duties of women within the law codes; and within family law I will focus on women's economic agency and issues relating to inheritance.

Women's agency, especially their economic power, in the Hindu codes has been a much-debated topic. We see the constant invocation of their lack of agency and independence in this oft-cited passage from Manu: 'Day and night men should keep their women from acting independently; for, attached as they are to sensual pleasures, men should keep them under their control. Her father guards her in her childhood, her husband guards her in her youth, and her sons guard her in her old age; a woman is not qualified to act independently' (MDh 9.2–3). Misogynic statement such as these abound not only in Manu but also in other legal codes, but they do not tell the whole story. The lived reality of women's lives was more complex, and the codes themselves bear witness to it.

These texts do acknowledge, for example, that married women owed property; such property is given the technical term *strīdhana* ('women's property'). Manu (MDh 9.194) gives six kinds of such property: 'what a woman receives at the nuptial fire, what she receives when she is taken away, what she is given as a token of love, and what she

receives from her brothers, mother, and father'. Women's property is generally viewed as consisting of clothes, jewellery, and the like. This picture is also inaccurate, however, because in their sections on crime and punishment the same codes impose various kinds of fines on women payable in cash (YDh 2.285; KātSm 487), thus assuming that women had control over their own money. Manu's (8.369) prescription of a fine even for an unmarried woman engaging in lesbian love indicates that even unmarried women were presumed to have money: 'If a virgin violates another virgin, she should be fined 200, pay three times the bride-price, and receive ten lashes'. The codes view a married woman's property as clearly separate from that of her husband; such property was not part of the common family estate and was given the technical term *yautuka* (MDh 9.131). Nārada (NSm 13.7) is clear and explicit: 'The mother is master (of her property) just as the father is of his'. She is thus able to give her property to anyone of her own free will, just as the father. If a husband took a loan from his wife's personal property, he was obliged to pay it back. Nārada (NSm 1.13; also KātSm 569–570) likewise distinguishes the debts of husband and wife: 'A wife does not have to pay a debt made by her husband or by her son unless she agreed to do so or unless she had made the debt jointly with her husband'. These explicit rules clearly presuppose the independent agency of women in economic matters, including taking out loans and getting into debt independently. Kātyāyana (KātSm 919) himself, in his discussion of inheritance, says that *immovable property* given by parents to a daughter goes to her brothers if she dies childless. This provision assumes that women did have control even over land. So, Manu's declaration that women cannot act independently and are always under male authority appears to reflect an ideological aspiration rather than social reality.

The codes also enumerate the heirs to a maternal estate: 'When their mother dies, all the uterine brothers and sisters should divide the maternal estate equally among themselves. If those sisters have any daughters, one should joyfully give them also, as is proper, something from their maternal grandmother's property' (MDh 9.192–193). At other places, however, the daughters are singled out as heirs of their mother's property, thus establishing a female line of inheritance: 'Anything that is part of a mother's separate property becomes the share of her unmarried daughters' (MDh 9.131).

The death of the father, however, is the major occasion for dividing the paternal estate. Ancient India did not have the custom of making a last will and testament; the order of inheritance was laid down by local custom or the legal codes. All property, especially immobile property, that the father inherited from his own father becomes 'ancestral property' (*pitrya*), and the father does not have to right to alienate it without the consent of his sons. Although there is a difference of opinion among the codes as to how the sons obtain their rights with respect to that property, it is clear that the ancestral property has to pass down to the next generation through the partitioning of the estate. The father can alienate or give to his children as he wishes only the property he has himself acquired. In general, the ancestral property was divided among the sons, even though some shares were reserved for unmarried daughters.

It was possible, however, for a man to have several wives from his own or lower social classes according to the rules of hypergamy. Thus, the order of inheritance can become quite complex – sons who are from a mother of a higher class receive larger shares.

There is, furthermore, a close relationship between inheritance and ancestral offerings (*śrāddha*). Significantly, the obligation to offer *śrāddhas* to a particular deceased individual is often expressed within the context of inheritance: whoever inherits the estate of someone is obligated to make offerings to him (Kane 1930–1960, III: 736f). The *Viṣṇu Dharmaśāstra* (15.40) is explicit: ‘The person who receives the inheritance has to offer the ancestral oblation’. Medieval legal digests also emphasize this obligation on a person inheriting an estate, even if that person is not a son of the deceased.

The point seems to be that the owner of ancestral wealth has the obligation to feed those who depend on that wealth: the living as well as the dead members of the family. Conversely, the offering of the *śrāddha* to the deceased owner of the property legitimizes the offerer’s current ownership of that property. This highlights the significance of the ritual triad to whom *śrāddhas* are offered; within this patrilineal society, father, paternal grandfather, and paternal great-grandfather were, in succession, the owners of the property now owned and enjoyed by the performer of the *śrāddha* to them. The public offering of *śrāddhas* to the previous owners of the property is a public and ritual expression of the legitimacy of the inheritance by the current owner of that ancestral property. Ritual thus is here tied closely to law and legality.

28.3 Conclusion

The religious life of a Hindu as depicted in the Hindu legal treatises is far removed from the depictions of Hinduism we find in the introductory textbooks and learned tomes alike and is probably closer to the lived reality of Hindus in pre-modern India. It has been common for scholars to focus on the world-renouncing, other-worldly, and mystical, or on the philosophical dimensions of Hinduism. This focus, bordering on obsession, has exoticized Hinduism, making it the totally different oriental ‘other’. Albert Schweitzer (1960, p. 19) is not unrepresentative of twentieth-century scholarship when he contrasts Greece with India. Greece, according to him, ‘turned toward world and life negation ... because in the end it begins to have misgivings about the world and life affirmation which for centuries had seemed a matter of course’. So, in Greece, there is a history to the life-negating orientation. In India, on the contrary, ‘world and life negation does not originate in a similar experience. It is there from the very beginning, self-originated, born as it were in a cloudless sky’. India is denied not just normalcy but also history – it has always been like that in that unfamiliar, exotic, and unchanging land!

The historical reality cannot be more different. Hinduism, if we follow the arguments, injunctions, and prohibitions of the Hindu legal treatises, is very much a this-worldly, social, and bodily religion, concerned mainly about bodily functions, sexual relations, family life, hospitality, death and birth, purity and impurity, and food and drink. Hindu law or dharma is comprehensive, covering all the aspects of quotidian life. Law deals with the embodied and bodily lives of individuals, as it presents the rules of righteous and virtuous living. It is concerned with the minutiae of bodily functions – how to answer calls of nature; how to brush the teeth; when and how to bathe; when, how, and what to eat; when and how to have sex; when and how to sleep. Little

actually is said about world-negation, meditation, ascetic practices, devotional activities, temples, divine icons, prayer, or even pilgrimage – things that scholars frequently associate with ‘religion’ especially in India. Or, to put it differently, a very different kind of religion is presented in these legal codes.

The law codified in these treatises was supposed to be supplemented by laws handed down in distinct families, social groups, villages, and regions, and most such laws were not codified or presented in written form. They constituted normative custom, which the legal codes themselves assume to be a significant epistemic source of law or dharma. It is in this sense – both law as presented in formal legal codes and the living and changing law represented by custom – that Hinduism may be understood as a legal tradition.

Abbreviations

GDh	Gautama Dharmasūtra
KātSm	Kātyāyana Smṛti
MDh	Mānava Dharmaśāstra
NSm	Nārada Smṛti
YDh	Yājñavalkya Dharmaśāstra

Notes

- 1 For a sustained argument supporting this thesis, see Davis (2007) and (2010).
- 2 For a discussion of the concept of law, see Hart (2012).
- 3 Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* (1.1.2) at the very outset says: *codanālakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmah' – 'Dharma is something beneficial disclosed by a Vedic injunction'.*
- 4 For detailed treatments of the history of Hindu law codes, see Olivelle (2005b, 2010, 2012), Lingat (1973), Kane (1962–1975).
- 5 For discussions of this principle in Indian writings, see Olivelle (2005a), Pollock (1985, 1989a, 1989b).
- 6 On the disputed history of the initiation of girls, see Kane (1962–1975), II: pp. 293–296, 365–368.
- 7 Regarding the girl's hair and other bodily characteristics, see Lariviere (1996).
- 8 This refers to the ritual and legal possibility for a sonless father to appoint his daughter, now technically named *putrikā*, ‘female son’, to bear him a son. So his grandson becomes his legal son. In this case the biological father would not be his legal/ritual father.
- 9 The meaning of these numbers is not altogether clear. The ‘first four’ is generally taken to refer to the four days of menstruation. Then we have only 12 days remaining, and excluding the eleventh and the thirteenth, there are 10 nights when sex is permitted. This appears to be the view also expressed in the *YDh* 1.79. I think, however, that this is erroneous. The 16 days exclude the days of menstruation. The first four must refer, I think, to the first four nights after the menstrual period. So, the prohibited nights are the four days of menstruation, the first four days after that, and the eleventh and thirteenth days of the menstrual cycle.
- 10 Earth was used in ancient India much like soap today to scrub both the body and utensils.
- 11 *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.5.6.6–7; *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 2.10.1.

- 12 For a detailed discussion of hospitality and women's central role in it, see Jamison (1996).
 13 For detailed discussion of Hindu dietary laws, see Olivelle (2002a) and (2002b).
 14 For a discussion of purity in the legal codes, see Olivelle (1998).

Works Cited

- Davis, D.R. Jr. (2007). Hinduism as a legal tradition. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75: 241–267.
- Davis, D.R. Jr. (2010). *The Spirit of Hindu Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hart, H.L.A. (2012). *The Concept of Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press Originally published in 1961.
- Jamison, S.W. (1996). *Sacrificed Wife Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kane, P.V. (1962–1975). *History of Dharmaśāstra*. 5 vols. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Lariviere, R.W. (1996). Never marry a woman with hairy ankles. In: *Festschrift für Dieter Schlingloff* (ed. F. Wilhelm), 163–172. Reinbek: Orientalistische Fachpublikationen.
- Lingat, R. (1973). *The Classical Law of India* (repr. 1998, *Law in India Series*). Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Olivelle, P. (1993). *The Āśrama System: History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Olivelle, P. (1998). Caste and purity: a study in the language of the dharma literature. *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 32: 190–216.
- Olivelle, P. (2002a). *Abhākṣya* and *abhojya*: an exploration in dietary language. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122: 345–354.
- Olivelle, P. (2002b). Food for thought: dietary regulations and social organization in Ancient India. 2001 Gonda Lecture. Amsterdam, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.
- Olivelle, P. (2005a). *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Olivelle, P. (2005b). Explorations in the early history of Dharmaśāstra. In: *Language, Texts, and Society: Explorations in Ancient Indian Culture and Religion* (ed. P. Olivelle), 169–190. Florence: University of Florence Press.
- Olivelle, P. (2012). Patañjali and the beginnings of Dharmaśāstra: an alternate social history of early Dharmasūtra production'. Aux abords de la clairière: Colloque en l'honneur de C. Malamoud. In: *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes - Sciences religieuses*, 117–133. Paris: Brepols.
- Olivelle, P. (2013). *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pollock, S. (1985). The theory of practice and the practice of theory in Indian intellectual history. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105: 499–519.
- Pollock, S. (1989a). 'The idea of śāstra in traditional India'. In: *The Sastric Tradition in the Indian Arts* (ed. A. L. Dallapiccola et al.), pp. 17–26. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Pollock, S. (1989b). 'Playing by the rules: śāstra and Sanskrit literature'. *Ibid*, pp. 301–312.
- Schweitzer, A. (1960[1936]). *Indian Thought and its Development* (trans. C.E.B. Russell). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

CHAPTER 29

Religion and Ethnicity as Located and Localized

Terje Østebø

Anafi si, akka Islaama fi Sidaamaa [Amhara]

Me and you are like a Muslim and an Amhara

29.1 Introduction

This proverb, common among the Oromo of eastern Ethiopia, is one of the strongest expressions of enmity the language can offer. The fact that religion is the metaphor of unbridgeable division represents a fascinating case in point for the complex relationships between ethnicity and religion, an issue that for a long time has followed me through my work in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Home to a myriad of different ethnic groups, with a long historical presence of both Christianity and Islam, and haunted by recurrent wars and conflicts, the issues of ethnicity and religion have a particular relevance in the region. My own research has focused much on the relations between the Oromo and the Amhara in the southeastern area of Bale, and in particular the so-called Bale Rebellion (1963–1970) and the continued insurgency during the 1970s leading up to the Ogaden war in 1977–1978. These events have, on the one hand, been construed as peasant revolts framed within a Marxist paradigm (Tareke 1991), and, on the other hand, as expressions of an ethno-nationalist struggle (Melbaa 1988). Both interpretations point to the political developments in Ethiopia. In the Marxist Derg period (1974–1991), class was the overriding category, while the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime, which is currently in power, brought ethnicity to the forefront. I believe Marxist and ethno-nationalist perspectives taken in isolation remain incomplete, and I have been intrigued by the ways assumedly ethnic labels contain interesting religious dimensions, evident both as part of self-depictions and in processes of 'othering'. Unfortunately, Ethiopian Studies have

largely ignored the religious factor, and there have been virtually no attempts to analyse how ethnicity and religion might be related. The result is that we are left with insufficient understandings of inter-group relations in Ethiopia – both peaceful and conflictual.

While recognizing that ethnicity and religion can be distinguished as two separate phenomena, I view them as intimately intertwined, and I argue that they can only be properly understood when seen as part of the embodied, materially embedded human reality. Such an integrated approach mitigates a too-common tendency to apply a grid of typologies, taxonomies, and categorical schemes, which risks segregating social reality in mutually exclusive compartments. My contention is that ethnicity and religion are intrinsically related to the core concept of belonging. Belonging, in its various forms, is, as I will elaborate, foundational in human life, and is reflected by the ways humans are located and localize themselves. I moreover argue that ethnicity and religion have the potential of being the most fundamental aspects of, and powerful forces in the formation and maintenance of human identity. The word potential is important as a caveat. Ethnicity and religion can have different meanings for people at different places and in different points of time. They can be fervently adhered to, produce impenetrable boundaries, motivate social action, or they can have little relevance.

29.2 Ethnicity and Religion: Dominant Perspectives

If we understand Amhara as an ethnic category and *Islaama* as a religious one, the above proverb seems to position a religious group against an ethnic one. However, the term *Islaama* is at the outset ambiguous. It was the self-referential term used by the Oromo in Bale, and referred both to religious and ethnic belonging, effectively amalgamated. During the 1960s, they refused to call themselves Oromo, claiming that this referred to being *awaama*; pagan, and only in the 1980s did the term Oromo become common. While the word Amhara has been the subject of debate (Michael 2008; Teka 1998), the *Islaama* or the Oromo understood it as an ethnic group – in which language was a determining marker – as well as referring to religion. One of my key-informants expressed this in the following way:

All [the people] knew was that Christianity came with the Amhara. When I was a child my father sent me to school...I was the first in my area who received modern education. At that time, all the people in our area objected my father. They complained and said that

‘he will be like an Amhara’, meaning he will be a Christian. The main reason for this was because the teaching was conducted in Amharic. When a person, an Oromo spoke Amharic, he was considered to be an Amhara, a Christian.¹

While it is generally recognized that there is a relationship between ethnicity and religion, the actual nature of this relationship remains highly un-theorized. In most of the social anthropological literature, religion is seen as a marker of ethnicity, as explicitly expressed by Manning Nash (1988), who claims that ethnicity is made up of three main markers; kinship, commensality, and common cult (cf. Connor 1972; Horowitz 1985, p. 41). There are also those who say that it is futile and unrealistic to separate religion

from ethnic identity, and who simply suggests that ethnicity is merely religion in disguise (Enloe 1980, p. 355). Religious studies, on the other hand, have had very little to say about ethnicity, treating it largely as a side issue with little relevance. Paying attention to the question of religious identity, this has largely been the concern of psychology of religion. In much of this literature, identity is treated as an individualistic and personal matter, with little bearing on, or connection to ethnic identity.

Ethnicity in itself remains one of these highly elusive phenomena that cannot be fully discussed here. Given the limited space, I can only sketch those perspectives important for the formulation of my arguments. Social anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969) brought an important shift in the study of ethnicity, emphasizing the relational and interactional aspect. Moving away from a focus on ethnic groups construed as isolated entities and represented by the sum of 'objective' cultural features, Barth argued that the *boundary* was the defining criterion and what constituted the basis for the construction of difference, and hence the demarcation and maintenance of ethnic groups. Applying an actor-centred approach, he challenged the notion of self-contained cultural inventories, and argued that what mattered were 'those [differences] which the actors themselves regard as significant' (1969, p. 14). Thus, he concluded that it was incorrect to reduce ethnicity to a quantifiable sum of cultural features, or 'cultural stuff'. Other scholars recognized the relevance of 'cultural stuff' in relation to ethnicity; however, they stressed that culture, in all its fluidity and diffuseness cannot be reduced to any form of 'holdings' (Handelman 1977), and nor is it something which exists autonomously.

In response to the limitations of Barth's approach, Anthony Cohen (1985) acknowledged the relevance of both cultural content and boundaries, but added the claim that culture's primary function is to produce a particular sense of belonging to a collective, a group, or, in Cohen's terms, a community. Further, Cohen, in line with an idealist reading of Durkheim's notion of social facts as collective representations, held that community is experienced symbolically, constructed by the actors as a cognitive product, and not material, practical nor structural. The task of understanding ethnicity consequently becomes to deduce meanings from symbols of the community, or the community of symbols.

Both Barth's and Cohen's positions reflect a constructivist perspective, entailing an abstraction of the realities of social life, which is taken to the 'extreme' by Rogers Brubaker (2002, 2004), claiming that ethnicity is all about classification and categorization. The idea that all human and social realities are products of discourses, that they are indefinite, fluid, and open-ended (Spencer and Taylor 2004, p. 9) is, however, highly problematic. A group of people cannot be reduced to a concept, to merely something individuals think about. Moreover, the constructivist perspective exacerbates further the elusiveness of ethnicity, since it is not particularly helpful in distinguishing it from other cultural constructs, from other types of identity and forms of collectivities. My argument is that the focus on boundaries or cultural content misses the main point. In the Horn of Africa, an Oromo identity is not merely produced through encounters with an Amhara or another group, and being Somali is something far more than speaking Somali or having a certain culture. Ethnicity is more than only an abstract and a dislocated concept; it is something that the actors experience as intrinsically 'real', and which is based upon relations with real people and with a real material world.

Religion is, similar to ethnicity, also an elusive category, and a pertinent dilemma in much of the studies of religion is that it often is reduced to something existing merely in the mind of people, as an abstract idea, an ineffable feeling, or an archetypal category represented through narratives, texts, and myths.² While alternative perspectives have been introduced, there is a lasting tendency to abstract religion, and to favour its transcendent and spiritual aspects. This is something clearly expressed in Clifford Geertz's (1973) interpretative anthropology, in which the focus on symbols renders religion a 'system of sacred symbols', thus disembodimenting it and reducing it to signification, to semiotics, and to a category producing meaning in peoples' lives. Not only does religion remain de-situated, it also remains restricted in humans' mind as a cognitive map – as 'expressive texts to be enacted and decoded' (cf. Asad 1993, 43f.; Vásquez 2011, p. 220). According to Talal Asad, Geertz sees religion as nothing more than a state of mind and a conviction that exists 'independent of the worldly conditions' (1993, p. 45). A second and interrelated dilemma is the tendency to give preference to a Western perspective of religion which, as I will discuss later, favours individual faith, belief as a choice, and is very much about the personified relation between the human and the deity. Labelled as the 'private affair tradition' by Russell McCutcheon, this narrow and biased understanding of religion reduces it to 'interior, personal, and utterly unique states and dispositions' (2003, p. 55). Such an understanding becomes highly problematic when it is uncritically transferred to non-Western contexts.

29.3 Localization and Belonging

Instead of seeing religion as a set of propositional beliefs held by individuals, and humans as containers of religions, I argue for an integrative approach that recognizes the dynamic character of religious identity; not as an isolated, self-referential system of symbols, but as integrated in human, social, and material realities. The potential of ethnicity and religion lies not necessarily in being conscious or enacted, and not in their content or 'stuff'. Rather, the potential of ethnicity and religion is found in the way they are integral to humans as embodied and social beings. Ethnicity and religion are about the visceral experience of selfhood, about how people exist in the world. It is, as I will return to in the next section, primary yet not primordial. I argue that the too strong constructivist bias misses far more important fundamental points for the formation of ethnicity and religion, and that there is a need to adjust the way we think about *identity* formation as the underlying premises for these two categories. This excessive constructionism even vitiates otherwise fruitful approaches to identity. For example, Richard Jenkins (1996, p. 75) recognizes that ethnic identity is the 'basic or first-order dimension of human experience'; a primary identification, into which he includes humanness, gender, kinship.³ However, while acknowledging the foundational nature of identity, Jenkins ultimately sees it as an ever-changing set of complex repertoires which people experience, use, learn and 'do' in their daily lives. For Jenkins, identity is dynamic, constantly changing, and something people construct as part of an ongoing process of making sense of themselves and their fellow beings (Jenkins 2008, p. 15). Along the same lines, Stuart Hall construes identity as dislocated, as forms of identification that disavow any location. Claiming that it is a process of

becoming rather than being, he ends up arguing that identification is 'what we might become' (Hall 1996, p. 4), thus eliminating any possibility for stability. Invoking Derrida's concept of *différance*, in which meaning is subject to an infinite deference and repositioning of meaning, Hall claims that meaning as related to identity can only be made through a 'temporary break' in the endless semiosis of language (1996, p. 3). This notion of endless deference and repositioning of meaning has the implication of establishing a disposable, fluid, and empty self – one that deflects any possibility of continuance, stability, and location. Moreover, the emphasis on languages and symbolic systems reduces identity to a mental process related to disposessions in the mind.

The idea of the autonomous, dissociated individual, as constantly 'becoming' has direct consequences for how we approach ethnicity and religion, and my findings from the field have revealed how problematic it is to apply this to the terrain of Horn of Africa. In such a context, an individual would define himself/herself, or be defined in relation to a continuum of collectives, meaning that identity is a product of relations which are emplaced and have material bases. An Oromo would, for example, always be a member of a particular clan and sub-clans – which in turn are spatially located, whereas an Amhara would relate to his/her immediate and extended family. Going against this Western bias that imagines the individual as detached from the group and individual identity as different from group identity, I also challenge the notion of the dissociated self and the claim that identity is limitlessly changing. My contention is that there would always be a degree of stability and continuity, which means that there are certain aspects of one's identity that are more binding or defining in the particular contexts in which individuals and groups are embedded. The self, being, and identity cannot be only infinitely fluid and ever-changing, involving just cognitive processes. Nor can we speak about some sort of 'individual's core' (Seul 1999, p. 555), which remains diffuse and undefined. Rather, identity is about actual real humans, their experiences, their agencies, and their environments. What is needed is an approach that is grounded in a more integrated understanding of humanness – as lived in concrete, material, social, and cultural environments. Echoing Manuel Vásquez's (2011) suggestions, I argue for a mechanism of check-and-balances to a detached constructivism; an approach that mitigates persistent dualities of mind–body, abstract-concrete, culture-reality, and finite-infinite.

At the core of my alternative approach is that the salience of ethnicity and religion is intrinsically related to the notion of *belonging*, here understood as defining 'who we are' in a relational way. It is a term that has little or no meaning in itself, and it makes no sense to talk about belonging unless we talk about 'belonging to', 'belonging in', or 'belonging with'. It is about being-with-others and about emplacement, and thus relates to connections, to being attached, to continuity, and to comfort. My point of departure will be to approach belonging through primary processes of embodiment and emplacement of ethnicity and religion. I use belonging as intimately linked to location, to the natural-cultural landscapes to which and within which we belong. Similar to belonging, prepositions like 'to', 'in', and 'with' are also required for making the term location meaningful, pointing to how location is about being situated in one's immediate and broader environment. Seeking an integrated understanding of location, I will approach it in two different ways; in a passive and an active mode – understood to be closely intertwined and reciprocally interrelated.

The passive mode of location refers to *being located*, or alternatively, being situated or positioned, and relates directly to the concepts of embodiment and emplacement. While embodiment has gained increased attention in recent years,⁴ there is a tendency to treat the body as a representation for something else, or as detached from agency, construed as a passive physical shell for the mind, and thus not central to the sense of self.⁵ Similar problems can also be observed in perspectives on embodiment and identity. Jenkins (1996, p. 60f.) talks, for example, about identity in relation to the embodied self (and practice), but the dilemma is that he too soon leaves the body and focuses instead on selfhood and mind and on the cognitive processes of identity formation and maintenance. The result is that the human body becomes reduced to 'a basic metaphor for symbolizing and imagining collective identities' (1996, p. 143). Dissociating between the individual as embodied and the collective as abstract, Jenkins also upholds a body–mind dualism which inhibits any integrative and interactive approach for construing ethnic identity. Ian Burkitt has alternatively argued for 'humans as embodied social beings' or the embodied self (1994, p. 8), intending to move away from seeing the body as a 'text' to be read, as a representation of some sort of symbolic meaning, and as a metaphor. Instead, the mind entails the body, not as two separate entities. Rather than reproducing Jenkins's dualism in reverse, reducing the self to body, Burkitt (1987) posits mind and body integrated as 'thinking bodies'. The integration of the self's organic and social aspects, makes the human a 'socio-natural entity' (Burkitt 1987), and the self an 'ecological self' (Neisser 1988).

Being emplaced means, moreover, that the individual occupies a particular space at any given time. This both enables and constrains its relations to others and to the world, in the sense that a person's finitude as embodied being means that it cannot be in more than one place at the same time, and that it is locked in restricted interactions with its reality (cf. Bordo 1998, p. 90). As noted by Donna Haraway (1991, p. 191), being located in this manner is a particular embodied standpoint which always is partial. Being emplaced refers to the individual's relation to its immediate and broader social and material realities, as well as to being located in relation to embodied fellow others. Thomas Tweed has touched upon emplacement in his discussion of the term *dwelling*. He brings several interesting insights, yet misses, at the same time, some important points. Emphasizing dwelling as something active, he describes it as involving 'three overlapping processes: mapping, building, and inhabiting' (2006, p. 82). While these surely are relevant, he overlooks the important fact that prior to any such activity, that the individual *is dwelling*: he or she is physically located in real space. It is only when this is established – and the materiality of that location is recognized – that we can start exploring how the individual is actively constructing, imagining the significance of his or her dwelling.

Being located, as embodied and emplaced, in contrast to the floating, the dislocated, and displaced self, is captured in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962) concept of being-in-the-world (*être au monde*). Helpful for understanding human existence, and for construing ethnicity and religion, being-in-the-world entails a concrete, embodied form of existential immediacy in the material world. Humans are part of the world, as they inhabit it as active purposive beings. *Être au monde* redresses reductive understandings that see humans as defined by any sort of inner essence – as merely a thinking 'I', and moves away from an unbalanced focus on the cognitive mind. It is about recognizing the body as the self's primary datum; the concreteness and materiality of the body.

Being-in-the-world consequently means that the embodied self is intimately emplaced in the world in the sense that the 'body is made of the same flesh as the world' (1968, p. 248), although not in any monist manner.

The active mode – *to localize* – is about structuring elements as parts of a whole. It is about how people localize themselves, their others, and the different aspects of the environment – in producing an integrated whole. It is about mapping out and making sense of oneself and one's realities, which means that just as much as the individual is located in the world, s/he also creates the world through his/her embodied practices, which are not limited to representing, to producing symbols. However, the world is, according to Merleau-Ponty, ambiguous. As the individual's experiences and perceptions are from a located point of view, s/he sees the world as boundless, extending beyond its experience with it. An important aspect of the embodied and being-in-the-world individual is the urge to make sense of this boundlessness, made possible through the individual's capacity to abstract and imagine. The end-goal of this is, according to Merleau-Ponty, to produce meaning – related to that each element perceived is part of a whole, so that perception of one element 'arouses the expectation of more than it contains, and this elementary perception is therefore already charged with meaning' (1962, p. 4). I find this notion of meaning to be a little ambiguous, and suggest that relating parts to a whole is really about belonging, about being-with-others: of establishing relations to other beings and objects in relation to oneself and each other, and reciprocally to relating oneself to these. The core point for the individual's intention and purposiveness is thus to establish belonging.

To localize entails thus activity and engagement in structuring, categorizing, imagining, and abstracting. This has been addressed by Alfred Schutz (1967, 176f.) who, by drawing upon Max Weber's ideal types, distinguished between face-to-face knowledge of an individual's fellows and abstracted, indirect knowledge of its contemporaries. As Schutz claimed, the former constitute the basis for the process of abstraction, and there is a continuum between the concrete and the abstract. Such processes are never merely linear, but always complex and reciprocal, entailing a constant dialogue between the lived realities and deduced abstractions. It means that processes of abstraction would be dialectically related to the concrete, and that abstraction would constantly be reconfigured in light of this as well as reciprocally returning to the material (cf. Tweed 2006, p. 158). The role of the material for the construction of the imagined has been discussed by early scholars of religion such as Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and by F. Max Müller who argued for a 'mental faculty' among humans, claiming that people's encounter with material nature enabled 'man to apprehend the Infinite under different names, and varying disguises' (cited in Tweed (2006, p. 95). This has later been echoed by Justin Barrett and Frank Keil who argue that '[a]s natural creatures, we can only draw upon our natural experiences in our attempts to characterize God' (1996, p. 220). The capacity to abstract entails embodied interactions with other human beings and the material world, and the pivotal point is, according to Vásquez, to recognize that our

lived reality emerges from the reciprocal exchanges between our embodied practices and material apparatus (art, popular culture, technology, and science) and the environment that is itself summoned and enacted by those practices and apparatuses. In this interplay, our systems of symbols represent malleable pragmatic responses to constraining and enabling bodily and environmental processes. (2011, p. 83)

It is important to underscore that imagination is not the same as unreal. My suggestion is that the human being simply is incapable of abstraction isolated, or severed from the material world. This means that nothing abstract or imagined can exist without being connected to a material reality. When we think of things like love, hope, or beauty – our brains will always make references to our embodied experiences and knowledge of the material reality. Ethnic and religious groups are thus not merely empty social categories, but produced and maintained by the reciprocal relations between the material and the imagination based upon this materiality.

Tweed's (2006, 45f., p. 68) suggestions on the role of analogous language in processes of abstraction is particularly relevant here. Making reference to James Fernández (1991) and Paul Friedrich (1991), he points to how tropes, including metaphors, similes, myths, allegories, and symbols, within analogical language serve as a mode of transport, which can 'create associations, stir affect, and prompt action' (2006, p. 47). As analogous, they draw from the clear to illuminate the unclear, and serve to redirect our attention. Tweed's usage of tropes deals with transportations between different domains of abstract language, experience and culture, but I believe they also have the capacity of transporting attention from the material to the abstract; being 'tools for making and remaking imagined worlds' (2006, p. 68).

29.4 Ethnicity Located and Localized

The tropes I believe are particularly fruitful for the Horn of Africa context are *family* and *home*. They relate to something fundamental in humans' experience of belonging, and represent both the embodied and emplaced aspect of this, as well as being highly relevant for the construction of ethnic and religious identities. Home and family are both in Amharic and the Oromo largely captured in one single expression. In Amharic ቤተሰብ (*betēsāb*) is a combination of ቤት (*bet*) which means home or house, and ሰብ (*sāb*) which refers to human or people. In Oromo, the same is expressed through *warra manaa*, in which the former denotes family or people, and *manaa* being the word for home or house. I will in the following apply these terms as signifying being located in an embodied and emplaced manner, and as relevant tropes for the process of localization in relation to ethnicity and religion.

Ethnicity as located points to the family as the basic relational and concrete unit by way of signifying the primary and most intimate of such relations: that between a child and its parents/custodians. This physical, embodied relationship is the most foundational one in every human life, in which the parents are the first 'significant others', the ones catering to the child's physical and emotional needs, as well as being the most important in processes of socializing. This is eloquently expressed by Steven Grosby this way:

One's parents give one life. The locality in which one is born and in which one lives nurtures one; it provides the necessary for one's life. The larger collectivity in which one is born and in which one lives protects one's life from the potentially threatening chaos of the external world. One's parents have the power to give life to one. (1994, p. 169)

The pivotal point is that this is not something imagined, but manifestly real in the sense that it is made up of relations between real embodied and locally situated people. Important to insert here is that neither family nor home should be restricted to any Western reading of these words – privileging the nucleus family or the single-family home. Yet, while there obviously are huge cultural variations in the setup, the relationship to one's parents/custodians and family remains imprinted throughout the individual's life. It is a primary reference-point in an individual's awareness – cognitively, emotionally, and physically – of its attachment, origin, and belonging.

Ethnicity is furthermore located in the sense of spatial emplacement, particularly through the home as an intimate physical place. People literally build their homes on actual land, something clearly reflected in ቤተሰብ (*betēsāb*) and *warra manaa*, expressing the intertwining of people and space. Just as much as the intimate embodied relations within the family are real, so do the words *bet* and *manaa* express home as a physical and real place; the locus of the experience of being-in-the-world and, as part of it, of being-among others with one develops strong feelings of attachment. It refers to an intimate controlled space 'that provides for bodily needs – shelter, sleep, sex, healing, and food – and usually, though not always, is inhabited by some members of the family' (Tweed 2006, p. 105). The spatial outline of the house is often determining the roles of, and relations between family members, being important for socialization and the production of identity.⁶ It is moreover important to note that home never exists in isolation, but is a place always related to other places, like neighbouring homes, being part of a village, or interlinked with other villages. Home would also be part of space in the broader sense, for example by immediate farmland, as well as extending into territories like region and homelands. This is clearly the case in rural southeastern Ethiopia where home refers to a homestead, which often includes a cluster of houses, surrounding fields, as well as integrating clan-land. Here it may be relevant to use Peter Geschiere's (2009) term *autochthony* as an analytical tool. Defined as 'sons of the soil' or 'to be born from the soil', it is linked it with belonging and quests for belonging, and Geschiere argues that although the term is shrouded with ambiguity, it has gained increased relevance in the age of globalization. While he uses *autochthony* broadly in relation to social localities standing against global flows, stressing the emotional dimension of the ties to soil and land and pointing to the 'strong territorializing capacity' of *autochthony*, Geschiere fails to sustain a fully materialist approach. He argues that *autochthony* happens 'in a more or less symbolical way' (2009, p. 29). In other words, in spite of making the very important connection to the soil as material space, the experience of *autochthony* is reduced to a process of symbolization.

I believe it is crucial to recognize land as actual physical landscape, and as fundamental for processes of emplacement. This is expressed in Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of *topophilia*, defined as humans' love of place or the affective ties with the environment (1974, p. 92). Arguing that feelings and their objects are inseparable, Tuan emphasizes the permanent feelings one has 'toward a place because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood' (1974, p. 93). Following these perspectives, I argue for an approach that duly recognizes the materiality of place, which with its sights, sounds, and smells generate experiences, emotions, and memories crucial in

forging a sense of belonging – to home (Vásquez 2011, 311f.). In turn, this deeply and viscerally felt sense of belonging is an essential ingredient for our sense of self, both as individuals and members of groups. Living two years among the Oromo in the barren and desert-like district of Raytu on the border to Ethiopia's Somali Region, an area constantly hit by recurrent droughts, I was often amazed with the people's tenacious attachment to the land. Year after year, the farmers would plant their corn, only to see it scorched by the sun before it was ripe. As the nearby ponds and rivers dried up each dry season, they periodically had to move to places where the ponds and rivers still contained water. Yet it was very hard for them to imagine another better place. When the authorities talked about moving people to the highlands to ease their hardship, the local response was: 'we don't want to live in an area where we will be eaten by fleas'. As expressed by Grosby: 'nature has the power to make plentiful the barren of the area in which one lives' (1994, p. 169).

Ethnicity as located then constitutes the basis for the process of *localization*. While ethnicity is a construct, the crucial point is that this is not imagined out of 'thin air', but embodied and emplaced. The family and home are real, and localization means that these tropes are transported to a larger collective – creating the situation in which family and home is connected to ethnicity as: 'the former builds on the latter, the one is often confused with the other, and behavior in one sphere is extended into the other' (Horowitz 1985, p. 61). This refers back to Merleau-Ponty's suggestion about how what we experience and directly perceive produces expectations and awareness of something more, something beyond this (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 4). Human lives as being-in-the-world entails that concepts are 'grounded in observable realities in the world' (Jenkins 1996, p. 10).

The concepts of family, home, and primary relations connect ethnicity to kinship and descent – common in ethnic studies. Kinship harks back to Max Weber's (1978) thesis of an ethnic group as based upon the shared belief of common descent, echoed by Stephen Cornell who defines ethnicity as 'its emphasis on real or assumed bonds of kinship', and as 'descent from a common homeland' (1996, p. 268). He even argues that omitting descent deprives the concept of ethnicity of 'analytical utility' (1996, p. 268).⁷ Finding the terms kinship and descent problematic, I follow Joseph Ruane's and Jennifer Todd's terms *peoplehood* and *provenance*, finding that they facilitate a broader understanding of ethnicity (2003). *Peoplehood* duly recognizes the embodied aspect, while *provenance*, understood as origin, or 'to come from', relates to the emplaced aspect. It is about family, the space of the home, birthplace and origin, meaning that the power of ethnicity thus lays in the fact that it locates the individual in strong, intimate, and embodied relations with its primary others, as well as emplaces it in familiar space. *Peoplehood* and *provenance* then become the basis for how people actively locate themselves in ways that transcend their real time and space. Mirroring one's embodied family relations, ancestors, patriarchs, or founding fathers are appropriated and made close, while place of origin and homeland become extension of the physical home. This is among the Oromo seen by the way clan names are concomitant with physical space, either as pastoral areas or farming land. For example, the Sebro clan has produced a place-name like Sebro, while the large Raytu clan corresponds to the name of Raytu district in Bale.

Attachment to land is moreover closely related to awareness of the past (Tuan 1974, p. 99), to longing, and to how collective memories produce ethnic identity. Each Oromo clan in Bale traces their ancestry back to the two brothers Mendo and Siko, who had seven and five sons, respectively. During the sixteenth-century Oromo migrations, these two brothers were said to settle in different parts of Bale; Mendo settling to the west of Weib River, and Siko settling to east. Clans are thus firmly attached to both these two ancestors. They trace themselves back to one of the two brothers' sons, and refer to the ancestors' settlements as their places of origin – in turn extrapolated as loaded markers of identity. The home may also be object for spatial longing, related to embodied memories. This is something that became increasingly relevant among the Oromo of Bale as state-policies contributed to 'dis-emplace' ethnic identity. In its attempt to repress armed insurgencies in the 1970s, the Derg regime embarked on an extensive villagization project from 1978 that effectively drove a population of nearly 1 million from their homes and native land, and forced different Oromo clans, Amhara, and other ethnic groups into state-created settlements. This had dramatic consequences. As land was both the actual resource and a cultural asset in identity making, the villagization programme thus disrupted the clan system as a *spatial* arrangement and affected the whole clan system (Østebø 2012, 213f.). When the Derg regime fell in 1991, some tried to move back to the original places, but the rearrangement of land through private ownership, state-farms, and commercialized agriculture made this difficult. Instead, people are left with affective memories about their homes, and stories told about these places were all about prosperity and abundant lives – contrasted with loss and poverty when 'people became uprooted' from their places of origin.

Peoplehood and provenance are in other words crucial for the production of history that bridges the past with the present, creating a sense of continuity between a broader past that is made one's own. As the individual defines and claims figures and events in the past as his or her own history, it transcends itself to something beyond its immediacy, which means that the individual can localize itself as belonging to a larger whole. Alfred Doja, argues that what 'distinguishes ethnic identity from other... is its orientation towards the past' (2000, p. 432), which in turn refers to Cohen's (1978, p. 387) concept of 'aura of descent' and to Don Handelman who connects ethnic membership to 'a corporate history in time and space', and who, through the concept of 'social biography', argues that history offers an explanation to members of ethnic groups as to 'why they are members, where they originated, and why the existence of the category is substantial and legitimate' (1977, p. 190). As this localization is represented through narratives and traditions, embodied in artefacts, and enacted through cultural practice, it is shared among the members of the ethnic group or the nation.

Is this focus on peoplehood and provenance, on kinship and origin any different from an outdated primordialist view of ethnicity? I claim that it is, and argue that the very inclusion of ethnicity as embodied and emplaced enables us to move away from the somewhat tiring debate about primordialism and constructivism. This is obviously not to say that ethnicity is a genetic category, and neither does it mean to uncritically accept the actors' claims of such. The actors' *emic* points of view can, however, not be ignored, but approached through Clifford Geertz's (1973) notion of the 'assumed givens' of ethnicity. Ethnicity is thus, as alluded to, not primordial, but primary. It is about primary embodied

relations to family and the affective embodied interplay an individual has with his or her material environment. It surely is constructed, yet, at the same time, built upon real relations and upon material topographies. Ethnicity as belonging (to a group, culture, society) is thus not only empty or accidental constructions, but closely connected to viscosity, embodied memories, and inculcated habituses inextricably connected to places of birth and socialization – to family and home. In other words, we need to move away from an excessive semiotic constructionism, that reduces materiality to discourse, and rather talk about a fully emplaced constructionism, a constructionism that is made possible by the dynamism of materiality, of our own embodiment and emplacement.

This relates moreover to the important affective aspect of ethnicity, something which needs to be approached in an integrative manner. As rightly pointed out by Connor, academia has always had a 'discomfort with the nonrational' (1994, p. 75) – a discomfort which reflects the enduring strength of the Cartesian body–mind dualism. Valuing rationality associated with the mind, feelings and desires have from this perspective been seen as raw and primitive forces located in the domain of the body, subject to the disciplining power of the cogito. Relating emotions to ethnicity, Connor underscores the ethnic group's self-awareness and the belief in 'shared blood', which he sees as deeply emotional, yet is unable to depict what this emotional self-awareness actually is about. He talks about shared blood and bonds that produce ethnicity, but reduces this to 'an intuitive conviction' that resists explication (1994, p. 202). He mentions the tropes of family and home, yet claims that they are 'metaphors that magically transform the mundanely tangible into emotion-laden phantasma' (1994, p. 205). In other words, affects are epiphenomena, the result of false consciousness, or invented traditions, rather vibrant aspects of the embodied self.

My approach is to see emotions as intrinsic to lived experience, as activating 'distinct dispositions, postures and movements which are not only attitudinal but also physical', and which reflect 'the experience of embodied sociality' (Lyon and Barbalet 1994, p. 48). It is more than only something 'internal'; it is clearly relational and public. Emotions are 'socially efficacious', and, at the same time, they have 'social ontology', in the sense that the 'emotion as an experience involving physical and phenomenal aspect has simultaneously a social-relational genesis' (Lyon and Barbalet 1994, p. 58). An integrative perspective thus means recognizing the reciprocal symbiosis of cognitive structures and emotional dispositions, and how this nexus is related to socio-cultural productions and the natural environment – all generated through the being-in-the-world.

This has direct bearing on so-called ethnic conflicts and the salience of ethnic identities in inter-group violence. The affective force of such sentiments was movingly expressed as one of my informants recounted the events during the political transition in 1991; when the Derg regime fell and when the political future was uncertain. With tears running he told the story about when the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) – the Oromo guerrilla movement which had been fighting the Derg government came to the town in Robe, addressing the people during a mass meeting at the town's soccer-stadium.

The emotions were indescribable that day. Everybody was happy, from the young to the old... I feel sorry today when I think about it. It is better to say that God did not allow us to succeed. I remember one old man called to bless the meeting before it started. He was old

and could not hear properly. He said: 'Let us all fight the TPLF.⁸ I am old, and I cannot go all the way, but I will go as far as Shaya [River]'. At that meeting I was not normal. It was freedom that was on everybody's mind, freedom from the Amhara. Or better to say, independence and having our own country.

My suggestion is that family and home as embodied and emplaced constitute powerful tropes which through processes of localization produce something much broader; social collectives, nations, and homelands. This is for example seen in the way ethnic groups depict themselves through analogies such as brothers, cousins, and talk about land as motherland, land of the fathers, and homeland (Horowitz 1985, 57f.). I also argue that the intimacy of these tropes has the potential to produce deep affections of allegiance. In his discussion of topophilia in relation to nationalism (patriotism), Tuan contends that the latter is 'an emotion rarely tied to any specific locality' (Tuan 1974, p. 100), and claims that the nation is too abstract and arbitrary to be experienced in any direct way. I disagree. There is a continuum between these basic tropes and imagined categories of belonging that invoke a profound sense of loyalty, something to defend with one's life. When the nation is perceived as threatened or attacked, the need to protect it arises as a primary and forceful sentiment. It is the reason why, as claimed by Grosby, 'human beings have sacrificed their lives and continue to sacrifice their lives for their own family and for their own nation' (1994, p. 169).

29.5 Religion Located and Localized

Religion is, as already alluded to, too often defined according to a Western Christian tradition that favours the intimate personal aspect as the genuinely religious, and which consequently reduces religion to conscious belief found in the mind of the autonomous individual, to abstract cognitive knowledge, and to symbols producing meaning (Asad 1993, 43f.; King 1999, 36f.). Asad argues that this is both a consequence of a Protestant view of religion as well as 'a product of the only legitimate space allowed for Christianity by post-Enlightenment society, the right to individual *belief*' (1993, p. 45), italics in original). What is problematic is when this perception of religion is made into a universalized model and applied to any context. Even in a Western context, we see that religion can be connected to collective identity. In a very interesting study of so-called nominalist, un-churched people in the UK, Abby Day (2011) found that religious identity is not dependent upon individual commitment or personal 'belief', and nor is it predicated upon participation in institutionalized religious practices. Religion as a collective category is obvious in a context like the Horn of Africa, being related to particular groups, to traditions, and practices. This is also underscored by Nancy Ammerman who claims that '[i]nstitutionalized rituals, stories, moral prescriptions, and traditions are usually recognized as religious, whether or not the participants themselves think a Sacred Other is involved' (2007, p. 225). Religious membership, adherence, and participation are thus not necessarily measured according to personal belief or commitment, but as part of broader traditions and narratives they confirm, sustain, and maintain a religious identity. Similar to Day's respondents who never attended church, but still defined themselves as Christians, it is not uncommon for

Christians and Muslims in the Horn of Africa to attend the church and mosque only occasionally. It would be inaccurate to label these people as less religious for that reason, or to reduce grassroots expressions to so-called popular Islam, folk-Christianity, or cultural religion (Demerath 2001); divergent, inferior, or vulgar forms of religiosity.

Religion can, similar to ethnicity, also be understood through the interrelated processes of being located and localization, and again I take departure from how people are located – embodied and emplaced – before demonstrating religion's importance for processes of localization. Religion as located means that it is more than cognitive schemes and conscious choices. Rather, it is about what one *is*; it is embodied, and closely related to family and home. Religion is, I argue, usually something a person 'inherits' from one's immediate family. It is closely attached to being a member of a group, inherently relational, and is therefore powerful in producing sentiments of belonging. Crafted by birth, maintained through socialization, it is embodied in relations to family and kin. This was clearly reflected in conversations with my informants, for example by a young man, saying: 'from my family I was a Muslim, I knew that I was a Muslim, and I was saying that I was a Muslim'. Again, this is not necessarily about personal faith, but, as expressed by another of my informants, about becoming and being part of a larger group: 'I make my children pray and study the Qur'an because I want them to be accepted in their community. I want them to keep their identity as Bale Oromo and as Muslims'.

Day also highlights the centrality of embodied relations in her study in the UK. Her respondents first and foremost related their religious identity to immediate family members – usually constituting the models and affective reference-points for their religiosity – and to the role the family played in socialization (2011, p. 156), before referring to a British Christian ethnicity (2011, p. 180). Day underscores that people 'have relationship-centred and relationship-guided beliefs, informed by experience and the emotions they (re)produce' (2011, p. 204). Jesse Graham and Jonathan Haidt (2010, p. 144) write in similar veins about how morality binds people together in groups, to moral 'sacred others', and to a reality beyond a finite reality. Robert Orsi points to how religion takes the form of a network of relationships between heaven and earth, 'involving humans of all ages and many different sacred figures together'. He makes the important point in arguing that these relationships 'have the same complexities – all the hopes, evasions, love, fear, denial, projections, misunderstandings, and so on – of relationships between humans' (2005, p. 2).

This relational aspect of religion does not, however, preclude the possibility of religious conversions. What is interesting to note is that in the Horn of Africa, religious conversions have often been collective phenomena which have been accompanied by change in ethnic affiliation. In the case of Borana people on the border between Ethiopia and Kenya, their conversion to Islam was followed by a gradual assimilation and adoption of a Somali identity (Schlee 1994; Schlee and Shongolo 1995).⁹ In more recent years, we have seen noticeable conversions from Orthodox to Protestant Christianity and some sporadic conversions from Islam to Christianity. Such conversions usually have, however, significant consequences because they not only entails rejection of previous narratives, traditions, and ritual practices, but also because they often alienate the individual physically from his or her family or kin, who refuses any form of contact. Conversion, thus, means dislocation, which only can be mended by a new embodied location within a new community.

Religion as located moreover relates to emplacement, and to the way actors are physically situated in relation to particular spaces – both in the immediate vicinity and more distant. The home arguably constitutes a primary spatial venue for shaping religious identity. Intimately linked to the family, as already noted, the home is the place where religious socialization takes place, where rituals are performed, and where the child incorporates through modelling and the performance of daily routines its parents' embodied religiosity. There is also a continuum between the home and other spaces; for example, by ways the child is taken to the church, the mosque, or the shrine. The physical landscape of Ethiopia is dotted with churches and mosques, and such institutionalized places are the most common focus when it comes to the spatial aspect of religion. Also important, however, are the numerous sites for healing and shrines, which in an Islamic context usually are burial-places for blessed individuals – producing spaces imbued with a specific force and hence targets for pilgrimages. The most important shrine in Bale is the burial-place of Sheikh Hussein, a Muslim emissary dating back to twelfth century. The shrine was pivotal in the spatial centre-periphery axis in Bale's religious topography, constituting the centre and centrifugal point for the expansion of Islam, and reciprocally, attracting pilgrims from the periphery (Østebø 2012, p. 52, 66f.).

Religion in relation to the process of localization entails the ways humans abstract, construct, and imagine its place in manners that transcends finite time and space, and which confirm ultimate belonging. Intrinsically related to embodied relations and emplaced existence, it is a reciprocal process in which 'transcendent experience of continued belonging is brought into being through embodied, physical sensations and emotions' (Day 2011, p. 196). Religion constitutes in a way the elongation of ethnicity in the sense that religion has the capacity and potential of providing what I call ultimate belonging, by which people can locate themselves in infinite time and space. Tweed refers to this as the ultimate horizon, and I concur with him in that the quest to traverse the boundaries between the finite and infinite is what 'distinguishes religious and non-religious cultural forms' (2006, p. 76). This ultimate location relates to humans' – however not necessarily explicit or conscious – pondering about questions about limitless time and endless space. However, these questions emerge from specific corporeal experiences, such as the person's gaze into the starlit sky, their presence at the graveside at the death of a family member, or the marvelling over a newborn child. These are instances where one finds oneself on the edge of material existence, and which produce imaginations of an infinite reality, of gods and other supernatural beings, which in turn are located in relation to the material world. Religion is thus an immanent phenomenon interlinked with the concept of being-in-the-world, and which contain fundamental insights into the nature of reality, and which provide opportunities for people to encounter the infinite in a continuum of manifest or latent experiences. Religions are materialized in artefacts, practices, institutions, as well as embodied in people. They are intrinsically human in the sense that without people there are no religions.

The relevance of family and home is clearly observable in the ways religious traditions include metaphors referring to family and kinship, most obvious where the ancestor is imbued with religious power. This then becomes an added aspect to the way ethnicity imagines the forefathers as the lineage's common origin, constituting a

crucial point of orientation by which the individual can localize her/himself across infinite time. Relevant is also the role of myths of origin that provide narratives about origin, about creation, and about the first and original ancestor. They are important means through which individuals localize themselves in a reality that transcends boundaries between the finite and infinite, thus being imaginations about the ultimate beginning, and consequently about ultimate belonging. Religion as localized also relates to immediate family members in a more intimate way. This has been discussed by psychologists since Freud, talking about gods as projections of one's father or as images of a parent (Barrett and Keil 1996, p. 221). At stake here is the production of analogies based upon people's experiences with the material world – primarily in the way gods are provided anthropomorphic features. Deities can also be associated with family and kin, indicating a parent–child relation between humans and their gods: God within Christianity is called upon as 'father', Virgin Mary as the divine 'Mother'. Gods can also be linked to one's ancestor and genealogical lineage, most obvious in Judaism with 'Abraham's God'. In addition, members of a religious group refer to each other as brothers and sisters, again pointing to the family as a trope. The point to be made here is that such references to intimate relations – between humans and gods, and between humans – remain based upon the embodied and real relations to family and kin, which become the point of departure for the abstraction and the production of the religious. This is something discussed by Orsi in his work on American Catholicism, where he argues that 'the saints and the Mother of God draw on the intimate histories of relationships within family worlds'. These relationships then constitute the bonds between 'heaven and earth... at the most intimate levels of experience' (2005, p. 13), and are the way in which humans localize themselves in relation to the infinite, in turn producing a deep sense of belonging. God then becomes the father in a very 'real' manner, and one's brothers and sisters both embodied and transfigured at the same time. Elaborating on how family networks constitute basis for imagining God as fathers or mothers, Tweed emphasizes how metaphors serve to propel 'users between cognitive and emotional domains', arguing that this 'cognitive-affective fluidity, or metaphor domain crossing, is one of the important sources of cultural creativity and religious innovation' (2006, p. 96). This firmly establishes the embodied character of the human being, and in the case of gods and kinship, the cognitive-affective fluidity reciprocally reinforces its powerful potential.

The home as an intimate site for belonging is the primary point of departure for the construction of imagined space and ultimate belonging. As a place where stories are told, rituals performed, and artefacts displayed, it provides the tools for localization and grants the individual the possibility to transcend boundaries of time and space. This is continued within spaces such as churches, mosques, and shrines. They are places that have their real histories, built by certain people – often genealogically linked to those in the present – at a particular defined time, yet are also associated with infinite time and space. Shrines are, as noted, dedicated to a historical person imagined as a saint, and nearly all Christian Orthodox churches in Ethiopia are named after and devoted to a particular saint, such as St. Michael, St. George, or St. Gabriel. As such, they 'incorporate and radiate divine power' (Schielke and Staath 2008, p. 7), and are spaces that transgress 'real history' by being representations of an infinite presence. Shrines, moreover, are concrete places, which, analogous to Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the one element producing

expectations of what is beyond, form part of a geography that is material and imagined at the same time, as eloquently demonstrated in Ishihara Minako's study about shrine connections and saint-itineraries in southeastern Ethiopia (Ishihara 2013). While remaining physical places *and* places produced by the infusion of *baraka* – infinite power – they enable the individual to merge his or her immediate history with a distant past, and moreover, to localize himself or herself in relation to the future. A particularly interesting feature of southeastern Ethiopia has been the existence of numerous shrines associated with – and venerated – by particular clans. In some cases, these shrines were ascribed to the ancestor of the clan, while in other cases attributed to individuals who brought Islam to that particular clan. Hardly would any believer imagine that their church or mosque would ever be gone; they will exist as representations of a future that is made manageable, comprehended, and brought within reach. Bridging the infinite and finite worlds, these venues 'mediate devotee's experiences and representations of time' (Tweed 2006, p. 93). Religion is thus, according to Vásquez (2011, p. 286), 'not only locative and translocative, but also supralocative, capable of expressing transcendence, absolute space, in the midst of spaces of everyday life'. While religion can create continuum between past, present, and future, it is important to emphasize that religion is about the present. It helps people to approach and deal with a distant past and an open-ended future in the immediacy of daily life, making the process of localization in this ultimate sense about bringing the infinite within reach (cf. Engelke 2007). Reverence for ancestors is about including them in a finite reality, and worship of gods is extensively about the here and now; mediating distance and time by ways of bringing the most distant horizon near (Latour 2005).

Similar to ethnicity, religion's powerful potential is played out in so-called religious conflicts, which more accurately should be depicted as conflicts between different embodied religious groups. Hardly any such conflicts are about correct doctrines or practices in a narrow sense. In a context like Ethiopia, where ethnic and religious boundaries often overlap, it becomes overtly difficult to define conflicts as being either ethnic or religious. When the Oromo took up arms against the state during the 1960s and 1970s, and referred to themselves as *Islaama*, it did not mean that they did so as solely members of a religious group, or that they were fighting for a particular religious tradition. And neither did their labelling of the Amhara – their enemy – as Christian mean that the struggle was aimed at encumbering the other's religion. Rather, it was against a group of people who they viewed as intruders, who had stolen their land, and who they saw as enforcing a foreign way of life upon them. The Amhara, on the other side, as representing the political elite viewed the *Islaama* as inferior, both ethnically and religiously. Again, the two categories are not easily distinguishable because they are part of a larger collective efforts to be located and localize. In this case, the ruling Amhara elite's attitudes were a complex product of a self-image as culturally superior and the imagination of Ethiopia as a Christian nation, a homeland for Christians. While it is clear that the religious fault-line shaped over centuries added to the antagonistic relationship between Christians and Muslims, the fact that the insurgents were both Oromo and Muslims mutually reinforced negative attitudes and exacerbated tensions. What is at stake is that when a conflict like this is based upon ethnic or religious references, such references touch upon very deep affective points of orientation – the reciprocal continuum between the embodied and emplaced nature of membership in a religious and/or an ethnic group and that of belonging. Attacks upon an

ethnic or religious group are thus extrapolated as attacks on one's family and immediate kin, and on one's home. Surely, the conflict in Bale was related to taxation and land-rights, but as it was ethnically and religiously demarcated and embodied, it attained a profound dimension related to immediate and ultimate belonging.

29.6 Conclusion

In an effort to rein in more radical constructivist perspectives, I have suggested an alternative integrated approach to the phenomena of ethnicity and religion. Challenging views that see them as simply or primarily cognitive, discursive, or symbolic processes, approaches that reflect a Cartesian dualism of body and mind, I have emphasized the important embodied and emplaced aspects of ethnicity and religion. I explored these aspects through the interrelated processes of being located, in the passive mode, and localizing in an active mode. As the former is about the inescapable materiality of human existence – our nature as embodied and emplaced beings – it constitutes the point of departure for the latter mode. I have argued that the concreteness of being-in-the-world among proximal others and the powerful tropes of belonging generated and extended from these primary experiences are reciprocally interlinked. Imaginations are not dissociated or disembodied abstractions made by the disembodied mind. I have moreover used the concepts of family and home as metaphors of the embodied and emplaced dimensions of ethnicity and religion, pointing to their primary character, arguing that this relates to belonging. Belonging is inherently relational and situated, and is real in the sense of being embodied and material, while, at the same time, producing continuity across finite and infinite time and space. The end result is that ethnic and religious identities are intertwined, and that they have the potential of being foundational and powerful dimensions of human reality.

These suggestions are meant as reflections about some of the fundamental aspects of identity formation in general, and of ethnic and religious identities in particular, which always needs to be historicized and contextualized. There are obviously significant differences in ways ethnicity and religion appear as points of orientation in human lives, as well as with regard to their potential. Furthermore, the roles of ethnicity and religion as markers of identity, as demarcating boundaries, and as producing conflicts are never static, but subject to constant alterations. This has been clearly noticeable in the usage of the term *Islaama*, which now is both surpassed by the word Oromo, as well as by a more explicit distinction between being Oromo and Muslim. While this is a result of the politicization of ethnicity both by the OLF and the current regime's shift to ethnic federalism, it is also brought by a process of secularization. One of my informants expressed this in the following way: 'Islam is my private religion, and being Oromo is for anyone... a private religion means that religion is a right, it is a choice. But my nation [ethnicity] is Oromo, that is why I am born to be, I cannot change that'. While this statement demonstrates the shifting, multi-layered nature of identity, it would be unproductive to read it through an excessively constructionist lens. Even if the informant indicates that religious identity has become individualized – something which was a product of broader

collective religious developments – it points to the dynamics of localization; to being born in a particular place. While state and globalization-driven processes such as secularization surely shape religious and ethnic identities, religion and ethnicity continues to refer to embodied and emplaced, related to primary relations and spaces. There is much work to be done on how the relations between ethnicity and religion are played out in different contexts, and I hope and believe that these reflections can serve as a fruitful point of departure for further empirical investigations.

Notes

- 1 This was during the Imperial Government of Haile Selassie in the 1960s, and the public schools were also closely attached to Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
- 2 Arguably, the most powerful expressions of this understanding in religious studies are the idea of the holy (Otto 1958) and the sacred (Eliade 1959).
- 3 Barth also refers to ethnic identities through terms such as 'absolute' and 'comprehensive', and claims that it is 'superordinate to most other statuses' (Barth 1969, p. 17).
- 4 There is a growing literature on the concept of embodiment that cannot be exhaustively be discussed here. For a good review, see Thomas J. Csordas (1994, p. 4f.)
- 5 Often the body is viewed as a tool, an agent, and as the locus for symbolic meaning. This latter aspect is found in Mary Douglas' writings which reduce the body to a 'symbol of society' (1970, p. 93), as a 'text' which can be read. Sometimes the body is understood in relation to certain spheres of human activity, such as the body and gender, the body and health, etc. The perspective on the 'multiple body' divides it into entities as the individual body, the social body, and the political body. Here again, the body is understood symbolically to represent culture, society, and structures. In addition, Michel Foucault (1979, 1980) perceives the body in relation to discursive processes of domination, and as a product of power-plays.
- 6 Bourdieu has discussed this in relation to the physical house in Kabylia, particularly the ordering of gendered space (1977, p. 89f.). For similar arrangements among the Oromo, see Marit T. Østebø (2007, p. 47).
- 7 Similar views have been forwarded by Walter Connor (1994, p. 74), by Grosby (1994), and by Ronald Cohen who talks about 'a set of descent-based cultural identifiers' (1978, p. 387).
- 8 Abbreviation for the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the major front ousting the Derg and the main competitor to OLF. TPLF became the backbone of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which gradually monopolized all political power, in turn causing the OLF to opt out of the political process and return to armed struggle.
- 9 For a broader discussion of this topic, see Schimmel (1975) and Qureshi (1962).

Works Cited

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Ammerman, N.T. (2007). Studying everyday religion: challenges for the future. In: <i>Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives</i> (ed. N.T. Ammerman),</p> | <p>219–238. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Asad, T. (1993). <i>Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in</i></p> |
|--|---|

- Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Barrett, J.L. and Keil, F.C. (1996). Conceptualizing a nonnatural entity: anthropomorphism in god concepts. *Cognitive Psychology* 31 (3): 219–247.
- Barth, F. (1969). Introduction. In: *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (ed. F. Barth), 9–38. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Bordo, S. (1998). Bringing body to theory. In: *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader* (ed. D. Welton), 84–97. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bourdieu, p. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brubaker, R. (2002). Ethnicity without groups. *Archives européennes de sociologie* 43: 163–189.
- Brubaker, R. (2004). *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burkitt, I. (1987). *Bodies of Thought*. London: Sage Publications.
- Burkitt, I. (1994). The shifting concept of the self. *History of the Human Sciences* 7 (2): 7–28.
- Cohen, R. (1978). Ethnicity: problem and focus in anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7: 379–403.
- Cohen, A.P. (1985). *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Tavistock.
- Connor, W. (1972). The politics of ethnonationalism. *Journal of International Affairs* 27 (1): 1–21.
- Connor, W. (1994). *Ethnonationalism: A Quest for Understanding*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cornell, S. (1996). The variable ties that bind: content and circumstance in ethnic processes. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19 (2): 265–289.
- Csordas, T.J. (1994). *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Day, A. (2011). *Believing in Belonging: Belief and Social Identity in the Modern World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Demerath, J.N. (2001). *Crossing the Gods: World Religions and Worldly Politics*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Doja, A. (2000). The politics of religion in the construction of identities: the Albanian situation. *Critique of Anthropology* 20 (4): 421–438.
- Douglas, M. (1970). *Natural Symbols*. London: Barry and Rockliff.
- Eliade, M. (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Engelke, M. (2007). *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Enloe, C. (1980). Religion and ethnicity. In: *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe* (ed. P.F. Sugar), 350–360. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio.
- Fernández, J.W. (1991). Introduction: confluents of inquiry. In: *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (ed. J.W. Fernández), 3–13. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: Introduction*. New York: Vintage.
- Friedrich, p. (1991). Polytypy. In: *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (ed. J.W. Fernández). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geschiere, p. (2009). *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthont, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Graham, J. and Haidt, J. (2010). Beyond beliefs: religions bind individuals into moral communities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14 (1): 140–150.
- Grosby, S. (1994). The verdict of history: the inextinguishable tie of primordiality – a response to Eller and Coughlan. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17 (1): 164–171.

- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: who needs "identity"? In: *Questions of Cultural Identity* (eds. S. Hall and p. Du Gay), 3–13. London: Sage Publications.
- Handelman, D. (1977). The organization of ethnicity. *Ethnic Groups* 1: 187–200.
- Haraway, D.J. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Horowitz, D.L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ishihara, M. (2013). The formation of trans-religious pilgrimage centers in Southeast Ethiopia: Sitti Mumina and the Faraqasa connection. In: *Muslim Ethiopia: The Christian Legacy, Identity Politics, and Islamic Reformism* (eds. T. Østebø and p. Desplat), 91–114. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Jenkins, R. (2008). *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*. London: Sage Publications.
- King, R. (1999). *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'*. London: Routledge.
- Latour, B. (2005). Thou shall not freeze-frame – or how not to misunderstand the science and religion debate. In: *Science, Religion, and the Human Experience* (ed. J.D. Proctor), 27–48. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lyon, M.L. and Barbalet, J.M. (1994). Society's body: emotions and the "somatization" of social theory. In: *Embodiment and Experience: The Essential Ground for Culture and Self* (ed. T.J. Csordas), 48–66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCutcheon, R. (2003). *The Discipline of Religion: Structure, Meaning, Rhetoric*. London: Routledge.
- Melbaa, G. (1988). *Oromiya: An Introduction*. Khartoum: Kirk House Publishing.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The Phenomenology of Perception: An Introduction*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Michael, M. (2008). Who is Amhara? *African Identities* 6 (4): 393–404.
- Nash, M. (1988). *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Neisser, U. (1988). Five kinds of self-knowledge. *Philosophical Psychology* 1 (1): 35–59.
- Orsi, R.A. (2005). *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Østebø, T. (2012). *Localising Salafism: Religious Change among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia*. Leiden: Brill.
- Østebø Tolo, M. (2007). Respected women: a study of Wayyyuu and its implications for women's sexual rights among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia. MA thesis. University of Bergen, Centre for International Health.
- Otto, R. (1958). *The Idea of the Holy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Qureshi, I.H. (1962). *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistani Subcontinent, 610–1947*.
- Ruane, J. and Todd, J. (2003). The roots of intense ethnic conflicts may not in fact be ethnic: categories, communities and path dependence. ISSC Discussion Papers Series, Institute for the Study of Social Change.
- Schielke, S. and Stauth, G. (2008). Introduction. In: *Dimensions of Locality: Muslim Saints, their Place and Space* (eds. S. Schielke and G. Stauth), 7–21. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.
- Schimmel, A. (1975). Turk and Hindu: a poetical image and its application to historical facts. In: *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages* (ed. V. Speros Jr.), 107–126. Wiesbaden: Undena Publications.
- Schlee, G. (1994). Ethnicity emblems, diacritical features, identity markers. In: *A River of Blessing: Essays in Honor of Paul*

- Baxter (ed. D. Brokensha), 129–143. New York: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.
- Schlee, G. and Shongolo, A.A. (1995). Local war and its impact on ethnic and religious identification in southern Ethiopia. *Geojournal* 36 (1): 7–17.
- Schutz, A. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Seul, J.R. (1999). Ours is the way of god: religion, identity, and intergroup conflict. *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (5): 553–569.
- Spencer, S. and Taylor, G. (2004). *Social Identities: Multidisciplinary Approaches*. New York: Routledge.
- Tareke, G. (1991). *Power and Protest: Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Teka, T. (1998). Amhara ethnicity in the making. In: *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa* (eds. M.A. Mohammed Salih and J. Markakis), 116–126. Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Tuan, Y.-F. (1974). *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Tweed, T.A. (2006). *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vásquez, M. (2011). *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

CHAPTER 30

Never Again

Religion, Commodities, and the State

Kevin Lewis O'Neill

Each set of volumes is really quite heavy. The first set, published in 1999 by the Commission for Historical Clarification, comprises 12 hardbound volumes (CEH 1999). The second set, published in 1998 by the Recovery of Historical Memory Project, has four hardbound volumes (REMHI 1998). Their physical density, their weight, has everything to do with their production. Thick boards, covered in cloth, frame thousands of pages of acid-free paper. Even the thinnest of volumes weighs more than a pound. They have been built to last. And as with other kinds of monuments, such as war memorials and commemorative statues, both sets are also meant to be looked at and gestured towards rather than passed around. Neither portable nor fleeting, their monumentality apprehends (in an effort to control) both the past and the future. Their brute existence, their materiality, makes this happen.

Both sets of volumes form truth commission reports that document Guatemala's civil war (1960–1996). This was a genocidal conflict that placed the country's indigenous population between a militarized government and counterinsurgent guerrilla forces for decades. By the end of the conflict, an estimated 200,000 Guatemalans had been murdered, 50,000 disappeared, and 1 million displaced out of the country's total population of 8 million. The first and much larger set of volumes is entitled *A Memory of Silence* (CEH 1999). The second set, published by the Roman Catholic Church, is entitled *Guatemala, Never Again* (REMHI 1998). Both commissions rightly lay blame at the feet of the state. *A Memory of Silence* reports that 93% of all human rights violations can be connected to the Guatemalan state. *Never Again* reports that 90% of the perpetrators were members of Guatemala's Armed Forces or the army-commissioned Civil Defence Patrols. Mass graves dot the country's rural interior, painting a grim picture of state violence (Sanford 2003, 2012).

Thick literatures address the history and political economy of reconciliation processes and reports (Coombes 2003; Grandin and Klublock 2007; Theidon 2004). These reports form a genre of representation that has become increasingly popular the world over (similar truth commissions have been formed in countries from Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile to Sri Lanka, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe). There is also a great deal of research on Guatemala's genocidal civil war (Green 1999; Stoll 1993) and its postwar context (Nelson 1999, 2009; O'Neill and Thomas 2011), even its truth commission reports (Oglesby 2007; O'Neill 2005). Yet, this chapter lingers on the materiality of these two sets of volumes – on the books themselves – to understand a knotted relationship between religion, commodities, and the state, namely how the commodification of memory through Christian techniques of representation both indemnifies and yet also relieves the Guatemalan state of postwar responsibilities (Bevernage 2013; Bilbija and Payne 2011). It is an analysis that shuttles between two very different approaches to materialism and yet stays focused on a rather qualified sense of religion.¹

30.1 Materialism and Religion

The first sense of materialism at work in this chapter is that of artefacts, or stuff. Both sets of truth commission reports are modes of material culture. They are things (Brown 2001; Houtman and Meyer 2012) – in the sense, as explained below, that they stand out amid a world of mere objects, to employ the philosophical coordinates of Martin Heidegger (1971). They constitute a break in everyday life, forcing the subject to situate him or herself differently in the world. These truth commission reports announce and denounce the tortured history of Guatemala's genocidal civil war both through their content but also through their very existence. Of particular importance here is the possibility that these things not only have a social life – that is, 'the concrete, historical circulation of things' (Appadurai 1988) – but also agency.

The agency of things refers, in part, to the ability of material culture to act on this world. This idea remains unintuitive largely because of a prevailing dualism that disaggregates subject from object. The guiltiest purveyor of this separation might very well be Émile Durkheim and his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Beyond his divisions between the sacred and the profane as well as between belief and rites, Durkheim maintains a strong separation between objects, such as the totem, and agents, such as the individual or even the collective. For Durkheim, the totem represents society and collective effervescence enacts the sacred. The object itself is simply a vessel. The totem is never an actor. It does nothing. 'Now the primitive thinks like a child', Durkheim writes condescendingly, 'Consequently, he also is inclined to endow all things even inanimate ones, with a nature analogous to his own' (1915, p. 53). Yet objects themselves can carry a kind of charisma. The type of social actors at work, argues Bruno Latour (2005, p. 64), should include things. He continues, 'Objects by the very nature of their connections with humans, quickly shift from being mediators to being intermediaries, counting for one or nothing, no matter how internally complicated they might be' (Latour 2005, p. 79). Things, in this sense, can have an effect on, even an affect in, the world. These two sets of truth commission volumes are material artefacts – they are

things – that have agency. These texts do things in this world and to this world, in that they do not simply represent history but also can perform a kind of justice through their very materiality. It is, of course, the unintended consequences of these texts and their monumentality that are of ultimate interest here.

The second sense of materialism at work on this chapter is that of Marxism, or a materialist conception of history. Central here is an understanding of capitalism as an historical epoch, one in which men and women rarely control the means of production but rather sell their labour to work yet another day. Embedded within this philosophy is a notion of the commodity, which is anything produced by human labour and then bought, sold, or exchanged in a market. Characteristic to the commodity, says Marx, is its value (the labour that went into making the commodity), its use value (what need the commodity satisfies), and its exchange value (for what the commodity can be traded). One classic problem for Marx is when a commodity becomes a fetish – when, for example, the market becomes a series of relationships between exchange values rather than value itself. When this happens, the very value of labour disappears. The price of objects eclipses labour and social relationships no longer hold between workers but rather between objects.

This wrinkle is what often drives Marx's conception of the commodity past the functional and onto the metaphysical, maybe even the theological. Marx writes, 'A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' (1887, cited in Ralph 2009, p. 78). It is this ambivalence, the undetermined nature of the commodity, that ultimately allows for such millennial interpretations of capitalism. The commodity does not just become a fetish but also the answer, the solution, to society's biggest problems. To read these truth commission reports as not just things but also commodities and to place them within this materialist frame is to re-read Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff's notion of millennial capitalism: 'a capitalism that presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered' (2000, p. 291). Can these truth commission reports also be read as endowed with the same salvific promise? The truth of Guatemala's history, this chapter ultimately argues, has a value (people made it), a use value (people need it), and an exchange value (people will trade for it). The question is whether the global free market has fetishized the truth of Guatemala's genocidal history.

Underlying both senses of the material here is a very particular approach to religion, one that draws explicitly from the study of materiality. Daniel Miller, for one, refers often to the work of Erving Goffman and Ernst Gombrich, who both write a great deal about frames, framing, and frame analysis. Goffman is interested in the context of action. 'I assume', he writes, 'that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify' (1974, p. 10f.). Gombrich, an art historian, thinks about actual frames set atop and around actual art (1994). When it comes to materiality, Miller argues (2010, p. 50), braiding Goffman and Gombrich, 'the less we are aware of [the frame], the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene'. This chapter

takes religion to be a set of tropes, discourses, and practices that 'determine our expectations by setting the scene'. In the case of these two sets of volumes, with a particular interest in their materiality, this means foregrounding how Christian tropes frame these two truth commission reports.

The section below titled 'The Good Book' addresses the Christian assumptions and missionary histories that encourage truth to take the physical form of a book. The next two sections focus on content. 'The Passion of Guatemala' assesses the framing decisions that enable one truth commission report to parallel Guatemala's civil war with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. 'Testimonio' explores the Protestant normativity that places the testifying survivor at the centre of both truth commission reports. And the final section, titled 'Global Fetish', considers the millennial capitalism that allows the materiality of this truth to facilitate Guatemala's postwar foray into the global free market. Yet before all of these sections, this chapter must begin, as do most approaches to materialism, with history.

30.2 The Civil War

Guatemala's civil war began after the failure of a nationalist uprising by military officers in 1960. It formally ended on 29 December 1996, with the signing of a peace agreement between the military and counterinsurgent forces in Guatemala City. The roots of the war, however, took hold in 1954 with a US-backed coup of the then-democratically elected government. President Jacobo Arbenz's practice of land redistribution – accentuated by the Cold War's fear of communism – threatened the United Fruit Company, a US-based corporation and Guatemala's biggest landowner (Schirmer 1998; Schlesinger and Kinzer 2006). Following the coup, Guatemala's government became increasingly militarized while other Ladinos (non-indigenous Guatemalans) formed popular movements rooted in the ideologies of Marxism and liberation theology that eventually gave rise to insurgent guerrilla forces. The struggle between the government and the guerrillas was at first articulated through the language of class conflict. In the 1960s, however, Ladinos became interested in strengthening their forces by incorporating indigenous communities, historically excluded by the Ladino minority. The expansion ultimately led to an ethnic analysis of Guatemala's struggle over freedom of organization, land rights, and democracy.

The government's response to these demands by Ladino-led indigenous movements throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s was absolutely brutal, especially between 1978 and 1982. Large-scale massacres, scorched earth tactics, and massive acts of disappearances and displacements aimed at annihilating Guatemala's Mayan population riddled the country with what would later be understood as acts of genocide (Grandin 2004; Manz 1988). Global awareness of such systematic, large-scale human rights violations forced the Guatemalan government by the mid-1980s to adjust its tactics in order to continue receiving international aid. Under the protective umbrella of general amnesty and impunity, civilian rule slowly began to shape the agenda alongside the military, while human rights abuses increased and went unpunished. Guatemala's peace process, however, slowly began in 1986, amidst political unrest, with a series of

talks and accords that ultimately led to a United Nations-mediated peace process (1994–1996) and, as is the focus of this project, to the writing of two truth commission reports (Fischer and Brown 1996; Warren 1998).

The Oslo Accord, signed in 1994 as part of the United Nations peace process, initiated the Historical Clarification Commission (CEH), a project created to investigate human rights violations and to make recommendations on how to promote peace in postwar Guatemala. The Roman Catholic Church, motivated by the CEH, initiated its own Recovery of the Historical Memory Project (REMHI), a faith-based truth and reconciliation commission that sought to establish the history of Guatemala's civil conflict and to serve as a basis for justice and national reconciliation. The two distinct projects developed strikingly similar reports. According to the former, more than 200,000 people died or disappeared as a result of the armed conflict, of which more than 80% were indigenous. The Catholic Church, similarly, asserts that 150,000 civilians were killed, that another 50,000 disappeared. Both reports agree that roughly 1 million people were displaced during the country's civil conflict and that members of indigenous groups were 'systematically killed, [were the victims of] serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately subjected to living conditions calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction' (CEH 1999, 2, p. 38). In light of the United Nations Genocide Convention, both reports establish that the Guatemalan state committed acts of genocide against Mayan people from 1978 to 1985.

30.3 The Good Book

The kind of storytelling and memory making enacted through truth commission reports is defined in part by its physicality. The literal weightiness of each collection adds to its metaphorical gravitas, with the producers of such texts making full use of the books themselves to tell their stories. These reports are hardbound, often embossed with stately script. The colours chosen to bind the reports are often muted and damp, in dark blues and greens. They appear comprehensive, and their principal analogue is the encyclopaedia. The truth commission report, in fact, as a technique of representation, relies on the coordination of text and context to make truth. It must do this, if only because a large portion of Guatemala's population is illiterate. Guatemala's literacy rate is second lowest in the Latin American and Caribbean region, with nearly half of the country's poorest citizens unable to read (UNESCO 2012).

The fact is that most Guatemalans have never and most likely will never read these books. To the men and women from the rural communities that suffered the most at the hands of the military, these truth commission reports perform truth through their materiality rather than through their content. Their efficacy lies in their existence rather than their context. Or, as Catherine Bell writes about the ritualization of the text, 'Viewed simply as conceptual representations or formulations of their milieu, many aspects of texts are lost to us' (1988, p. 368). She continues, 'We can lose the whole dimension of the textual medium itself. That is, the use of a textual medium and a specific textual format to communicate are taken for granted, even though these aspects have a profound effect on the message being formulated, communicated, and

understood' (1988, p. 368). We must consider the materiality of the book as part of the medium – to consider why truth needs to exist in the form of a book. And her point is well taken, if only because 'by viewing the text as an entity that merely expresses a particular perspective on its time, we may miss how the text is an actor in those times. The tangible presence of the text may go unnoticed when we objectively regard it as a historical document, and we may forget to ask about the subjective perceptions and situations that would produce and deploy such objects within a set of social relationships' (1988, p. 368). The question Bell helps to raise, for this conversation, is why the truth of Guatemala's genocidal civil war must come in the form of a book (see Keane 2007, p. 20).

Part of the answer begins with Guatemala but extends towards a cosmopolitan network of human rights activists that fight for justice in Guatemala as elsewhere (Balibar 2004). Mapping the proliferation of truth commission reports begins to flag the kind of expertise that circles the globe, hopping from one war-torn country to the next. The end product of these efforts is often a report, policy, or book. The liberal assumptions at play here cannot be overemphasized (Mamdani 2008). Yet the Christian genealogy of the book in Guatemala is also key, invoking the country's history with missionary Christianity and its efforts to link the book to notions of progress.

This genealogy of progress peaks in the nineteenth century, during Guatemala's liberalization period. In this era, President Justo Rufino Barrios studied the works of Auguste Comte, who was one of the first to argue that society matures much like an organism and that not all societies have developed along the same timeline (Garrard-Burnett 1998). Comte's biologically-inspired argument was often read in light of Darwin. Different parts of the world, Comte reasoned, are at different stages of development. France was not only more advanced than Guatemala but elite Guatemalans were also more advanced than their indigenous counterparts. Barrios, as did so many other liberal leaders throughout Latin America, saw Protestant Christianity as a means 'to create a modern, unified nation from a mix of ethnicities, languages, classes, customs, and conflicting bonds of loyalty and association' (Garrard-Burnett 1997, p. 35). Protestantism was a means to an end for an elite that had already passed out of religiosity and into the bright light of science.

Relatedly, Comte concluded that individuals pass through three stages of development and that each of these stages has a distinct mindset (1988). Children are devout, even magical, believers. Adolescents become metaphysicians; they are enamoured with fate and first causes. Adults, however, are positivists. They rely on science and reason. Societies, Comte then leaps, follow the very same stages of development, constantly moving upwards and outwards – away from childish magic and adolescent metaphysics and towards a mature realism. Understanding Guatemala's fragmented society as literally at different stages of development, again with the indigenous yet childlike and the elite mature adults, Barrios hoped that Protestant Christianity would propel his countrymen beyond indigenous spirituality and Roman Catholicism and towards liberal secularism (Garrard-Burnett 1997). But Barrios did not want his country to be Protestant, *per se*. He wanted to have Protestant Christianity provide his citizens with enough forward momentum to surpass magic and with enough force so as to slingshot them beyond religion altogether.

Protestant efforts to indoctrinate Guatemala's indigenous with Christian modes of piety subtend the liberal era. Central to these efforts were Bible literacy programs that coordinated Protestant education with a disdain for Roman Catholic ritualism. During this era, the book and one's ability to read a book took hold at the intersection of salvation and secularism. In one very real way, Guatemala's elites as well as its growing Protestant population understood that the truth (of the Book) could set Guatemala free. For the book no longer mediated God, as it did during Roman Catholic liturgy, but rather empowered the believer to connect directly with God. This rugged individualism marked a step towards development, in the eyes of Barrios. This was because the book was the very vessel (and oftentimes agent) of progress.

Edward Haymaker, Guatemala's second Protestant missionary, arrived in 1887 with a set goal: 'When the people of Guatemala begin to develop [the country] along modern lines, when they learn sanitation, motherhood, education, thrift... Guatemala will be one of the greatest little countries in the world' (Garrard-Burnett 1997, p. 41). Identifying the rural poor as 'The Great Unwashed', Haymaker published Christian pamphlets on health and hygiene, all for Guatemala's salvation and development. The two goals were hardly distinct. Again, in the 1880s, President Justo Rufino Barrios injected Protestant Christianity into the Guatemalan context to bolster efforts at liberalization. Protestant Christianity would 'civilize' Guatemala by undercutting Roman Catholicism and indigenous spirituality while also contributing to the country's own efforts at industrialization, not only with a 'Protestant work ethic' and a more hospitable atmosphere for German and North American Protestants interested in business opportunities, but also the ability to read books.

Central to this modernization fantasy was, and still is, a vision of the book as a tool that might help not just people but also whole populations push past magic and religion to stake its claim on science and democracy. Books, especially the Good Book, became an artefact, a technique of representation as well as an agent that could advance Guatemala from one stage of development to another. Foregrounding this history of the book in Guatemala as well as other parts of Latin America highlights the centrality of things and how things shift, in the words of Latour, 'from being mediators to being intermediaries'. This last point may carry more weight even than Latour intended. For to understand the book as an intermediary is to see the book as a thing that connects people as well as a thing that seeks an agreement or reconciliation. From Latour's perspective, from the perspective of a certain kind of materiality, the truth commission reports are agents positioned between missionary efforts and secularization fantasies.

30.4 The Passion of Guatemala

And yet the book also speaks. These truth commission reports tell a particular kind of truth; they deliver a particular set of stories. Both truth commission reports set out to advance Guatemala past its genocidal past and towards a possibly redemptive future. One point to note is that with truth commission reports (not unlike the Bible itself), authorship is varied. The bureaucratic nature of truth commissions results in a snaking list of directors, council members, and coordinators of local, non-local, and semi-local

backgrounds. These are lists that tend to elide the authorial contributions made by field liaisons, interpreters, analysts, informants, clergy, theologians, data processors, editors, government officials, and philanthropists, all of whom come from multiple subject positions of varying degrees of locality (Hinton and O'Neill 2009).

Of interest is that this yawning network came together, at least in the case of the Roman Catholic Church's report, to weave Guatemala's tortured history through Christ's passion narrative, making Christ's crucifixion Guatemala's crucifixion (Peterson 1996; O'Neill 2005). Bishop Juan Gerardi, a church leader and human rights activist, was beaten to death only one day after the report's release (Goldman 2007). The day before his murder, however, he announced to a crowded cathedral, 'The thousands of testimonies of the victims and the recounting of the horrific crimes are today's manifestations of the figure of the suffering servant of Yahweh, brought to life in the people of Guatemala. "Behold my servant," says Isaiah, "...many were afraid of him. He was so disfigured he was beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of sons of man. He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted' (REMHI 1998, 1, p. xxv; cf. Isaiah 53). Gerardi's remarks represent only a small moment in a larger postwar narrative, one that reads the suffering of a tortured country as a promise for an eventual resurrection. The Church's report notes, 'Despite the profound sorrow with which we have heard these testimonies of human suffering, the memory and image of Christ crucified anew, we can do no less than hope that by renouncing this dark past of horror, and with our determination to rebuild our country, a new climate of hope will emerge' (REMHI 1998, 1, p. xxix). Guatemala suffered, died, and was buried.

This passion lay inside each of the report's testimonies. While not every testimony published in the Church's report involves Christian images (the Church itself acknowledges that only 9% of testimonies collected make biblical references: REMHI 1998, 1, p. 277), the report's testimonies nonetheless deliver powerful examples of Christ's passion. They provide an interpretative framework for both survivors and perpetrators. Two such testimonies begin to animate this point. The first makes direct reference to the crucifix. A survivor testifies, 'What we have seen has been terrible: burned corpses, women impaled and buried as if they were animals ready for the spit, all doubled up, and children massacred and carved up with machetes. The women too, murdered like Christ' (REMHI 1999, pp. 9–10). Another survivor returns the reader to the cross: 'Before murdering her, they nailed her to a cross they had made. They stuck huge nails into her hands and chest, then they put her inside the house to burn her up. They found her burned, still on the cross; her son was beside her, also burned – badly burned' (REMHI 1999, p. 79). This is the passion of Guatemala.

The use of such graphic testimonies yields the question of whose body is suffering (cf. Scarry 1987). The report's explicit Catholic grammar provides a clear answer. The body in pain is the suffering body of Jesus Christ, whose inevitable resurrection infuses Guatemala's genocidal past with the promise of a peaceful future. Here, Christ's passion becomes axiomatic, providing both order and meaning to the seeming disorder of war-time Guatemala. The critically acclaimed photographer Jonathan Moller, a North American artist who has documented Guatemala's post-genocidal context, both captures and participates in this framing, delivering a photograph that resonates with these

testimonies. This image is of a crucifix from a church in *San Juan Cotzali*, a small town hit hard during the genocide. Jesus hangs both broken and hobbled on his cross while dozens of names surround him. Each name marks someone murdered during the civil war. And, above this display, there reads simply but powerfully, 'And they gave their lives like Christ'. Moller's work (2004) embodies the Church's own reading of Guatemala's genocide.

Another powerful passion narrative builds on the rhetorical force of *Nunca más*. It is the spiritual biography of Dianna Ortiz (2004). Ortiz is an Ursuline missionary from the United States who was kidnapped in 1989 by Guatemalan security forces operating under the direction of a US official. Blindfolded, burned with cigarettes 111 times, and gang raped – impregnated with a foetus she eventually aborted – Ortiz was filmed by her torturers, allowing the photographic gaze, as per Judith Butler (2007), to become a part of the torture. By way of the camera, they made Ortiz's clandestine torture chamber public. Guatemalan security forces intensified Ortiz's humiliation by prompting her to consider those who might one day view her anguish. Her family? Her friends? Her sisters in Christ? 'Well, you know, we have the photos of you, and the videos', Ortiz's captor told her. 'Those could be embarrassing' (Ortiz 2004, p. 33). These perverted promises kept her silent for years. She eventually wrote a memoir, a stirring spiritual biography that can be read in lockstep with Christ's own passion and resurrection. As Ortiz writes, her pain is Christ's pain; his resurrection is her resurrection. 'Jesus also was tortured, and he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When I was first taken down into the basement of that building in Guatemala I asked myself the same question – why had God abandoned me?' (Ortiz 2004, p. 132).

Through similar testimonies, the Catholic Church establishes seemingly unambiguous relationships between images found within the passion narratives and the suffering of Guatemala's population. One survivor notes:

There he took me to another door, and there were planks along the top of that doorway. Have you seen the crucifixion? Well here, very nearly, was Jesus Christ; there was a man, there was half a man – the most horrendous thing I have ever seen – a man totally disfigured. He already had worms, he had no teeth, no hair, his face was disfigured, he was hanging, I mean by his hands. Right then, someone from the Judicial arrived. He was carrying a tiny scythe, a small one, like for cutting coffee. It was red hot, and he grabbed the penis and cut it off. That guy let out a scream that I have never forgotten, a terrible scream, so horrifying that for many years I remembered that scream. (REMHI 1998, 2, p. 61)

Considering that the Catholic Church selected and published only a fraction of its collected testimonies, it is important to ask: what do these testimonies reveal about the Catholic Church's conceptual orientation that ultimately contributes to its representation of Guatemala's genocide? Its report itself provides an answer, in the following quote:

This [report] is a pastoral approach. It is working with the light of faith to discover the face of God, the presence of the Lord. In all of these events it is God who is speaking to us. We are called to reconciliation. Christ's mission is one of reconciliation. His presence calls us to be agents of reconciliation in this broken society and to try and to place the victims and the

perpetrators within the framework of justice. People have died for their beliefs. Killers were often used as instruments. Conversion is necessary, and it is up to us to open spaces to bring about conversion. It is not enough simply to accept facts. It is necessary to reflect on them and to recover lost values. (REMHI 1999, p. xxiii)

Testimonies of the suffering body evidence the report's reliance on a Christian imagination that stresses similitude between the suffering of this world and the suffering of Jesus Christ. As a result, the Church's report tends to read Guatemala's genocidal history into a Christian sacrament, into 'the face of God' who 'is speaking to us'. Given the tendency of historiography to turn epistemic ambiguities into linear stories, it becomes clear that Christian tropes of suffering help to frame, in sometimes loud but otherwise opaque ways, the writing of Guatemala's genocide. The passion narrative, for one, provides Guatemala's civil war and its genocidal moments with a clear beginning, an obvious end, and, most importantly, the promise of eventual resurrection. And at the centre of these passionate books sits the Protestant subject, ready to testify the truth.

30.5 Testimonio

The mandate to *A Memory of Silence* is 'to clarify with objectivity, equity, and impartiality the human rights violations and acts of violence connected with the armed confrontation that caused suffering among the Guatemalan people' (CEH 1999, 1, p. 42). The report aims

to provide answers to questions that continue to be asked in peacetime: why did part of society resort to armed violence in order to achieve political power? What can explain the extreme acts of violence committed by both parties – of differing types and intensities – in the armed confrontation? Why did these acts of outrageous brutality, which showed no respect for the most basic rules of humanitarian law, Christian ethics and the values of Mayan spirituality, take place? (CEH 1999, 1, p. 16)

In search of answers, *A Memory of Silence* represents Guatemala's genocide through the very same techniques of historiography that the Catholic Church employs: first-person testimonies, statistical analysis, charts, graphs, case studies, and historical periodization. Close textual analysis suggests that Christian concepts, rhetoric, and images also shape *A Memory of Silence*'s representation of Guatemala's genocide. More specifically, the report's reliance on a sovereign, testifying individual who works towards reconciliation by giving truthful witness resonates well with Protestant notions of the sovereign individual.

Scholarship on the Christian dimensions of secular discourses lays the foundation for this part of this analysis; these works establish some of the many ways in which Christianity plays a positive, constructive role in the formation of secular theories and histories. John Milbank, for one, convincingly argues that 'all the most governing assumptions of [modern social] theory are bound up with the modification or the rejection of orthodox Christian positions' (1993, p. 1). David Nicholls, in a proximate project,

asserts that 'images and concepts of [a Christian] God have been related to political rhetoric (and thereby to social structures and dynamics) at specific periods of history and in particular cultural contexts' (1995, p. 190). Moreover, Talal Asad writes, 'As a result of developments in Higher Criticism, a problem of Christian theology has virtually evaporated, but some of the ideas generated to address it remain in secular disciplines, formed in pursuit of a new universality' (1993, pp. 20–21).

Yet, Asad offers an important warning against the idea that 'if one stripped appearances one would see that some apparently secular institutions were really religious' (2003, p. 25). This approach, Asad explains, is too facile and does not recognize that the secular is the product of both religious and non-religious discourses. While the Christian is present and operative within the secular, the secular is not entirely Christian. Taking careful note of this qualification, the argument here is that sediments of a Protestant imagination motivate *A Memory of Silence's* representation of Guatemala's genocide. The testifying individual, in fact, sits at the centre of Protestant theology but also, here, at the centre of *A Memory of Silence*, which communicates individuality through the language of rights and dignity.

A Memory of Silence, thus, is a narrative about individuals victimized by acts and agents of genocide. The language of the text, however, creates a suspicious tension between the individual and the collective (Hinton 2002, p. 4). Consider, for example, that *A Memory of Silence* is first and foremost a representation of genocide, which is a crime understood by the United Nations' Convention on Genocide as an offence perpetrated against 'whole or part of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group' (1948, p. 1). That is, genocide is a crime against a collective but the point of departure for *A Memory of Silence* is the individual. The Catholic Church is able to sidestep this tension by framing the communal body over the individual in *Nunca más*. Why cannot *A Memory of Silence* do so?

Part of the answer to this question may be that a Protestant imagination actively governs *A Memory of Silence's* representation of genocide. Protestant theology's reliance on the individual, as many have noted, has percolated through the centuries to become a part of secular international human rights discourse. To be sure, individualism is not an exclusively Protestant concept. However, *A Memory of Silence* understands the victim as an individual in and through its reliance on international human rights discourse, which echoes a Protestant predilection away from the community and towards individualism as a human predicament. More interestingly, a sovereign individual both testifies and gives witness throughout *A Memory of Silence*. The report reads:

Testimonies of people who suffered human rights violations and violent acts constitute the primary and most relevant source of the Commission's work. The formal CEH, through several means of communication, called together all of the victims and their families without distinction so that they could contribute to its success. Their testimonies, presented under norms established by the CEH, have provided indispensable information for the investigation of each of the presented cases and, in their entirety, have meant a qualitative and statistical wealth of inestimable value for the general analysis of the established themes in the central chapters as well as contributing to the conclusions of the present report. (CEH 1999, 2, p. 53)

The theologian David Tracy writes regarding a Protestant, dialectical imagination: 'Proclamation is a classic religious expression. For the [dialectical] Christian, proclamation is experienced paradigmatically as kerygmatic address: a word of address bearing a stark and disconcerting shock of recognition of the self; a word of address with the claim of a nonviolent appeal to listen and receive its gift and demand; a questioning, provocative, promising and liberating word that the event happens now; a judging and forgiving word' (1981, p. 269). In relation to the Catholic Church's report, *A Memory of Silence*'s qualitatively different use of testimony results in a perceivably different rhetorical effect.

Testimony within *A Memory of Silence* draws lines between genocide and, in the words of the report itself, 'the most basic rules of humanitarian law, Christian ethics and the values of Mayan spirituality' (CEH 1999, 5, p. 11). This line of argumentation reflects what Tracy understands as one of a dialectical imagination's central characteristics. Take, for instance, the following two examples. One testimony reads: 'In 1964 they killed Pedro Picón in a place that they call El Socolo. He was cutting coffee. They also killed his little boy. They were saying that they killed a guerrilla. According to someone, the son of Pedro Picón, Herlindo Picón testified to the death of his father, he tried to flee but he was assassinated' (CEH 1999, 2, p. 329). Another reads: 'In Zacapa, in the waters of the Motagua River, in the jurisdiction of San Pablo, someone discovered a corpse of a man riddled with bullets, with signs that he had been tortured and with his hands tied behind his back. The corpse of Fuastino Moscoso Ruiz, who was kidnapped in Chiquimula, was found floating in the waters of the Motagua River' (CEH 1999, 2, p. 330).

A Memory of Silence in no way uses testimony to establish a relationship between the suffering of Jesus Christ and the suffering of Guatemala's population. For *A Memory of Silence*, there is nothing sacred about Guatemala's experiences with genocide or the testimonies that have been recovered. Rather, its testimonies give witness to Guatemala's genocidal past and, in turn, allows for Guatemala's genocide to be imagined through a Christian conceptual language that is much less corporeal and communal, much more individual and dialectical, than the Catholic Church's own representation of Guatemala's genocide in *Nunca más*. With David Tracy's theological models as a guide, *A Memory of Silence*'s use of testimony can in the end be read as a subtle, but real, Christian denouncement of genocide because of its reliance on testimony. Similarly, the report's insistence on reconciliation as a stated goal further brings the report's Christian sensibilities to clearer relief.

30.6 Global Fetishes

A Protestant subject (as read in *A Memory of Silence*) gives witness to Guatemala's passion (as read in *Never Again*), with each truth made material by way of the truth commission report. To what end? The stated intentions of both reports are justice and peace. They exist so that Guatemala's genocidal past will never be forgotten and never be repeated. As the church's report implores: never again. Of interest is the

context in which this materiality circulates, with all its framing devices. They have a life of their own – as these texts meet a now terrible postwar context. Postwar Guatemala is just as violent as its wartime era, even if the political coordinates have changed (Nelson 2009).

Guatemala City, in fact, is now one of Latin America's most dangerous cities. By 1999, Guatemala City's homicide rate was third only to Medellín and Bogotá, but by 2007, both Colombian cities witnessed an impressive decrease in violence while Guatemala City's homicide rates soared. As the Canadian Red Cross (2006; Amnesty International 2006) has reported, Guatemala City's number of homicides rose from 3230 in 2001 to 5338 in 2005, making the city's murder rate 109 per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2010, the rate of homicides per 100,000 of population in Guatemala City was 116. By comparison, the United States has a rate of about 5 (Restrepo and García 2011). These numbers are almost certainly light. Informal conversations with police officers and firefighters reveal that officials tend to count only certain murders, such as those of labourers as opposed to gang members. Regardless of the altogether imperfect science of tracking violence, this incredible spike in insecurity does lead to some startling calculations. Guatemala City's current murder rate is higher than the average number of Guatemalans that were killed each year as a result of the country's genocidal civil war (Painter 2007).

A number of factors contribute to this postwar violence. These include transnational street gangs, organized crime, and a multibillion dollar drug trade as well as a rather weak postwar state and even weaker judicial system. Only 2% of homicides in postwar Guatemala result in a conviction (Painter 2007). The sheer amount of postwar violence raises the frustrating question, how *post* is postwar Guatemala?

The quick answer to this question is, 'not very'. The violence suggests as much. Yet it is the production of this postness by way of truth commission reports that allows a range of figures to announce in seemingly unproblematic ways that war-time violence is a thing of the past, even when the streets have become riddled with warlike violence. Still key here is the materiality of these truth commission reports. Framed by subtle yet significant Christian techniques of representation – the book, the passion, the witness – the truth of wartime Guatemala has acquired a value (people made it), a use value (people need it), and an exchange value (people have come to trade for it). When technicians of memory render a history material, when they make it not only a thing but also a commodity, they allow this memory to become an intermediary, to acquire a certain degree of agency. The agency acquired by this truth, by this thing, is the very real sense that Guatemala's genocidal civil war is a thing of the past and that these commissions physically mark the line between the past and the future.

A coping mechanism, perhaps, but the millennial optimism that accompanies this commodity should waver more than it does as postwar Guatemala continues to position itself as a site for foreign investment. For in the states' efforts to perform the truth of its past, there emerges a kind of fetish that establishes a series of relationships between exchange values rather than value itself. The very labour that produced this truth – this materiality – has disappeared.

Note

- 1 Revised, repositioned, and repurposed for this chapter, some of the details here have been explored in greater detail elsewhere (see O'Neill 2005, 2010, 2012).

Works Cited

- Amnesty International (2006). Guatemala: no protection, no justice: killings of women in Guatemala. Amnesty International: Working to Protect Human Rights Worldwide 34, no. 19.
- Appadurai, A. (ed.) (1988). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Asad, T. (1993). *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Asad, T. (2003). *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Balibar, É. (2004). *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. (trans. J. Swenson). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bell, C. (1988). Ritualization of texts and textualization of ritual in the codification of Taoist liturgy. *History of Religions* 27 (4): 366–392.
- Bevernage, B. (2013). *History, Memory, and State-Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice*. London: Routledge.
- Bilbija, K. and Payne, L.A. (eds.) (2011). *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Brown, B. (2001). Thing theory. *Critical Inquiry* 28 (1): 1–22.
- Butler, J. (2007). Torture and the ethics of photography. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (6): 951–966.
- Canadian Red Cross (2006). Facts and figures: Guatemala 2005.
- CEH (1999). Memoria del silencio. Guatemala: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico. Guatemala.
- Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J.L. (2000). Millennial capitalism: first thoughts on a second coming. *Public Culture* 12 (2): 291–343.
- Comte, A. (1988). *Introduction to Positive Philosophy* (ed. F. Ferré). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- Coombes, A.E. (2003). *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Durkheim, É. (1915). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (trans. J.W. Swain). London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Fischer, E.F. and McKenna Brown, R. (eds.) (1996). *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Garrard-Burnett, V. (1997). Liberalism, Protestantism, and indigenous resistance in Guatemala, 1870–1920. *Latin American Perspectives* 93 (2): 35–55.
- Garrard-Burnett, V. (1998). *Protestantism in Guatemala: Living in the New Jerusalem*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Goldman, F. (2007). *The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop?* New York: Grove Press.
- Gombrich, E.H. (1994). *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*. London: Phaidon Press.
- Grandin, G. (2004). *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Grandin, G. and Klublock, T.M. (eds.) (2007). Special issue on truth commissions: state terror, history, and memory. *Radical History Review* 97 (Winter).

- Green, L. (1999). *Fear as a Way of Life: Mayan Widows in Rural Guatemala*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1971). The thing. In: *Poetry, Language, Thought* (trans. A. Hofstadter), 174–182. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hinton, A.L. (ed.) (2002). *Annihilating Differences*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hinton, A.L. and O'Neill, K.L. (eds.) (2009). *Genocide: Truth, Memory, and Representation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Houtman, D. and Meyer, B. (2012). *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Keane, W. (2007). *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Missionary Encounter*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mamdani, M. (2008). The new humanitarian order. *The Nation* (29 September 2008).
- Manz, B. (1988). *Refugees of a Hidden War: The Aftermath of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Marx, K. (1887). The fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof. In: *Capital A Critique of Political Economy Volume I Book 1: The Process of Production of Capital* (ed. F. Engels). New York: Cosmo.
- Milbank, J. (1993). *Theology and Social Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Miller, D. (2010). *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Moller, J. (2004). Our culture is our resistance: repression, refuge and healing in Guatemala, <http://www.jonathanmoller.org/portfolio1.htm> (accessed 1 April 2010).
- Nelson, D.M. (1999). *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nelson, D.M. (2009). *Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Nicholls, D. (1995). *God and Government in an 'Age of Reason'*. New York: Routledge.
- Oglesby, E. (2007). Educating citizens in Postwar Guatemala: historical memory, genocide, and the culture of peace. *Radical History Review* 97 (Winter): 77–98.
- O'Neill, K.L. (2005). Writing Guatemala's genocide: truth and reconciliation commission reports and Christianity. *Journal of Genocide Research* 7 (3): 331–349.
- O'Neill, K.L. (2010). *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- O'Neill, K.L. (2012). The passion of Guatemala: space, temporality, and the politics of truth and resurrection. *Postscripts* 5 (3): 391–407.
- O'Neill, K.L. and Thomas, K. (eds.) (2011). *Securing the City: Neoliberalism, Space, and Insecurity in Postwar Guatemala*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ortiz, D. (2004). *The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press.
- Painter, J. (2007). Crime dominates guatemalan campaign. British Broadcasting Company (10 May 2007).
- Peterson, A.L. (1996). Religious narratives and political protest. *JAAR* 64 (1): 27–44.
- Ralph, M. (2009). Commodity. *Social Text* 100 27 (3): 78–84.
- REMHI (1998). Guatemala, nunca más; proyecto interdiocesano de recuperación de la memoria histórica. In: *Volúmenes I–IV*. Guatemala City: Proyecto Interdiocesano Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica.
- REMHI (1999). *Guatemala, Never Again*. New York: Orbis Press.
- Restrepo, J.A. and García, A.T. (eds.) (2011). *Guatemala en la encrucijada: Panorama de una violencia transformada*. Geneva: Secretariado de la Declaración de Ginebra.
- Sanford, V. (2003). *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Sanford, V. (2012). *Violencia y genocidio en Guatemala*. Guatemala: F&G Editores.
- Scarry, E. (1987). *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schirmer, J. (1998). *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Schlesinger, S.E. and Kinzer, S. (2006). *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (rev. ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stoll, D. (1993). *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Theidon, K. (2004). *Entre prójimos: el conflicto armado interno y la política de la reconciliación en el Perú*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.
- Tracy, D. (1981). *The Analogical Imagination*. New York: Crossroad.
- UNESCO (2012). Integral family literacy: country profile Guatemala. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, <http://www.unesco.org/uiil/litbase/?menu=16&programme=94> (accessed 13 November 2018).
- United Nations (1948). Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. General Assembly Resolution 260 A (III).
- Warren, K. (1998). *Indigenous Movements and their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Index

- Abbahu, Rabbi, 77
ācāra, 532–538
actor-network theory (ANT), 6, 26–28,
57, 478
adam, 63–64
 androgynos, 78–80, 88
 rabbinic construction of gender, 6–64,
78–80
Adeboye, Pastor Enoch, 177
Adorno, Theodor W., 190
aesthetics and digital media, 477–479
afterlife, 323–325
Agamben, Giorgio, 35
agriculture, 375–377, 386–392
 Brahma Vidya Mandir, 377–381
 Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, 381–383
 Mesoamericans, 436, 443–444
 Sirius Community, 383–386
 society, 388–390
Aguilar, 263
ahimsa, 400, 401, 404–405, 409
 Brahma Vidya Mandir, 380
Akal Takhat, 359
Akan, 323
Alacoque, Margaret Mary, 304–309
Alam, Muzaffar, 362
Albera, D., 215
Albert the Great, 50
Alexander, Elizabeth, 73
Allegrini, Pietro and Antonio, 295–296
Altieri, Miguel, 389
Amardas, Guru, 356
ambivalence towards materiality, 3, 8–16
Amhara, 545–547, 549, 552, 555,
557, 561
Ammerman, Nancy, 557
Anderson, Michael, 111, 112, 113
Andree, Richard, 213
androgynos, 64–69, 78–80
 adam, 78–80, 88
 Rabbinic construction of gender, 75,
77–82, 84
Angola, 150, 154, 161
animals, 7, 23–24, 28, 274–275, 280–286
 cognitive science, 112, 115
 Hindu code, 535–536
 Hohodene, 91–95, 99–103, 105
 new materialism, 277
 pilgrimage, 214
 as religious actors, 274, 278, 281,
284–286
 as religious objects, 281–284

- animals (*cont'd*)
 sacrifice, 272, 281–284, 286, 395–398, 400, 402
 Mesoamericans, 442, 446, 448
 spirit incorporation, 157, 165
 studies, 278–279
- anthropocentrism, 32, 36, 153, 286–287, 446
 animals and religion, 274–275, 277–278, 284, 286–287
- anthropomorphism, 165, 279
- Appadurai, Arjun, 27, 244, 343
- Aquinas, Thomas, 49, 54
- arangetram*, 131, 145
- Arbenz, President Jacobo, 570
- Aristotle, 12, 26, 49, 50
- arma Christi*, 53
- Arnold, Philip, 443
- artefacts, 295–299
 digital media, 471, 474–477
 sacredness, 293–314
- artificial intelligence (AI), 113
- Asad, Talal, 10, 14, 15, 20, 337
 civil war in Guatemala, 577
 ethnicity, 548, 557
- Assumptionists, 219–220
- Astor-Aguilera, Miguel, 442, 448
- astrology, 173
- Augustine, Bishop, 523
- Aum Shinrikyô, 483
- aural media, 22, 487–501
 body and voice, 490–494
 case studies, 490
 ritual instruments, 494–496
 space, 496–499
 working with sound, 488–490
- Austin, Alfredo López, 261
- authenticity, 2, 11, 190–199, 202
 alterities, 191, 192, 195–198
 digital media, 480–481
 Makah whaling, 347
 tourism, 33, 187–199, 202
- authority, 481–483, 484
- autochthony, 10, 553
- autopoiesis, 115
- Avatar*, 465, 468
- Avicenna, 48, 50
- Ayau, Halealoha, 350
- Aztecs, 271
 cosmovision, 266–267
 human sacrifice, 268, 270, 271, 437
 imagination of matter, 258–259, 261–262, 264–268, 270–272
- Babb, Lawrence A., 421
- Babuji Maharaj, 421
- Bae Yonggyun, 461
- Baffelli, E., 483
- Balakrishnan, Nandita, 144
- Balberg, Mira, 63
- Ballantyne, Tony, 368
- Bamana, 319–320
- Bamba, Sheikh Amadou, 320
- Bamiyan Buddhas, 1–2, 3–5
- Banerjee, M. and D. Miller, 332, 336
- Bankole, Pastor, 181
- Baptists, 491
- Barad, Karen, 55–56
- Baring-Gould, Sabine, 171
- Barrett, Justin and Frank Keil, 551
- Barrett, Nathaniel F., 21, 108–124
 functionalism, 117–123
 implementational materiality, 121–122
 problematic meaning of cognitive science, 110–117
- Barrie, J. M.
Peter Pan 341
- Barrios, President Justo Rufino, 572, 573
- Barth, Fredrik, 547
- Bartmann, Sarah, 519–520
- Bastide, Roger, 151, 162–165
- Bataille, Georges, 447–448, 449
- Baudrillard, J., 337, 339
- Bauman, Whitney, 391
- Bavli*, 63, 69, 76, 78, 79, 81
- Bavli Shabbat*, 70, 75, 77
- Bavli Yevamot*, 69, 70
- Baye Fall, 320
- Beck, Guy, 491
- Beilby, James, 171
- Bekoff, Marc, 285
- Belaj, Marijana and Zvonko Martić, 216
- Bell, Catherine, 571–572

- bells
 aural media, 494, 495, 496
 Indian dance, 132, 134, 136–137, 147
 Benjamin, Walter, 189, 462–463
 Bennett, Jane, 30, 165, 276, 287
 Berekiah, Rabbi, 77
 Berezan, Jennifer, 497
 Berger, Peter, 462, 463
 Bergson, Henri, 30
 Bernard of Clairvaux, 304
 Bernstein, R., 329, 332
 Berry, Wendell, 390
 Betsileo, 325
Bhagavad Gītā, 423–424
 Brahma Vidya Mandir, 378–381, 391
 Vaishnava vegetarianism, 395, 401,
 403–404, 406–407
Bhagavata, 381, 400–402, 405–406, 408
bhakti, 12, 133, 378, 396, 491
 Bhave, Vinobha, 376–381
 Bible, 183, 258–259, 402, 472, 573, 574
 colonialism, 514, 523
 Rabbinic construction of gender, 61–62,
 64, 66–68, 71–72, 76–80
 Biette, Elise, 140
 Bildhauer, B., 48
 biopower, 18, 23, 34
 blood, 47–55
 incarnation in Christianity, 45–57
 menstrual, 47–50, 56, 57, 77, 87
 sweat of Jesus, 50–51
 Bodhisattvas, 5, 201, 227
 body-centrism, 108, 110, 117
 bogolanfini, 319–320
 Bonnke, Reinhard, 177
 Boon, Jessica A., 7, 17, 45–60
 Boone, Elizabeth, 438
 Boranas, 558
 Bosman, Willem, 517
bottu, 24, 132, 143, 147
 Bourdieu, Pierre, 9–10, 16, 19–20, 25
 habitus, 19
 Boyarin, Daniel, 61, 64, 78
 Boylston, Tom, 375
 Brahma Vidya Mandir, 377–381
 food, 376–381, 383, 386–388, 390–392
 labour, 377, 380, 383, 386–388
 Brahman, Nāda, 491
 Brāhmanas, 534, 536, 538
 Brahmins, 12–13
 colonialism, 522–523
 Hindu food, 416–423, 425, 426, 428
 vegetarianism, 395–397, 404, 408, 409
Braveheart, 456
 breastfeeding, 76–77, 81
 Bremer, Thomas S., 33, 187–204
 tourism, 33, 187–204
 authentic alterities, 191, 192, 195–198
 authentic religion, 202
 economies of existential phenomenology,
 188–192
 Graceland charisma, 192, 199–202
 Yellowstone awakenings, 192–195
 Brennan, Vicki, 492
 Bridget of Sweden, 51
 Brooks, Rodney, 112, 113
 Brown, Bill, 329
 Brown, Karen McCarthy, 151
 Brown, Linda, 259
 Brown, Peter, 17
 Brubaker, Rogers, 547
 Buddha, 468, 473, 475–476
 destruction of statues, 1–2, 3–5
 Buddhism, 5–6, 10, 11, 23, 250, 521
 animals as religious actors, 281
 aural media, 489–491, 495
 Christian pilgrimage, 216
 cinema, 461
 digital media, 472, 474, 476–477, 479,
 482, 484
 food and agriculture, 391
 Laos, 29
 processions, 227
 relics, 33, 356–358, 368
 spiritual warfare, 175
 Tibet, 448, 451, 490, 495
 vegetarianism, 404, 408
 Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), 472
 Bùnù, 325
 Bunyan, John
 Pilgrim's Progress, 195
 Burdick, John, 491
 Burke, Edmund, 194
 Burkitt, Ian, 550

- Burnouf, Eugène, 6
- Butler, Judith, 20, 72, 74, 80, 332, 575
- Bwa, 321
- Bwende, 324–325
- Bye, Robert, 262, 271
- Bynum, Caroline Walker, 17, 25–27, 31–33, 309
- incarnation in Christianity, 46–48, 53, 55–56
 - medieval materiality, 46–48, 55–56, 57
 - Sikh relics, 369
- Caballeros, Harold, 182
- Caboclo, 150, 161
- Cameron, James, 465
- Campbell, Heidi A., 22, 471–484
- digital media, 471–484
 - aesthetics, 477–479
 - authenticity, 480–481
 - authority, 481–483
 - future studies, 471, 484
 - key themes and challenges, 471, 479–480
 - manifestation of materiality, 471, 474
 - mobile apps, 476, 477–478, 484
 - online ritual, 476–477
 - rise of digital religion, 472–474
 - Second Life, 473–475, 477, 482, 484
 - shaping and changing understanding, 483
 - translation and transportation of the religious, 474–476
 - virtual world, 471, 473–476, 478, 482
- Campbell, Joseph, 282
- Candomblé, 27, 150–167
- affordances and constraints, 156–162
 - initiation ritual, 155–158, 162–163
- Carrasco, David, 29, 258–273, 442–443
- Mesoamerican cities, 264–267
 - sacred body, ritual violence, 267–271
 - sacred tree, 261–264
- caste, 264
- Brahma Vidya Mandir, 378
 - colonialism, 522
 - food, 395, 409, 415–420, 422–428
 - Hindu code, 532, 533, 535
 - processions, 233
- Castells, M., 474
- Catholicism, 4, 10–14, 46, 242–243, 245, 406
- Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, 376–377, 381–383, 386–387, 389–390, 392
 - civil war in Guatemala, 567, 571, 573–578
 - colonialism, 10–11, 13, 513, 523, 527
 - digital media, 473
 - ethnicity, 560
 - images and statuary, 296, 303, 306–312, 442
 - imagination of matter, 259, 261–263
 - place pilgrimage, 211–213, 215–219, 221
 - spirit incorporation, 151, 154
 - spiritual warfare, 11–12, 176
- Ceiba tree, 261–263, 267, 271
- Chadwick, Henry, 45
- chalkware, 295–298
- Chan Bahlum, 441
- characterizing the turn to materiality, 16–33
- Charles V, 264
- Charlotte's Web*, 459, 460
- Charney, Leo and Vanessa Schwartz, 456, 464
- Cheong, Pauline, 480, 482
- Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, 376–377, 381–383, 386–387, 389–390, 392
- Chewa, 321
- Chidester, David, 4, 191, 481
- Chinna Satyam, Vempati, 137–138
- Chirac, Jacques, 328
- Chisda, Rav, 70
- Chödrön, Pema, 391
- Christian, William, 17
- Christianity, 2, 7, 10–11, 512–514
- ambivalence towards materiality, 8, 10–13
 - aural media, 492, 494–495, 497–498
 - cinema, 456, 465
 - civil war in Guatemala, 568, 570, 572–579
 - colonialism, 10, 510, 512–520, 526–527
 - digital media, 472, 473, 475
 - ethics, 336
 - ethnicity, 545–546, 557–561
 - food and agriculture, 391
 - Hawaiian sacred objects, 352
 - incarnation of body and blood, 45–57

- Orientalism, 521–524
 place pilgrimage, 209–221
 monumentality, 218–220
 power and control, 216–218
 theoretical itineraries, 210–214
 theory and practice, 214–216
 Rabbinic construction of gender, 62
 recovery of the body, 16–25
 relics, 33, 356–358, 368
 scholars of Buddhism, 5–6
 scriptures, 399
 sexuality, 514–515
 spiritual warfare, 11–12, 18, 171–184
 textiles, 318
 tourism, 190, 194
 see also, Catholicism; Protestantism
 cinema, 22, 51, 179–180, 455–469
 after the show, 466–468
 before the show, 458–462, 463
 brief background, 456–458
 during the show, 462–466
 circumcision, 61, 72, 74, 75
 androgynos, 70, 75, 84–85
 Jesus, 47
 Cirese, Alberto, 213
 Clark, Andy, 108, 110, 117, 121
 Clarke, Eric, 120
 Clingerman, Forrest, 391
 clothing for Indian dance, 131–132, 134, 141–143
 Cobb, John, 390, 391
 Cobussen, Marcel, 488–489, 490
 Cody, William F. (Buffalo Bill), 196
 cognitive science, 21, 108–124
 functionalism, 117–123
 problematic meaning, 110–117
 cognitive science of religion (CSR), 109, 118, 124
 cognitivism, 111, 113
 Cohen, Anthony, 547, 555
 Coldwell, W., 475
 Colebrook, Claire, 55
 Coleman, Simon, 11, 171–184, 215
 spiritual warfare, 171–184
 ideology to strategy, 172–174
 scaling in space and time, 174–180
 subjectivity and discipline, 180–183
 collective identifications, 157, 161–162
 Colombière, Rev. Father Claude de la, 306
 colonialism, 4–5, 90, 509–527
 ambivalence towards materiality, 8, 10–14
 Americas, 514–516, 519, 526
 Asia, 520–526
 Candomblé, 159–160
 Catholicism, 10–11, 13, 513, 523, 527
 Indian dance, 133
 processions, 227, 229
 racialization, 510–512
 spiritual warfare, 173, 182
 West-Central Africa, 516–520, 526
 Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff, 25, 569
 commensality, 22, 415–419
 food, 22, 33, 375, 415–419, 427, 428
 commodification, 18, 25, 33, 568–569
 tourism, 33, 189, 191, 194–198, 200–202
 community and *prasāda*, 415–419
 computationalism, 116
 Comte, Auguste, 572
 conception of Jesus, 45, 48, 49
 concomitance theory, 56
 Connelly, Louise, 22, 471–484
 digital media, 471–484
 aesthetics, 477–479
 authenticity, 480–481
 authority, 481–483
 future studies, 471, 484
 key themes and challenges, 471, 479–480
 manifestation of materiality, 471, 474
 mobile apps, 476, 477–478, 484
 online ritual, 476–477
 rise of digital religion, 472–474
 Second Life, 473–475, 477, 482, 484
 shaping and changing understanding, 483
 translation and transportation of the religious, 474–476
 virtual world, 471, 473–476, 478, 482
 Connor, Walter, 556
 constructivism, 23, 115, 120
 ethnicity, 547, 562
 Cooke, Jay, 192–194
 Copernicus, 513
 Corbin, Alain, 494

- Cornell, Stephen, 554
- Corpus Christi, 249, 308, 309
lithograph, 296, 298, 308
- Cortés, Hernán, 261–265
- Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), 45
- cows, 380–381, 395–396, 404–405, 408
- Crawley, Ashon, 491
- creation narratives, 48, 64, 258–259
Candomblé, 154, 156, 157
cinema, 463
gender, 64, 79, 80, 157
Hohodene, 91
Mesoamerican, 434, 438, 439, 441
- Cristo de la Ascensión*, 244, 250–252
- Cristo de los Immigrantes*, 244, 253
- Critchley, Simon, 336
- Croiset, Fr. Jean, 304–307
- Cromwell, Oliver, 306
- Crowley, Aleister, 526
- Csordas, Thomas, 176, 180–181
- Culler, Jonathan, 190
- Cuvier, Georges, 519–520
- cyberspace, 22, 472, 475, 479, 480
- Dahomey, 150, 154
- Dalai Lama, 462
- Dalits, 424, 428, 430
- Dalla, Bhai, 360, 361
- Damasio, A. R., 482
- dance, 131–148
bells, 132, 134, 136–137, 147
clothing, 131–132, 134, 141–143
description of the body, 133, 134–141, 143–146
embodied knowledge, 132, 133, 144–145, 146–147
face, eyes and hair, 141, 143, 147
feet, 132, 135–139, 145–147
hands, 138, 139–140, 145–146
knees and back, 137–139
spirit incorporation, 150, 152–153, 155, 158, 162–164
Tamil Hindu processions, 226–228, 229–234, 236, 238
- Danely, J., 214
- Daoism, 120
- Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple), 359, 367
- Dargis, Manohla, 465, 468
- Darish, P., 324
- Dark Knight, The*, 465
- Darwin, Charles, 572
- Daugherty, Richard, 347–348
- Davidson, Bruce, 383
- Davidson, Gordon, 383
- Davis, Donald, 531
- Dawson, L. and D. E. Cowan, 480
- Day, Abby, 557–558
- Day, Dorothy, 381, 382
- Day, Matthew, 27, 28, 29
- de Ágreda, María, 57
- de Broses, Charles, 517–518
- de Chantal, Jane Frances, 305
- de Crémone, Roland, 49
- de Escandon, José, 244
- de Franco, Adela 'Marti' Bautista, 250–253
- de Marees, Pieter, 519
- de Mena, Pedro, 300–301, 309
- de Sales, Francis, 305
- de Silva, Manuel, 93
- de Waal, Frans, 285
- deBernardi, Jean, 173
- Deleuze, Gilles, 17, 27, 30, 53, 215
- Deleuze, Gilles and F. Guattari, 294–295
- Deol, J., 362
- Derges, Jane, 233
- Derrida, Jacques, 7, 160, 549
- Descartes, René, 8, 513
- Descola, Philippe, 32–33, 36–37
- Detienne, Marcel and Jean-Pierre Vernant, 341
- Devarajan, Arthi, 145
- Devereux, Paul, 498
- devotional labour, 22, 243, 248–249, 253
- Dhammai, 258
- Dharma, 530–544
law, 538–542
proper conduct, 532
vegetarianism, 399, 401, 408, 410
- Dharmaśāstra, 11, 530–544
law (*vyavahāra*), 538–542
proper conduct (*ācāra*), 532–538
- Di Paolo, Ezequiel, 116
- Diaz del Castillo, Bernal, 261–262, 264–266

- digital media, 22, 471–484
aesthetics, 477–479
authenticity, 480–481
authority, 481–483
future studies, 471, 484
key themes and challenges, 471,
479–480
manifestation of materiality, 471, 474
online ritual, 476–477
- Dilipa, king, 533
- Dirks, Nicholas, 421–422
- Dodge, M. and R. Kitchen, 214
- Dogon, 316–317
- Doi, K., 215
- Doja, Alfred, 555
- Dorsky, Nathaniel, 461
- Doss, Erika, 201
- Douglas, Mary, 375, 461–462
- Dravidians, 523
- Droogan, Julian, 448, 449
- Dubois, J. A., 523
- Dürer, Albrecht, 264
- Durkheim, Émile, 18, 259, 344, 375, 568
ethnicity, 547, 551
- dynamical systems approach, 21,
114–115, 117
- Eade, John, 18, 209–221
place pilgrimage, 209–221
monumentality, 218–220
power and control, 216–218
theoretical itineraries, 210–214
theory and practice, 214–216
- Ebert, Roger, 468
- Echchaibi, N., 481
- Eckhart, Meister, 17
- Eckman, Paul, 141
- ecological psychology, 21, 114, 115, 117
- Eddy, Paul Rhodes, 171
- Edelman, Gerald, 116
- Ekik, 322
- Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard, 61, 62
- Eisenberg, Andrew, 499
- Eisenlohr, Patrick, 489, 492
- Ejagham, 322
- Ekpe, 322
- Eleazar, Rabbi, 77
- Eliade, Mircea, 13, 17, 18, 190, 259, 261
Orientalism, 525
place pilgrimage, 210, 211
- Elias, Jamal, 2
- Eliezer, Rabbi, 70
- embodied knowledge, 132, 133, 144–145,
146–147
- Emmerich, Catherine, 57
- enactive theory, 21, 115, 117
- Engelke, Matthew, 7, 10
- Enlightenment, 3, 6, 34, 62, 557
colonialism, 522, 526
- Epicurus, 30
- Erdoğan, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip, 328
- Ergin, Nina, 499
- Erlmann, Veit, 488
- ethics, 361, 376, 472
cinema, 465
headscarves, 334–336
- ethnicity, 23, 90, 545–563, 570
dominant perspectives, 546–548
localization and belonging, 548–552
located and localized, 552–557
religion located and localized, 557–562
see also race and racialization
- Eucharist, 12, 55–56, 358, 406, 513
assembling inferences, 296, 302, 307–309,
311–312
- evangelicals and evangelism, 15, 216–217
spiritual warfare, 172–175
tourism, 191, 193, 194, 195
- excrement, 435, 436, 443–446
Hindu code, 531, 534
- Falcone, J., 477, 482
- family of the saint, 153, 155
- Farid, Baba, 359
- Farrell, Will, 473
- Faxian, 227
- Feinstein, Joseph, 496
- Feld, Steven, 494, 497
- feminism, 55–56
- Fernández, James, 552
- fetish, 10–11, 28, 34, 569, 578–579
colonialism, 10, 511, 516–518, 522, 526
headscarves, 329, 337
- Feuerbach, Ludwig, 9, 277, 462

- Fitzgerald, Tim, 14
- Flood, Finbarr, 2, 3, 4
- Flueckiger, Joyce Burkhalter, 24, 25, 131–148
arangetram, 131, 145
 bells, 132, 134, 136–137, 147
 body, 24, 131–136, 138–147, 148
bottu, 24, 132, 143, 147
 clothing, 131–132, 134, 141–143
 description of the body, 133, 134–141, 143–146
 embodied knowledge, 132, 133, 144–145, 146–147
 face, eyes and hair, 141, 143, 147
 feet, 132, 135–139, 145–147
 hands, 138, 139–140, 145–146
 knees and back, 137–139
 Krishna, 132, 133, 140, 146
mudras, 134, 139–140, 141, 144–146
 ornamentation, 132, 134, 141–143
rasa, 133, 141, 146–148
 saris, 24, 131–132, 134, 142–143, 147
 Sklar, Deidre, 146
 Srinivasan, Priya, 131–132
 theory-practice, 132–133
vesham, 141–143
- flutes, 90–93, 96–106
- Fonrobert, Charlotte, 64, 76–78
- food, 33, 375–392
 body and labour, 386–387
 Brahma Vidya Mandir, 377–381
 Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, 381–383
 communities, 377–386
 environment, 390–391
 Hindu code, 533–536
 Mesoamericans, 435–439, 441–447, 449
prasāda, 22, 414–430
 Sirius Ecovillage, 383–386
 society, 388–390
 Vaishnava vegetarianism, 13, 22, 395–412
 five components, 401–406
 meat eating, 398–401
 scriptural basis, 396–398
- Fordism, 189
- Foucault, Michel, 7, 11, 14, 34, 35, 180
 body, 17, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26
 colonialism, 514–515, 524–525
 Rabbinic construction of gender, 61
 sexuality, 514, 524–525
 veiling, 332
- Frazer, James, 4
- Fred Harvey Company, 196, 203
- Freeman, Walter J., 116
- Freud, Sigmund, 6, 375, 462, 525, 560
- Friedrich, Paul, 552
- Fuentes, Carlos, 258, 259, 261
- functionalism, 21, 117–123
 embodied cognitive science, 110, 113, 117–123
- funerals, 104, 284
 Hindu code, 537
 textiles, 317–318, 322–325
- Galen and Galenic theory, 48, 49
- Galileo, 513
- Gallagher, Shaun, 35
- Gance, Abel, 462, 463
- Gandhi, Mahatma, 376–380, 404
- Garbison, Eric, 382
- Garifuna emigrants, 156–157
- Garrard-Burnett, Virginia, 174
- Gaudiya Vaishnavas, 398, 412, 424, 425
- Gautama, 535, 538
- Gautier, Ana María Ochoa, 492
- Geertz, Armin, 110, 203
- Geertz, Clifford, 14, 15, 20, 276, 337
 ethnicity, 548, 555
 pilgrimage, 212, 213
- gender, 46, 47–48, 54, 57, 176
 colonialism, 512, 514–516, 519, 525
 Hindu code, 531–533, 540–541
 Hohodene, 90–91
 Rabbinic construction, 20, 61–88
 androgynos, 64–69, 78–80
 bodies, 63–64, 75–78
 male and female performative acts, 65, 71, 72–74
 perspectives, 80–82
 primal androgyne, 78–80
 provisional spectrum, 69–71
 spirit incorporation, 157–158, 162
 textiles, 319, 320–321

- genital discharge, 65, 77–78
geopolitics, 18, 241–255
 religion on the border, 244–254
 religion on the move, 241–244
Gerardi, Bishop Juan, 574
Geschiere, Peter, 553
Gibson, James, 36, 114
Gibson, Mel, 57, 465
 The Passion of the Christ, 51
Gill, Sam, 24, 25, 347
Giménez, Gilberto, 213
Gladiator, 456
globalization, 4, 25, 183, 553
 place pilgrimage, 209, 210, 212, 220
Goffman, Erving, 569
Gökariksel, Banu, 4, 328–339
 agentive thing, 332–334
 assemblage of veiling, 330–332
 ethical problems, 334–336
Golan, O., 482
Gombrich, Ernst, 569
Gomes, Luiz, 93, 94
González-Náñez, Dr. Omar, 93
Goodall, Jane, 284
Goodwin, Thomas, 306
governance, 157, 159–160
Graceland, 192, 199–202, 203–204
Graham, Jesse and Jonathan Haidt, 558
Gramsci, Antonio, 213
Greek Catholics, 215, 218, 219
Greek orthodoxy, 215
Greene, Paul, 493–494
Greenwood, Rebecca, 173, 175, 178
Grellet, Alexandre, 303
Griaule, Marcel, 316
Grieve, G., 483
Gold, Ann Grodzins, 428
Groeneveld, L., 48
Grosby, Steven, 552, 554, 557
Gross, Aaron, 280–281
Guatemala, 15, 18–19, 182, 567–580
Guattari, F., 27, 294–295
Gunning, Tom, 464
Gurbilās, 362
Gurdwaras, 356, 359, 364, 365–366
 processions, 228, 234, 235, 236
Guru Granth Sahib, 234, 235–236
 Sikh relics, 359, 361, 364, 365
Guthman, Julie, 390
habitus, 19
Hackett, Rosalind I. J., 22, 487–501
 aurality, 488, 490, 500
 body and voice, 490–494
 case studies, 490
 Hagia Sophia, 498, 499, 501
 healing, 491, 495–496, 497
 hearing, 487–488, 489, 497, 500
 ritual instruments, 494–496
 sound studies, 487–489, 491–497,
 499–500
 soundscapes, 488, 492, 496, 499
 space, 496–499
 visuality, 500
 working with sound, 488–490
Hadden, J. K. and D. E. Cowan, 480
Hadewijch of Antwerp, 56
Hajj, 4, 473
Halemba, Agnieszka, 218, 219
Hall, Stuart, 548–549
Han, Judy, 173, 175
Handelmann, Don, 555
Hann, Chris, 34
Haraway, Donna, 279, 550
Hardin, Michael, 173
Hare Krishna movement, 227
Hargobind, Guru, 366
Harkness, Nicholas, 492
Harman, Graham, 446, 449
Harris, Alana, 217
Harvey, David, 62
Harvey, Graham, 445, 448–449
Hawaii, 27, 342, 349–352
Hayden, Ferdinand, 193–194
Hayden, Robert, 215
Haymaker, Edward, 573
Hazard, Sonia, 276–277, 284, 286
headscarves, 328–339
 agentive thing, 332–334
 assemblage of veiling, 330–332
 ethical problematic, 334–336
Hegel, Georg, 6, 8–9, 13

- Heidegger, Martin, 17, 329, 568
 Helland, C., 481
 Helmreich, Stefan, 496
 Henry, Michel, 25
 Herskovits, Melville, 162
 Hertz, Robert, 211
 Hesse, Barnor, 510
 hierophanies, 13, 210
 Hildegard of Bingen, 491
 Hill, Erica, 283–284
 Hildebeitel, Alf, 141
 Hinduism, 2, 11, 12–13, 24, 26, 228–229, 530–544
 aural media, 490, 491, 493
 Christian pilgrimage, 214–216
 colonialism, 509
 digital media, 476, 481
 food and agriculture, 378–381
 Indian dance, 133, 135–136, 139–140, 143, 146
 law, 538–542
 Orientalism, 521, 522, 523, 525
 prasāda, 414–430
 commensality and community, 415–419
 food systems, 419–422
 universal food, 416, 419, 422–427, 428
 processions, 226–234, 236
 proper conduct, 532–538
 spiritual warfare, 175
 Vaishnava vegetarianism, 395–396, 409
 Hirsch, Charles, 499
 Hobbes, Thomas, 513
 Hohodene, 25, 90–106
 Hojsgaard, M. and M. Warburg, 480
 Holsinger, Bruce, 491
 Holvast, René, 175
 Horowitz, Alexandra, 279
 Hosler, Dorothy, 495
 Hough, James, 523
 Houtman, Dick and Birgit Meyer, 329
 Huff, B. and A. Stallins, 214
 Hughes, Jennifer Scheper, 31, 33, 264
 Hui Mälama, 350, 351, 352
 human sacrifice, 259, 261, 267–272, 433–451
 eat and be eaten, 446–449
 sacrificial feeding, 433–437
 sustaining blood, 437–443
 sustaining excrement, 443–446
 Husayn, 358
 Hussein, Sheikh, 559
 Husserl, Edmund, 9, 17
 hyperobjects, 31

 I. Donnelly Company, 296, 297
 iconoclasm, 2–4, 6, 10
 Igbo, 322
 Ijo, 322
 Im Kwon-Taek, 461
 incarnation, 7, 16, 17, 45–57
 ambivalence towards materiality, 8, 10, 12
 turn to materiality, 16
 infertility, 76, 81
 Ingold, Timothy, 30–31, 55, 57
 embodied cognitive science, 108, 109
 spirit incorporation, 165
 inheritance, 540–542
 Internet, 471–474, 479–483
Into the Wild, 467–468
 ISKCON community, 227, 425–426
 Islam and Muslims, 4, 328–339, 530
 aural media, 490, 492, 493, 499
 Christian pilgrimage, 215, 216
 colonialism, 510, 517, 518, 523
 destruction of religious images, 1–2, 3–5
 digital media, 472, 473, 481
 ethnicity, 545–546, 558–559, 561–562
 headscarves, 328–339
 agentic thing, 332–334
 assemblage of veiling, 330–332
 ethical problematic, 334–336
 incarnation in Christianity, 45
 relics, 358, 365–366
 religious art, 1–7, 10
 rituals of piety, 20
 spiritual warfare, 175
 textiles, 317–318, 320–321
itihāsik, 356, 359, 364–366
 Iyers, Shaiva, 419

 Jackson, Dana, 390
 Jackson, Peter, 467
 Jackson, Wes, 390
 Jackson, William Henry, 194

- Jacobsen, Knut A., 13, 26, 226–238
 processions, 226–238
 Hindus, 228–234
 Sikhs, 226–229, 234–238
- Jagannath, 227
- Jai Santoshi Maa*, 459, 460, 465
- Jainism, 369, 404, 408
- James, William, 152, 190
- Jansen, W. and G. Dresen, 45
- Jansenism, 307
- Jatha, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sevak, 366
- Jedi, 456
- Jefferson, Thomas, 192, 520
- Jenkins, Richard, 548, 550
- Jeremiah b. Leazar, Rabbi, 64, 78
- Jesuits, 304, 306–307, 309, 312
- Jesus Christ, 11, 16, 383, 468
 crucifixion, 570, 574–576, 578
 digital media, 473, 477
 imagination of matter, 259, 262–264
 incarnation, 17, 45–51, 53–56
 Passion, 16, 46, 47, 53, 465
 place pilgrimage, 215, 217
 relics, 358
 resurrection, 16, 48–49, 54
 Sacred Heart of Jesus, 27, 293–299, 301, 303–313
 statuary and images, 293–313
- Jesus House, 176, 177, 179
- Ji, Sri Nanak Dev, 236
- jiva-daya*, 401–402, 405–406
- Jobs, Steve, 478
- John, 16, 17
- John of Capistrano, 49
- Johnson, Greg, 27, 341–353
 Hawaiian objects, 349–352
 legislators theorize the sacred, 343–346
 Makah whaling, 346–349
- Johnson, Paul Christopher, 27–28, 150–167, 242
 spirit incorporation, 150–167
 affordances and constraints, 156–162
 materiality, 153–156
 precedents, 151–153
 redescription, 162–166
- Johnson, Sylvester A., 4, 509–527
 colonialism, 514–526
 colonialization and racialization, 510–512
 matter and spirit in Christianity, 512–514
- Jones, Lindsay, 261
- Jones, William, 11
- Josephson, Jason, 14
- Judaism and Jews, 175, 250, 387, 530, 560
 Christian pilgrimage, 215
 colonialism, 510, 511, 519, 523, 526
 digital media, 472, 473, 482
 Rabbinic construction of gender, 20, 61–88
 androgynos, 64–69, 78–80
 bodies, 63–64, 75–78
 male and female performative acts, 65, 71, 72–74
 perspectives, 80–82
 primal androgyne, 78–80
 provisional spectrum, 69–71
- Julian of Norwich, 51
- Jung, Carl, 190, 467, 525
- Kahn, Douglas, 488
- Kālidāsa, 533
- Kaluli, 497
- Kamath, Harshita Mruthinti, 24, 25, 131–148
 arangetram, 131, 145
 bells, 132, 134, 136–137, 147
 body, 24, 131–136, 138–147, 148
 bottu, 24, 132, 143, 147
 clothing, 131–132, 134, 141–143
 description of the body, 133, 134–141, 143–146
 embodied knowledge, 132, 133, 144–145, 146–147
 face, eyes and hair, 141, 143, 147
 feet, 132, 135–139, 145–147
 hands, 138, 139–140, 145–146
 knees and back, 137–139
 Krishna, 132, 133, 140, 146
 mudras, 134, 139–140, 141, 144–146
 ornamentation, 132, 134, 141–143
 rasa, 133, 141, 146–148
 saris, 24, 131–132, 134, 142–143, 147
 Sklar, Deidre, 146
 Srinivasan, Priya, 131–132
 theory-practice, 132–133
 vesham, 141–143

- Kant, Immanuel, 3, 6, 8, 21, 194
karma, 22, 397, 401, 402, 406
 Kātyāyana, 541
 Kaur Singh, Nikky-Guninder, 361
 Kautilya, 540
kavati dancers, 230–234, 236, 238
 Kawaihae, 349–352
 Keane, Webb, 2, 6, 9, 10, 332, 337
 Kearns, Laurel, 391
 Kelso, J. A. Scott, 116
 Kemmerer, Lisa, 280
 Kente, 323
 Kessler, Gwynn, 20, 61–88
 Rabbinic construction of gender, 61–88
 androgynos, 64–69, 78–80
 bodies, 63–64, 75–78
 male and female performative acts, 65, 71, 72–74
 perspectives, 80–82
 primal androgyne, 78–80
 provisional spectrum, 69–71
 Khalistan movement, 229
 Khalsa, 234–237, 238, 362, 363–364, 367
 Khare, R. S., 423, 426, 429
 Kieschnick, John, 5
 Kim Ki-Duk, 461
 King Jr., Martin Luther, 404
 King, Richard, 11
 Kirschenmann, Fred, 390
 Klawans, Jonathan, 282–283, 284
 Knott, K., 242
 Kohn, Eduardo, 32–33
 Kolrud, K. and M. Prusac, 6
 Kopytoff, Igor, 27
 Koran *see* Qur'an
 Kormina, Jeanne, 217
 Kracauer, Sidney, 463
 Krakauer, Jon, 467–468
 Krause, Kristine, 179, 182, 183
 Krishna, 132, 133, 140, 146, 227
 digital media, 473
 food, 375
 Brahma Vidya Mandir, 378, 381
 prasāda, 423–426
 vegetarianism, 396, 398, 400, 403–408
 Kshatriyas, 399, 409, 416, 419
 Kuba, 324
 Kuchipudi dancers, 131–133, 135–140, 144–147, 148
 Kuwai, 25, 90–106
 adornment, 104
 birth, 92, 96, 99
 body, 25, 92–97, 104–106
 death, 96, 97
 duality, 93–94
 growth, 96, 97–103
 sounds, 97–103
 viscera and body fluids, 94–96
 labour intensiveness, 157, 158–159
 Ladinos, 570
 Lafontaine, Don, 458
 Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson, 114, 118
 Lam, Brian, 478
 Lamb, Ramdas, 424
 Lambek, Michael, 151
 Laredo, Bernardino de, 50
 Larkin, Brian, 493
 Latour, Bruno, 6, 26–32, 36–37, 165
 civil war in Guatemala, 568, 573
 digital media, 478
 incarnation in Christianity, 53, 57
 law, 530–544
 Hinduism, 538–542
 titles of law, 539–540
 Lee, Tong Soon, 493
 Lefebvre, Henri, 18
 Leibniz, Gottfried, 513
 Lentz, David, 444
 Leo the Great, 45
 Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 278
 Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam (LTTE), 229
 likeness of objects, 299–300, 304–309
 Lincoln, Bruce, 25
 Lofton, Kathryn, 190, 200
 Lok, John, 519
 Lokayata (later Charvaka), 13
 London, Jack, 468
 Long, Charles H., 260
 Lopez, Donald, 6
 Louis XIV, 307
 Lourdes, 211, 216, 217, 219
 Lubman, David, 498

- Lucretius, 30
 Luhrmann, Tanya, 15
 Lumière brothers, 463–464
 Luther, Martin, 514
- MacCannell, Dean, 188–189, 190
 MacDougall, David, 465, 466
 Maddrell, Avril, 220
 Madhavi, 131
 Madhvacharya, 399
 Magdoff, Fred, 390
Mahabharata, 397, 399–400, 402, 409
 Mahar, Pauline, 417, 418
 Maharaja of Patiala, 366
 Maharashtrians, 421
 Mahmood, Saba, 20, 142, 332
 Maier, Katrin, 177–178, 181
 Makah, 27, 342, 346–349, 352
 Malafouris, Lambros, 121
 Malinowski, B., 158
 Mansata, Bharat, 389
 Manu, 531–532, 536–541
 Manu Samhita, 395, 397
 Maoris, 445, 449
 Marks, Laura, 466
 Marsh, Christopher, 494
 Marshall, Ruth, 18
 Marx, Karl and Marxism, 6, 9, 17, 462–463, 545
 civil war in Guatemala, 569, 570
 new materialism, 276, 285
 place pilgrimage, 213
 Massumi, Brian, 24
 Masuzawa, Tomoko, 11, 14
 Maturana, Humberto and Francisco Varela, 115
 Maurin, Peter, 381–382
 Mauss, Marcel, 19, 20, 55
 Maya, 438, 441–443
 aural media, 497–498
 civil war in Guatemala, 570, 571, 578
 Mayer, Fejervary, 263, 267
 McAlister, Elizabeth, 183
 McCandless, Chris, 467–468
 McCutcheon, Russell, 14, 24, 25, 35, 548
 tourism, 190, 291
 McLaughlin, Corinne, 383
- McLeod, W. H., 361, 430
 McLuhan, Marshall, 455, 466
 McMurray, Peter, 499
 meat eating, 397, 398–401, 402, 404, 409
 medieval materiality, 46–48, 55–56, 57
 Meinen-Dick, Ruth, 387
Mekhila of R. Ishmael, 67, 71
 memorials, 475
 menstruation, 47–48, 49–50, 56
 Hindu code, 535, 537, 543
 Rabbinic construction of gender, 77
 Merina, 325
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 8, 17, 30, 34
 ethnicity, 550, 551, 554, 560
 Mesoamericans, 29, 259–273, 433–451
 human sacrifice, 259, 261, 267–272, 433–451
 imagination of matter, 259–273
 Aztec cosmovision, 266–267
 cities, 264–267
 sacred tree, 261–264
 super materiality, 264–267
 Methodists, 472, 473
 mêtis, 341, 342, 344, 352
 Meyer, Birgit, 7, 10, 11, 466
 aural media, 489, 490, 492
 digital media, 471
 spiritual warfare, 172, 174, 179–180
 Miczek, N., 483
 migration, 25, 101, 212, 241–243
 Garifuna emigrants, 156–157
 processions, 227–229, 237, 238
 religion on the border, 246–248, 250, 252–253
 Milbank, John, 576
 Miller, Daniel, 55, 332, 336, 337, 500, 569
 Miller, Tracy, 260
 Mīmāṃsā, 530
 Minako, Ishihara, 561
Mishnah, 63–66, 70, 72–74, 77
Mishnah Bikkurim, 64, 73, 74
Mishnah Hagigah, 64, 73, 74
Mishnah Kiddushin, 72–75, 81–82
Mishnah Makshirin, 77
Mishnah Niddah, 75
Mishnah Ohalot, 63
Mishnah Sotah, 72, 73, 75, 81–82

- Mishnah Yevamot*, 64, 69–70
mitzvot, 65, 71–74
 Moctezuma, 264, 266, 271
 Mohammed (or Muhammad), Prophet
 358–359, 468, 473
 Moller, Jonathan, 574, 575
 monumentality, 18, 218–220
 Moore, Laurence, 191
 Moran, Thomas, 194
 Morgan, David, 27, 45, 293–314
 assembling inferences, 293–314
 artefacts, 295–299
 refining likeness, 304–309
 religious technology, 309–312
 reticulating the sacred, 312–313
 specification, 300–304
 Morton, Timothy, 31, 446–449, 451
 Mossi, 321
 Mouride brotherhood, 320
 Mowbray, D., 50
mudras, 134, 139–140, 141, 144–146
 Müller, Max, 4, 11, 523, 551
 multiple realizability, 110, 117–118,
 121–123
 Murphy, Anne, 33, 356–369
 Gurdwaras, 356, 359, 364, 365–366
 Sikh communities, 358–359, 361–367
 Sikh contexts, 356–357, 361, 366,
 367–369
 Sikh past, 357, 362, 364–366
 Sikh relics, 356–369
 itihāsik, 356, 359, 364–366
 materiality of religious life,
 368–369
 materiality of traditions, 359–364
 travels, 366–368
 music, 23, 120, 270, 271, 430
 aural media, 488–494, 497–499
 cinema, 456, 457, 459
 dance, 145, 162–164, 167
 digital media, 476, 477
 Kuwai, 25, 96, 99
 processions, 231, 234, 236
 tourism, 199–200
 Muslims *see* Islam and Muslims
 Myerhoff, Barbara, 462
 mysticism, 17, 31, 209, 448
 Candomblé, 151, 162, 163
 Orientalism, 521–522, 524
 textiles, 321
 Nabha, Kahn Singh, 366
 Nagel, Thomas, 278–279
 Nahua, 437–438, 442, 444–445, 447, 449
 naivedya, 402, 406
 Nanak, Guru, 358–361, 364
 Napoleon, 509
 Narada Muni, 402, 406, 531, 541
 Narayana Maharaj, 424
 Narayanan, Vasudha, 22, 491
 Nash, Manning, 546
 native Americans, 27, 341–353
 colonialism, 514–516, 519
 Hawaiian objects, 349–352
 legislators theorize the sacred, 343–346
 Makah whaling, 346–349
 nature-nurture debate, 119
 Navaho, 259
 Nelson, Lance, 400–401
 Nelson, R., 281
 neo-Pentecostalism, 161, 174, 175
 neurodynamics, 115–116
 neuroscience, 111
 new materialism, 30–31, 276–277, 284–287
 new religious movements (NRMs), 483
 Newark Earthworks, 197–198
 Newton, Isaac, 513
 Ngbe, 322
 Nicholls, David, 576–577
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 30
 Norton, Harry J., 195
 Ochoa, Todd, 166
 Ogotemmèli, 316
 O'Leary, S., 479
 Olivelle, Patrick, 11, 530–544
 ancestral offering (*śrāddha*), 533,
 536, 542
 ascetic, 530–531, 533, 537–538, 543
 Dharmaśāstra, 11, 530–544
 householders, 531–532, 534–538
 impurity, 533, 534, 537, 542

- law (*vyavahāra*), 538–542
 proper conduct (*ācāra*), 532–538
 Vedic initiation (*upanayana*), 532
- Olsen, Bjørnar, 15
- O'Neill, Kevin Lewis, 15, 18–19, 567–580
 civil war, 570–571
 global fetishes, 578–579
 Good Book, 571–573
 passion of Guatemala, 573–576
 spiritual warfare, 182, 183
 testimonio, 576–578
- Orientalism, 4, 14, 33, 509–510, 520–526
- orixás, 27–28, 150, 153–156, 158–159,
 162–164
 aural media, 494
- ornamentation, 132, 134, 141–143, 317
- Oromo, 545–547, 549, 552, 554–558,
 561–562
- Orsi, Robert, 12, 13, 35, 212
 ethnicity, 558, 560
- Ortiz, Dianna, 575
- Ortiz de Montellano, B. R., 444
- Østebø, Terje, 23, 545–563
 Amhara, 545–547, 549, 552, 555,
 557, 561
 embodiment, 23, 546, 548–563
 ethnicity, 545–563
 dominant perspectives, 546–548
 localization and belonging, 548–552
 located and localized, 552–557
 religion located and localized, 557–562
- Oromo, 545–547, 549, 552, 554–558,
 561–562
- peoplehood, 554–555
 provenance, 554–555
- Otto, Rudolf, 31, 152, 190
- Oyama, Susan, 119
- Pacal, king, 263, 441
- Paden, William, 462
- Pallava, Aparna, 388
- Parroquia del Santo Niño, La*, 243–245,
 247–250, 252–254
- Pasteur, Louis, 26
- Patel, Mayur, 144
- Patton, Kimberley, 283, 284
- Paul the Apostle, 16–17
- Pecham, John, 51
- Peña, Elaine A., 18, 241–255
 religion on the border, 244–254
 religion on the move, 241–244
- Penn, Sean, 468
- Pentcheva, Bissera, 498–499
- Pentecostalism, 11, 153
 aural media, 490, 491
 spiritual warfare, 171–184
 ideology to strategy, 172–174
 scaling in space and time, 174–180
 subjectivity and discipline, 180–183
- Penumarthi, Sasikala, 132–133, 136, 139,
 141–143
- performance
 gender, 20, 72–74, 75, 81
 Indian dance, 12, 24, 131–138
 processions, 228–238
 spirit incorporation, 151–152
- Perlo, Katherine, 280, 282
- persistence of materiality, 1–8
- pervasiveness of materiality, 5
- Peterson, Anna L. 7, 274–287
 animal studies, 278–279
 animals and religion, 280–286
 burials, 280, 284
 chimpanzees, 284–285
 dogs, 279
 hunting, 281, 282, 283–284
- phratric exogamy, 91, 105
- photography, 154, 160–161, 259
 cinema, 455, 457, 462, 469
 civil war in Guatemala, 574–575
 Graceland, 199
 Yellowstone, 194, 196
- Picón, Pedro, 578
- Picón, Herlindo, 578
- Pilate, Pontius, 300
- pilgrimage, 18, 27, 209–221, 456
 cinema, 456, 468
 digital media, 476
 ethnicity, 559
- Mesoamericans, 261, 270, 272, 442
- monumentality, 18, 218–220
- power and control, 216–218

- pilgrimage (*cont'd*)
 Sikh relics, 358, 368
 theoretical itineraries, 210–214
 theory to practice, 214–216
 tourism, 189, 190, 199, 200–202
- Pinkney, Andrea Marion, 13, 22, 414–430
prasāda, 414–430
 commensality and community, 415–419
 Hindu food systems, 419–422
 as sacred Hindu food, 414–415
 as universal food, 416, 419, 422–427, 428
- Plato, 8, 12
- Plate, S. Brent, 22, 455–469
 cinema, 22, 455–469
 after the show, 466–468
 before the show, 458–462
 brief background, 456–458
 during the show, 462–466
 mythologies, 456, 458–460, 462, 464–465, 467
 mythologizing, 455
 myths, 458, 462, 465, 468
 worlds and world-making, 456–457, 458–462, 463–467, 468–469
- pollution, 22, 385
 Hindu food, 416–418, 420, 422–423, 425–426, 428
- Pope and digital media, 472, 473, 478
- possession in spiritual warfare, 178, 180
- Povilleni, Elizabeth, 343
- Prabhupada, Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, 407–408, 410
- Prachinabarhi, king, 402
- prasāda*, 414–430
 commensality and community, 415–419
 Hindu food systems, 419–422
 as sacred Hindu food, 414–415
 as universal food, 416, 419, 422–427, 428
- Presbyterians, 472
- Presley, Elvis and family, 192, 199–202
- Price, Percival, 495
- primal androgyne, 63–64, 78–80
- processions, 226–238, 241
 Hindus, 228–234
 Sikhs, 226–229, 234–238
- proper conduct, 532–538
- Protestantism, 4, 8, 10–14, 306, 329, 557
 aural media, 489, 494
 civil war in Guatemala, 570, 572–573, 576–578
 colonialism, 512–513, 514, 527
 place pilgrimage, 215, 216, 220
 Reformation 2, 10–11, 171
 relics, 368
 spiritual warfare, 11–12, 171
 tourism, 193, 194, 195
- Proudfoot, Wayne, 152
- psychological and cognitive studies, 151, 152
- Purchas, Samuel, 518
- Purohit, Hina, 144
- Pusti Mārg community, 424–425
- Qur'an, 2, 558
 aural media, 492, 499
 textiles, 319, 321
- race and racialization, 509, 510–512, 518, 526
 colonialism, 509–512, 514–527
 Americas, 514–516
 Asia, 520–526
 West-Central Africa, 516–520, 522
see also ethnicity
- Radde-Antweiler, K., 480
- Radhasoamis, 421
- Ragavan, Deena, 260
- Rahit*, 362, 363, 364
- Ramanuja, 12
- Ramírez, Father José Martínez, 246, 247, 250, 252–253
- Rāmnāmīs, 424
- Randolph, Paschal Beverly, 526
- rasa*, 133, 141, 146, 147, 148
- Rasmussen, Anne, 492
- Read, Jeremy, 140
- Read, Kay A., 29, 281, 433–451
 human sacrifice, 433–451
 eat and be eaten, 446–449
 sacrificial feeding, 433–437
 sustaining blood, 437–443
 sustaining excrement, 443–446
- Redeemed Church of God (RCCG), 174, 176–179, 181, 183
- redescription, 157, 162–166

- Regan, Tom, 283
- Reichel-Dolmatoff, G., 97
- Reinhardt, Bruno, 7
- relics, 33, 46
- Sikhism, 33, 356–369
 - itihāsik*, 356, 359, 364–366
 - materiality of religious life, 368–369
 - materiality of traditions, 359–364
 - travels, 366–368
- religious art and images, 1–8, 293–313
- ambivalence towards materiality, 8–12
 - carnation in Christianity, 46–47, 51–53
 - destruction of statues by Taliban, 1–2, 3–5
 - re-purposing, 3–4
 - statuary, 296, 303, 306–312, 442
- Renaissance, 55
- repatriation of objects, 27, 341–343, 346
- representationalism, 116
- reproduction and Rabbinic construction of gender, 61
- re-purposing of mages and icons, 3–4
- resurrection of Jesus, 16, 48–49, 54
- Rg Veda*, 396, 523
- Rheingold, H., 472
- rhizome, 27, 294
- Richer, Juan E., 245
- Ricoeur, Paul, 267
- Rinehart, R., 362
- ritual, 2–3, 7, 10–11, 19–20, 27–28, 242, 476–477
- animals, 274–276, 280–285
 - aural media, 489, 490, 494–496
 - Candomblé, 27, 151–166
 - Catholicism, 573
 - cinema, 455–456, 458, 461–462, 464–468
 - cognitive science, 120
 - dance, 133, 135, 136
 - digital media, 22, 471–472, 474, 476–479, 481–484
 - Eucharist, 309
 - food, 33, 375–376, 378, 392
 - prasāda*, 414–428
 - vegetarianism, 396–398, 406, 407
 - headscarves, 332
 - Hindu code, 530, 532–538, 542
 - Hohodene, 98, 101, 104, 106
 - images and statuary, 309, 310, 312
 - indigenous sacred objects, 343–346, 348
 - Mesoamericans, 259–265, 267–271, 272
 - sacrifice, 433–435, 438, 440–442, 445
 - pilgrimage, 210, 211, 220
 - processions, 26, 98, 101, 226–238
 - Rabbinic construction of gender, 65, 73, 81
 - Sikh relics, 360
 - textiles, 321, 323–324
- Rivera, Mayra, 16
- Robbins, Joel, 173, 183
- Robertson, K., 55
- robotics, 113
- Rocky*, 467
- Rodrigues, Raymundo Nina, 162
- Rose, Marina, 497
- Rosen, Steven J., 13, 22
- Vaishnava vegetarianism, 13, 22, 395–412
 - five components, 401–406
 - meat eating, 398–401
 - scriptural basis, 396–398
- Ross-Bryant, Lynn, 214
- Rovine, Victoria L., 4, 316–326
- textiles from Africa, 4, 316–326
 - afterlife, 323–325
 - clothing for the spirit world, 319–322
 - sacred places, 322–323
- Ruane, Joseph and Jennifer Todd, 554
- Ruiz, Fuastino Moscoso, 578
- Runa, 32
- Rupert of Deutz, 56
- Russian orthodoxy, 215, 217
- St. Augustine, 50, 211
- St. Britto, 214
- St. Gregory, 301, 302, 309
- St. Paul, 171, 173, 176, 523
- St. Thecle, 215
- Sack, Daniel, 376
- sacralization of space, 241, 243–244, 246–247, 249–250, 252–254
- Sacred Heart of Jesus, 27, 293–299, 301, 303–313
- sacredness, 293–314
- artefacts, 295–299
 - flutes and trumpets, 90–93, 96–105
 - geography, 104, 105

- sacredness (*cont'd*)
 native American objects, 27, 341–353
 Hawaiian, 349–352
 Makah whaling, 346–349
 refining likeness, 304–309
 religious technology, 309–312
 reticulating the sacred, 312–313
 specification, 300–304
- sacrifice, 29
 animals, 272, 281–284, 286, 395–398, 400, 402
 Mesoamericans, 442, 446, 448
 digital media, 481
 Hindu code, 533–535
 human, 259, 261, 267–272, 433–451
 eat and be eaten, 446–449
 sacrificial feeding, 433–437
 sustaining blood, 437–443
 sustaining excrement, 443–446
 Mesoamericans, 29, 433–451
- Sahib, Guru Granth, 430
- Sai Baba of Shirdi, 421, 429
- Said, Edward, 14, 509–510, 520–521
- Sainapati, 362
- Samkhya, 12
- Samuels, D. W., 496
- Sanford, A. Whitney, 13, 33, 375–392
 body and labour, 386–387
 Brahma Vidya Mandir, 377–381
 Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, 381–383
 environment, 390–391
 Sirius Ecovillage, 383–386
 society, 388–390
- Sansi, Roger, 155
- Sanskrit, 6
 body and dance, 134, 141, 145
 colonialism, 509, 522–523
 Hindu code, 533, 537, 538
 prasāda, 414
 Sikh relics, 362
 vegetarianism, 396–397, 402, 405
- Santería, 490
- saris, 131–132, 134, 142–143, 147, 230, 336
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, 17
- sattva-guna*, 401, 403–404
- Saunders, Nicholas, 280
- Scarry, E., 53
- Scent of the Green Papaya*, 466
- Schaefer, Donovan, 23, 285, 286
- Schafer, R. Murray, 494, 497
- Scheifinger, H., 481
- Schelling, Friedrich, 13
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich, 152, 190
- Schmidt, Leigh, 489
- Schofer, Jonathan, 61
- Schopen, Gregory, 5, 357, 358, 368
- Schroeder, R., 479
- Schumacher, E. F., 381
- Schutz, Alfred, 551
- Schweitzer, Albert, 542
- Scott, James C., 341
- Scott, Joan, 335
- Secor, Anna J., 4, 328–339
 headscarves, 328–339
 agentic thing, 332–334
 assemblage of veiling, 330–332
 ethical problematic, 334–336
- Secunda, Shai, 79
- Seder, 375, 376, 387
- Seidman, Naomi, 61
- Sells, Michael, 4
- sensorimotor system, 21, 114
- Sephardic Jews, 250
- Seremetakis, Nadia, 135
- sexuality and sexual behaviour, 47, 61
 colonialism, 509, 511–512, 514–516, 519–520, 524–526
 Asians, 524–526
 native Americans, 514–516
 West-Central Africans, 516, 519–520
 Hindu code, 533, 541
- Shaivism, 2
- Shakta, 396
- shamans and shamanism, 28, 36, 173
 aural media, 490, 495
 Hohodene, 25, 91–97, 99–103
 Kuwai's birth, 92
- Shankara, 12–13
- Sharf, Robert, 357, 368, 369
- Shani, Giorgio, 367
- Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine, 24
- Shields, Rob, 214
- Shimon, Rabbi, 69

- Shippen, Bill, 198
 Shiva, Vandana, 388
 Shizvi, Rav, 70
 shrines, 1, 272
 Candomblé, 155
 colonialism, 513, 514
 ethnicity, 559, 560–561
 Graceland, 200, 201
 images and statuary, 296, 312–313
 place pilgrimage, 210–211, 214–221
 processions, 227, 230
 religion on the move, 242, 243, 244
 sharing, 215–217
 Sikh relics, 358, 359
 textiles, 317, 323
 sickness, 92–97, 100, 103, 105
 Siddharta *see* Buddha
 Sieber, Roy, 318
Sifra, 67, 68, 70
Sifre, 67, 68
 Sikhism, 26, 228–229
 aural media, 491
 prasāda, 424, 430
 processions, 226–229, 234–238
 relics, 33, 356–369
 itihāsik, 356, 359, 364–366
 materiality of religious life, 368–369
 materiality of traditions, 359–364
 travels, 366–368
 weapons, 359, 360
 Silk Road, 1, 10
 Silverman, Kaja, 465
 Simpson, James, 3
 Sinan, Mimar Koca, 499
 Singh, Baghel, 365
 Singh, Bhai Boota, 366, 368
 Singh, Chaupa, 365
 Singh, Guru Gobind, 227, 234–236, 238, 359, 362, 430
 Singh, Harbhajan, 366
 Singh, Guru Hargobind, 238
 Singh, Maharaja Ranjit, 229, 366
 Sirius Ecovillage, 376–377, 383–386, 390–392
 Siskel, Gene, 468
 Sitney, P. Adams, 461
 Sklar, Diedre, 146
 slavery, 16
 androgynos, 64, 65, 67, 71
 Candomblé, 153, 154, 158–160, 166
 colonialism, 516, 518, 520, 526
 gender, 64, 67, 71, 73, 84
 Slingerland, Edward, 118, 119
 Smart, Ninian, 190
 Smith, Huston, 190
 Smith, Jonathan Z., 18, 34, 190, 241, 261, 272
 Smith, Robertson, 375
 Snow, Michael, 461
 Socrates, 8
 Souriau, Étienne, 457, 467
 speaking in tongues, 18, 178, 181, 491
 Spinoza, Baruch, 30, 513
 spirit incorporation, 27–28, 150–167
 affordances and constraints, 156–162
 collective identifications, 161–162
 gender, 157–158, 162
 governance, 157, 159–160
 labour intensiveness, 157, 158–159
 materiality, 153–156
 performance, 27–28, 151–152
 possession, 27, 157, 160–161
 precedents, 151–153
 redescription, 162–166
 Spirit Possession Two-Step, 150–151, 153, 165
 Spiritism, 153
 spiritual mapping, 173, 175–179
 Spiritual Warfare Network (SWN), 173
 Splaine, Rev. James F., 310–311
 Srinivasan, Priya, 131–132
 Stallone, Sylvester, 466–467
Star Wars, 459–460, 468
 Stations of the Cross, 219, 300
 Steinberg, Leo, 47, 48
 Sterne, Jonathan, 487–488, 493
 Stoler Miller, Barbara, 148
 Stonehenge, 497, 398
 Sufi, 329, 359, 493, 499
 Sugirtharajah, Sharade, 11

taijiquan, 120
 Taliban, 1–2, 3–5, 10, 26
 Talmud, 61, 63, 69, 70, 78–79

- Tamil Hindus, 228–229
 processions, 226–228, 229–234, 236, 238
 Tamoanchan tree, 262, 269
 Tantra, 524–526
 Tantric Buddhism, 490
 Taoism, 491
 Taves, Ann, 4, 118, 119
 Teresa of Avila, 17
 textiles, 4, 316–326, 380
 afterlife, 323–325
 clothing for the spirit world, 319–322
 sacred places, 322–323
 texts and textualism, 5–7, 482, 548
 ambivalence towards materiality,
 10–11, 13–15
 Buddhism, 5–6, 11
 civil war in Guatemala, 567–579
 colonialism, 513–514, 521–523, 525–527
 dance, 134, 141
 digital media, 472, 475
 films, 456–457
 food and agriculture, 378–379
Guru Granth Sahib, 234, 235–236
 Sikh relics, 359, 361, 364, 365
 Hindu code, 531, 534, 540
 Mesoamerican Borgia, 433–447, 449
 place pilgrimage, 210, 220
prasāda, 414–415, 422, 423
 Rabbinic construction of gender, 62–81
 Sikh relics, 356, 359, 361–369
 vegetarianism, 395, 396–408, 409–411
 Thelen, Esther and Linda Smith, 115
 theory-practice, 132, 133
 thing-power, 30
 Thompson, E. P., 277
 Thoreau, Henry David, 192, 468
 Thooumin, Rabbi, 215
 Tillich, Paul, 202
 Titon, Jeff Todd, 491
 Tolkien, J. R. R., 467
 Tolstoy, Leo, 380
Tome of Leo the Great, 45
 Toomey, Paul, 424, 425, 429
 Torah, 65, 66, 73, 74, 82
Tosefta Bikkurim, 65–67, 69, 74–75, 77–78,
 80–81
Tosefta Megillah, 66–67, 73
Tosefta Shabbat, 75
Tosefta Yevamot, 76
Tosefta Zavim, 77, 78
 totem, 33, 281, 329, 568
 tourism, 27, 33, 187–204
 authentic alterities, 191, 192, 195–198
 authentic religion, 202
 economies of existential phenomenology,
 188–192
 Graceland charisma, 192, 199–202
 place pilgrimage, 209–211, 215, 217, 221
 Yellowstone awakenings, 192–195
 Towrson, William, 519
 Tracy, David, 578
 Trainor, Kevin, 358
 trances, 151, 159, 162, 163
 transcendence, 3, 6, 7, 16
 ambivalence towards materiality, 8, 9,
 10, 12
 transubstantiation, 12, 16, 55
 trumpets, 90–93, 96–97, 100–106
 Tuan, Yi-Fu, 18, 553, 557
tumtum, 64, 67–69, 71, 73–75, 77–78, 81, 84
 turn to materiality, 16–33
 bodies and things, 25–33
 recovery of the body, 16–25
 Turnbull, Colin, 497
 Turner, Victor and Edith, 211, 212, 213
 Tweed, Thomas, 18, 179, 212, 343
 ethnicity, 550, 552, 559, 560
 religion on the move, 241, 242
 Tweedie, Ann, 349
 Tylor, E. B., 31
 Tz'utujil, 259
 ukara cloth, 322–323
 Umbanda, 150, 153, 160, 161
 UNESCO, 92
 United Nations, 2, 4
 United States – Mexico border, 242, 243,
 244–255
 Urban, Greg, 491
 Urry, John, 189, 203
 Vaishnavism, 491
 food, 376, 378–381
prasāda, 423–424, 426

- vegetarianism, 13, 22, 376, 395–412
 five components, 401–406
 meat eating, 398–401
 scriptural basis, 396–398
 Vaishya, 416, 419
 Vallabhites, 424, 425
 van der Leeuw, Gerard, 17
 van Wyk, Ilana, 174
 Varela, Francisco, Evan Thompson and
 Eleanor Rosch, 115
 Vargas, Ivette, 281
 Varkari, 358
 Vásquez, Manuel, 1–37, 45, 242, 338
 animals in religion, 285, 287
 comparative religious materiality, 1–37
 ethnicity, 549, 551, 561
 governmentality, 18
 native American sacred objects, 343
 place pilgrimage, 210, 212
 power, domination and resistance, 8, 10,
 17–18, 212
 practice(s), space and place-making, 22, 31
 Vasudeva Datta, 405
 Vedas and Vedic texts, 13, 525
 Hindu code, 532–535
 prasāda, 414, 419
 processions, 227
 vegetarianism, 396–400, 402, 407,
 408–410
 veganism, 280, 395
 vegetarianism, 22, 280, 425, 536
 Vaishnavism, 13, 22, 376, 395–412
 five components, 401–406
 meat eating, 398–401
 scriptural basis, 396–398
 veils and veiling, 142, 317, 328–339
 assemblage, 330–332
 fashion, 330–332, 338
 Verger, Pierre, 154, 161
vesham, 141–143
 performance, 142–143
 practice, 142
 Via Campesina, 388
 Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo 32–33
 Vogel, Steven, 277
 voice, 490–494
 Vonnegut, Kurt, 146, 147
 Wacquant, Loic, 24
 Wadley, Susan, 428
 Wagner, Peter, 173, 175, 183
 Wagner, R. 477, 478
 Wahhabism, 4
 wait-stations, 243
 Wallace, David Foster, 187, 188, 202
 Wallace, William, 456
 Waller, Steven, 498
 Walsham, Alexandra, 357, 359
 Walton, Heather, 210
 Wang, Ning, 189
 Washburn, General Henry Dana, 193
Wavelength, 461
 Weber, Max, 11, 522, 551, 554
 Weidman, Amanda, 491
 Weiner, Isaac, 489
 Welsh, Mark, 198
 Welten, Ruud, 488
 Werbner, Richard, 211
 whaling, 346–349, 352
 Wheatley, Paul, 29, 260, 261,
 265, 268
 Wheeler, James Talboys, 524
 Wheeler, Michael, 110, 117, 121
 Whitehead, Alfred, 30
 Williamson, J., 200
 Winfrey, Oprah, 190, 200
 Wink, Walter, 173
 Wirtz, Kristina, 152
 Wirzba, Norman, 390
 witchcraft, 10, 173, 174, 179
 colonialism, 10, 513, 516
 Wolfe, Carey, 278, 285–286
 Wozencroft, Jon, 498
 Wright, Robin M., 25, 90–106
 body adornments, 104
 duality of Kuwait's body, 93–94
 hidden anomaly, 92
 Kuwait and growth, 96
 sacred geography, 104, 105
 sacred sounds, 97–103
 viscera and body fluids, 94–96
 Yehudah, Rabbi, 70
 Yellowstone, 192–195
 Yglesias, Ángeles Espinosa, 272

Yoruba, 150, 153, 154, 166

textiles, 322, 323, 325

Yosi, Rabbi, 66, 67, 69–70, 80–81

Yuda, Rabbi, 77

Yurupary, 92, 105

Zarrilli, Phillip, 141

Zimmer, Heinrich, 525

Zoolander, 473

Zoroastrianism, 472, 491

Zuzworsky, Rose, 391