

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FORUM ON FOLKLORE AND POPULAR CULTURE

Volume 12

Frank van Vree

Absent Memories

Responses by Aleida Assmann, Marianne Hirsch

Steven Gardiner

*Behold the Man: Heroic Masochism and
Mel Gibson's Passion as Masculine Rite of Passage*
Responses by Mark Pizzato, Fareed Ben-Youssef

Bo Allesøe Christensen

Rational and Emotional Fools?

Response by Philip W. Scher

Reviews by **Claudia Schwabe, David J. Puglia,
Adrienne Gerard, & Spencer Green**

Cultural Analysis:
An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular
Culture
Volume 12

Frank van Vree

Absent Memories..... |
Responses: Aleida Assmann, Marianne Hirsch

Steven Gardiner

Behold the Man: Heroic Masochism and Mel Gibson's Passion
as Masculine Rite of Passage..... 18
Responses: Mark Pizzato, Fared Ben-Youssef

Bo Allesøe Christensen

Rational and Emotional Fools?.....44
Response: Philip W. Scher

Book Reviews

Claudia Schwabe, *Fairy Tales Transformed?:*
Twenty-First-Century Adaptations & the Politics of Wonder (Bacchilega).....R1

David J. Puglia, *Sensing the Past:*
Hollywood Stars and Historical Vision (Cullen).....R4

Adrienne Gerard, *Stuff* (Miller).....R7

Spencer Green, *Latter-day Lore:*
Mormon Folklore Studies (Eliason and Mould).....R9

Editorial Board

Pertti J. Anttonen, University of Helsinki, Finland
Fekade Azeze, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia
Hande Birkalan, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey
Regina Bendix, Universität Göttingen, Germany
Charles Briggs, University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A.
Véronique Champion-Vincent, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, France
Oscar Chamosa, University of Georgia, U.S.A.
Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, University of Iceland, Reykjavik
Jawaharlal Handoo, Central Institute of Indian Languages, India
Galit Hasan-Rokem, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem
Damascus Kafumbe, Middlebury College, U.S.A.
Kimberly Lau, University of California, Santa Cruz, U.S.A.
James R. Lewis, University of Tromsø, Norway
John Lindow, University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A.
Sabina Magliocco, California State University, Northridge, U.S.A.
Jay Mechling, University of California, Davis, U.S.A.
Fabio Mugnaini, University of Siena, Italy
Sadhana Naithani, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
Peter Shand, University of Auckland, New Zealand
Francisco Vaz da Silva, University of Lisbon, Portugal
Maiken Umbach, University of Nottingham, England
Ülo Valk, University of Tartu, Estonia
Fionnuala Carson Williams, Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, Åbo Academy, Finland

Editorial Collective

Senior Editors: Anthony Bak Buccitelli, Karen Miller, Tok Thompson, Elaine Yau
Associate Editors: Sophie Elpers, Robert Guyker, Jr., Semontee Mitra
Review Editor: Spencer Green
Copy Editors: Jason Canniff, Cory Hutcheson, Annamarie O'Brien
Website Manager: Kiesha Oliver

Absent Memories

Frank van Vree

University of Amsterdam
Netherlands

“The map of an Irish hell” lamented *The Irish Times* on May 21st 2009, referring to the report of an official commission, led by the high court judge Seán Ryan and installed by the Irish government, to inquire child abuse from 1936 onwards. “It is a land of pain and shame, of savage cruelty and callous indifference.”¹ Rape, sexual molestation, beatings and humiliation were “endemic” in Irish Catholic church-run orphanages and other institutions, according to the 2,600-page final report. It was published after nine years of investigations and drew on testimony from thousands of former inmates and officials from more than 250 church-run institutions. The commission concluded that Catholic priests and nuns had terrorized thousands of boys and girls for decades and that government inspectors had failed to stop the physical and psychological terror.²

The outcome of the Irish investigations—and these of similar agencies in other countries, such as the *John Jay Report* in the U.S. (2004) and the *Report of the Deetman Commission* in The Netherlands (2011)—poses serious questions with regard to the functioning of “social memory” and “social forgetting.” Considering the scale and the enormity of the abusive practices one may wonder why memories of these did not come to light before. Was it the power of the Church that prevented victims to speak, as one may conclude

from the words of the abbot of Glenstal Abbey? The Church, according to the leader of the Benedictine Community in the county of Limerick, “made this island into a concentration camp where they could control everything (...) and the control was really all about sex.”³ The Church appeared to have the spiritual power to actually silence individual memories.

To explain the massive silence that reigned so long, others pointed to the traumatic nature of sexual abuse, whether occurred within a church institution, a family or another more or less closed community. Analogously to the symptoms individuals may develop after being exposed to traumatic experience, public silence with regard to the widespread abuse should be interpreted as “social amnesia,” caused by a collective trauma.

Both explanations of the thorough obfuscation with regard to the psychological and physical terror exerted by priests and nuns, for many long decades, in Ireland as well as in other countries—a case to which I will return later—seamlessly fit into what may be designated as the dominant paradigms of social silence or forgetfulness: the *paradigm of hegemonic memory* and the *paradigm of traumatic memory*. The issue at stake here is whether or not these paradigms suffice to understand these and other phenomena related to social forgetting.

Paradigms of “social forgetting”

To address the latter question, it is necessary to get a better grip upon the concepts and patterns that underlie these phenomena—and this is what this contribution is about. Its form is not that of a closing argument, but an exploration into the nature of “social memory” and

“social forgetting.” Such an explorative work should not be considered to be a redundant exercise, since there are reasons to be worried, or even annoyed, about the way various concepts and patterns regarding memory are currently being deployed. Along with the growing popularity of memory studies with scholars and students, the number of studies lacking originality and quality has also been rising, based upon research that suffers from a certain degree of repetition as well as empirical weakness, losing itself into a kind of self-referring theoretical exercises, or a rather naive, oral history based storytelling. Both remembering and forgetting are conceived and applied in an almost mechanistic way, as an *explanans* instead of an *explanandum*. However, to get a better understanding of complex processes and multifaceted phenomena like “social memory” and “social forgetting,” a far more nuanced approach is needed, questioning established ideas and arguments, and, if necessary, uprooting them.

Looking back into the history of memory studies it appears that most authors dealing with social forgetting, silencing and amnesia focus on what may be called “distortions of memory,” cases in which forgetfulness is dysfunctional, contrary to what is perceived as the “natural process of forgetting.” After all, forgetting is a fully natural or even necessary phenomenon, for the individual as well as for society, as Marc Augé (1998, 7) argues. Even our autobiographical memory is, as psychologist and historian Douwe Draaisma puts it in his fascinating book *Why Life Speeds Up as You Get Older: How Memory Shapes Our Past*, a diary and a book of forgetting in one, governed by its own enigmatic laws (Draaisma 2004, 1).

But in the case of distortions of memory, “forgetting” may turn into “all the types of amnesia with which clinical literature abounds,” as Paul Ricoeur argues: “It is against this forgetting that we conduct the work of memory (*oeuvre de mémoire*) in order to slow down its course, even to hold it at bay” (Ricoeur 2004, 426-427).

Such notions of “distortion” and “dysfunctionality” of forgetting appeared tailored for use within the social and historical domain. Two, only partly related lines of thinking, appeared to be predominant, lines to which I already referred to as *paradigms*. The first—and oldest—of these has been identified as the *paradigm of hegemonic memory*, the second as the *paradigm of traumatic memory*. The first line, that of hegemonic memory, found its most rude and cynical expression in George Orwell’s novel *1984*, which basically centers around the politics of history as a way of controlling the present through the past. The Ministry of Truth, where the book’s hero, Winston Smith, works, is first and for all rewriting history, having people and events disappearing into “memory holes.” Thus conceived “social forgetting” belongs to the realm of politics and power relations, being a dominant discourse, produced by deliberate repression and other forms of hegemony.

Memory, as a product of the politics of memory, serves ideological needs, to start with national unity, as expressed, for example, by Ernest Renan in his seminal essay *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation – What Is a Nation?*, published in 1882. “Forgetting,” according to the French philosopher and writer,

is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation. (...) The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common and also that they have forgotten many things,

adding, a bit further, that

every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Barthélemy, or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century.

The notion of a national forgetting in Renan's essay, however, is rather problematic, as Benedict Anderson has pointed out in his famous work *Imagined Communities*. Zeroing in on the original French phrase, that the French citizen "*doit avoir oublié*", meaning: that he or she "has to have forgotten" ancient tragedies—instead of just "has to forget" them—Anderson argues that forgetting is conceived by Renan as a prime contemporary civic duty (Anderson, 1991, 200). Renan's readers were being told that they *should have already forgotten*, what Renan's own words assumed that they naturally still remembered. Anderson accounts for this paradox by arguing that the citizens of modern nations must undergo "a deep reshaping of the imagination", a process over which the state itself has barely any substantial control (*ibid*, 201). This reshaping requires a forgetting in order to reconfigure the bloody events of the past, such as civil war and all kinds of bitter disputes and internal conflicts, thus contributing to the conception of the nation as an extended family, according to Anderson.

Along these and similar lines, "social forgetting" has been conceived as belonging to the realm of politics and power relations, as a result of deliberate repression or less visible mechanisms of political and cultural hegemony. This may be the reason why, as Ann Rigney has indicated,

"memory" has tended in practice to become synonymous with "counter-memory", defined in opposition to hegemonic views of the past and associated with groups who have been "left out", as it were, of mainstream history. The study of such memories has been based on a belief in the importance and possibility of "recovering" memories which were once there and which have since been "lost" or "hidden" (Rigney 2005, 13).

According to Rigney, this "recovery project" is in various ways linked to contemporary identity politics of particular groups, searching to profile their common identity by claiming distinct roots in a particular historical experience. "Memory" may even be considered here to be the opposite of "history", as the official recitation of distant events, recorded by archival documents, artifacts and testimonies.

The second guiding line, or paradigm, fostering the notion of "social forgetting", developed only in the late Twentieth century, and is closely connected to the idea of trauma: forgetting, or silencing, as a psychological or even social-psychological phenomenon, brought about by experiencing severe repression, sexual and physical violence, humiliation and other—I would even say: a growing number of other—degrading acts and extremely painful situations. One may say that the emergence of trauma as a paradigmatic discourse itself is a mark of our time, as Ana Douglass and Thomas Vogler have argued: the rise of the discourse of trauma—originally emanating from postwar philosophical reflections on Auschwitz—

for defining the catastrophic, calamitous, or otherwise injurious may be seen as a metaphor for characterizing the historical epoch of the present (Vogler 2003). Cathy Caruth, one of the founding theorists of trauma theory, has pushed this idea even further, claiming history to be inherently traumatic, and trauma as an overwhelming experience that resists integration and expression; similar thoughts were expressed by two other early theorists, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, in their path-breaking volume *Testimony—Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992).⁴

From the 1980's on historians—particularly in the field of oral history—and scholars of literary, cultural and memory studies adopted not only trauma as a key concept for understanding individual as well as social memory, but also the language of psychology. Thus the field of individual and social memories was so to say “booby trapped” with so-called “pathogenic secrets” or “trauma stories” that had to be unraveled—memories that were supposed to have been silenced, repressed or even totally lost in amnesia. However, just as psychologists have seriously questioned the concept of traumatic memories and the therapies related to it, historians have increasingly raised doubts regarding trauma in relation to *collective* entities—social groups, let alone nations—beyond its metaphorical usage and apart from its symbolic meaning, expressing the ethos of compassion and the demand for justice, characteristic of our time (Stone 2014; cf. Fassin & Rechtman 2009). Studies on cultural trauma, the German historian Wulf Kansteiner argues, often display a disturbing lack of historical and moral precision, while aestheticizing

violence and conflating the real experiences of victims, perpetrators and spectators of traumatic events (Kansteiner 2004, 193-221).

It is obvious that, in order to understand social forgetting, we cannot content our selves with the approaches stemming, in one way or another, from these two paradigms. What we need is a deeper, more layered view of social forgetting as a dynamic process, by introducing a variety of motives and factors leading to forgetting or silencing of past experiences, as Karine Varley has also pointed out in her contribution to this issue.

On the Plasticity of Memory

To understand the complex nature of social forgetting, it may be worthwhile to focus a while on the relationship and—above all—the interaction between individual memories and social memories. Following cultural theorist Aleida Assmann, personal memories should be defined as subjective, often fragmented, episodic memories, referring to one's own past experiences, which are embodied in our brains and body, while social memories refer to the past as experienced and communicated within communities.⁵ Social memories are, similar to personal memories, embodied in living people—as members of a family, a peer group or any other community, including a nation—but, unlike the first, communicative and performative *by their very nature*. Defining individual memories as being located in the individual brain, however, does not imply that they are *void* of social qualities—in contrary.

Empirical research in psychology strongly underlines the idea that individual memories are molded by social,

communicative processes, even in cases they are not expressed in words, silence or body language. And when we use the word “molded,” we do so to refer to a variety of factors, determining not only the linguistic, visual and narrative *forms* of these individual memories, but also their durability and—what we may call—their “content,” or “objects,” *i.e.* the experiences these memories refer to. In other words, personal memories may be completely unspoken, buried in the individual’s brain, but nevertheless they have an undisputedly social dimension, particularly in modern society, in which experiences are increasingly mediated, as Augé argues, in the form of collective stories, images, music and tropes, posing a threat to the “integrity” of personal narratives (Augé 1998).

In this sense personal memories are not stable, as they change under the influence of social life, re-shaping the narrative and mental representations, again and again, by adding, omitting, inserting and absorbing elements. Or personal memories may even be completely invented, as Elisabeth Loftus and others have convincingly proven (Loftus & Ketcham 1994). On these grounds, some theorists have concluded memory to be “a fundamentally defective system.” However, its defects may also be seen as “the by-products of otherwise adaptive features of memory, a price we pay for processes and function that serve us well in many respects,” as Daniel Schacter (2001, 184) puts it.

The conclusion that episodic, individual memories are subject to a high degree of plasticity, is extremely relevant for memory studies, since it sheds a clear light upon the relationship and the interaction between individual and social

memories, and consequently upon “social forgetting” as a dynamic process. As mentioned before, recent psychological research may help us to understand the mechanisms of interaction, showing, for example, how individual memories are deeply affected by conversation, with effects lingering long after the conversations themselves are only a distant memory. The effects, however, may differ greatly depending on someone’s position in the conversation: so “listeners” may find their memory substantially altered and reshaped by a conversation, while the same conversation may merely serve to reinforce speakers’ pre-existing memories. On the other hand, speakers tend to adjust their memories to their audience, in order to create what is called “a shared reality”: a process of “mnemonic tuning” which does indeed appear to affect their own memories as well. This results into what psychologists call a process of “mnemonic convergence” (Koppel & Hirst 2011, 89-104).

From this experimental laboratory research we may learn how individual memories may be reshaped, by mnemonic tuning and the transmission of recollections from speakers to listeners, leading to what is labeled “social contagion” (that is: implanting new memories with the listeners) and “induced forgetting” (that is: conversation causing the listeners to partially or even wholly forget memories). Remarkably, research indicates that to have specific memories completely to be forgotten, the optimal strategy for speakers would not be *not* to refer to the situation or information, but only to exclude the specific elements they wish to be forgotten. To give a simple example: if a wife wishes her husband to forget a painful incident during their va-

cation, she might be more successful by discussing the vacation without referring to that specific incident than just not mentioning the vacation at all.

Absent memories

Quite obviously, empirical findings like these from psychological experiments are extremely relevant for our understanding of the dynamics of social remembrance and forgetting, and, in particular, the role of articulation and communication. It may offer a sound explanation why, for example, memories might be virtually absent in public discourse at a specific moment in time, and to emerge at another.

Take, for example, the almost complete silence, during the first decades after 1945, virtually all over Europe, on the victims of the Nazi extermination policies, as was apparent from the lack of public monuments, historical works, ceremonies and other expressions of public attention. In the East, as well as the West, killed Jews were not commemorated as victims of the German anti-Semitic, genocidal policy of *Endlösung*, but primarily as “compatriots” fallen in an atrocious war between nations and ideologies. A striking expression of this tendency is constituted by Nathan Rapoport’s famous Warsaw Ghetto Monument. Erected under socialist-communist rule in 1948, it was first of all meant to commemorate the martyrdom and solidarity against the “class-based” Nazi terror, not Jewish victimhood.

Likewise, at the other side of the Iron Curtain, in the Netherlands, various efforts to create a memorial for its deported and killed Jewish compatriots remained fruitless as well, apart from a few monuments highlighting national resistance and other acts of support against the Nazi

persecution of the Jews. And when finally the Hollandsche Schouwburg, the Amsterdam theatre where tens of thousands of Dutch Jews had been imprisoned before being deported to the annihilation camps in the East, was installed as a site of commemoration, in 1963, the sign on the wall read: “*memorial for the Jewish compatriots fallen 1940-1945*”—fully in line with the current dominant discourse of remembrance, which was basically nationalist and oriented at future reconstruction (Hijink 2011; Van Vree, 1995; Lagrou, 2000).

It would be too easy to reduce the lack of public attention for the persecution and extermination of the Jews—in Poland, the Netherlands or France—to a deliberate effort to repress painful memories of widespread passiveness of bystanders and collaboration by non-Jews. The reasons were manifold, to start with a general, deeply felt search for continuity and reconstruction, falling back on traditional ideology and stressing the idea that all this suffering had not been in vain. Within such a mental framework there was hardly any room for victims other than political prisoners, military and resistance fighters. Anti-Semitism may definitely have played a role too, but the same goes for the argument that in a “truly national” commemoration culture no group should get a special treatment—for exactly such distinctions had underlain Nazi policies. At the same time there was, of course, also a genuine lack of interest for the recent past, amidst the widespread misery, despair and destruction, feelings against which trusted ideologies, heading for a new future, served well.

The limited visibility⁶ of the Jewish victims in the national memory cultures, at least till the 1960’s, may thus be seen as a natural outcome of a rather specific cul-

ture of remembrance, build around traditional ideologies, which were ubiquitous in post-war politics as well. The silence was part of a commemorative discourse, which indeed appears to have led to “induced forgetting”, also among the Jewish communities themselves, during the first decades after 1945. “Many former prisoners had managed to find a place in life again and didn’t want to be occupied by the past, neither as a researcher nor as a subject of research” wrote Eddy de Wind, a Dutch psychiatrist and survivor of Auschwitz himself (De Wind 1993, 25). In these years Dutch Jews, according to historian Selma Leydesdorff, appeared to have internalized the dominant nationalist view of the recent past, often contrary to their own experience (Leydesdorff 1992, 79). It was not before radical changes in the dominant memory culture—in the Netherlands marked by the publication, in 1965, of *Ondergang*, Jacques Presser’s impressive and critical two volume work on the destruction of the Dutch Jews—that radically different memories could be inscribed into the public realm. One may put it differently: the dynamics of the commemorative discourse gave way to a continuing re(dis)covery and reshaping of individual and collective memories, also with regard to the post-war years of silence (Van Vree 1995, 102).⁷

In many respects, the “shattering of the silence” (Leydesdorff) around the history of the Nazi genocide and the memories of its survivors, as part of a changing commemorative culture—a phenomenon which, in a sense, challenges the very idea of “collective trauma”—parallels the rupture of the decades-lasting obmutescence with regard to the psychological and physical terror within the Catholic Church, in Ireland as well

as in other countries. In both cases, there was virtually no room for personal memories to be publicly communicated, due to the lack of what in social studies has been termed “frames” in perception as well as in communication.⁸ Following Goffman’s classic (1974) definition, frames are to be conceived as basic cognitive structures, guiding our perception and representation of reality. As schemes of interpretation, understood as more or less coherent collections of narratives, representations and values, unconsciously adopted in the course of communicative processes, frames function as mental “filters” in understanding and responding to the world around us; in this sense frames create meaning, by ordering and excluding information and experiences.

The concept of framing, though ambiguous and defined and used in many disparate ways (Entman 1993; Vreese 2005), has proven to be very fruitful over the last years, in psychology as well as communication and media studies, so it may be useful and productive in the field of memory as well. After all, framing, according to Goffman, is an innate property of all social processes and indispensable for communication. From this perspective “social forgetting” may be understood as a deliberate or non-deliberate exclusion or dilution of memories through framing, or, even, because of the very *lack* of proper frames. After all, for personal, episodic memories to become a subject of conversation—or, better: to become social memories—they “need a frame,” so to speak, they need a social, discursive place, in an open narrative structure, that gives them shape and meaning, to make them exchangeable and debatable, open for transformation. If not, these private

memories are deemed to stay absent—absent to be understood as “not present,” lacking a social space, not socially communicated nor circulating as cultural or political memories.

The concept of framing may thus enable us to get a better understanding of the fluent, inherently communicative nature of memory and the numerous factors—including power relations—that may play a role in the emanation of memories in public discourse, their prevalence and interrelationship, as well as their plasticity and multilayered nature. Such an approach opens up a more subtle and dynamic perspective on social memory than the rather flat or even mechanistic concepts connected to the paradigms of traumatic and hegemonic memory.

Absent memories may live a life-time and still fall out of the actual frames of social and cultural memory, although they may circulate in a very limited, protected sphere, among partners or close friends, be it often in concealed terms, or in the form of allusions. This was the case with Jewish families in the Netherlands in the first decades after 1945, but also, for example, among former students of Catholic seminaries—as I know from personal experience. But in the case of the systematic terror and sexual abuse by catholic nuns and priests in Ireland there was simply no opportunity to communicate these memories in the public realm. Of course the spiritual power of the Church played a role, as did the traumatic nature of their experience prevent individuals to speak up, but it was also the lack of a proper frame, or public discourse, that would enable victims to speak out, a lack that was due to fact that such a frame was fully incompatible with everything the Church

in Ireland stood for. In other words: the victims of sexual abuse were literally left alone with their memories of this bitter experience, because the scandal as such was virtually unimaginable and thus non-representable; they were in a sense like the survivors of the Nazi concentration camps, returning home as “travelers poor of words,” as the Dutch novelist Durlacher, a former inmate himself, put it (Durlacher 1985, 87).

Of course the lack of proper frames, resulting into social forgetting, may be elicited by their potential incompatibility with dominant political or cultural discourses, as was the case with the Armenian genocide, the bombing of German cities by the Allies during the Second World War, or the—almost completely forgotten—widespread atrocities committed by allied soldiers at the Pacific front in the same years. These are all clear instances of politically incompatible memories, often fragmented and isolated but persisting under the surface of public memory—at least for a certain period of time, thus facilitating the creation of more powerful, coherent narratives of the past.

However, memories may also be absent from the public realm for less obvious causes. Proper frames might not evolve if memories mainly arouse feelings of *shame* and *embarrassment*, for the individual as well as for social groups. This was the case with the painful memories of the 110,000 Japanese Americans who were detained in dozens of internment camps, mainly along the Pacific Coast, in the wake of Imperial Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbour in 1942. They had to stay there for years, in barbed-wire-surrounded enclaves, all in remote, desolate areas far from population centers, in

barracks with unpartitioned toilets and cots for beds, and armed guards around them (Ng 2002). Apart from the physical, psychological and material hardships and the sometimes vehement racism they confronted, the internees—all American citizens—must have felt deeply humiliated. After the war, however, speaking up would possibly bring all these painful feelings back—so the whole issue was put aside for decades. It took more than twenty-five years before the silence was really broken, mostly by their children, seeking reparation and redress.

Shame, embarrassment—the origins of social forgetting are manifold, and not straightforward related to or deductible from the paradigms of hegemonic or traumatic memory. Loyalty may also be such a motive, loyalty to a liberating army, a community or a nation. Such motives, grounds and situations may—at least temporarily—hamper proper frames to evolve; memories may be too painful, while openly testifying might inflict or even reinforce once again feelings like shame and embarrassment.

Social forgetting may even be inescapable in order to take up the thread of life, not only for individuals, as Dutch psychiatrist de Wind noticed with regard to former survivors in the after war decades, but also for communities and institutions, as in the case of the nursing centers for mentally and physically handicapped in Germany and Austria. During half a century these institutions preserved a complete silence on the killing of more than 200,000 mentally and physically disabled people, psychiatric patients and so-called *a-soziale Elemente* and other *nutzlose Esser* (“useless mouths”) between 1938 and 1945. These mass killings, euphemisti-

cally called “euthanasia”, by deliberate starvation, poisoning and gassing, constitute one of the most shocking crimes committed under Nazi rule, although the project was certainly not an exclusively Nazi undertaking, in contrary. Nevertheless it lasted until the last decade of the century before the health institutions involved, most of them still in function, began to commemorate the victims, with booklets, exhibitions and historical studies.⁹ To explain this startling case of “social forgetting,” we may think of “shame” and “guilt” as significant motives, since neither the institutions nor its personnel had done much to stop the killings; in contrary, they had often been sheer accomplices. Relatives of the victims, on the other hand, may have felt guilty as well, from the sense that they had failed, or, even worse, that by supporting the Nazi regime, they were in fact accomplices as well.

There is no doubt that shame and guilt have indeed played an important role in preserving silence, but apart from these motives, health institutions virtually had no other choice than to forget: how could they possibly have continued to function otherwise, after the end of Nazi rule, and to develop a trustful relation with their new patients, than through silencing the atrocities and horrors of the recent past? In other words: in this case “forgetting,” understood as the absence of memories that are not forgotten, was a *conditio sine qua non* for survival, not only for individuals, but for groups and institutions as well—just as Renan said.

For a long time notions of “social forgetting” and “social amnesia” depended heavily on theories of hegemonic and traumatic memory. This is not to say

that social forgetting, in specific circumstances, may not be a consequence or an aspect of a repressive, hegemonic commemorative discourse; but to understand the mechanisms of social forgetting and the absence of specific memories in the public realm, we should be aware of the multiple factors influencing the relations between personal and social memories as well as the way they interact and reshape each other. Considering the fact that communication, be it in words, images or gestures, is crucial, not only for the way episodic, personal memories are molded and evolve, but even more for these memories to be shared and to become social memories, whether of a family, a small community or of a nation as a whole, social forgetting should also be understood from a communicative perspective.

Thus the absence of specific—extremely painful—memories in the public realm at a certain moment in time, may be explained with the help of a concept like “framing”, as I have tried to argue in this explorative essay. To speak up, to communicate one’s experiences, to turn personal memories into meaningful stories, there has to be a proper frame, to make these memories understandable for others.

The reasons why specific frames are lacking may be manifold and the same goes for the question why and how they evolve. Shifts in the political structure, cultural developments and the rise of a new generation may act as agents of change, and the same applies to novels, history books, films, novels, songs and other artefacts of popular culture, transcending traditional cultural, political and national boundaries. Also in that respect both the history of the memory of the Nazi genocide and the case of the widespread abuse within the Catholic Church, may be considered to be exemplary.

Notes

¹ “The savage reality of our darkest days”, *The Irish Times*, 21 May 2009.

² *Final Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* (20 May 2009), at www.childabusecommission.ie/publications

³ Abbot Dom Mark Patrick Hederman interviewed in “The Irish Affliction”, *The New York Times Magazine*, February 9, 2011.

⁴ Caruth, 1996; Felman & Laub, 1992; Alphen 1999: 24-38. For an assessment of trauma theory, see a.o. Craps 2012; Buelens, Durrant Eaglestone 2013; Kilby Rowland 2014.

⁵ For a brief version of her theoretical position: Assmann 2010: 35-50.

⁶ With some notable exceptions, such as the films and monuments made during the artistic Polish Spring in the 1950’s: see Van Vree 2006.

⁷ For a concise historiographic overview see Haan 2008. Cf. Bossenbroek 2001; Kristel 1998.

⁸ The term “frame” was already introduced by Maurice Halbwachs in his basic work *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925). However, “cadre” or framework is used to designate the mental sphere of a specific social group, thus constituting social memory.

⁹ Cf. e.g. *Nationalsozialistische Euthanasieverbrechen. Beiträge zur Aufarbeitung ihrer Geschichte in Sachsen* 2004 ; Rotzoll 2010.

Work Cited

- Alphen, Ernst Van. 1999. Symptoms of Discursivity: Experience, Memory, and Trauma. In *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, eds.. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London-New York: Verso.

- Assmann, Aleida. 2010. Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past. In *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in modern Europe*, edited by Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter. Amsterdam: AUP.
- Augé, Marc. 1998. *Les formes de l'oublié*, Paris: Payot & Rivages.
- Böhm, Boris. 2004. Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten zur Erinnerung an die Opfer Politischer. Gewaltherrschaft *Nationalsozialistische Euthanasieverbrechen. Beiträge zur Aufarbeitung ihrer Geschichte in Sachsen*. Dresden: Sandstein Verlag.
- Bossenbroek, Maritn. 2001. *De Meelstreep, Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.
- Buelens, Gert, Sam Durrant and Robert Eaglestone, eds. 2013. *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary Criticism*. London: Routledge.
- Caruth, Cathy. 1961. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Craps, Stef. 2012. *Postcolonial Witnessing. Trauma Out of Bounds*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- de Wind, Eddy. 1993. Ontmoeting met de dood (1968). In *Confrontatie met de dood. Psychische gevolgen van vervolging*. Utrecht: ICODO.
- Douglass, Ana and Thomas Vogler, eds. 2003. *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma*. New York: Routledge.
- Draaisma, Douwe. 2004. *Why Life Speeds Up as You Get Older: How Memory Shapes Our Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Durlacher, G.L. 1985. *Strepen aan de hemel. Oorlogsherinneringen*, Amsterdam.
- Entman, R.M. 1993. Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 43: 51–58.
- Fassin, Didier and Richard Rechtman. 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. 1992. *Testimony – Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York-London: Routledge.
- Goffman, Ervin. 1974. *Frame analysis: an essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Haan, Ido de. 2008. Breuklijnen in de geschiedschrijving van de Jodenvervolging. Een overzicht van het recente Nederlandse debat. *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 123: 31-70.
- Hijink Roel. 2011. *Voormalige concentratiekampen. De monumentalisering van de Duitse kampen in Nederland*. Hilversum: Verloren.
- Kansteiner, Wulf. 2004. Genealogy of a category mistake: a critical intellectual history of the cultural trauma metaphor. *Rethinking History* 8: 193-221.
- Kilby, Jane and Antony Rowland, eds. 2014. *The Future of Testimony*. London: Routledge.

- Koppel, Jonathan and William Hirst. 2011. The role of Conversations in Shaping Individual and Collective Memory, Attitudes and Behavior. In *Memory and the Future. Transnational Politics, Ethics and Society*, edited by Yifat Gutman, Adam D. Brown and Amy Sodaro. Houndmills etc.: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kristel, Connie. 1998. *Geschiedschrijving als opdracht. Abel Herzberg, Jacques Presser en Loe de Jong over de jodenvervolgning*. Amsterdam: Meulenhof.
- Lagrou, Peter. 2000. *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leydesdorff, Selma. 1992. A Shattered Silence. The Life Stories of Survivors of the Jewish Proletariat of Amsterdam. In *Memory and Totalitarianism*, edited by L. Passarini. Oxford- New York: Oxford University Press.
- Loftus, E.F. and K. Ketcham. 1994. *The myth of repressed memory: false memories and allegations of sexual abuse*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Ng, Wendy L. 2002. *Japanese American internment during World War II: a history and reference guide*, Westport. Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Renan, Ernest. 1882. *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* Conférence faite en Sorbonne, fr.wikisource.org/wiki/
- Ricoeur, Paul. 2004. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rigney, Ann. 2005. Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory. *Journal of European Studies* 35: 209-226.
- Rotzoll, Maïke, Gerrit Hohendorf, Petra Fuchs, Paul Richter, Christoph Mundt, Wolfgang U. Eckart, eds. 2010. Die nationalsozialistische "Eutanase"-Aktion "T" und ihre Opfer. *Geschichte und ethische Konsequenzen für die Gegenwart*. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Schacter, Daniel L. 2001. *The Seven Sins of Memory. (How the Mind Forgets and Remembers)*. Boston-New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Stone, Dan. 2014. History, Memory, Testimony. In *The Future of Testimony*, edited by Jane Kilby and Antony Rowland. London: Routledge.
- Van Vree, Frank. 1995. *In de schaduw van Auschwitz. Herinneringen, beelden, geschiedenis*, Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij.
- _____. 2006. The Stones of Treblinka. *Centropa. A Journal of Central European Architecture and Related Arts* VI/3: 237-245.
- Vreese, Claes H. de . 2005. News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design + Document Design* 13: 51-62.

Responses

Awkward Memories and the Role of Silence: A Commentary on Frank van Vree's Concept of "Absent Memories"

Aleida Assmann
*University of Konstanz
Germany*

It is usually taken for granted that memory studies is a branch of research that focuses on the why and how and when of remembering. However, further insights reveal that remembering must be complemented by forgetting. It is now generally agreed that our knowledge of remembering stays incomplete if we are not able to study the dynamics of remembering against forgetting, of remembering intertwined with forgetting and, indeed, sometimes as well, of remembering as a form of forgetting. With the introduction of his notion of "absent memories" Frank Van Vree has shown, however, that this is not enough. Forgetting is an umbrella term that is in need of further differentiation. Van Vree offers us another vantage point, which makes it possible to address topics that had so far been largely overlooked in memory studies. The author attributes this blind spot to the dominance of two sweeping theories that blocked the access to these phenomena. On the one hand, the theory focusing on political hegemony of memory suggests that the memory of a society can be brought under the will and control of power by forms of state censorship; the trauma theory of memory, on the other hand, contends that memory breaks down altogether or is radically deformed under the

pressure of devastating events. The term "absent memory" points to something else: to the presence of memories that are unspeakable, to the ban on communication of what is available as shared knowledge, to a stifling silence that is reinforced and perpetuated by strong social taboos.

Van Vree thus takes us from politics of memory and the dynamics of individual memory into the complex and largely implicit realm of the social as the important third dimension within which the dynamics of memory evolve and are played out. Silence is indeed an important additional concept for memory studies, situated in the vague space between remembering and forgetting, forms of knowing and not knowing. The Israeli psychotherapist Dan Bar-On made an important contribution to this topic in the 1990s when he spoke about Holocaust testimonies being confronted with "a double wall of silence."¹ The first wall of silence refers to the self-imposed restriction of the victim who for various reasons does not choose to speak about his or her experiences. The second wall of silence refers to the attitude of a society that does not want to listen. Before a wider communication about shocking, painful and embarrassing experiences becomes possible, both walls have to come down.

As his most conspicuous example, van Vree refers to recent discussions of sexual child abuse. This turned out to be a transnational memory event, developing an energy that transcended European borders. The tide hit Germany in 2010. Throughout that year, we witnessed the fall of the second wall of silence as charges were brought against the institution of private schools and the Catholic Church and were publicly discussed in the media.

Charges had been voiced by the victims before, however the information had not been passed on but hushed up in order to protect the officials and the respective institution. Those responsible reacted invariably by trivializing, postponing or ignoring the charges. They were confident that by turning a blind eye, this shameful problem could be made to automatically disappear. Such complicit forgetting is reinforced by the pressure of social taboos; it involves three forms of silence which mutually reinforce each other:

1. A symptomatic silence on the part of the traumatized victims
2. A defensive silence on the part of the perpetrators and
3. A complicit silence on the part of society.

When these three forms of silence reinforce each other, crimes can remain concealed for a long time. Nothing will really change as long as the victims are the only ones ready to break their silence and to claim their rights. It is the collective will of society alone which can change the situation and turn the tables. Only then will the voice of the witnesses be heard and, by gaining the support of the public media, be acknowledged as a "testimony." In a similar way a change of values connected with the introduction of a new political notion of human rights in the 1980s had created a new sensibility for the suffering of the victims of such traumatic histories of violence as the Holocaust, slavery, colonialism and dictatorships. After this global change of orientation, the response of the population was gradually transformed from a protection shield for the perpetrators to a sounding board for the victims.

The important theoretical concept that is re-introduced by Van Vree's paper is that of the "frame." I say "re-introduced" because it is not an entirely new tool in this field. Maurice Halbwachs, who is today recognized as one of the the pioneers of memory studies, published a book about the "Social Frames of Memory" (*Les cadres sociaux de la Mémoire*) already in 1925. As a sociologist, he emphasized the role of society in the construction of individual memories. This concept however, has remained something of an absent memory in memory studies itself. It was accessible, it was referred to frequently, but it was seldom taken up and developed as a practical tool to come to grips with new problems. The introduction of the term silence into memory studies brings these frames back to our attention.

Silence is imposed by a society on its members to dispose of awkward and embarrassing truths that are part of common knowledge but are not circulated or addressed because they undermine the consensus of a given frame and threaten to destabilize institutions. In the context of social communication, silence can serve different functions. If connected to tact and the rules of politeness it can be a means of strengthening the ties between individuals, whilst promoting social coherence. If connected to strong social taboos, however, the tacit imposition to de-thematize certain topics met with a willing acceptance to ban such topics from conversation blocks the circulation of knowledge, and is thus a repressive syndrome that paralyzes social consciousness.

It is an important insight that Van Vree's article presents, namely, that oppressive silences have their expiration dates. As they are backed up by social

frames, these frames can suddenly break up with the change of values, losing their normative power and guiding orientation. Another important point is the social co-production of memories. A social memory does not arise automatically from spoken or printed information. It always takes two: a voice that is speaking and an ear that is listening, heeding and responding in one way or another. Without this dimension of reception and a living response in the presence we may have stores filled with information and digital archives replete with data within almost everybody's reach, but not a communal, social or cultural memory.

Notes

¹ Bar-On, Dan. *Die Last des Schweigens. Gespräche mit Kindern von Nazi-Tätern*. Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1993.

Reframing “Absent Memories”

Marianne Hirsch
Columbia University
USA

I am grateful to Frank van Vree for bringing the process of “social forgetting” into focus and for attempting to forge a capacious theoretical language with which to analyze this widespread phenomenon. This is an especially urgent question now, at the moment in which we observe the anniversaries of the Rwandan and the Armenian genocides that still suffer from very different yet powerful forms of silence and denial.

Finding that social forgetting has been seen as due either to the powers of hegemonic remembrance or of traumatic repression or dissociation, Van Vree searches for a model of memory that better calibrates the relationship of individual to social memory than either the political model of power and hegemony or the psychoanalytic model of trauma can do. These popular models both show social forgetting to be dysfunctional and the work of memory to be corrective, he argues. Instead, following Halbwachs and Goffman, the essay proposes the idea of the frame as a means by which to conceptualize the absence of certain memories from public view at one moment in time, and the means by which they can become known, acknowledged and integrated into social self-understanding at another. Frames, the essay argues, allow us to see how this form of “forgetting,” or occlusion, can at times be enabling, even necessary, for citizens of modern states who wish to move forward rather than

remaining subject to painful and paralyzing past histories. Framing allows us to understand social forgetting as either deliberate or non-deliberate. And it helps account for the malleable and communicative character of memory, and the complex negotiations that produce a certain shared image of the past while rejecting conflicting versions.

“The reasons why specific frames are lacking may be manifold and the same goes for the question why and how they evolve,” Van Vree writes and this, to me, is the key question raised by the essay. The examples on which the essay bases its inquiry—sexual abuse in the Irish Catholic church, the Nazi Holocaust, and the Nazi euthanasia program – would actually seem to point back to the political and psychoanalytic motivations the essay wants to surpass. Van Vree specifically names shame, embarrassment and guilt as emotions explaining why some of the stories have remained outside the available frames, and what he terms “forgetting” at times looks quite explicitly like denial or projection; that is, psychological defense mechanisms which could be transferable from the individual to the social realm. And when Van Vree writes that a frame that would render the sexual abuse in the church visible “was fully incompatible with everything the Catholic Church in Ireland stood for,” is he not invoking a notion of hegemonic power to screen certain acts and events of the past from view? Perhaps these memory models are not so different from one another after all. Perhaps we need to bring them together to get to the fascinating question the essay raises, the questions of what allows frames to shift, and absent memories eventually to become present.

The metaphor of the frame is certainly useful in conceptualizing visibility and invisibility, but I wonder what might get lost by looking at memory uniquely through a spatial/visual model. What if we spoke of certain available scenarios or scripts that might explain why some acts remain offstage? Or what if we thought about memory as operating according to a set of available narratives or tropes that would also explain why some stories that did not correspond to these would remain untold? These models from theater or narrative seem to me as useful, or as useless, as the idea of the frame. None of these models ultimately explain how frames can be shattered, scenarios restaged or narratives rewritten. And yet we know that they can and we know how powerfully transformative that process can be. And we know that they often aren't leaving many images, scenarios and stories unseen and untold, and many lives unrecognizable and unrecognized.

Behold the Man: Heroic Masochism and Mel Gibson's *Passion* as Masculine Rite of Passage

Steven Gardiner
Zayed University
United Arab Emirates

With over \$370 million in domestic ticket sales, director Mel Gibson's 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ* is, as of mid-2014, the highest earning R-rated movie in U.S. history. Its closest competitor is Andy and Lana Wachowski's cyberpunk epic *The Matrix Reloaded*, almost \$100 million behind (Box Office Mojo 2013). A lot of people have seen Gibson's film, but *The Passion* is outsized in a second way: the mass of commentary, criticism and controversy it engendered. The journalistic responses across a range of media from the *New York Times* and CNN to Christian Right publications—such as those from James Dobson's Focus on Family—are best measured in gigabytes. The scholarly literature alone easily runs to thousands of pages, a looming bulk daunting to anyone considering jumping into the fray.¹

Reactions from anthropologists have, however, been relatively sparse.² Yet the event at the center of Gibson's *Passion*—the graphic depiction of a prolonged episode of judicial torture and execution—is best read less as a rite of *sacrifice* and more as a rite of *passage* of the particular type that has long fascinated anthropologists.

And while the cinematic violence perpetrated in the film certainly contains a sacrificial component, the main ritual work it accomplishes is *initiatory*: the man Jesus is transformed through the performance of a blood-soaked rite into the Christ. Anthropologist Maurice Bloch (1992, 1998) argues that both types of rite—sacrifice and initiation—are intimately related, both requiring a symbolic or concrete act of killing. However counterintuitive this might seem, in the special logic of sacrifice *and* initiation such violence is necessary to the efficacy of the rite: the initiate must pass through death, through a great emptying out of the ordinary vitality of life, to be born again in a transformed state of being (Bloch 1998, 176). At the level of ritual initiation, the scourging and crucifixion constitute not a punishment, but a privilege.

The initiatory character of the violence depicted in *The Passion of the Christ* holds true for virtually *all* Passion narratives, including those presented in the gospels. But in its emphases and stylizations—and perhaps most of all in its extra-canonical artistic license—Gibson's version relies upon the *gendered* character of the narrative. While not all rites of passage are gender specific—e.g. boys and girls both become Christians through the rite of baptism—an explicit gendering of the initiate is often central to the socio-politics of such rites. More than just transforming one type of person into another, initiation permanently separates those who can be initiated from those who never can be because they are of the wrong gender, race, class or background (Bourdieu 1991, 119).

Looking at *The Passion of the Christ* with awareness of rites of passage into adult masculinity and privilege, I insist that gender is crucial for understanding this film. My key argument is that the particular Passion narrative selected by Gibson interpolates its audience so as to constellate a militarized, masculinized form of Christianity that presumes, indeed depends upon, the socially authorized suffering of obedient (read “soldierly”) sons. While the controversy generated by the film bears witness to the ways in which this constellation of gendered religion, militarization, and public consent is resisted and rejected, the incoherence in much of the criticism speaks to a significant cultural blind spot related to masculine suffering.

The highly stylized suffering of Jesus in the film—which makes use of some 135 digital effects to produce the viscerally “real” affect attested by sympathetic viewers (Magrid 2004, 57; Prince 2006, 13)—depends on a male body at its center for ritual coherence. A powerful form of gender politics is at work in *The Passion*, grounded in what I have elsewhere called *heroic masochism* (Gardiner 2013a): the socially desirable suffering inflicted on and accepted by men as a warrant for masculine privilege.

As I lay out the argument for understanding *The Passion of the Christ* as a masculine rite of passage writ large, I will point up some of the difficulties in naming such suffering. In conclusion, I will sketch out why such an interpretation is important not just in understanding Gibson’s film, but in making sense of a wide range of cultural forms and social phenomena in the contemporary United States of which the film is symptomatic.

Rites of Passage and Masculine Fragility

In the anthropological tradition a rite of passage is understood as a series of ritualized acts that, correctly performed, actualize a socially recognizable change in status (Turner 1967; Van Gennep 1960). Through the correct performance of such rites the single person is married, the child enters the communion of a particular faith, the layman becomes a doctor or a judge and the deceased joins the ancestors. Such rites can be as common as name-giving or as rare as coronations; as minimal as a Las Vegas impulse wedding or as prolonged as the highest levels of formal education in the United States.

The emphasis in such rites is on *auspicious performance*: the rite must be performed in the right way, at the right time, by the right ritual experts upon the *appropriate* ritual subjects. Absent any of these qualifications the change in status that the rite is meant to accomplish is not certain. There is a risk of nullification or social opprobrium. A groom or bride of the “wrong” gender, as locally construed, might not be recognized; an inaugurated president of the “wrong” race might be challenged to prove the naturalness of his qualifying citizenship; the corpse of a person who died in the “wrong” way might be denied the rite of burial.

Herein the focus is primarily on that subset of rites related to masculine initiation: rituals that transform male-bodied children into *men*, investing them with masculine status. While Passion narratives in their variety certainly partake of various ritual correlates and antecedents—e.g. judicial ordeal (Asad 1983), cu-

rative exit rituals, and more specifically the ancient Hebrew Day of Atonement ritual found in Leviticus 16 (Maclean 2007)—I have chosen to consider Gibson’s film version through the narrow lens of man-making rituals within the context of contemporary US culture.

Masculinity is, virtually everywhere, considered to be a rather fragile status that has to be produced through processes of man-making rituals (Gilmore 1990). But if this is everywhere considered true, the degree of militarization in a society—political, economic, and symbolic—greatly influences the particular qualities considered most important to inculcate in men (Gardiner 2004; Goldstein 2001). In heavily militarized societies—and the contemporary United States is certainly one such (Bilmes and Stiglitz 2008; Lutz 2001; Turse 2008)—the “military virtues” of obedience, courage, and above all “toughness” of body and mind are paramount. At the same time the alienation of the civilian world from actual military experience makes the need for such hardened men contestable (Belkin 2012; Gardiner 2013b). In such a context, Gibson’s film can—and I argue should—be seen as an intervention in an ongoing debate about masculinity and how men should be made. In an important sense, it is about rites of passage.

Virtually all rites of passage have certain elements in common, following a logically necessary tripartite structural progression of separation-margin-aggregation first described by French folklorist Arnold Van Gennep (1960). Within the ritual horizon of this structure there are three sorts of tasks such rites *may* accomplish—although the actual emphasis varies a great deal across cultures. In the most general terms rites of passage accomplish the following:

1) They prepare the initiate for assumption of the new status through training, teaching, and emotional priming;

2) They mark the transition symbolically, demarcating the precise moment when the new status, with all of its prerogatives and responsibilities, is assumed, following a “liminal” period during which initiates are “no longer classified” as they were but “are not yet classified” as they will be at the conclusion of the rite (Turner 1967, 96); and

3) They institute a socially relevant distinction between those who can be initiated and those who can never be (Bourdieu 1991, 118).

The first of these three efficacies is, broadly speaking, practical—imparting role-specific skills and associated knowledge to the initiate. The second is primarily psycho-social, easing the transition from status to status by publically differentiating between the initiated and the uninitiated, declaiming the *achieved* character of the status—particularly important with respect to masculinity rites, as the passage to manhood is widely construed as both fraught and highly contingent (Gilmore 1990, 104). The third efficacy is unabashedly political. It marks out a category of persons as distinct—ostensibly from those who have not yet gone through the ritual, but more permanently from those who never will. In Bourdieu’s terms, such rites do not just mark a “before and after” but also cast a shadow of exclusion, adding the patina of investment to what might otherwise be mistaken as a simple matter of “natural” classification. The rite says: “this man is a man—implying that he is a real man, which is not always immediately obvious. It tends to make the smallest, weakest, in short the most effeminate man into a truly manly man, separated by a difference in nature and

essence from the most masculine woman, the tallest, strongest woman, etc.” (Bourdieu 1991, 119).

It is a matter of no small import that between the latter two ritual efficacies—the symbolic marking of before and after, and the institutionalization of a permanent exclusion—there is an inbuilt tension. The institution of manhood draws a line of exclusion meant to be independent of any particular masculine qualities; the symbolic demarcation of status transition is almost always construed as dependent on successful negotiation of the rite, which in turn requires the correct performance of normative masculinity exactly in its locally most salient qualities.

Those locally salient features of manhood vary a great deal from group to group, but a common pattern is that in the most militarized societies the “military virtues” of toughness, physical courage and obedience to authority tend to be most closely associated with “real” masculinity and inculcated in rites of passage (Gardiner 2004; Goldstein 2001). Such rites can be lengthy and elaborate, taking months to complete like those found in Bantu-speaking East Africa (Gutmann 1970; Wagner 1949), but along the way they often include one or more acute ordeals. Adolescent circumcision is an example, found traditionally in Africa, Oceania, and Australia (Beidelman 1987, 511). Also common are various forms of flogging, beating, scarification, cutting, piercing, ingestion of hallucinatory poisons, fasting, exposure and physical exhaustion—and in virtually every case initiates are enjoined to endure the often excruciating pain stoically, without crying out or otherwise showing outward signs of suffering (Gilmore 1990; Herdt 1982).

It is important to emphasize that pain inflicted and pain endured in these rituals is not incidental, but central to their meaning as construed by cultural insiders. Boys will not become men, it is widely believed, unless they are subjected to such ordeals to drive the weakness out of them (Gilmore 1990, 14). That is, manhood is not a natural attainment, but something that has to be produced through the testing and training of the initiators. It has to be proven, earned and achieved; it is widely understood as the most fragile of constructs (Gilmore 1990, 115; Connell 2005, 12). It is only a seeming irony that the fragility of masculinity is not so much eradicated by ordeals of initiation, but impressed on the consciousness of the initiate. Weakness is a permanent feature that the initiate must forever guard against, lest the allure of comfort and softness that is the necessary concomitant of being alive prove too strong (Belkin 2012, 4-5; Gardiner 2013a, 10).

The tension within (military) masculinity is not so much in the transition from boy to man, in which a disposition to reflexive self-monitoring with respect to displaying weakness is inculcated, but between the need for such inculcation and the institutional demarcation of essential differences between men and women. That is, if masculinity is not an essence, but a list of characteristics that must be inculcated, then the institution of manhood is suspect and unstable. The door is open to libertarian and individualistic logics allowing a woman to fill normatively masculine roles, most quintessentially soldierly roles, provided that she can successfully perform the requisite qualities (Belkin 2012; Enloe 1983).

This tension between institutionalized essence (naturalized masculinity) and a permanently fragile bundle of qualities that must be inculcated, tested and repeatedly proven is nothing new in masculine initiation. The context of reception, however, has changed radically in recent decades. Thus the context of production of *The Passion of the Christ*—an early twenty-first century United States caught up in the first throes of post-9/11 militarization—demands special attention. This is *not* because *The Passion* is a straightforward celebration of soldierly masculinity of the sort depicted in many of the films addressed by Susan Jeffords (1994) in her now classic *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*. Notwithstanding the claims of critics such as biblical scholar Paula Fredriksen (2004, 63) who sees *The Passion* as little more than a riff on the torture-execution scene in *Braveheart* (1995), the underlying structure is more complicated. As astutely argued by Kent Brintnall: "...the accusation ... that Gibson's apparent reliance on action genre tropes distorted the Christian narrative fails to acknowledge that the suffering-hero narrative predates Christianity and had already provided a framing device for the gospel narratives" (Brintnall 2001, 56). *The Passion* shares this structure with films as diverse as *The Lord of the Rings* (2001, 2002, 2003), *A Man Called Horse* (1970), *A History of Violence* (2005), *First Blood* (1982), *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), and so on, ad nauseam.

The suffering-hero iterations in so many Hollywood films work as a kind of echo chamber, amplifying the points of reference for the sympathetic viewer. The masculine rite of passage structure

was always already embedded in the Passion narrative and Gibson's particular emphases highlight, rather than elide, the tension between processes of active inculcation and evaluation of gendered initiation. The result is a rather brutal gendered politics imagined on the male body of the character of Jesus that has been underappreciated in the voluminous commentary.³

The Passion of Gibson's Christ vs. Abject Androgyny

Yet if the gender politics of *The Passion* have largely been elided in both scholarly and journalistic reactions, it is not because no one noticed the violence that hid them in plain sight. Indeed, running neck-and-neck with justifiable condemnations of the film's anti-Semitism have been commentaries deploring its graphic violence. Much of the latter, in David Greven's apt summary, "...reeked of middlebrow disdain rather than an understanding of the varieties of Christian experience" (2009, 205). American critics of Gibson's filmic violence, however secular, are heirs to a politics of representational reticence and austerity grounded in the uneasiness of many forms of Protestantism with the visual (Morgan 2005, 90). Combining a watery iconoclasm with the platitudes of progressive theology, many of these critiques—e.g. A.O. Scott's (2004) in the *New York Times* and David Denby's (2004) in the *New Yorker*—explicitly denounce the gratuitous nature of the violence in *The Passion*. But they misidentify the ritual core of the film when they take Gibson to task for missing the main theological point, which they see as "...not the physical suffering

of the man but the sacrificial nature of his death and the astonishing mystery of his transformation into godhood—the Resurrection and the triumph over carnality” (Denby 2004, 84). These critics of Gibson contend that his film subjects us to a Hollywood action movie-cum-horror-flick that “essentially consists of a man being beaten, tortured and killed in graphic and lingering detail” (Scott 2004, E1).

Unlike Scott and Denby, I interpret the violence in *The Passion of the Christ* as anything but gratuitous—and this is a position I share, quite uncomfortably, with the conservative Catholic and Evangelical viewers most positively inclined to the film.⁴ For this set of film goers—a far larger demographic, it should be noted, than the readership of the *New Yorker* or the *NYT*—the violence depicted in the movie is an index of its “realism,” indicating that “Gibson had gotten it right” (Prince 2006, 12, see also: Brintnall 2008; Brown, Keeler and Lindvall 2007; Wood, Jindra and Baker 2004). The violence is also, I argue, essential to the deeply emotional connection many such viewers made with the film, a connection that depends on a combination of the availability of the ritual script of male initiation on the one hand and on the other hand the human capacity to recall their own initiatory experiences, however tame by comparison.

Most viscerally for sympathetic Catholic viewers with experience praying the Stations of the Cross—but more generally for the film’s supporters—*The Passion* acts as an immersive, fantastic tableau of identification that recalls embodied memories of real suffering and compassion. While the hardened, militarized social world that makes such logic of sanctified suffering believable and laudable certainly

warrants the closest possible scrutiny, it is spurious to fault the film or dismiss it for successfully tapping into these forms of desire, without attempting to explicate and place them in a wider cultural context.⁵

Such a context must start with a doubled object: the Passion narrative as it has come down to us and the film itself. The former object is almost infinitely plural, encompassing not only the canonical gospels, but various “apocryphal” works, the quite early and independent accounts of two historians, Cornelius Tacitus and Flavius Josephus (Crossan 1995, 5), the development of devotional practices such as praying the Stations of the Cross and a suffocating mass of subsequent products from Medieval Passion plays, Renaissance art, and Romantic mysticism down to contemporary cinematic cousins. Obviously even a glance at the bulk of this material is far beyond the scope of this article—yet a few points must be established about the core of the Passion narratives before turning to the film.

First, it requires no great act of New Testament scholarship to recognize that at the center of the crucifixion story is an act of bloody violence inflicted on a specifically male body. This seemingly simple and undisputed fact, however, slips out of one’s grasp like a stick of butter. The suffering body of Jesus of Nazareth in its specificity—images of which have been so ubiquitous—is obfuscated, occulted, by the transcendent Body of Christ.

Unlike Jesus the man, the Christ partakes not of a particular, embodied masculinity in the gospel narratives, but of the universal and categorical masculinity which has so often been used to represent *humanity* as such. The body of Jesus is un-

doubtedly male, but the focus of Christological debate has always been on negotiating the relationship between human and divine, with most Christian traditions settling on the permanently ambivalent position taken at the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE). Known as the “hypostatic union,” this doctrine holds that the Christian savior has/had two “natures”—that of “Jesus” (the human) and “Christ” (the transcendent divine)—which are permanently bound together in one “person,” i.e. “Jesus Christ” (Davis 1990, 187). This doctrine, both affirming and denying duality, tends to obscure the personal and corporeal specificity of the man (that is, the person of male sex and masculine gender) who is also the Christ. This leaves a problem for representation: how *exactly* does one visualize two natures in one person? In such a context, and upping the stakes because the canonical source material is so sparse on these issues, visual representation becomes the primary means for interpolating a personal Jesus. Put another way, the person/body of Jesus which is so vaguely adumbrated in the gospels and complexly interpreted in Christology becomes something close to an “empty signifier” (Barthes 1972, 117), a vague mental image that can mean anything to anyone. Only in specific visual representations is this emptiness given form and flesh, with particular representational decisions pointing to radically different conceptual frames and cultural politics. In the richness of Christological art there are two tropes—*androgyny* and *vital evanescence*—that are of particular interest in understanding Gibson’s choices in *The Passion*.

Given the ways in which important gender tells—e.g. hair style and length, clothing choices—are so dependent on geographic and historical context, androgyny can be a complex object to identify. Representations read as gender ambiguous in one age may have been seen as manly at the time they were produced. What is well known, however, is that many representations of Jesus—from those of Italian Renaissance paintings to the early twentieth century portraits of Warner Sallman—whatever their creators may have intended, have been critiqued by conservative Christians as sentimental and effeminate (Morgan 1992, 867; Kupfer 2008, 15). For example Sallman’s mass reproduced *Head of Christ* has been celebrated by admirers for its depiction of gentle humility, allowing viewers to interpolate Jesus as benevolent and accessible, as kindness personified (Morgan 2005, 5). Critics, however, have found the same image to be intolerably feminized. One Lutheran seminarian said of Sallman’s familiar image that in it “we have a pretty picture of a woman with a curling beard who has just come from the beauty parlor with a Halo shampoo, but we do not have the Lord who died and rose again!” (Morgan 1992, 867).

The visual rhetoric of *The Passion* comes down emphatically on the side of those who would reject androgyny in the representation of Jesus. This is obvious enough from the film and Gibson has reinforced the point, stating in an interview that he “didn’t want to see Jesus looking really pretty. I wanted to mess up one of his eyes, destroy it” (Boyer 2003, 60). Thus the Jesus of the film is relent-

lessly embodied and masculinized, but such embodiment does not obviate the problem of representing the inherently unstable hypostasis of man and god. Rejecting androgyny as a mode of representing the embodiment of the universal and transcendent, Gibson turns to the second important trope of Christological depiction: vital evanescence.

Vital evanescence is one of the central motifs in ritual logics of both masculine initiation and sacrifice (Bloch 1992, 1998). It indexes the theme of the sublation of the corporeal, opening a door between animal life and transcendent being through the draining away—as for example in sacrificial exsanguination—of bodily vitality. That is, not only in Christianity but in religious practice infused with sacrificial logics more generally, such rites accomplish a metaphysical “rebirth” to a higher or transfigured state by performing a passage through death (Bloch 1998, 170).

Now, it should be noted that the two tropes—androgyny and vital dissipation—are by no means incapable of simultaneous deployment. Indeed the genre of Christ crucified is suffused with such dual-trope depictions that feature an emaciated, fine-featured Jesus ineffably hovering at death’s door. In fact, to the extent any still image refuses overt masculinization of the crucified Jesus, it invites a feminizing gaze *because* of its de-vitalization. Long-established misogynist reception regimes that readily assimilate weakness and violation to the feminine, with a complementary tendency to imagine women as the only blameless victims, support such readings (Clover 1992, 12).

Thus rejection of physical androgyny is not enough to secure a full-blooded masculinity. Given that Gibson can hardly avoid *both* androgyny and vital dissipation, he risks the obvious reading of the embodied Jesus as *victim*, a victim of superior Roman military power—a reading that has to be deflected.

The Passion of the Christ accomplishes this deflection of the androgynous brilliantly by the relentless dramatization of an embodied male Jesus—depicted by the conventionally handsome and obviously masculine James Caviezel—stoically enduring sacrificial-cum-initiatory-violence. By subjecting viewers to scene after brutal scene of cinematic torture, Gibson uses “movie magic” to multiply the visual spectacle of suffering until it becomes nearly unendurable to the audience. In the process, according to David Morgan, “Gibson wants to destroy an entire way of seeing and install in its place a manly Jesus who is his father’s son, one who by virtue of extreme iconoclasm has been purged of rival ways of seeing. The film plunges viewers into a protracted agony in order to wrench from them the devotional gaze that is fixed on such imagery as Warner Sallman’s portrait of Jesus” (Morgan 2005, 5). Gibson’s choice is by no means outside the two-trope Christological symbolic economy of androgyny and vital evanescence. Rather, it emphasizes the latter to the exclusion of the former: Jesus’ body is destroyed in the process of becoming the Christ. This destruction is carefully modulated as the stoic endurance of a warrior, lest it be read as feminized helplessness in the face of superior force.

Vicariously Speaking: Films, Mirrors, Rites and Mental Time Travel

No matter how skillful Gibson's use of spectacular violence to deflect androgyny, his film risks a second deflection as mere "violent pornography," absent an alternative reception regime (Prince 2006, 12). The male rite of passage provides just such an interpretive framework. While it is important to keep in mind that there are crucial differences between a ritual, which intends a permanent transformation of status, and a film which can at best evoke the emotional states associated with such rituals (Bloch 1998, 174), the specific instance of *The Passion* tests this limit. Granted, no audience is liable to forget that it is in spectator mode while viewing the film. The subject matter in this case is doubly ritualized, interpretively derived from pre-existing ritual forms and reflecting back the embodied ritual of the Stations of the Cross. The film is, in effect, ritually saturated. Therefore, the tripartite stages of space-time, analogous to the stages of rites of passage are unsurprisingly foregrounded in *The Passion*. The basic structure can be adumbrated as follows:

1) Separation. Opening in the Garden of Gethsemane following the Last Supper, Jesus is removed from his former life, betrayed by Judas, arrested and tried by Jewish authorities and sentenced by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

2) Margin. The bulk of the film is consumed with the torture and crucifixion of Jesus—the "liminal" period in the rite during which Jesus has left behind his existence as a man, however extraordinary, but has not yet been transformed into the Christ.

3) Aggregation. Having passed through death, Jesus returns—very briefly—as the risen Christ, man reborn as a god.

What follows is a slightly more detailed recapitulation of key moments in the film, highlighting references to masculine initiation and sacrificial violence and keeping in mind the tendency of such rites to produce a moral economy that values purposeful suffering as the essential prerequisite of soldierly toughness and masculine privilege.

In the opening scene Jesus, all but consumed by the terror of his own immanent crucifixion, is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. As the camera stalks him like a psycho-killer in a slasher film, Jesus experiences the *agony*, the struggle with his own human weakness. John Debney's score, a head-on collision of creep show nightmare and bullroarer in the bush, jangles our nerves and builds dread. Like any initiate on the cusp of an ordeal, the mortal man struggles with the temptation of weakness and refusal. In one of the film's most effective innovations, Gibson personifies this temptation in the a-scriptural introduction of an effeminate and horrifically seductive Satan.

Played by the youthful Italian actress Rosalinda Celentano, this Satan literally glows with androgynous perversity, combining "so many levels of gendered and sexual depravity, through so many symbolic modes of sign, play, and parody, that s/he ends up emerging as one of the bravura inventions of Gibson's film" (Greven 2009, 207). However innovative, the gender-bent androgyny of this Satan also provides a crucial didactic clue to viewers, allowing them to negotiate the tension between the trope of androgyny

and vital evanescence *and* the complementary tension between the transformative efficacy of initiation and its institutionalizing impetus.

The introduction of the demonically beautiful androgyne into the Garden reinforces the shadow play quality of the too-easy surrender of Jesus to the soldiers, and makes it clear no compassionate or pacifist impulse motivated Jesus to tell Peter to put away his sword. The real conflict is at the supernatural level, between Jesus-as-almost-Christ and Satan as the ugly-beautiful temptation of feminine weakness. Demonstrating his masculine fitness to face the ordeal that awaits him—that is, his appropriate submission to God-the-Father—he saves face as a warrior, in effect recruiting the audience to a particular mode of identification constellated by his violent rebuke of the Devil.

In a show-stealing scene that multiplies the already “perverse” symbolism of the youthfully androgynous Satan, the Devil produces a snake that crawls from under his/her skirts, sliding with horrific lasciviousness towards Jesus, who kneels in prayer. The serpent glides caressingly over the hand of Jesus in the precise place where the nail will soon attach him to the cross. He rises, not in revulsion, but with menacing deliberateness, emphatically smashing the serpent’s head under the heel of his sandal while staring down the Devil.

In the visual economy of the film, a Jesus who might otherwise be construed as androgynous in appearance—Caviezel being a rather pretty actor when not covered in prosthetic and/or digitally conjured wounds—is rendered safely,

thoroughly masculine in contrast with Celentano’s Satan. Another way to think of this contrast is that it allows any tension about the universality of the Christ threatening the *institution* of manhood as embodied in the person of Jesus to dissipate. The institutional demarcation between masculine and feminine is reinforced by visually drawing the line between Jesus, a real man no matter how pretty, and Satan’s uncanny androgyny. The Christian universality of the hybrid being Jesus-Christ that doctrinally admits women as well as men to the ranks of salvation is here *represented* as unambiguously male, rejecting traditional androgynous depictions of the embodied Jesus and simultaneously framing viewers’ experience of that which is to come: the torturous process of vital evanescence as transformational ritual-cum-metaphysical-warfare rather than victimization.

At the same time the transformative character of the *rite* behind the movie is reinforced. In the Garden, Jesus has not yet crossed the threshold; he has not yet entered the liminal phase of the rite wherein the status transition—man to god, mirroring the transition of boy to man—is enacted. As he waits at the threshold, he establishes his *bona fides*, his right to be initiated, paralleling the pre-separation anxiety of boys awaiting their turn to be taken. Jesus acts out his worthiness by overcoming the agony and choosing the ordeal; by demonstrating filial piety in his submission to God-the-Father, and most effectively through his confrontation with the Devil: manly violence deployed with surgical precision in the rejection of androgyny!

Following the glimpse behind the metaphysical curtain, reassured that Jesus is no (unmanly) victim but a volunteer for the Cross, the literal forms of arrest, trial, judicial torture and execution that follow become mere appearances. What actually happens is the rite of passage, albeit an initiation that also doubles as a sacrifice—which is also foreshadowed in the Gethsemane scene. Satan, encountering Jesus in the midst of his human apprehension, mocks him, saying: “Do you really believe that one man can bear the full burden of sin?”

The Devil’s question is key, a reminder that the embodied human suffering that follows is exactly not gratuitous, but a sacrifice for the greater good. The masochistic embrace of crucifixion must not be construed as a perversion of desire, pleasure in pain or the embrace of abjection. Satan already occupies the abject ground. In his rejection of the satanic temptations of weakness and androgyny, Jesus chooses a path of *meaningful suffering*, of enduring for a (greatest possible) cause—taking on “the full burden of sin”—which is what I call heroic masochism (Gardiner 2013a, 31).

The film stretches out the separation phase of the ritual and builds anticipatory dread for the ordeal to come, not only through the familiarity of the narrative, but because of its emplotment as a rite of passage. Even as Christ is supposed to be crucified, ordeal is supposed to follow separation in the liminal phase of the ritual. In this context, the trial before the Sanhedrin, the questioning by Herod, the sentencing by Pilate and the crowd’s choice of Barabbas over Jesus *primarily* serve as narrative redundancy, amplifying

the masculine steadfastness of his choice.⁶ Every step he takes away from the temptation in the Garden, moving through the various moments of separation from his life that was, Jesus becomes more certain, transfigured by the workings of the rite. Gone now are the doubts and anxieties of Gethsemane, crushed like the head of Satan’s snake under his heel. Here is a steely-eyed Christ, his human body ever more disfigured. Every effort to deflect him from his purpose—which is to be crucified—is met with a laconic disdain bordering on contempt. The performance by Caviezel here is, I think, underappreciated: he sells the stoic spiritual warrior of Gibson’s imagination.

Now to the main event. Dragged before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, Jesus is sentenced to flogging—the usual precursor to crucifixion, though that doom has not yet been pronounced. The beating begins. Through torture after torture, the audience, like Mary (Maia Morgenstern) and Mary Magdalen (Monica Bellucci), is held in a spell of horror and awe. Yet the reaction shots, focused on the two women, mediate audience responses which by Gibson’s design simply cannot encompass the heroic suffering of Jesus. Even to witness this artistic rendition of ritual suffering becomes for the audience a terrible ordeal—an ordeal that in its cinematic exaggeration has the power, at least for the most receptive segment of the audience, to trigger visceral body memory, what is sometimes called *mental time travel* (MTT). In MTT the subject is momentarily transported into the midst of episodic memory, essentially re-experiencing a particular event, including its sensual and emotional components (Boyer 2009, 5). While

most contemporary subjects will not have initiatory memories as distinct as the hundreds of examples described in the ethnographic record (Gilmore 1990), the depiction of ritualized suffering in the film is so thorough as to provide multiple points of identification, sufficient to provoke the recall of any personal experience of acute suffering either endured or witnessed.

The crucial point of the liminal phase occurs when Jesus, bloody and tortured beyond sensibility, beyond sanity—at one point the barbed whip used on him sticks in his back so defiantly that the burly Roman torturer is hard pressed to rip it away again—is dragged once again before Pilate. The body of Jesus is bloodied almost beyond recognition, and a feeling of exhausted nausea settles over the audience. This sickened identification of the film audience, mediated by the compassionate suffering of the maternal Mary, is in marked contrast to the onscreen audience, which is perversely blood-drunk. Meanwhile the Roman governor is visibly moved to sympathy by the sight of the tortured Jesus.

“Behold the man,” shouts Pilate, reprimanding the viciousness of the crowd as he supports Jesus by the arm, echoing the words of John 19:5.

The mob, whipped up by the sinister Jewish leadership, jeer and shout back, “Crucify him!”

Pilate’s reply is sad, that of a man who has measured human nature and found it wanting: “Isn’t this enough?” he asks. “Look at him!”

The inevitable response, of course—mandated by the scriptural source material—is the demand for immediate crucifixion.

Pilate, the soldierly figure of Imperial Rome, is thus cast as the reluctant agent of Jesus’ execution; the lion’s share of the guilt is reserved for the Jewish mob and its priestly leaders. While soldiers of Rome enact the scourging of Jesus with a giddy sadistic glee, Pilate as a Roman leader sympathizes with the suffering victim and goes along with the demands for crucifixion apparently only to keep the peace, after “washing his hands” of it. Yet even this apparent paradox is firmly rooted in the formulaic progression of the rite of passage. Jesus must be seen to choose his end, to be the heroic master of his own fate. He cannot be a feminized victim of imperial power.

“Speak to me,” pleads Pilate. “I have the power to crucify you, or else to set you free.”

“You have no power over me...” answers Jesus, “...except what is given to you from above.”

The sadism of the Roman torturers reads differently when they are considered—though it is scarcely possible—as the authorized agents of a transcendent and necessary ritual. Like circumcisers, they enact a violence on the body that outside of the ritual context would be entirely wicked, nearly incomprehensible. Here Gibson’s profoundly ahistorical Pilate also has an important role.⁷ The Roman role here is ritually necessary and Pilate is at the center, representing an unflinching pagan masculinity and state authority well-qualified to carry out the initiation of Jesus. Gibson’s anti-Semitic depiction of the bickering treachery of the priests and the effeminate decadence of Herod disqualifies the Jewish authorities.

Condemned, Jesus is taken away and prepared for his final apotheosis. Again via the agency of the hyper-masculine Roman soldiers, he is made to “bear his cross” to the place of his execution, and is nailed to it—a process the unabridged version of the film presents unblinkingly. There Jesus lingers on the far threshold, nearly ready for the moment of aggregation, when he will rejoin the social world as the Christ. In the final minutes of the film a heretofore absent God-the-Father looks down on the tableau of Calvary and sheds a single divine tear over the death of his mortal son. The tear falls to the dusty ground and reverberates as an earthquake, and the Temple is literally split in two. Terrified, the Roman executioners hurry to end it, and thrust a spear into the side of Jesus. Satan kneels and writhes in what appears to be an erotically abject rage on the cracked and barren ground, signifying his/her defeat by the Christ victorious.

The body of Jesus is removed from the cross—savaged but still visibly muscular and male—and held across the lap of his youthful mother Mary. She is in shock, pained beyond tears, mirroring scenes of reunion between mortal mothers and mortal remains of sons enacted so many millions of times in the last century alone. In the end, Jesus emerges on cue from the tomb, reborn as the Christ. And here Gibson doesn’t bother to linger, for the resurrected Christ has achieved transcendence. He is much like the fallen soldiers upon whose particular sacrifices it is best not to dwell upon too closely, lest one disturb the delicate ideological screen that separates the *sacred* from the *meaningless*.

Conclusion

The *Passion of the Christ* is a controversial film that polarized critical responses. For its detractors it was an anti-Semitic spectacle of pornographic violence that excluded the most vital teachings in the Christian tradition. For its supporters, the violence Gibson depicted facilitated an audience member’s experience of personal suffering, allowing them to immerse themselves in the underlying ritual structure and to identify with the purposeful suffering of Jesus, at least up to a point, and celebrate his redemptive sacrifice.

Gibson’s Jesus is the obedient warrior-son, sent to do battle with the demonic enemy. Jesus is tortured and crucified so that he may be transformed from man, weak as all men are, into something more, a weapon who can lead the hosts of heaven against the powers of evil. His suffering is central to that transformation. It forged him into battle-readiness. As a boy is made into a man, made to be always vigilant against the seductive inner pull of feminine weakness and softness, steely-eyed Jesus is made into Christ, now and forever beyond its reach.

This particular Passion narrative, while grounded in long tradition, is only one of many possible and contested Passion narratives. It is however the version precisely in tune with the tensions and divisions of a culture with militarist defaults, wedded to the values of heroic masochism, in a state which at the time of its release enlisted women as (non-combat) soldiers and was widely rumored, though not yet proven beyond all possible doubt, to engage in torture. In such a context Gibson’s decision to focus on embodied masculine suffering in the film is not just an inter-

vention in the tradition of Christological depiction—though it is certainly that—but also an intervention into masculine ideals in American culture more broadly.

Heroic masochism is the key component of a style of masculinity, militarized masculinity, in which to be a man is to be fit for military service. If perhaps not quite hegemonic in Connell's terms (2005), this ethos is nonetheless extraordinarily influential, drawing aspirants eager to suffer what they must for the sake of that transformation which make them into weapons and invests them with a position of gendered privilege.

Gibson is showing us something crucial: the glorification of transformative suffering. And it is alluring in its promise: that anyone willing to pay the appropriate price in pain and humiliation can enter the exclusive club of militarized masculinity and thereby join the fight against the enemy and participate in the privileges due a valorized, toughened self. The toughened militarized self, in turn—grounded in the rejection of always-suspected (because all too human) weakness, softness, and excessive compassion—is not only authorized to inflict (transformative) pain upon others, but does so as part of militarized masculinity.

Consideration of the post-9/11 American context of production circles back to this question: why (given the ritual logics previously adumbrated) *must* Christ have been Jesus—a male? The early twenty-first century has witnessed the explosive growth of women in roles previously reserved for men, particularly the role of soldiers.⁸ The institutional separation of men from women has been threatened by feminism, by individual rights and by

the relentless logic of capitalism. It does not require a detailed knowledge of Mel Gibson's politics to see the ways in which his choices as filmmaker respond to this context.⁹

The contemporary destabilizing of the *institutionalizing* function of gendered initiation, not to mention the retreat of such rites into specialized niches, provokes movement within the transformational logics of the rite, suggesting ever-escalating ordeals. With enough suffering, Gibson's narrative seems to suggest, surely the institutional demarcation between men and women can be stabilized. It is worth noting that such a gendered politics must be played out on the bodies of men and boys, demanding an embrace of the ethos of heroic masochism.

Within this logic of gender, a real man is not, can never be truly a victim; he can be overwhelmed by superior forces, but surrender and submission is not thinkable without failure, without giving over to the seductive feminine pull of internal weakness: Gibson's Satan. It is crucial to the logic of a masculine rite of passage that the initiate be willing and not a victim, and that the candidate be worthy, able to endure the ordeal. Gibson raised the bar of the ordeal beyond comprehensibility, attempting to reauthorize proper masculinity. In this context Gibson draws on powerful cultural conventions to support his project. He knows that while there may be female persons (or androgynous men) who could be imagined to endure the tortures he depicts, qualification becomes irrelevant in the gaze of the audience. It expects to see a male initiate not just because "everyone knows" Christ is a man—the hypostatic logic and artistic tra-

dition is anything but clear on this unless we insist on gendering god—but because the post-9/11 audience would be unable to read a woman as other than a victim, and worse a victim whose heroic body might be construed as a pornographic object disqualified from heroic transcendence.

Thus, for all of the noise and heat a blind spot remains at the film's core: the presumptive necessity, one might even say goodness, of embodied male suffering. While transcendence through suffering may be the very point of Passion narratives, the Christological tradition of depiction and narrative does not require Gibson's relentless masculinization of Jesus. Arguably it is the ongoing American culture wars of the twenty-first century that make such a move both resonant and nearly invisible, particularly to the critics for whom the bloody torture depicted is pointless violence rather than purposeful suffering. I prefer not to question the depiction of suffering, but to ask why critics concede that heroic suffering is necessary, however uncomfortable they find its depiction.

Notes

¹ Even a cursory search of Google Scholar or the Library of Congress catalogue turns up dozens of monographs and essay collections focused in whole or in part on Gibson's film, including, to list only a notable few, the collection *Mel Gibson's Bible: Religion, Popular Culture and "The Passion of the Christ"* (Univ. of Chicago, 2005), edited by Timothy Beal and Tom Linafelt; sociologist Neal King's *The Passion of the Christ* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); Brent Plate's edited volume *Re-Viewing The Passion: Mel Gibson's Film and its Critics*

(Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); Zev Garber's *Mel Gibson's Passion: The Film, the Controversy and its Implications* (Purdue University Press, 2006); Joseph Egan's *Brave Heart of Jesus: Mel Gibson's Postmodern Way of the Cross* (Columbia Press, 2005), and particularly relevant herein, David Greven's *Manhood in Hollywood from Bush to Bush* (University of Texas Press, 2009), particularly chapter seven, "The Devil Wears Abjection: The Passion of the Christ." Similarly a search in the database Academic Search Complete of peer-reviewed articles that feature both "Gibson" and "Passion of the Christ" yields nearly five hundred results. To put that into perspective, a similar search for "Matrix" and "Wachowski" yields less than half that number.

² The only work I know of that deals substantively with *The Passion of the Christ* to appear in a major anthropological journal is Steven Caton's (2006) article, "Coetzee, Agamben, and the Passion of Abu Ghraib," published in *American Anthropologist*.

³ Some key exceptions are David Greven's (2009) work on *The Passion* in his *Manhood in Hollywood from Bush to Bush* and Kent Brintnall's (2011) treatment in *Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-in-Pain as Redemptive Figure*. David Savran's (1998) book, *Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture*, comes too early to include *The Passion* but nonetheless addresses the relationship between male suffering and cultural forms in a powerful way

⁴ I have not differentiated the ways in which various supportive audiences—Evangelical, conservative Catholic, etc.—received the film. There are doubtless important distinctions to be made but part of the argument herein is that the overarching framework of the masculine rite of passage, in the context of ongoing American culture wars over gender ideals and militarism, provides a level of resonance that is available to critics and shared by and/or identified with by supportive audiences.

⁵ From an aesthetic point of view the way Gibson uses cinematic violence in *The Passion* is devastatingly effective. Aesthetic triumph, however, does not compensate for the anti-Semitic bigotry Gibson refuses to deflect in his telling of the Passion narrative. Given that the historical anti-Judaism that is the ancestor of murderous anti-Semitism has always been deeply imbricated in particular interpretations of the Passion story—as argued by theologian John Crossan (1995, 35)—this is a signal failure of the film.

⁶ The historical context for the inclusion of these scenes in the gospels are a separate matter, disputed by theologians and historians of religion, most likely having to do with intra-Jewish politics in the century following the crucifixion of Jesus (Crossan 1995). Such concerns, however, will barely intrude on a contemporary audience apart from a few specialists.

⁷ While there is no consensus among historians on the figure of Pilate, there is no support for Gibson's portrayal of him as a manly, sympathetic figure put upon and perhaps even intimidated by a bloodthirsty Jewish mob (Aus 1998, 139; Maclean 2007, 310).

⁸ Women have been an increasing presence in the U.S. military since the end of selective service in 1973 and they reached crucial levels of visibility in the wake of 9/11. About 10 percent of those who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq, 15 percent of all active duty personnel, and 20 percent of the total U.S. armed forces, including reserves are women (Parrish 2012).

⁹ Gibson's politics, including his anti-Semitism and a form of conservative Catholicism that rejects the reforms of Vatican II, are not irrelevant to understanding *The Passion of the Christ*, but what makes the film effective for many who do not share these beliefs is the resonance of heroic suffering, the frame of the male rite of passage, and the ongoing cultural confrontation around ideal manhood and its relationship to military values.

Works Cited

- Asad, Talal. 1985. Notes on Body Pain and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritual. *Economy & Society* 12.3: 287-327.
- Aus, Roger D. 1998. The Release of Barabbas Revisited. *Caught in the Act, Walking in the Sea and the Release of Barabbas Revisited*. Atlanta: Scholars Press. 171-179.
- Barthes, Roland. 1972. Myth Today. *Mythologies*. trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang. 109-157.
- Beal, Timothy, and Tom Linafelt, Eds. 2006. *Mel Gibson's Bible: Religion, Popular Culture, and The Passion of the Christ*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Beidelman, T.O. 1987. Circumcision. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Vol. 3. Edited by Mircea Eliade, 511-514. New York: Macmillan.
- Belkin, Aaron. 2012. *Bring Me Men: Military Masculinity and the Benign Façade of American Empire, 1898–2001*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bilmes, Linda, and Joseph Stiglitz. 2008. *The Three Trillion Dollar War*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Bloch, Maurice. 1992. *Prey into Hunter: The Politics of Religious Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1998. The Presence of Violence in Religion. *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*. Edited by Jeffrey H. Goldstein, 163-78. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Brintnall, Kent L. 2008. Pursuing The Passion's Passions. *Shopping for Jesus: Faith in Marketing in the USA*. Edited by Dominic Janes, 217-51. Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing.
- _____. 2011. *Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-in-Pain as Redemptive Figure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. Rites of Institution. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Edited by John Thompson, 117-26. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Boyer, Pascal. 2009. What Are Memories For? Functions of Recall in Cognition and Culture. *Memory in Mind and Culture*. Edited by Pascal Boyer and James V. Wertsch, 3-27. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Boyer, Peter. 2003. The Jesus War: Mel Gibson's Obsession. *The New Yorker* 79.26: 58-71.
- Box Office Mojo. The Passion of the Christ . <http://www.boxofficemojo.com>. Accessed January 11, 2013
- Brown, William J., John D. Keeler, and Terrence R. Lindvall. 2007. Audience Responses to The Passion of the Christ. *Journal of Media and Religion* 6.2: 87-107.
- Caton, Steven. 2006. Coetzee, Agamben, and the Passion of Abu Ghraib. *American Anthropologist* 108.1: 114-123.
- Clover, Carol J. 1992. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Connell, R. W. 2005. *Masculinities*. second ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Crossan, John D. 1995. *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Davis, Leo D. 1990. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*. Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press.
- Denby, David. 2004. Nailed: Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ." *New Yorker* 80.2: 84.
- Enloe, Cynthia. 1983. *Does Khaki Become You: The Militarisation of Women's Lives*. Boston: South End Press.
- Fredriksen, Paula. 2004. Responsibility for Gibson's Passion of the Christ. *Passionate Controversy: A Viewer's Guide to The Passion of the Christ*. Edited by Carolyn Hack. Lulu Press, 2004. www.lulu.com. 60-66.
- Garber, Zev. 2006. *Mel Gibson's Passion: The Film, the Controversy and its Implications*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press.
- Gardiner, Steven. 2004. *Masculinity, War and Refusal: Vicissitudes of German Manhood before and after the Cold War*. PhD diss., Cornell University.
- _____. 2013. Heroic Masochism: Masculine Privilege and the Uses of Pain. *Library of Social Science Working Paper*. www.libraryofsocialscience.com/ideologies/docs/Gardiner-HeroicMasochism.pdf.
- _____. 2013. In the Shadow of Service: Veteran Masculinity and the Civil-Military Disjuncture in the United States. *North American Dialogue* 16.2: 69-79.

- Gilmore, David. 1990. *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Manhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Goldstein, Joshua. 2001. *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greven, David. 2009. *Manhood in Hollywood from Bush to Bush*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Gutmann, Brunno. 1970. Chagga Law. eHRAF World Cultures.
- Egan, Joseph. 2005. *Brave Heart of Jesus: Mel Gibson's Postmodern Way of the Cross*. New York: Columbia Press.
- Herd, Gilbert, ed. 1982. *Rituals of Manhood: Male Initiation in Papua New Guinea*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jeffords, Susan. 1994. *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- King, Neal. 2011. *The Passion of the Christ*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- Kupfer, Marcia. 2008. Introduction. *The Passion Story: From Visual Representation to Social Drama*, edited by Marica Kupfer. University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press. 1-22.
- Lutz, Catherine. 2001. *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Maclean, Jenifer K. Berenson. 2007. Barabbas, the Scapegoat Ritual, and the Development of the Passion Narrative. *Harvard Theological Review* 100.3: 309-34.
- Magid, Ron. 2004. Adding Agony to The Passion. *American Cinematographer* 85.3: 57.
- Morgan, David. 1992. Sallman's Head of Christ: The History of an Image. *The Christian Century* 109.28: 868-870.
- _____. 2005. *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Parrish, Karen. DOD Open More Jobs, Assignments to Military Women. U.S. Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov>. Accessed September 5, 2014.
- Plate, S. Brent, Ed. 2004. *Re-Viewing The Passion: Mel Gibson's Film and Its Critics*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- Prince, Stephen. 2006. Behold Blood Sacrifice in The Passion of the Christ: How Real is Movie Violence? *Film Quarterly* 59.4: 11-22.
- Savran, David. 1998. *Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Scott, A. O. 2004. Good and Evil Locked in Violent Showdown. *New York Times*. February 25, 2004, E1.
- Turner, Victor. 1967. Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967. 93-111
- Turse, Nick. 2008. *The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives*. New York: Henry Holt.

- Van Gennep, Arnold. 1960. *The Rites of Passage*. Trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Wagner, Günter. 1949. *The Bantu of North Kavirondo*. London: International Africa Institute.
- Wood, Robert H., Michael C. Jindra, and Jason D. Baker. 2004. The Audience Responds to *The Passion of the Christ*. *Re-Viewing The Passion: Mel Gibson's Film and Its Critics*. Edited by S. Brent Plate. New York: Palgrave. 163-80.

Responses

Passion Pruned

Mark Pizzato

University of North Carolina at Charlotte
USA

Mel Gibson's 2004 film, *The Passion of the Christ*, has been hugely popular and very controversial. Steven Gardiner provides significant insights about the appeal of "heroic masochism" in this movie, with its horror-film scenes of Jesus being tortured by ancient Romans at the urging of his fellow Jews. Gardiner finds this symptomatic of a current American ethos of "militarized masculinity," arguing that the traditional Christ narrative "does not require Gibson's relentless masculinization of Jesus." Yet in order to make this claim, Gardiner prunes Gibson's film, with its many potential viewpoints and audience identifications, into a narrow narrative lens.

Gardiner finds "a blind spot" at the film's center: "the presumptive necessity, one might even say goodness, of embodied male suffering." He argues that the "post-9/11 audience" would not accept a woman in the role of a tortured hero, Jesus here, because her body would then be victimized as a "pornographic object." But Gibson's objectifying of the body of the actor, Jim Caviezel in this film and his own in other heroic action movies, is both pornographic and transcendent depending on how it is viewed by non-believers and believers in the audience. Male and female viewers might be drawn to the eroticism of a "pretty actor . . . covered in prosthetic and/or digitally conjured

wounds," as Gardiner aptly describes him, or repulsed when flesh is ripped from that body or nails pierce its limbs. Yet Gardiner does not consider the variety of other characters onscreen, male and female, observing the objectified body of Jesus—as identification points for different movie viewers with numerous associations in their brain's "inner theatres" (Pizzato 2011).

As I have argued before, while comparing this film to medieval biblical plays through current neuroscience, along with Artaudian and Brechtian theories of the sacrificial actor, there is at least anecdotal evidence of viewers identifying with the tortured Jesus as a subject across gender, with mirror-neurons and emotional contagion evoking physical suffering in the audience (2011: 218-25). A woman in Wichita, Kansas (Peggy Scott) reportedly died from a heart attack she suffered while watching the movie. Perhaps she not only identified with the pain of Jesus, but also mimicked in her body the agony of his mother and Mary Magdalene onscreen: wiping his blood from the cobblestones after his scourging, watching him die on the cross, and cradling his corpse.

Instead of considering these female allies as viewer identification points, Gardiner focuses on the androgyny of Satan (Rosalinda Celentano) as Jesus's enemy, especially in the opening scene of temptation in the garden. Although played by a female, the Satan figure is also shown with a phallic snake crawling out from under his/her robe. After the snake crawls over his hand, Jesus rises from the ground and stomps his foot near it—"smashing the serpent's head under the heel of his sandal while staring down

the devil" (in Gardiner's view, although a smashed serpent's head is not actually shown onscreen). Satan also appears at the scourging scene as a perverse Madonna, holding an elderly-faced, anti-Christ child—perhaps as a Brechtian distancing device, raising awareness in some spectators of their own sadomasochistic pleasure in observing the bloody spectacle and nurturing its popular creativity. But Gardiner sees the Jesus-Satan rivalry throughout the film merely in terms of a militarized masculinity versus "the ugly-beautiful temptation of feminine weakness." Gardiner also terms this binary rivalry as a choice between the meaningful suffering of "heroic masochism" (which he nonetheless critiques) or a "perversion of desire, [with] pleasure in pain . . . [and] the embrace of abjection," represented by Satan's androgynous temptations.

Such masculine heroism versus feminine compassion is explored more fully in Martin Scorsese's 1988 film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*. It shows the militaristic desires of Judas as an anti-Roman terrorist, and of Paul as imperial preacher, against the family-man potential of Jesus beyond the cross after his mystical visions in the desert, forming a complex tragic sacrifice (Pizzato 2005). Gibson's film has a more limited focus, but Gardiner makes it seem even narrower. He presents all of *The Passion* as a "rite of passage" for Jesus from "the pre-separation anxiety of boys," paralleled by his agony in the garden, through the "liminal phase" of his scourging and crucifixion as boy-man or man-god, with the Roman torturers as "authorized agents of a transcendent and necessary ritual" to his resurrection from a cave tomb. But what is the symbolic

frame for this imaginary rite of passage and its real pain (especially real for Peggy Scott) that mirrors audience desires for a transcendent meaning to their own sufferings?

As Gardiner briefly mentions, near the end of the film "a heretofore absent God the Father looks down on the tableau of Calvary and sheds a single divine tear over the death of his mortal son." But that Father figure was also present (for believers) just off-screen in the opening Garden of Gethsemane scene, with Jesus praying to avoid the "chalice" of suffering that another part of His Godhood was demanding. For Christians, the full arc of the film's sacrifice is crucial to its transcendent meaning: God showing His love by becoming human, suffering, and dying, in order to lead people in a lifelong passage to eternal bliss.

In Gibson's film, the passion of Jesus Christ is not only an exemplary rite of passage, mirroring current American demands of masochistic masculinity for men and women soldiers (as Gardiner suggests), thus encouraging such sacrifices in real life and giving them a greater meaning. The film also prunes the neural networks of movie viewers in many other potential ways. It engages particular beliefs, associations, and identifications in each viewer, strengthening those brain circuits as others die off, according to a lifelong process of neural Darwinian sacrifice. This alters each spectator's inner theatre through Artaudian identifications with the actor's sacrifice and key moments of Brechtian distancing in the various viewpoints the film offers. These Artaudian and Brechtian options of sacrificial intimacy or critical distance involve

different camera angles, dramatic contexts, and other cinematic elements—plus each viewer’s choice in how to watch.

For example, with God the Father watching at the edges of the film like the mass audience from Gethsemane to Calvary and beyond, certain aspects of a cosmic, political, social, personal, or inner brain theatre might be evoked with Artaudian passion and Brechtian awareness. God is *not* shown looking down on Calvary, as Gardiner suggests. Instead, the movie audience is given God’s viewpoint, looking down *with* Him from above, even seeing the Calvary crosses through His tear as a lens. (This detail is not mentioned by

Gardiner.) When the tear hits the ground, as Gardiner says, it “reverberates as an earthquake” causing the Temple to be destroyed and leading to another scene of Satan in “erotically abject rage on the cracked and barren ground, signifying his/her defeat by the Christ victorious.” But this falling tear of reverberating violence, showing divine compassion for suffering and yet further destruction on earth, might be seen as caused by: (1) a sadistic or sadomasochistic streak in God or Mother Nature, (2) humankind’s original sins against God being repaired or avenged, (3) the divine battle of Christ as objectified “weapon” against Satan’s abject temptations, (4) mimetic rivalries across human cultures, from Judeo-Roman conflicts in Jesus’s time to many others since then, or (5) other associations in viewer’s inner theatres.



God’s Tear. *The Passion of the Christ*. New Market Films 2004

Gardiner simply stresses the third of these options—and that fits the melodramatic mode of clear-cut good versus evil in many Hollywood action movies. (Mel Gibson’s 2006 scandal involving a drunken anti-Semitic slur, along with the depiction of Jewish leaders in the film as more vicious than Pilate, suggests a particular combination of these options for the filmmaker also.) But even in his critique of heroic masochism as reflecting a

larger problem in American culture, Gardiner repeats its melodramatic dominance in analyzing Gibson’s film. Instead, one might explore various tragicomic (Artaudian, Brechtian, neuroscientific, and thus deeply biopolitical) meanings of sacrificial violence onscreen, replaying in the brains and lives of the mass audience—especially with Americans’ post-9/11 temptation to fight apocalyptic villains in the “Holy Land” and in the “Birthplace of Civilization” that surrounds it.

Works Cited

- Pizzato, Mark. 2005. *Theatres of Human Sacrifice: From Ancient Ritual to Screen Violence*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- . 2011. *Inner Theatres of Good and Evil: The Mind’s Staging of Gods, Angels and Devils*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Fareed Ben-Youssef

University of California at Berkeley
USA

In his article, “Behold the Man: Heroic Masochism and Mel Gibson’s *Passion*,” cultural anthropologist Steven Gardiner identifies why Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* so resonated with post-9/11 audiences. Gardiner fruitfully draws upon anthropological ideas on rites of passage to frame Gibson’s film as a meditation on obtaining manhood through suffering. He finds that the film depicts a heroic masochism, a “socially desirable suffering inflicted on and accepted by men as a warrant for masculine privilege” (Gardiner 2014, 20). Finding a blind spot within the critical consensus, which has often seen the film as depicting pointless violence, Gardiner argues that *The Passion of the Christ* in fact employs the spectacle of incredible violence on the male body to cannily deflect contemporary concerns of a destabilized masculinity. By focusing on heroic masochism, however, Gardiner forecloses an understanding of the film’s vision of a militant femininity, portrayed in the androgynous, violent figure of Satan. In this response, I will offer a reading of the film that will buttress Gardiner’s reading of the strange militancy of Gibson’s Christ and his relation to executive power. At the same time, I will engage with feminist theories on women in combat to fill a blind spot in Gardiner’s account—how Gibson’s amorphously gendered Satan contains a power to nullify the purpose of the divine warrior-son’s sacrifice which the film never quite overcomes.

While Gardiner evokes the militaristic dimension of Gibson’s Jesus—via his reading of the crushing of the snake in the Garden of Gethsemane—the film pushes even further, explicitly drawing connections between the Son of God and executive leaders of the military. When Pontius Pilate pleads with the Jewish leaders to spare the man, Gibson visually links Jesus with the Roman prefect. He places them side by side, their faces often intermingling within quarter-profile shots. These compositional equivalences, which highlight the shared reddish color of their garbs, have a multivalent effect beyond absolving Pilate of responsibility in Christ’s death. Such a correlation with the Roman Empire’s representative functions to present Jesus as emblematic of a spiritual empire of his own. The link also shapes our understanding of Jesus’ dominion as a particularly militaristic one. The soldierly qualities of Gibson’s Christ become illuminated by the juxtaposition of his bloody skin against Pilate’s glistening armor, each wearing the uniform issued by their respective commander: one made of silver, the other made of flesh. The sight of Jesus on the right shoulder of a benevolent state leader whispering encouraging words while the multitudes attempt to sway his hand appears deeply imbricated within a post-9/11 moment when President George W. Bush often acknowledged God’s wisdom while calling for retribution for the attacks. In the former president’s 2011 autobiography, *Decision Points*, Bush recalls praying to himself, “Lord, let your light shine through me” before delivering a speech that intertwined pronouncements on God’s divine love with the prospect of

the nation's vengeance (Bush 146). The image of the military leader sharing the frame with Christ helps to underline the extent to which Gibson's biblical epic is not cleaved from, but is in dialogue with, a post-9/11 world—an allegorical interrelation that Gardiner very astutely highlights.

Gardiner, in his reading of the film, identifies the particularly masculine suffering of Gibson's Christ as "an intervention into masculine ideals in American culture more broadly" (Gardiner 2014, 32). When making this suggestion, Gardiner references the broader debates surrounding women in the military following the Abu Ghraib scandal. He finds that the Devil is identified for his presumed androgyny and said to "represent the seductive feminine pull of internal weakness" (*ibid.*). The underlying valence of this reading is that the film's allegorical analogue for the female soldier is the Devil. In simply conflating the feminine with weakness, however, Gardiner ignores the potential of the female soldier to undermine the notion of sacrifice as specifically masculine that sustains the militant masculinity and rites of passage Gardiner describes. I would suggest it is this power that is expressed within the Satan of the film. Early on in the film, the Devil controls a phallic snake, suggesting the potency of a feminine that co-opts the violent force of chosen warrior-sons.

The stakes for such a co-option have been well expressed within feminist studies of the discourses surrounding women in combat. Gender scholars Veronica Pin-Fat and Maria Stern, in an essay on the prevailing mass media narrative surrounding Private Jessica Lynch in the

Second Iraq War, employ Giorgio Agamben's concept of the *homo sacer* who exists within a zone of indistinction, a space of sovereign exception such as the military. The individual within such a space is transformed into bare life, into a *homo sacer*, and can be destroyed since he exists in a space outside of human law as well as divine law (Pin-Fat 41). The *homo sacer* undergoes a vital evanescence, to use Gardiner's formulation, "a great emptying out of the ordinary vitality of life"; however, his very marginalized position prohibits the *homo sacer* from achieving the spiritual transcendence that is offered to Christ. Indeed the myth of sacrifice becomes crucial in hiding the root expendability of the soldier (Gardiner 2014). Pin-Fat and Stern find that women must be excluded, for this validating sacrifice is justified as occurring for the sake of a domestic space tied inextricably to femininity. Female soldiers risk undermining the very possibility of meaningful sacrifice as they show that the "the masculinity of the military, indeed the existential identity of the military as part of war, relies on this constitutive other" (Pin-Fat 35). They find that "the sacrifice of military women threatens to reveal the very impossibility of sacrificing military men. Thus, the meaning for which sovereign power kills the life takers disintegrates" (Pin-Fat 44).

Gardiner points out that in the political realm the "door is open to libertarian and individualistic logics allowing a woman to fill normatively masculine roles, most quintessentially soldierly roles" but I would argue that via the androgynous figure of the devil, the film engages in these logics with more nuance and depth than the article suggests (Gardiner 2014,

23). Pin-Fat and Stern's suggestion demonstrates that women fighting in war represent a threat that cannot simply be elided by women fulfilling the "quintessentially soldier roles," as Gardiner writes (*ibid.*). Indeed, engaging with Pin-Fat and Stern highlights the very obliterating possibility of Satan within the film, whose muddled gender identity may push Jesus to contemplate that his own sacrifice may lack an overarching purpose. In stomping upon the Devil's snake, a display of "manly violence deployed with surgical precision in the rejection of androgyny," Jesus rebukes the possibility. Strangely, Gibson's staging of the scene, where Jesus is tearful and frightened until he faces the demonic presence, suggests that violence is itself a balm against his existential fear. By having to squash Satan with manly force, the film posits that the demon represents not feminine weakness, but the possibility of a feminine violent strength. Under this framework, a woman could not be in Christ's tortured position, which allows him to achieve a heroic transcendence—not just because post-9/11 audiences might conceive such a female body as a "pornographic object" like Gardiner asserts, but because such an individual would invalidate the very possibility of sacrificial masculinity (Gardiner 2014, 33).

Gardiner gestures towards the ideological tension at the heart of the film when he compares the fleeting vision of Christ's resurrection with how little the living explore the sacrifice of fallen soldiers. He finds that particularities of their sacrifices are not delved into, "lest one disturb the delicate ideological screen that separates the sacred from the mean-

ingless" (Gardiner 2014, 31). At the end of this response, it may be worth lingering on the brief scene of a Christ reborn to underline the surprising complexities of Gibson's film. As light stretches across the cave, the camera pans on the profile of a perfect, unmarred Jesus. The film then cuts to a close up of his face, his eyes looking up as though he sees the divine redemption that awaits. Had this been the final shot, the film would have simply reinforced a masculine vision. However, he rises up. What comes fully into view is a more enigmatic image: Christ's naked groin obscured by his hand which now features a gaping hole. The final interweaving of the literal phallus with the metaphorical vaginal opening of his hand suggests a Christ figure that remains corporeally damaged, even though he has been resurrected. Gibson literalizes the possibility of femininity on such a militant hero as a void, becoming figuratively unrepresentable. The compositional androgyny constructed within this final image of a Christ ascendant functions to reinscribe tropes traditionally coded as feminine back on to the hypermasculine body of the Christ figure. Christ takes on an androgyny here, but such an image is only possible after the violence has been rendered. By way of Jesus' masculinity and Satan's femininity, such a state is rendered impossible for women, precisely because the film indicates that they stand outside of the rites of passage, the very violence necessary to achieve vital evanescence. At the same time, the literal void in the God bespeaks a weakness, a masculinity rendered fragile. Could then the film's very lack of closure suggest that meaninglessness exists within the sacred

purpose given to the obedient warrior sons of the nation? Here, in the film's quintessential representation of its "rather brutal gendered politics imagined on the male body," does the film allude to the disruptive force of the warrior-daughter on the myth of sacrifice (Gardiner 2014, 23)? Gardiner's essay encourages us to probe this final image of irresolution—his essay opens the way to find subtlety and self-contradiction in a film whose ambivalences can be lost in the overwhelming spectacle that is the "main event" of its violence.

Works Cited

- Bush, George W. 2011. *Decision Points*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Gardiner, Steven. 2014. Behold the Man: Heroic Masochism and Mel Gibson's *Passion* as Masculine Rite of Passage. *Cultural Analysis* 11: 19-37.
- The Passion of the Christ*. 2004. Dir. Mel Gibson. Perf. James Caviezel and Monica Bellucci. New Market Films.
- Pin-Fat, Veronique and Maria Stern. 2005. The Scripting of Private Jessica Lynch: Biopolitics, Gender, and the "Feminization" of the U.S. Military. *Alternatives* 30: 25-53.

Rational and Emotional Fools?

Bo Allesøe Christensen

Aarhus University
Denmark

Have we not noticed that experiences have made themselves independent of people?
Musil – The man without qualities
(v.1, 158)

Abstract

This article analyses the phenomenon of connecting an idea of experience with economy as done within modern marketing theories. This, initially, held a promise of moving past rational choice theory by incorporating experiential aspects of emotionality, thus claiming to be a new and more precise kind of economy with new kinds of production and consumption. One academic example of this experience economy will be analysed from a hermeneutical and analytical philosophical perspective, in order to question whether it presents a viable description of experience, and actually presents a new understanding of economy. The article's conclusion claims that the example fails on both issues, presenting us with resuscitation of classic hedonic utilitarianism, but in the guise of a neurophysiologic explanation of experiential intentionality.

Introduction¹

When Amartya Sen wrote his famous article "Rational Fools" in 1977, the critique of rational choice theory was well under way making the under-determination of theory by the plurality of conditions for human agency one of its overall targets.² Sen argued that failing to meet the conditions of rational choice theory was not due to humans' limited strategic sophistication.

On the contrary, it was the lack of sophistication on part of theory instead. Sen placed the notion of commitment at the heart of humans' capabilities to act and in doing so drove a wedge between rational choice's identification of personal choice with personal welfare (i.e. that any choice is based on a rationality of maximizing the gains for personal welfare). Commitments indicated the presence of non-gains-maximizing factors as an important part of human rational behaviour, which was not theorisable in the context of rational choice theory. Sen, therefore, named the anthropological figure presumed in rational choice theory, a rational fool. The figure was a social moron, Sen claimed, because no person could act as if self-interested gains-maximization is the sole preference-ordering principle (Sen 1977, 336). Otherwise this person is most likely lacking the competences needed to act in a social way. Besides the important critique of rational choice theory made in this classic article, a general aspect of Sen's argument should be emphasised. This aspect concerns the intertwining of economic agency and the understanding of the human being, with this being comprising of relations to the world, to other people and the self. Sen's critique of rational choice theory could be rephrased as a request for relevant information about the whole of human experience, as a basis for understanding economic agency. Thus, underscoring some sense of human (economic) agency as influencing any description of (human) economic agency, with the extent of this influence being contested. Implicitly Sen's critique, then, is a critique of the model of human beings that informs rational choice theory, which he sees as narrow-minded and overly rationalistic.

Cultural Analysis 12 (2013): 44-74

© 2013 by The University of California.

All rights reserved

This article will address an allegedly new economic phenomenon, experience economy and focus, in light of the general implications of Sen's critique, on the human economic agency depicted in this economic model. The idea of the experience economy, while not part of mainstream economics, is more a business- or marketing-oriented economics, trying to understand and model how economic agency is more influenced by experiential than by rationalistic conceived factors (Østergård 2007). It tries, therefore, to incorporate non-economic factors (e.g. symbols or emotions), as part of the informational basis for understanding economics. Just as anthropology and ethnography in the sixties and seventies revolted against the ahistoricity and dehumanisation of the broad theoretical programs of structuralism, and turned to the study of the concrete lived experience instead, a parallel development occurred in the seventies and eighties within consumer studies and business economics. These fields turned from a statistical and quantitative focus on the market-behaviour of people towards a focus on the concrete experience of products. Where the focus on concrete experience in anthropology meant, *inter alia*, turning to immediacy of experience (Turner and Bruner 1986), performance and action (Bronner 2012), the pragmatics of experience (Abrahams 1985) and hermeneutic-inspired thick descriptions (Geertz 1973), in marketing and business economics it meant turning to everyday consumption practices and consumer experiences, and how these were mediated by the use of cultural symbols (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), and expressions of consumers' understandings

of themselves, which were to be studied in a hermeneutical and phenomenological fashion (Thompson *et al*, 1989). The next step towards experience economy was taken by Pine and Gilmore in an attempt to try to understand how experiences and experiencing could be a source of additional economic value over and above the value of choosing regular products and the services build around these products (Pine and Gilmore 1999). Specifically, Pine and Gilmore asked about the economic value conferred by choosing the Disneyland or Starbucks experience, instead of going to the local funfair or diner. Why were these cultural and economic phenomena appealing more to the experiential expectations of consumers than something else? And why were consumers willing to pay more for products within these experiential settings than in other settings? Experience economy, then, tries to model how, why and for whom the different experiences created as part of ordinary and extra-ordinary economic practices work. Experience economy is therefore part of what Löfgren has termed "the new economy," which incorporates both new modes of production (the creation of experiences in conjunction with a regular product or service, like going to Starbucks) and "novel forms of consumption and organisation of everyday life, horizons of planning, logistics of mobility, new forms of materialities and sensibilities" (Löfgren 2003, 239). In the words of Jantzen and Rasmussen, two proponents of experience economy, "designing experience economic offerings revolves around manufacturing products the consumer wasn't aware of needing beforehand, but afterwards fails to understand how living

without was ever possible” (Jantzen and Rasmussen 2007d, 44). Needless to say, the kind of economic thinking described by Jantzen and Rasmussen affects us all in our everyday economic transactions, making it imperative to analyse critically the relation between human and economic agency.

To show how this works, take the following example of how companies try to influence us in our everyday lives through immersive advertising. It exemplifies a paradigm shift occurring in the tracking of our behaviour through technical devices like iPads, phones and computers. We are used to Google or Facebook tracking our behaviour by storing information about our browsing by means of cookies. A shift has occurred, however, because the means for doing the tracking has become more sophisticated opening up the tracking of physiological and emotional indicators, not just plain text-based search queries. For example, certain new phones can detect your physical state of being through their sensors (e.g. accelerometers, gyrometers, compasses) thereby potentially adjusting for your behaviour.³ Whereas cookie-tracking technology is not able to differentiate between multiple users of the same computer or device, thereby giving an inaccurate picture of the individual user, this new technology allows companies to advertise in a much more personalised manner (Dwoskin 2013; Morozov 2013). Emotional targeting is a suitable overall name for this emerging marketing technique. As an illustration of this technique, here is an excerpt from a recent patent application by Microsoft:

The computer system monitors online activity of users. The online activity is processed to identify a tone of content the users interact with during a time period. The computer system also receives indications of the users’ reactions to the content... Advertisements are selected for delivery to the users by the computer system...The computer system delivers the selected advertisements with the highest monetization values to the users that are emotionally compatible (Microsoft 2010).

Notice here that the device records the reactions of the users interacting with content, for example a game, and then targets a strategic place for advertising based on these real-time responses. Which ads get shown, then, depends on the experiences and emotions displayed by the users, not on what is conveyed in the game content itself. Companies are already specialising in this technique by targeting “game players at natural, critical points in game play where they are most receptive to brand messages” (Dwoskin 2014). The following quote is taken from one such company helping other companies with proprietary emotional targeting, “through a suite of proprietary products and analytics, the company delivers immersive brand messages during breakthrough moments (BTMs) within games when people are most receptive to marketing messages. Our ads elicit positive emotions by rewarding users and enhancing the user experience during game play” (Mediabrix 2014). BTM’s are, for example, getting a new personal high score, or getting stuck on a specific level. In the latter case a brand can offer to help the player

move on to the next level in exchange for viewing a commercial, whereas the former can offer you a reward, for example by using the phone's GPS to give you a free soda to come with a burger meal at a nearby fast food restaurant. Leaving the glow of old-fashioned behaviourism aside,⁴ detecting these BTM's is, of course, the special technique of this company, targeting the gamer and creating an emotional attachment to a given brand. Since the technique supposedly helps creating a positive experience and affects some kind of pleasure either by reward or compensation, it exemplifies the assumption of a notion of the (economic) human being similar to the one expressed by Jantzen and Rasmussen above, a being whose needs are created by rewards or compensations. The potential of affecting our everyday lives, both when using and not using technical devices, is immense and indicates the reconfiguration of parts of those socio-economic processes dealing with the daily consumption practices by using the concept of experience as a new instrument (Christensen 2013, 79). Furthermore, as attested by the growing international literature on the subject (eg. O'dell and Billing, 2005; Sundbo and Darmer 2008; Lorentzen and Hansen, 2012; Sundbo and Sørensen 2013), this should be scrutinised critically.

This critique might strike more than a note of similarity with the concept of *Kulturindustrie*. Familiar psychotechniques (of which emotional targeting is one) for influencing customers, such as the infantilisation of or barbarism toward subjects as a method for the simplification of life, are part of experience economy and seek to characterize, as will be described below,

modern society in a positive vein. Despite this similarity, as Hullot-Kentor (2008, 138) notes, understanding and using the concept *Kulturindustrie* is possible in a very special sense only, since the noued vital of the concept, as Adorno and Horkheimer used it has gone. Nevertheless it "lives;" it is used, but in the almost exact opposite sense of how it was originally conceived, i.e. as an industry manufacturing culture-products and thereby contributing, the industry claims, positively to the overall growth of society. But what is this culture industry, then? Hullot-Kentor claims that "the manufacture of culture as the production of barbarism is the culture industry" (2008, 145). Barbarism, then, is similar to Sen's description of foolish rationality in the sense that it connotes a primitivization of life, namely the reducing of life to few variables like conforming to a set of idealistic conceived economical laws, or a simple fulfilment of needs. The case study below, a scientific justification of experience economy, displays this power of primitivization by reducing humans to pleasure-seeking individuals only. It may appear to concur with Sen's critique of rational choice theory by stressing the emotionality of human beings, but instead simply adds a premise to the overall rationality of maximizing the gains for the personal welfare. Furthermore, it wraps itself in a selective and simplified understanding of the history of modern society, supplying the importance attached to this experience economy with a glow of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This essay's object of study, henceforth the Aalborg interpretation⁵ (Jantzen and Jensen 2006; Jantzen and Rasmussen 2007a; 2007b), is distinctive in invoking a

biological/neurophysiologic explanation of experiences as a point of departure, and combining this with a socio-historical explanation of experiences. Furthermore, these explanations are used to justify a new version, it is claimed, of economical hedonism, arguing that human economical agency intentionally seeks experiences to achieve the optimal homeostatic and joyous well-being. The aim of this article, then, is to critically question this connection between experience and economy by inquiring whether this particular interpretation actually delivers what is promised, i.e. presenting a suitable and new frame for understanding economy and experience as connected. Hence, as Sen might put it, does it present a viable picture of human economic agency? And is it actually as new as it claims to be? To address this, critical theoretical inspiration is found within the argumentative rigour of both the analytical and the hermeneutical philosophical tradition, as well as studies of everyday culture such as Highmore (2002), Abrahams (1985; 1986; 2005) and Berger (2009). Another purpose of the article is, therefore, to initiate a discussion between scholars investigating expressive and everyday culture, and those studying economics and public policy. One significant result from the investigation in this article concerns the implications of the notion of agency analysed. The essay argues against both a reductionist naturalistic and social conformist version of human agency—understanding peoples' actions as based, roughly, on either a causal or a norm/cultural based interaction with the surrounding world. Instead human agency, economical or otherwise, ought to be understood as intertwined by both biological and social conditions, serving as joint facilitators of these practices.

First, the biological/neurophysiological and socio-historical explanations of the intentionality of the experiential economic agency will be presented. Second, I will put forth a description of the concept of experience as intentional, using both a hermeneutical and analytical-philosophical framework. This will disclose some important traits necessary for understanding experience as a whole and how experience, as part of human agency, can be significant.

Initially, intentionality and experience might be understood as connected in the following ways. First, people crave experiences: they want to experience because experiencing releases some sense of pleasure or excitement. In this sense, experiences are comportments, i.e. intentional stances, having a positive state as the object of the comportment. Second, experiencing is a comportment in the sense that one cannot crave something without understanding it in some way. These two connected senses loosely correspond to the German terms of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, the first connoting a sense of “lived experience” or eventful intensity, the other a sense of being “experienced,” of living in a mode of ordinary meaning—not necessarily a happy or joyous state—but a state with-duration or continuity (Goodman 2003, 117, see also Highmore 2002, 66-67). Third, this essay shows that the Aalborg interpretation cannot accommodate these necessary traits within its own description of experiences as intentional. Finally, the model interpretation ultimately characterises human beings in a reductionist fashion as emotional fools, making the alleged new economy a reawakening of an old combination of hedonism and util-

itarianism—a resuscitation of Bentham within a supposedly neurophysiological frame of reference. In other words, the experience economy in this hedonic guise reproduces plain rational choice theory's emphasis on self-maximising behaviour as the prime human indicator, but with the difference that its informational base includes an appeal to emotions in addition to an idealised rationality.

Hedonic Experience Economy

Initially, however, the essay describes experience economy as consisting of two parts. The first part describes how the socio-historical development of the Western society made the hedonic part of consumers' intentional behaviour predominant. In the second part, this essay will show how individuals of this hedonic society are craving experiences due to certain biological inclinations describable in neurophysiologic terms. Hence, according to Jantzen and Rasmussen (2007d, 37-38) the first part establishes how individuals, through their hedonic behaviour, intentionally comport themselves towards specific objects of preference. The second part, referring to a neurophysiologic perspective, explains why they do so, taking its point of departure in biological intentionality as "...the motivation of the organism regarding the world of objects." (Jantzen and Rasmussen 2007d, 38)

A Historical Justification for the Joining of Experience and Economy: The Hedonic Society

According to the Aalborg interpretation, present-day society is characterised by a predominance of certain collective hedonic dispositions, serving as the basis for

modern economy. The force of these dispositions, it is claimed, is the result of a specific historical development implied in the idea of modernity. In particular "structural conditions of late modernity was a requisite for experience to function as an acceptable, and perhaps even dominating, motivational reason for many people" (Jantzen and Østergård 2007, 89). The relationship between the hedonic dispositions and these structural conditions is synergic in the sense, "that a modern form of hedonism, one the one hand, was promoted by particular circumstances of modernity and, on the other hand, it promoted these particular circumstances as well" (*ibid.*). The particular circumstances of modernity emphasized here are, firstly, a change in the overall extent of market-supply offering more experiences for the individual(s) to purchase and, secondly, a change in mentality causing more individuals to be oriented towards experiences than before. Hence, a certain kind of dialectic between the extent of market-supply and the historical conditions of the collective hedonic consciousness is established, where each somehow presupposes and promotes the other.

This dialectic is summarized by Jantzen and Østergård. Following the increase in production of goods in the last century, an aesthetisation of goods occurred, endowing these with both expressive and impressive functions (92). The former endow goods with a certain style and makes them recognizable within the social space (Bourdieu 1984). The style becomes a brand and shows something for and, primarily, *of* those who buy it. The latter appeals to the senses of people (Ritzer 2005). The sensuousness of goods entices

consumers; it appeals to their imagination and makes the act of consumption private and difficult to communicate to others. Both of these functions are most clearly at work in advertising “emphasizing the pleasure the use of goods can produce, and appealing to emotions and the wish for meaningful experiences” (Jantzen and Østergård 2007, 93). However, according to the authors, commercials only work when the consumers picture themselves as partial hedonists and acknowledge the implicit values behind advertising. Enjoyment, feelings and experiences must function as the implicit values of a commercially constructed “good life,” supplying consumers with sufficient reasons to consume. Hence, the aesthetisation of products from the supply-side only works if a certain demand exists, and this demand presupposes a certain attitude on the consumers’ part approving the above set of values. These values, then, function as instrumental reasons for the craving of experiences: “The hedonist is orientated towards pleasure, and acts in a calculating way with the aim of obtaining as much pleasure as possible” (Jantzen and Østergård 2007, 86). The presupposed attitude of approving the values is, according to the authors following Schulze (1992), the result of the historical development of the mentality of hedonic behaviour oriented toward experiences. This development creates a new *preference-order* based on what is exciting (Jantzen and Østergård 2007, 104), by connecting enjoyment with *calculation* (107). Notice the italicised words, the first originating within neoclassical economical theory, connected with utility maximisation and revealed preference theory

(see Walsh 1996), underlining a connection between revealing one’s preferences and the imperative to enjoy the experiences. The second echoes Bentham: “Passion calculates, more or less, in every man: in different men, according to the warmth or coolness of their dispositions: according to the firmness or irritability of their minds: according to the nature of the motives by which they are acted upon” (1789/1987, 111). Dispositions, emotions and excitements are here connected with a calculation directed at either promoting or avoiding what Bentham claims are humanity’s two masters: pain and pleasure.

Jantzen and Østergård present four additional features within the historical development of this hedonic mentality. First, that the craving of experience presupposes the actual increase in income, education, spare time, and life expectancy that followed World War II. This increased societal wealth in Western societies was, according to the authors, transformed into individual welfare and wellbeing through the production of a multitude of goods and the legitimisation of subjective reasons to choose these goods. An example of this is answering the question “why did you buy it?” with “Oh, I just felt like it” (Jantzen and Østergård 2007, 94). Second, according to the authors, again following Schulze (1992), the “rebellion of ‘68” against fixed norms and static and hierarchal societal structures for what is right to do and feel, rehabilitated a diversity of feelings, emotions and experiences as authentic evaluations and judgements for what you (can) do and, hence, buy. Expressions like “This is cool,” “This is so me” or “I like that” are all emotional expressions of the *justified* consumption

act made “not for the *outer* recognition but for the *inner* enjoyment” (Jantzen and Østergård 2007, 94). Hence, the authors claim, a democratization of enjoyment was the result, since most people could now afford to buy what they wanted. Needless to say, since it is so blatant, this can appear as democratization only if the issues of poverty and distributive justice are excised from the understanding of economics. Third, justified enjoyment, or modern hedonism, has its basis in Protestantism and its connection with Capitalism. Drawing on Campbell’s interpretation of Weber’s *locus classicus* of the connection between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of Capitalism (1987), the authors want to show that the effort to control the emotions of the Protestant ethic produced an acute sensitivity as well. Alongside the prohibition of enjoying the fruits of labour and the resulting ethics of production, a consumption-ethics developed, apparently redirecting drives and wants in a sensuous direction. The result was enjoyment not as a satisfaction of innate needs, but as the redemption of desires caused by consumer fantasies. Hence, “the roots of the modern orientation towards experiences lie in the Puritan renunciation of secular nonsense and foolishness” (Jantzen and Østergård 2007, 98). This paves the way for:

The modern hedonist, a capable manipulator of sense impressions and the turning up and down for the fantasy, with a larger and more differentiated register of experiential and joyous possibilities than the biggest potentate. He or she has become a dream-artist, controlling the object-world and the modulation of his or her feelings by a “controlled decontrol of emotions”. And this is everything else but irrational (99).

Notice here that this rationally controlled decontrol of emotions is the core output of this new hedonism, manifesting the new preference-order above. Fourth, a certain therapeutic praxis was legitimized, which helped people experiencing trouble with this new sensuousness. Jantzen and Østergård conclude that:

The modern hedonism is conditioned by a marketing economic enterprise creating a sensual world of ideas around the product and consumption. On the other hand, the experience orientation is a consequence of protracted mentality-historical changes, emphasizing how sensuality and sensitivity promote the individuals’ quest for meaning in life. These two sides encourage each other (107).

To recapitulate then, the basis and justification of this view of the modern consumer and modern hedonic society relies on a historical explanation of the predominance of the hedonic experience orientation based on, firstly, a change in mentality causing people to be oriented towards experiences, and secondly, the extent of the market supplying goods that appeal to the sensitivity of possible customers. The example of proprietary emotional targeting above is a clear example of targeting the sensitivity of consumers, inasmuch as it aims to create an experience by directing (controlling) consumers’ emotionality (decontrol) towards a positive fulfilment.

Hence, the authors seem to base their explanation on a dialectic in the supply of the market, which is both influenced by and influences the demand structure of the collective hedonic consciousness of consumers. However, failing to discuss both contradictory historical descriptions of how experience as a concept has been

used, and criticisms of Weber's classical study,⁷ the argument seems to be, in the terms defined by Hutchinson, Read and Sharrock, tendentious and a case of *apriorism* "to be committed to something—a method or the relevant explanatory factors in one's explanation of social action—prior to one's investigation" (Hutchinson *et al.* 2008, 3). Thus, it is assumed that the hedonic society is predominant now and that the history of mentality is the right method in explaining the development of society. No wonder, then, that experiences turn out to be pretty much what the theory claims it to be—namely hedonic and describable in mentalistic terms like sense impression, fantasy, and sensitivity. This picture of human experiential agency, then, presupposes a picture of economical agency in which human beings are primarily embedded in an (quasi-)equilibrious supply-demand structure, choosing to buy experiences as a way of maximizing pleasure, and then justifying these choices by appeal to internal emotions created by and embedded in the exact same supply-demand structure. The Aalborg interpretation, therefore, presupposes a specific connection between economical ideas of hedonism, preference-orderings and utility-maximisation, as the sole basis for human (economical) experiential agency. So even though Jantzen and Østergård claim that they are not arguing that hedonism is the only way modern consumers relate to goods (89), they fail to follow up on this point, making their argument *non sequitur*.

This reduced picture of experiential human agency will be discussed in the last section; however, the next section will examine the claim that the significance of

the hedonic regime of our society lies in its naturalistic basis (Jantzen *et al.*, 2012). A biological understanding of experience could explain the predominance of hedonic experiences in our society on a deeper level, i.e. not as a matter of cultural based preferences, but of the motivation of the biological organism regarding the world of objects. In this view, the historical explanation above describes a social norm-regulating adjustment pattern, justifying the right way(s) to want and procure hedonic experiences and denouncing others, thereby reproducing the naturalistic account of experience, but on a societal level. The novelty consists, then, of combining a naturalistic explanation with a social-regulatory account of experiential economical agency.

Experience Naturalised

Emphasizing emotionality (sensitivity and sensuality) as the primary human trait when it comes to experiencing, makes a connection with naturalistic and cognitive ways of explaining the experiential process straightforwardly. Jantzen claims, however, that consumer-studies, or microeconomics, have conceived experiences primarily as a non-economical side-effect of consumerism, understood as a satisfaction of needs called the needs-paradigm (Jantzen 2007, 139). Moving experiences to the centre of microeconomics therefore means dealing with three problems within this needs-paradigm for Jantzen. Firstly, people are controlled by motives other than the pure satisfaction of needs. Some people, Jantzen exemplifies, continue eating even though they are full, hence a wider model of what satisfaction consists in is called for. Secondly, microeconomics has failed

to conceptualize the process after needs are satisfied, particularly how the evaluation of an act of consumption proceeds, from the perspective of the consumer. A consumer's disappointment with a product can be explained as product failure, or as a result of misleading marketing, "but the reason is frequently, that the consumer was not capable of bringing himself into the right mood leading up to the anticipated moment" (140). A strong responsibility is placed on the consumer here and, as such, the fear of disappointment when buying a product is what creates the connection between the revealed preference and imperative to enjoy.⁸ The final problem is the "lack of the lack of needs." People eat, not because they are hungry and uncomfortable anymore, but to keep the hunger from manifesting itself in the first place. Hence, the satisfaction of needs is anticipatory rather than responsive.

These three problems show, according to Jantzen, that the experience process is not a pure side-effect of consumerism and that "experiences as goods need another calculus and another theoretical basis than the need-paradigm of microeconomy" (141). This calculus, according to Jantzen, consists of expectations, bodily and emotional reactions during the consumption, affective evaluation and reflexive cultivation after the consumption act. These elements comprise the *new calculus of the rationality of the consumer behaviour*, creating the frame for explaining the justified emotionality (the controlled decontrol) described above (141). Jantzen proposes a three-level biological explanation of this new calculus, naturalizing the experience process, claiming that instead of

...[C]onsidering experiences as an organism's inner response to an outer stimuli, the intentionality of the organism towards outer stimuli with the aim of reaching an inner response must be investigated. The organism, however, is not motivated by scarcities or lacks, in need of satisfaction, only, but also by a constant neurophysiologic activity creating experiences – even when scarcity is not present (145).

The first level consists of neurophysiological activity and is explained through an arousal-paradigm based on Scitovsky's introduction of neurophysiologic factors into consumption instead of the need-paradigm described above (Jantzen 2007, 147f). The basic assumption in this paradigm is that the biological organism is not only motivated by situations of scarcity or lack, which the need-paradigm assumed. The organism is instead motivated by an inner biological urge for homeostasis, aiming at the optimal level of wellbeing between higher and lower neurophysiologic arousal levels. This idea is captured by fig. 1, a reproduction of Jantzen's model (149).

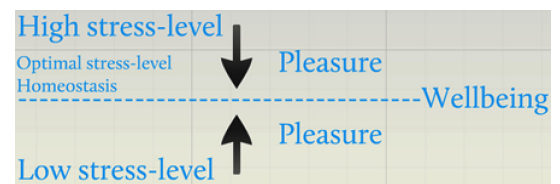


Fig.1.

The organism has a continuous biological readiness to react intentionally towards the exciting surrounding world, balancing the level of activity approximating it

to the optimal homeostasis. The process leading to the optimal homeostasis, balancing out either the high or low stress-level is experienced as pleasurable. The difference between pleasure and wellbeing explains why different people create different preference-orders for themselves. Jantzen explains, for example, that “for introverted people pleasure comes from relaxing, whereas extrovert people wants pleasures motivated by stimulating experiences” (150). Wellbeing, then, is absence of the unpleasant, which itself is a condition for pleasure since pleasure is the diminishing of unpleasantness. Due to the abundance in modern (Western) society the overall degree of unpleasantness is low. Hence, “pleasure needs to be induced in another way: by trying something new, surprising as it is with other sense-impressions than the usual ones” (152). Therefore, *how* and *what* you experience is important. It must be intense and eventful, a range of enlivened experiences (142). This can serve as a naturalistic epistemological justification for the notion of BTMs used in emotional targeting described above. Understanding when the consumer is distal from the optimal homeostasis provides information about when the consumer is most receptive to brand messages, and therefore when the use of compensation or rewards as instruments in fulfilling the biological urge for homeostasis is most effective.

At the next biological level, a certain emotional evaluation commences, aiming at the creation of a positive evaluation of the brand. Both trying and evaluating something new, creates an emotional involvement causing behavioural adjustment. According to Jantzen and Vetner,

“emotions act as anticipating or annulling in behavioural dispositions,” influencing the promotion or prohibition of certain complexes of actions (Jantzen and Vetner 2007a, 208).

Does it feel good? Do I want to continue? Will I do it again? These evaluations serve as an emotional basis for creating preferences culminating in habits and routines, minimizing the risk for disappointments, but also limiting the chance of experiencing something excitingly new (Jantzen 2007, 154). At the third and last biological level, individual preference schemes are created and adjusted in accordance with the social environment in which the consumers move. These three levels, the neurophysiological, the evaluative, and the habitual “constitute the biological level of experiences, where the organism receives, cultivates and pursues impulses without the necessary involvement of the consciousness” (Jantzen and Vetner 2007a, 210). All three levels make up the biological intentionality of the experiencing⁹ and pleasure-seeking individual, who responds sub-consciously to the exciting world through balancing the homeostatic stress-level. This creates behavioural adjustments by promoting and prohibiting certain dispositions culminating in individual preference orderings, which needs some sort of further social adjustment.

As an addendum to these levels, a fourth socio-cultural level therefore exists. At this reflexive and conscious level, a meaningful connection between past, present and future experiences and behaviour is created within the experiencing individual. This creation of meaning“ consists of interpretations and explana-

tions of impulses informed by the individual's picture of him- or herself and his or her social identity" (Jantzen and Vetner 2007a, 210). A sense of continuum, or meaningful duration, which the individual experiences in relation to the surrounding world, supplies the individual with a narrative of personal history for use in the social milieu. Experiences are here communicable and meaningful in an intersubjective sense, enabling the individual to justify the planned experience-causing actions within a social setting. Hence, instructions in where, how and why enjoyment should be pursued, are necessary regulations of the experience economical agency within the hedonic society (Jantzen and Østergård 2007, 108). These necessary regulations are, of course, made up by the emotionality that justifies each individual's intentional desire for and procurement of hedonic experiences. To return to our gaming example above, incentives to continue to play a game, and thereby receive additional rewards or compensations, can be connected to a personal narrative justifiable by reference to social sanctioned emotions like "I won" or "I made a new high score" and therefore "I think I'll try this game again."

The next section will take a step back and bring out some necessary implications of connecting experience and intentionality. The succeeding section will return to the two descriptions of experience (biological and social-historical) and ask, in light of these necessary implications, whether they present a coherent description of experiential agency. As will be seen, neither the biological nor the socio-cultural account of experiential agency are convincing due to serious shortcom-

ings in the description of the concept of experience. The result is an emotional counterpart to Sen's rational fool argument, which seriously questions the overall novelty of (human) economical agency implied in the Aalborg interpretation.

Experience as intentionality I

The experiential comportment described in the Aalborg interpretation above consists of two aspects: a biological account of intentionality directed towards the optimal state of wellbeing, and a socio-individualist account (since it is described from the singular person point of view), which describes the regulation of where, how and why this biological intentionality is appropriate in a social setting. This section will try to delineate a more precise characteristic of experience as part of intentional agency by emphasising certain necessary aspects of intentionality taken from hermeneutical and analytical philosophy and cultural theory.

First, as Stoller has convincingly argued, it is possible to understand the concept of experience as connected to intentionality without foreshortening the concept empirically (2009, 709). This foreshortening, following Malpas' understanding of experience as a whole, "refer[s] to human existence as it comprises capacities to think, to feel, to grasp, to act and so on" (1999, 16). Furthermore, Stoller defends the concept of experience against different accusations, two of which are important here: immediacy and uninterpretability. These two characterisations are connected, since both accusations are levelled at experience as an unmediated access to whatever experience is directed at. As Stoller claims, it is exactly the intentional-

ity of experience which makes this interpretation impossible, since “intentionality refers to the fact that a given *something* is always experienced *as something*” (716). Hence, for Stoller this (old) hermeneutic idea indicates that what is given in experience is always connected to how it is given. Being directed at something in experience is intimately connected to how the directedness between that something and the experience of it is conditioned. Being comporting towards a game is not, in this particular gaming situation, a matter of two separate things—the game and the intentional comportment—just being conjoined. Both are conditioned by number of factors influencing the experience of this situation: things to be aware of when gaming outside, the right time for being allowed to play (e.g. not before the homework is done), the batteries not running out, competing with other people. Together, these factors facilitate a particular relation between the game and the comportment. One consequence of this view is that experiential intentionality is not something internal to the mind, but describes the practical conditions for this particular gaming-intentionality to take place (see Carman 2003, 44-52). This is not denying the importance of the cognitive or the mental in experience;¹⁰ it is just not the primary in understanding experiential intentionality. In the words of Malpas “rather than viewing intentionality as some sort of occult relation between mental states and their objects, we can see intentionality as always grounded in the sort of spatial orientation and causal involvement that is characteristically a feature of engagement with objects in action” (1999, 95). Experiential intentionality, then, hap-

pens within and not besides different agencies and situations, as entanglements between persons and things, social practices and natural events, effectuated for a number of different purposes. It is on the basis of these entanglements that the understanding of something/someone is possible. Hence, different settings of engaged involvement with entities serves as the (back-)grounds on which these entities can become objects for particular instances of experiential intentionality, thereby understanding something as something. Understanding something as something involves, as Berger claims, the experience of both factual (size, weight etc.) and valuational traits of the entities we experience, including ourselves (Berger 2009, 137n1). These cases of experiential intentionality are, furthermore, always transforming. As Jay claims, experiencing happens “through an encounter with otherness, whether human or not. That is, an experience, however we define it, cannot simply duplicate the prior reality of the one who undergoes it, leaving him or her precisely as before; something must be altered, something new must happen, to make the term meaningful” (Jay 2006, 7). Experiential agency, then, is connected with change in the sense that experiencing opens up a space for different degrees of a transforming character: my experience of entities, of my self, or of other people is altered to a greater or lesser extent. As Abrahams describes it, experiences therefore come in varieties “providing the details of the daily process of life to those out of the general run, which we call *an* experience (or an *experience*) and beyond this a big experience, one memorable and worthy of being recounted” (Abrahams

1985, 325). *Erlebnis*, as a particular experience, and *Erfahrung*, as the continuation of experience, then, go together because to experience implies the possibility of being more experienced, and even failing to be experienced in a particular manner, is, in a certain sense, also a case of *Erfahrung*. For example, if you fail repeatedly to pass the exam for the bar, you will realise that being an attorney is not an experience you will get. As Highmore claims, *Erfahrung* is what makes *Erlebnis* socially meaningful (Highmore 2002, 67). Identifying an experience as new presupposes a context, e.g. a tradition in Abrahams' interpretation of William James (1985), or a social practice (Berger 2009, 97), from which this experience differs in a meaningful sense. The possible denunciation of previous ways of doing things and the embrace of others, are part of becoming experienced as well. Experiencing, therefore, also implies some sort of self-correction, making experiential agency part of a self-correcting enterprise.¹¹ For example, parents know how the experience of having children changed their way of life, giving them new practical knowledge as well as causing them to renounce certain behaviours.

Second, Anscombe describes a further characteristic of intentional agency, important for our understanding of experience. She argues that what distinguishes intentional actions from regular actions is "that they are actions to which a certain sense of the question 'Why?' is given application" (Anscombe 1957, 9).¹² This description, of course, involves some serious question-begging if the putative answer incorporates something remotely in the vicinity of being interpretable as "being intentional." Hence, Anscombe proceeds

by calling attention to the much-discussed category of things *known without observation* (13),¹³ which can be described without using notions like "willed", "voluntary", or "intentional". To give the reader an example, think about the situation of reaching for the coffee cup on the table, while reading the news on the computer screen. When reaching for it, one knows where the cup is without looking.¹⁴ Anscombe concludes, through analysing this particular kind of knowledge that intentional actions are known in a special sense—in answering the question *why*, no appeal to evidences nor mental causes will serve as reasons (24). Intentional actions, and therefore experiences, are something for which reasons can be given, but reasons should not be confused with causes. Instead, reasons comprising of a description of past history, a description of current action, or a desire for future experience, can serve as reasons for (intentional) actions. For example, answers like "I know from past experience...", "I think he did it, because in his experience..." or "I would like to experience this..." would comply with Anscombe's criteria for intentional actions. Answers like "I was not aware I was doing that" or "I *observed* that I was doing that" would not work, because they refuse the application of the question "why?" (25). The answer "For no particular reason," however, would work since "the question is not refused application because the answer to it says that there is *no* reason, any more than the question how much money I have in my pocket is refused application by the answer 'None'" (*ibid.*). Connected to intentional actions, then, is the joint possibility of and necessity for reason-giving. It is possible

in the sense that the answer is not given beforehand. But if the action is intentional, then not refusing the application of the question “why?” is also a necessity. So, ignoring whether this reason-giving is a species of either practical or theoretical reasoning, intentional action opens up a space in which one is accountable to this action in a variety of ways.

Now, Anscombe ends her discussion by addressing perhaps the most important question: why it is that the question “why?” distinguishes intentional actions? The reason is, according to Anscombe, that the description of intentional actions we are looking for is one which could not exist, if “why?” wasn’t applicable to it. Just like a description of something like a sentence could not occur prior to sentences carrying meaning at all, “So the description of something as human action could not occur prior to the question ‘Why?’, simply as a kind of utterance by which we were *then* obscurely prompted to address the question” (83). Hence, *describing* something as human action and asking why it was done are closely entwined in marking human action as intentional. In other words, describing an action as intentional is simultaneously understanding its place within a space of reason, or meaning-giving pattern, its sense of accountability. Anscombe gives the example of ‘offending someone,’ which makes perfect sense as an unintentional action (offending by mistake, for example), but is dependent upon there being a description of offending as an intentional action for being understandable (84). This also shows that intentionality is not the property of an act (the act being both offensive and not offensive at the same time) as if they were

virtually separable. In Anscombe’s evaluation, “an action is not called ‘intentional’ in virtue of any extra feature which exists when it is performed” (28). An action is intentional in virtue of internal features in its execution expressed by understanding the action within a pattern, namely a pattern exemplifying the understanding of an action *as* an (intentional) action.

As a whole, then, experience has at least these three characteristics. It is part of an overall intentional human agency, denoting activity and changeability. Furthermore, experience is always experience of something *as* something, the understanding of which presupposes involvements and engagements with objects and persons in different situations, leaving none of these unchanged in the process. Lastly, and in parallel to the experiencing of something *as* something, is the *description of intentionality* in such a way that it opens up a space within which there is a certain sense of accountability as part of intentional agency. Any putative experience economy would have to address these important aspects of experience to hold any credibility. The next section will question whether our case study can seriously accommodate these aspects.

Experience and intentionality II

The last section indicated how experiencing should be characterised as an intentional action. It argued that intentionality concerns the directedness of experience from within specific agencies in different situations. What role, then, can arousals play within this intentional agency? One very likely answer will depict these as bio-causal elements influencing the experiencing person, whose intentional agen-

cy is directed at achieving well-being as a perfect homeostatic equilibrium. Hence, the reward/compensation (arousals) in the emotional targeting example works, it would be claimed, because they cause equilibrium in human nature. In this section this answer will be questioned, especially whether the arousal paradigm can actually accommodate, in the light of the characterisation of experience as intentional above, the experiential tasks assigned to it by the Aalborg interpretation – serving as a biological explanation with a social-individualist explanation on top. The discussion will be framed within Haugeland's (1998) and Rouse's (2009) respective modes of discussing biological and social intentionality.

Rouse pictures existing theories of intentionality along two axes (Rouse 2009, 3-6). One consisting of the difference between descriptive and normative theories,¹⁵ the other containing the difference between empty and fulfilled intentional relations as a point of departure. A descriptive approach to intentionality "seeks to articulate those features of intentional compartments that are operative in producing their directedness toward their objects," whereas a normative approach "identifies the domain as those performances and capacities that can be held normatively accountable in the right way" (3). Framed within Rouse's picture, the arousal paradigm is, first of all, descriptive in identifying the homeostatic process as the prime operative function in establishing directedness towards objects and culminating in wellbeing. Responding to something as part of the experiencing process, then, is not being normatively accountable, but instead is just part of

the natural process of reaching an optimal stress-level. The other distinction divides intentional approaches starting with the actual relation to things—the fulfilled—from the possible relation to things—the empty— since the entity that the intentionality is directed at might be non-existing or non-present. For example, it might be an imaginary entity such as a unicorn. Put simply, how is intentionality possible when directed at non-existing objects—how do we make sense of non-referring intentional states? The arousal paradigm is clearly a case of fulfilled intentionality, since it starts with the actual relation to things through a causal stimulus-response relation. This does not exclude a sense of "empty" intentionality like dreaming of something not present, but the significance of this empty intentionality is, primarily, tied to how this dream is expressed in the causal interaction with the surroundings. So, as a characterisation of intentionality, the arousal paradigm is explanatory and assumes the primacy of fulfilled intentionality as point of departure. Notice that the evaluation described as part of the arousal paradigm fails to qualify it as a normative approach, since the evaluation revolves around whether the intentionality maintains the optimal homeostatic stress-level or not. That is why the evaluation is placed in the biological level, and helps the establishment of dispositions become ossified as habits at the last level.

But experiences are, as described above, also expressing accountability within the normative space they help open up. One does not just go through an experience; part of the experience is committing to some sort of accountability (pictured with-

in a frame of asking ‘why?’). For instance, being trained as a carpenter makes one accountable both to an employer, through an appeal to past experiences and towards the job, the right interpretation of the action in Anscombe’s terms. However, if experiences are understood in causal terms, as they are in the arousal paradigm, any normativity must be related or reduced purely to cause and effect. Furthermore, the causal space opened up by experiences this way must be viewed as uniform. Hence, it is wrong to speak of any kind of normative space being opened up because experience is inert (Luntley 1999, 197). The following will present an argument questioning whether experience, since it is exhibiting a normative saturated intentionality, can be reduced in this way to a matter of pure causality. The argument is a species of a genus of a plenitude of arguments against proclaimed naturalist explanations of intentionality in this way (see for example, Sellars 1953; McDowell 1984; Brandom 1994; Haugeland 1998, 305-361; Luntley 1999; Rouse 2002; and Janack 2012), however, the main inspirations for the argument here are Luntley and Haugeland. The argument proceeds in two steps. First, I will question the reduction of experience to the neurophysiologic or naturalistic description in terms of the arousal paradigm. Can it account for the inherent normative intentional element within experience, such as being accountable for discriminating right from wrong? Can it distinguish beliefs from the subject of those beliefs? Ultimately, I claim that it cannot account for this normativity and, instead I offer a possible alternative strategy for accommodating this insight, namely retreating to a so-

cial level for construing this normativity. The Aalborg interpretation could be pictured as using, tentatively, one example of this strategy through sanctioning the pursuit of hedonistic experiences at the social level. Hence, we have a biological explanation of inert experiences, which are then regulated at this top level, supposedly through structures ranging from the everyday production of norms for correct (experiential) behaviour to, one could imagine, the punishment of severe violations of these norms. This alternative strategy will also be questioned and claimed unsuitable as a description of experiential normativity.

Upon accepting the inertness of experience, does it make sense to claim that experience is connected to experiencing something, which *has* to be the case? Well, probably in the minimal sense of being biologically “normal,” i.e. as displaying a proper functioning within an overall biological whole. The arousals within the arousal paradigm described above, function as kinds of dispositional properties. As objects of a neurophysiologic explanation of what goes on, the arousals work as causal mechanisms of a plain stimulus-response regulation type within the homeostasis as a functional whole. Hence, the arousal-paradigm, we might say, aims to describe “the mechanism by which the proper functioning has been rendered typical in the current population” (Haugeland 1998, 309). As dispositions, we expect these causal mechanisms to work properly, just like we expect metabolism to work or our hearts to keep pumping blood around our bodies. They might stop working, but then we would speak about a malfunction on their part,

not their doing something wrong or being non-accountable, which would sound ridiculous since hearts work as properties and not as a proprieties.

Haugeland claims that there is a normative distinction this biological perspective cannot accommodate, namely, the distinction between being “functionally right but factually wrong, so to speak” (310). If any normativity is to be connected with experience, then it has to be accountable to some matter making an imposition *upon* experience. Haugeland’s example of birds refraining from eating yellow butterflies, shows this:

Imagine an insectivorous species of bird that evolved in an environment where most of the yellow butterflies are poisonous, and most others not; and suppose it has developed a mechanism for detecting and avoiding yellow butterflies. Then the point can be put this way: if a bird in good working order (with plenty light, and so on) detects and rejects a (rare) non-poisonous yellow butterfly, there can be no grounds for suggesting that it *mistook* that butterfly for a poisonous one; and similarly, if it detects and accepts a (rare) poisonous orange butterfly. . . For there is nothing that the response can “mean” other than whatever *actually* elicits it in normal birds in normal conditions (*ibid.*).

In other words, it makes no sense to answer the ‘why’ of the bird’s behaviour with anything other than “it just did.” If, however, we claim that it mistook the butterfly (a claim not hard to imagine), then our description of this bird’s allegedly intentional behaviour is a case of projection. We recognise it, because it is part of our intentionality to recognise something like

that as mistaken. Now picture this setting as applied to the arousal paradigm, the function of which works so as to avoid things that do not elicit joy, and to pursue things, which do. As a responsive disposition can it be held accountable to anything besides doing what it always does? Can the response mean anything other than the fulfilment of its disposition as Haugeland claims? No, it cannot be wrong since there is no way for it to exhibit intentional content, or be wrong in a factual sense. Rouse puts it nicely when he claims, “Haugeland does not spell out the underlying principle here, but the point is clear enough: intentional directness must introduce a possible gap between what is meant and what is actually encountered, such that there is a possibility of error” (Rouse 2009, 11). If claiming the bird as mistaken was a case of projection, then the arousal-paradigm, as a description, is a case of not recognising the distinctive character of human intentionality. Haugeland claims that the problem with the birds/arousal paradigm is that it makes no sense to claim that they are *supposed* to respond to something besides what they actually *do* respond to, because there is only one kind of functioning normativity, i.e. the biological one controlling their responses (1998, 308). In the arousal paradigm, what one wants cannot matter in such a way that I am accountable it. No independently determining and normative status applies to it, since it functions only as part of my biological responsive disposition. Failing to account for the possibility of error, and thereby disregarding intentionality as human intentionality, the experiential agency modelled on the arousal paradigm has a glow of infan-

tile behaviour about it: doing what one's dispositions tells you to do to reach pleasure—or, in the case of emotional targeting, assuming that the consumer will react when most receptive in a purely positive manner to a given brand. Here the other part of the argument comes in, because this cannot work as a proper description of consumer society. A sort of reciprocal “contractual connection” (Luntley 1999, 197), regulating this behaviour is needed as well. Which is to say, some sort of societal-based regulation is needed, binding the different experiences together and making us accountable to what is binding in terms of social norms. So, on top of the inertness of experiences, a social regulatory mechanism is placed. Within the Aalborg interpretation this is the function of the historical institution of hedonic society, legitimizing the *correct* and orderly way of pursuing hedonic experiences.

This, however, faces the same problem as the biological intentionality, according to Haugeland, just the other way around. In the social regulatory version, the normativity connected with experiences is socially instituted,¹⁶ regulating behaviours and circumstances for experiencing by matching the proper experiential agency with the appropriate circumstances. Take the example of waiting in line for riding the rollercoaster. This is a circumstance in which a whole range of behaviours is both appropriate and not appropriate. It is acceptable to show excitement as part of the anticipation of what is to come, but it is not acceptable to be so excited you try to bend the rules for waiting in line. Different statuses and roles are exhibited, connected with different authorities: the parent and a “first timer” child; two

youngsters, one an “experienced” rider, the other a rookie; the usher and the customers etc. Haugeland asks whether this kind of social normativity is able to account for the distinction above (1998, 313). Is the possibility of error an actual possibility here, equipping intentionality with the capability of self-correcting or, we might say, with the status of being experienced?

Not so, according to Haugeland, because a parallel to the problem with biological intentionality exists here, but in a social-conformist form. Common to both of Haugeland's critiques is the indication of the incapacity of intentionality to demonstrate a sense of openness. That is, none of the accounts are capable of showing accountability towards matters being authoritative in a way not instituted by the intentionality in question, whether this is made up of biological functions or social institutions. Take the example of waiting in line again. As a social institution, it institutes both the norms for behaving properly when waiting in line and the conditions for recognising a situation where waiting in line is realised. So, part of behaving properly when waiting in line is being able to tell when queuing conditions obtain. Is there any room for behaving properly when waiting in line, and yet misunderstanding the conditions? Not really, because the status of these conditions are dependent upon their involvement in the norm for proper behaving while waiting in line. Hence, “[t]here is really only one type of norm at work: the instituted conditions themselves have no *independent* criterial status at all” (314). We might make room for individuals failing to conform to the norms, even groups of people,

but “[w]hat cannot happen is that all or most of the community members systematically respond wrongly to a certain class of instituted conditions—for their common systematic responses define the very conditions in question. Thus, the “independence” of instituted conditions can extend no farther than the usual consensus” (315). This is a strong argument. If we want to understand intentionality and experience as opening a space in which we are held normatively accountable, then what our intentionality is directed at, the aboutness of our experience, must have an independent criterial status capable of exerting a normative authority upon us. It must be capable of mattering to us in a way beyond our influence. Otherwise the genuine possibility of being wrong, hence of self-correcting, by way of being experienced, is non-existent. Take another simple example like the gaming model used above. In contradistinction to the way games are used within emotional targeting, there is an aspect of playing a game where one learns, for example, that achieving something takes an effort.

What can be inferred about the case study’s depiction of experience from these excursions into Haugeland’s thinking?¹⁷ Haugeland claims that a sense of change, a mediating role, and an opening up of a space of normativity are important traits of experiencing as a whole, and I posed the question as to whether the Aalborg interpretation could accommodate these traits within its description of the biological/neurophysiological foundation of experiencing in hedonic society. The neurophysiological explanation cannot, according to its premises, describe experiential agency as normative since arousals are, as biolog-

ical agency, just part of a functional whole of which it is nonsensical to claim any accountability. It is just adaptable. Describing human agency in this way is too simplistic: it reduces agency to regressive and familiar reactions, without any possibility of maturing or developing, i.e. becoming experienced. Of course, it makes sense to claim that a process of adaptability displays some kind of development, but this is not tantamount to ascribing accountability to this development, except as a case of projecting. However, recourse to the social level of hedonic society instituting regulating norms for how, when and where the pursuit of pleasurable experiences is allowable, might be taken to instantiate the normative space opened up by the experiential agency. Here the experiential agency in the Aalborg interpretation is accountable, but in a conformist sense. Accountable means conforming to the pre-given norms by recognising the conditions under which it is right to act properly in an experience economic sense. Furthermore, these norms and the conditions for recognising these norms are instituted by the experience economical logic legitimised by the hedonic society. It dictates both the needs (the pleasurable experiences we never knew we could live without) and the proper way to redeem these needs. In the emotional targeting case it is, of course, the advertising agency’s job both to instil these needs and the proper way to redeem them on behalf of a company. This seriously limits the sense of experiencing as change, mediation and transformation connected to any idea of a self-correcting enterprise, *Erfahrung*, making any change a matter of conforming to the established consensus. Thus, being

experienced amounts to nothing more than the consumer having learned how to redeem the dictated needs by adapting to the marketers' norms for correct consuming behaviour. A primitivisation of life by reducing it to conformity to the dictated needs, and furthermore never questioning these, results. What matters for consumers, then, is apparently an aggregated sense of *Erlebnisse*, a punctual fulfilment of increasingly pleasurable experiences. Neither the biological nor the social accounts of experiential intentionality in the Aalborg interpretation have any room for the important aspects of experience claimed a necessary part of experiential intentionality. So, the human (economical) agency described by the Aalborg interpretation through experiential intentionality is a reduced human agency, incapable of engaging in any self-correcting enterprise besides adapting to the biological circumstances and conforming to the pre-given and experience economical established norms. All in all, this interpretation replays an old *Kulturindustrie* song using a combination of naturalism and social conformism as instruments, with social science as lead singer. Furthermore, these signs present a strong indication of a society incapable of being wrong except by its own consensual hedonic standards. It is, we might say, a society made of emotional but nevertheless foolish members.

Closing: What's new, you silly Benthamite?

Initially the notion of the experience economy held a promise of moving past an overly rational conception of economic agency by incorporating experiences, sensualities, and sensibilities as a further

informational basis for understanding this agency. Some resemblance to *Kulturindustrie* was noted, though, which could question the self-proclaimed novelty of experience economy. As an example of a theory of the experience economy, the Aalborg interpretation, consisting of two levels, was described. This interpretation appeals to a biological basis of experiential intentionality with a description of social-individualist intentionality layered on top, within what was claimed a modern hedonic society. This called for an inquiry into experiential intentionality and what characterised this intentionality as a whole, namely a sense of changeability, mediation, and the opening of a space where people are accountable to what is disclosed in their experiences, i.e. what these experiences are about. A question was asked about whether the example of experience economy scrutinised could accommodate these necessary characteristics of experience. In the section above, it was claimed that within the premises for a two-level account of experience that the experience economy establishes for itself, a coherent description is not possible. It fails to account for the normative status of experiences, making the naturalistic explanation more about biological responses than experiences, and the social-regulatory account inherently incapable of correcting itself in a non-conformist manner. The result was a somewhat confused and reduced description of human (economical) agency, adoptable by culture industrial techniques like emotional targeting. What remains to be seen, then, is what this discloses about (human) economic agency. Can the promise of establishing a *new* "economy," using this

bio-social agency be redeemed? Let us end with a, perhaps, unsurprising answer that the narrow view of human agency is connected to a very simple form of utilitarianism as economical agency.

First, the depicted economical agency is not different *in spirit* from Bentham's hedonic utilitarianism where agency is based on choosing pleasure and avoiding pain. The difference being, obviously, that Bentham's conception of pain and pleasure as psychological dispositions is now reconceived as biological dispositions. Hence, pain in the arousal paradigm is not necessarily being avoided, since painful activity can release a sense of pleasure as well. Bentham would probably agree with this, since this still makes the painful activity a means to the end of pleasure, and hence a calculated passion. Bentham's idea of a calculated passion is termed a controlled decontrol of emotions within the arousal-paradigm. The objective of both is pleasurable wellbeing, with the controlled decontrol making up the new calculus for explaining the rationality of consumer behaviour. In other words, emotions serve, when controlled and in tandem with affective evaluation and reflexive cultivation, as premises in the rationality of maximizing the utility: the well-being of the consumer.

Following Sen and Williams, this is characterisable as utilitarianism in the guise of *welfarist consequentialism* (1982, 3). This is, first, tantamount to assessing any given state of affairs on the basis of pleasure, satisfaction, or people getting what they want, as welfarism or wellbeing. Second, it implies an idea of correct agency since actions are chosen on the basis of their consequences, hence con-

sequentialism. Utilitarianism, then, "recommends a choice of actions on the basis of consequences, and an assessment of consequences in terms of welfare" (Sen and Williams 1982, 4). The experience economical agency falls, obviously, within this categorisation since welfare (or wellbeing in the arousal paradigm) is the sole criteria for evaluating whether a given state of affairs means that people are getting what they prefer—that is, the satisfaction of their preferences. The choice of actions, then, depends on their consequences in terms of pleasure: balancing the stress levels to approach the optimal stress level. Furthermore, it should be noted that the experience economy has its own version of the welfarist concept of sum ranking. Sum ranking is an aggregated principle of utilitarianism, which claims that one consequence is better than another if and only if it contains a greater total sum of well-being. Hence, individual welfares, or utilities, are simply added up to assess the outcome. As claimed above, the only notion of being experienced, *Erfahrung*, realisable in the Aalborg interpretation was an aggregated sense of *Erlebnisse*, joyful experiences, which constitute a sense of sum ranking. Being experienced means knowing how to evaluate which experiences cause the most pleasure. There is, however, no room for a person's experience to affect what he or she desires, which Elster has indicated to be a problem with this kind of utilitarianism (1982). This impotence in picturing agency as a self-correcting enterprise presents us, again, with a very narrow view of being a person and engaging in economical agency. Human economical agencies are, namely, defined

by their utilities only, i.e. the sites where activities such as desiring and having pleasure and pain take place. According to Sen and Williams, “once note has been taken of the person’s utility, utilitarianism has no further direct interest in any information about him” (1982,4). Sen and Williams sum this up in the following memorable phrase: “Persons do not count as individuals in this any more than individual petrol tanks do in the analysis of the national consumption of petroleum” (*ibid.*). This, again, points towards human economical agency as depicted within the experience economy as rationally and emotionally foolish behaviour. The experiencing human being is represented as a pleasure-maximizing individualist, making experienced behaviour inexplicable unless it is understood as effectuating pleasure (actions within the vicinity of renouncing pleasure are not options). Furthermore, once note has been taken of how the person’s pleasure is obtained and described within the arousal paradigm, no additional information is needed except the coordination with others seeking pleasure as well.

So, the experience economy in the Aalborg interpretation is hardly a new economy—it is classic Bentham-like hedonism and utilitarianism that simply seeks to be legitimised through biological explanations. With this, let us return to the historical explanation of modern hedonic society. What was left aside was the question begging character of this explanation. Sen and Williams might have the best description of this question begging. In a theory of human economical agency:

...[N]o large question is being begged if one merely assumes the individual agent to be deciding, quite often, what is the right thing to do, and deciding it, at least sometimes, in the light of moral considerations. A large question is being begged, however, if one assumes that the agent is required in rationality to subject all those decisions to one criterion of decision, and it is still being begged if one assumes that rationality requires that any other criteria of decision must themselves be justified by one over-riding principle (1982, 2).

Arguments direly need to show why people ought not make decisions based on their experience, for example as a result of a self-correcting behaviour different from biological adaptionism or social conformism, but express the accountability connected with experiencing we saw above. The reason these arguments are lacking is, simply, that the experience economy, *aka Kulturindustrie*, cannot handle a “mature” human economical agency without undermining its own livelihood. Therefore, the way forward for creating a viable model for connecting experience and economy is by accepting that human economical agency is based on a number of different experiences and reasons, all of which cannot be reduced to, or based upon, one overriding biological or social principle. So we need to accept a pluralist basis of conditions for understanding experiential intentionality, without losing a sense of accountability necessary for evaluating the bearing these experiences has on economical agency. Sen’s capability approach is an excellent point of departure, since it pays attention to

diverse factors, including pleasure and utility (1996), without using only one of them as evaluative criteria, which would result in a misrecognition of the diversity. The capability approach is, in Robeyns' brilliant description, a broad normative framework creating an evaluative space, including natural, social and personal factors, for understanding and assessing people's experience of well-being, and the design of policies and societal change needed for this well-being to be established in a just manner (2006, 352). People are here held accountable, in their experience of well-being, to societal and natural issues not of their own making, and not just to the immediate utility or pleasure of their own well-being. As an evaluative frame, however, it will need to be connected to a more thorough description of the normative implications of experiential intentionality if advancing an understanding of the different biological and social factors in forming economical agency is to take place.

Notes

¹ Thanks to the editors of *Cultural Analysis*, and especially Anthony Bak Buccitelli, and one anonymous reviewer for very helpful comments.

² For example, Hollis and Nell 1975; see Walsh 1996 for a historical overview.

³ For example, the sleep-cycle app for iPhone (see www.sleepcycle.com). Placing the phone near your head while you are sleeping, it uses the accelerometer to detect your movements through the night and suggests the optimal time for waking up. One problem is that the app uses an average human sleep pattern as a generalized model of the right sleep pattern. Sleep patterns, however, are both highly individual, and compensatory, i.e. if you miss a night sleep, you will compensate for it through

your coming sleeps. Hence, it might be behavioural adjusting in a negative sense at first, i.e. not sensitive to one's particular sleep pattern and actually wake you up at the wrong time. However, as Lewis (2013) suggests it can also have positive effect on behaviour, since it might indirectly spur people to reflect on their sleep habits and thereby change these.

⁴ See Miracle (1992, 63) for understanding the concept of play as a biological adaptive process.

⁵ After its place of origin, the University of Aalborg, Denmark. The following translations from Danish are made by the author.

⁶ The headline of Jantzen and Østergård 2007, "ENJOY IT! ENJOY IT!," underscores this imperative.

⁷ See Jay (2005) for the different uses and meanings of experience through history, leading to opposite claims of the function of, and appeal to, experience within different theories of epistemology, politics, history, post-structuralism, aesthetics and pragmatism. Furthermore, see Gay's (1984-1998) monumental historical description of the bourgeois experience from Victorianism onwards, denigrating the supposed "mental" and "bodily" rigidity usually attached to conceptions of Victorianism. This questions the connection between a protestant ethics and a capitalist spirit as an overall thesis and not, it should be emphasised, the eventual existence of particular examples of this connection. However, it thereby also questions the explanatory power Campbell and these authors attach to Weber's thesis and their development of it, that an overburdened control necessarily led to a de-control. For another critique of Campbell and his reply, see Boden and Williams (2002), and Campbell's reply (2003).

⁸ A new hedonic imperative logic might be at work here as well. Combined with the idea that the consumer is partly, if not mostly, to blame for any possible disappointment of the consumption act, this hedonism, as Zizek (2009, 58) points out, "...resides in the way

permitted *jouissance* necessarily turns into obligatory *jouissance*." The imperative, "enjoy it!" functions as a reversal of the Kantian imperative "You can, because you must", instead becoming "You must, because you can" (*ibid.*). Zizek provides the following example of how this works, "On the information sheet in a New York hotel, I recently read: Dear Guest! To guarantee that you will fully enjoy your stay with us, this hotel is totally smoke free. For any infringement of this regulation, you will be charged \$200." As Zizek (*ibid.*) explains "The beauty of this formulation, taken literally, is that you are to be punished for refusing to fully enjoy your stay." Sen's fool is no longer only rationally obliged (in theory) to act in a certain way he is emotionally obliged as well.

⁹ Interestingly, but not surprisingly, Jantzen (2007, 142) emphasizes experiencing and not experienced as the concept of experience par excellence. The devaluation of *Erfahrung* is, following Campbell, sought justified in the (almost usual) romantic rebellion against enlightenment predominance of reason over feelings. Furthermore, the only room for being experienced consist of the evaluation of the experiencing; hence it is an instrumental kind of rationality seeking the best means for experiencing. As will be seen in the next sections this leaves no room for experiencing as a self-correcting enterprise, making the experiencing individual a conformist and emotional fool.

¹⁰ Schear (2013) contains a recent discussion in the wake of a famous debate regarding this between Hubert Dreyfus and John McDowell.

¹¹ That the word experience connotes both is manifest in its use. We speak of an experienced (*Erfahrung*) person as someone who has gained knowledge of something, which can be transferred to another person. *Erlebnis* on the other hand refers more to a contextual sensate registering of the world, what we experience at a given moment. Raymond Williams describes experience as one of the

keywords thus: "At one extreme experience (present) is offered as the necessary (immediate and authentic) ground for all (subsequent) reasoning and analysis. At the other extreme, experience . . . is seen as the product of social conditions or of systems of belief or of fundamental systems of perception, and thus not as material for truths but as evidence of conditions of systems which by definition it cannot itself explain." (Williams, 1983: 128) Turner and Bruner (1986) use *Erlebnis* as introduction and fail to spell out the necessary connection with *Erfahrung*. For the classical argument against viewing *Erlebnis* as denoting some kind of pure immediacy, see Gadamer (1975, 53ff).

¹² There are several reasons why Anscombe's Intention, despite not being the most recent work on intentionality, is important here. First of all, it has basically been bypassed in both anthropology and economics since it was published, but is receiving a massive attention within philosophy and social science these years (for example Thompson 2008). Second, this has to do with, among other things, Anscombe's sophisticated but complex description of intentionality as resisting any unilateral physicalist, or naturalist explanation.

¹³ See Ford *et al* 2011 for a recent discussion of this.

¹⁴ The reader might retort that this is due to the fact that the same person very observantly placed the cup in its position. Hence, picking up the cup is an action based on knowing upon previous observation and not without observation *per se*. Anscombe would partly agree since she would claim that this, in a justificatory sense, pertains to past experiences. She would, however, deny that knowledge of past experiences function as some sort of mental cause making the person pick up the cup.

¹⁵ Not to be confused with Anscombe's descriptions, which would belong with the normative theories.

¹⁶ For Haugeland this institution is understood in a broad sense of training and learning, comprising both the possibility of norms or rules induced by parents or chess-teachers and, I take it, learning to be a consumer with market induced norms, as the why, when and where of experiential consuming.

¹⁷ It should be emphasised that Haugeland is not repudiating natural scientific explanations, only claiming, first, that the meaning of intentionality cannot be reduced to such explanations and, second, that we should therefore be aware of not stretching the explanatory power of natural scientific explanations beyond their conceptual confines. Nor would he claim that reducing intentionality to a social scientific explanation would work. Using concepts like social practice or tradition as expressing that on which the correctness of the intentionality depends, risk failing to account for how the difference between what we know/believe and what this knowledge and belief is about, is not dependent on us. I claim this is the real challenge to social sciences and humanities moving within the vicinity of social constructionism—including the narrative and performance turn—describing how they are not, in the end, depending on a sort of social conformism. Haugeland's effort of articulating the complexities in our biosocial intentionality is therefore a precursor to recent efforts of understanding and expressing the intertwinedness of our biological and social nature, or our biosocial becomings (see for example Harré and Moghaddam 2013; Ingold and Palsson 2013), i.e. how our biological and social lives are intertwined and influence each other, but without being reducible to each other.

Works Cited

- Abrahams, R. D. 1985. Pragmatism and a Folklore of Experience. *Western Folklore* 44(4): 324-332.
- . Ordinary and extraordinary experience. In Turner and Bruner (1986): 45-72.
- . 2005. *Everyday Life. A Poetics of Vernacular Practices*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Anscombe, G.E.M. 1958. *Intention*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Arnould, Eric J. and Thompson, Craigh J. 2005. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): twenty years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31: 868-882.
- Bauman, R. A. 1992. *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments*. Oxford University Press.
- Bentham, J. 1787/1987. *An introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Oxford: UK: Blackwell.
- Berger, H. 2009. *Stance*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Boden, S., Williams, Simon J. 2002. Consumption and Emotion: The Romantic Ethic Revisited. *Sociology* 36(3): 493-512.
- Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Brandom, Robert. 1994. *Making It Explicit*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Bronner, Simon J. 2012. Practice Theory in Folklore and Folklife Studies. *Folklore* 123:1, 23-47.
- Campbell, C. 1987. *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- . 2003. On Understanding Modern Consumerism and Misunderstanding the Romantic Ethic Thesis: A Reply to Boden and Williams. *Sociology* 37(4): 791-797.

- Carman, Taylor. 2003. *Heidegger's Analytic*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- Christensen, Bo A. 2013. Connecting experience and economy – aspects of Disguised Positioning. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Sciences* 47(1): 77-94.
- Dwoskin, E. 2013. Next In Tech: Web Giants Threaten End to Cookie Tracking. *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 October.
- Ford, Anton, Jennifer Hornsby, and Frederick Stoutland. (eds.) 2011. *Essays on Anscombe's Intention*. Cambridge, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Elster, Jon. 1982. Sour grapes – utilitarianism and the genesis of wants. In Sen and Williams 1982: 219-238.
- Gadamer, H. G. 1975. *Truth and Method*. London and New York: Continuum Books.
- Gay, P. 1984-1998. *The Bourgeois experience. Victoria to Freud*. Vol. 1-5. London: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Harre, R and Moghaddam, F. 2013. *Psychology for the third millenium. Integrating Cultural and Neuroscientific Perspectives*. London: Sage Publications.
- Haugeland, John. 1998. *Having Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Highmore, B. 2002. *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Holbrook, Morris B. and Hirschman, Elizabeth C. 1982. The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings and Fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9, September, 132-140.
- Hollis, Martin; Nell, Edward J. 1975. *Rational Economic Man: A Philosophical Critique of Neo-Classical Economics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hullot-Kentor, Robert. 2008. The Exact Sense in Which the Culture industry No longer Exists. *Cultural Critique* 70: 137-157.
- Hutchinson, P., Read, R., Sharrock, W. 2008. *There is No Such Thing as a Social Science*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate.
- Illouz, E. 2007. *Cold intimacies. The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Ingold, T. and Palsson, G. 2013. *Our Bio-social Becomings. Integrating Social and Biological Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jantzen, C. 2007. Mellem nydelse og skuffelse. Et neurofysiologisk perspektiv på oplevelser. In Jantzen, C., Rasmussen, T. A. 2007b: 135-163 (*Between pleasure and disappointment. A neurophysiologic perspective on experiences*).
- . 2006. *Oplevelser: koblinger og transformationer*. Ålborg: Ålborg Universitetsforlag. (*Experiences: Linkages and Transformations*).
- Jantzen, C., Rasmussen, T. A. 2007a. *Forbrugssituationer. Perspektiver på oplevelsesøkonomi*. Ålborg: Ålborg Universitetsforlag. (*Situations of Consumption: Perspectives on Experience Economy*).

- _____. 2007b. *Oplevelsesøkonomi. Vinkler på forbrug*. Ålborg: Ålborg Universitetsforlag. (*Experience Economy: Views on Consumption*).
- _____. 2007d. Er oplevelsesøkonomi gammel vin på nye flasker? in Jantzen, C., Rasmussen, T. A. 2007b: 21-47 (Is experience economy old wine in new bottles?).
- Jantzen, C., Vetner, M. 2007a. *Design for en affektiv økonomi*. In Jantzen, C., Rasmussen, T. A. 2007b: 201-218 (*Designing an emotive economy*).
- Jantzen, C., Østergaard, P. 2007. NYD DET! NYD DET! Den moderne hedonisme og dens mentalitetshistoriske forudsætninger. In Jantzen, C., Rasmussen, T. A. 2007b: 83-113 (ENJOY IT! ENJOY IT! Modern hedonism and its presuppositions in the history of mentality).
- Jantzen, C., Østergaard, P., Fitchet, James A., Vetner, Mikael. 2012. Just for fun? The emotional regime of experiential consumption. *Marketing Theory* 12(2): 137-154.
- Jay, Martin. 2005. *Songs of Experience*. University of California Press.
- Joseph Pine II, B., Gilmore, James H. 1999. *The Experience Economy*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. 1998. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage*. University of California Press.
- Lewis, J. G. 2013. Sleep cycle app: Precise or Placebo? *Psychology Today* October 8. Accessed July 19, 2014, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/brain-babble/201310/sleep-cycle-app-precise-or-placebo>.
- Löfgren, Orvar. 2003. The new economy: a cultural history. *Global Networks* 3(3): 239-254.
- Lorentzen, A.; Hansen, C. H. 2012. *The city in the experience economy: role and transformation*. London: Routledge.
- Malpas, Jeff. 1999. *Place and Experience*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- McDowell, John. 1984. Wittgenstein on Following a Rule. *Synthese* 58: 325-364.
- Mediabrix. 2014. <https://www.mediabrix.com/company/about/> (accessed 01.15.2014).
- Microsoft. 2012. Patent on "Targeting advertisements based on emotions." Downloadable from the US Patent and Trademark office: <http://appft1.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&d=PG01&p=1&u=%2Fnethtml%2FPTO%2Fsrchnum.html&r=1&f=G&l=50&s1=%2220120143693%22.PGNR.&OS=DN/20120143693&RS=DN/20120143693>.
- Miracle, A. W. 1992. Play, in Bauman (1992): 60-66.
- Morozov, E. 2013. I know what will cheer you up. Accessed January 15, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2013/12/emotion_detecting_advertising_regulators_aren_t_ready_for_it.html.
- O'dell, T., Billing, P. 2005. *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy*. Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Polio, H.; Henley, T. and Thompson, C. B. 1997. *The Phenomenology of Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Putnam, H. and Walsh, V. 2012. *The End of Value-Free Economics*. London: Routledge.
- Ritzer, G. 2005. *Enchanting a Disenchanted World*. California: Pine Forge Press.
- Robeyns, I. 2006. The Capability Approach in Practice. *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 14(3): 351–376.
- Rouse, Joseph. 2002. *How Scientific Practices Matter*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 2009. Haugeland on Biological and Social Conceptions of Intentionality. Downloaded from <http://jrouse.blogs.wesleyan.edu/static-page/work-in-progress/>.
- Schulze, G. (1992). *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag (*The Experience Society. A sociology of culture for the present*).
- Scitovsky, T. 1976. *The Joyless Economy: The Psychology of Human Satisfaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sellars, Wilfrid S. 1953. A Semantical Solution of the Mind-Body Problem. *Methodos* 5:45-84.
- Sen, Amartya K. 1977. Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioural Foundations of Economic Theory. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6(4), 317-344.
- Sen, Amartya. 1996. Rationality, Joy and Freedom. *Critical Review* 10(4): 481-494.
- Sen, Amartya K., Williams, Bernard. 1982. Introduction: Utilitarianism and beyond. In Sen, Amartya K., Williams, Bernard (Ed.) *Utilitarianism and Beyond* (pp.1-21). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- Stoller, Silvia. 2009. Phenomenology and the Poststructural Critique of Experience. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17(5): 707-737.
- Sundbo, J. and Darmer, P. 2008. *Creating Experiences in The Experience Economy*. Uk: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Sundbo, J.; Sørensen, F. 2013. *Handbook on the Experience Economy*. Edward Elgar Publishing Company.
- Thompson Craig J., William B. Locander and Howard R. Pollio. 1989. Putting Consumer Experience Back into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16: 133-146.
- Thompson, M. 2008. *Life and Action*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Turner, V. And Bruner, E. M. 1986. *The Anthropology of Experience*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Wash, Vivian. 1996. *Rationality, Allocation and Reproduction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press .
- Williams, R. 1983. *Keywords*. Revised edition. London: Fontana Paperbacks.
- Zizek, Slavoj. 2009. *First as Tragedy, then as Farce*. London: Verso.

Response

Philip W. Scher
University of Oregon
USA

In tackling Bo Allesøe Christensen's evocative essay I must confess to feeling, at first, distinctly out of my depth. After all, the literature cited and the approaches taken to the idea of agency, intentionality, the economy and consumption are indeed alien to my own work and the literature I am used to seeing. That being said, I was immediately struck by the ways in which Christensen's arguments and the scholars he engages with, are asking very similar questions to ones I *am* used to seeing. In this brief response I want to focus on a few simple observations I made, almost impressionistic ones, it might be said, while reading the piece.

Christensen does an admirable job of getting to the heart of several scholarly approaches to the issue of, basically, decision-making by consumers. It would seem to me that this is the "holy grail" of advertisers and marketers: what makes the consumer "tick." And how can they position their products in ever more precise and predictably successful ways. The dream of the sales department is to unlock the secrets of buying, take the guess work out of product development and sales and hit a "home run" every time. The bug in that machinery has always been the dizzying array of variables in consumer choices (not the choice of products themselves, but the factors involved in understanding why choices are made). Christensen's intervention into the literature, beginning with Sen's critiques and mov-

ing on to Aalborg's attempted correctives, neatly highlights that the advertising departments of the world have put faith in some kind of social scientific approach that might help them. Aalborg's approach is instructive because it attempts to fuse a kind of nature-nurture set of explanations making recourse to biological markers like stress levels in tandem with social norms. Biological explanations such as these (and these are not the only bio-cultural approaches one might take it should be added) always strike me as having missed an essential observation made by both linguistic and cultural anthropologists: perception is not meaning. That is to say, even such potentially objective, biological facts like measurable markers of stress cannot tell us what will produce those responses from one group of people to the next. It reminds me a bit of the attempts to universalize color terms on the basis of the biological fact that humans see color in the 1960s and 1970s. Such efforts were mostly criticized by cultural anthropologists on the basis that the ability to perceive something like color based on our biological equipment should not be thought to allow us subsequently to understand how people make sense of those perceptions. Thus, a marker that indicates a pleasurable level of stress reduction or increase cannot tell us from one person or group to the next what will cause that stress level. I think here Christensen's evocation of Anscombe is quite correct:

She argues that what distinguishes intentional actions from regular actions is "that they are actions to which a certain sense of the question 'Why?' is given application" (Anscombe 1957, 9)...In-

tentional actions, and therefore experiences, are something for which reasons can be given, but reasons should not be confused with causes. Instead, reasons comprising of a description of past history, a description of current action, or a desire for future experience, can serve as reasons for (intentional) actions.

In the example that follows a type of incident is given in which someone accidentally offends someone else. This could be seen as *unintentional* in the sense that if you asked the person why they offended the other they might say "I did not intend to", but they would still need to comprehend that that there existed, culturally speaking, a version of that act that *was intentional*, was patterned and codified and occupied a categorical position in person's cultural scheme. In that sense, then, the issue of agency becomes complex. As Christensen says "experience is always experience of something as something, the understanding of which presupposes involvements and engagements with objects and persons in different situations, leaving none of these unchanged in the process... Any putative experience economy would have to address these important aspects of experience to hold any credibility."

If the goal of understanding the experience economy by the "industry" is to create new kinds of experiences to sell while also utilizing the time of the experience to insert new and other products to consumers, a general lack of understanding of the enormous cultural complexity of what it means to want and have experiences is certainly going to be crippling. It seems to me that much of the literature that

Christensen successfully critiques starts with an idea of the "consumer" operating within an "economy." If one does not start by undermining the assumption that one can create such an identity in isolation for all the other aspects of that person's social universe than one will fail, from the start, to grasp what kinds of actions one can anticipate.

Reviews

Cristina Bacchilega. *Fairy Tales Transformed?: Twenty-First-Century Adaptations & the Politics of Wonder*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 2013. Pp. x + 290, introduction, 60 color plates, epilogue, notes, works cited, filmography, index, acknowledgements.

Once again, accomplished fairy-tale scholar Cristina Bacchilega has produced a superb, thoroughly researched, and well-rounded book of the highest academic and scholarly standards. *Fairy Tales Transformed?* gives the reader valuable insights into recent fairy-tale scholarship and the politics of wonder at work in the contemporary production and reception of fairy tales.

Divided into an intriguing introduction, four elaborately structured and styled chapters, and a compelling epilogue, the book highlights interwoven-and-yet-divergent social projects envisioned and instigated by fairy-tale adaptations circulating in modern popular culture. Bacchilega investigates how, why, and for whom fairy tales have been changed in the twenty-first century—essential questions that must be asked in today’s fairy-tale scholarship. The intertextual links of fairy tales, for instance, no longer refer back to the canonized Perrault-Grimm-Disney triad as central pre-texts. In Chapter One, fairy tales are linked hypertextually and the power dynamics within and among fairy-tale texts have changed. Bacchilega notes that fairy tales have become a multimedia phenomenon and this recognition has not only informed scholarly perspectives, but also taken hold in popular consciousness thanks to the electronic accessibility of fairy tales via web-

sites, blogs, social networks, and online publications. Basing her methodology on a conceptualized “fairy-tale web” of reading and writing practices, Bacchilega argues that we should consider the gender politics of fairy-tale retellings in relation to other dynamics of power and experiences of disjunction. She also stresses that we should “reexamine the relationship of the fairy tale with other genres, including the folktale, as constitutive of its hybridity, in order to become better attuned to competing uses of magic, enchantment, and wonder across cultures and media platforms” (ix). One of the more prevalent transformations of the fairy tale today, described in Chapter Three, has to do with genre mixing, which places the fairy tale in new dynamics of competition and alliance with other genres. While the author analyzes primarily literary and cinematic fairy-tale adaptations, she also brings television, comics, visual art, and drama into keen focus to explore a given theme.

Bacchilega creates an interesting opening for the reader by examining how contemporary understandings and social uses of the fairy tale have changed since the 1970s in the Euro-American history of the genre. She maps out major changes in the cultural deployment of fairy tales by drawing inter-alia on canonical authors of fairy-tale adaptations, such as Anne Sexton, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, Robert Coover, A.S. Byatt, Jeanette Winterson, and Salman Rushdie. Bacchilega makes the relevant observations that there is a widespread sensibility and increased awareness of issues of gender in fairy tales, which we see on and off of the Internet, and that the fairy-tale genre

has a multivalent currency based on the contemporary proliferation of fairy-tale transformations. In her opening, she successfully weaves together multivocal, multimedia, and intertextual practices with strands from Orientalism, colonialism, and artwork by Nalo Hopkinson and catches the reader's attention.

In Chapter One, Bacchilega zooms in on the questions "What is adaptation?" and "How do we respond to adaptations?" (31-32). Drawing on Donald Haase, she clarifies for the reader that adaptation must be understood as a practice that weaves multiple texts with one another not only intertextually but also hypertextually. Since a fairy tale circulates as a text that already exists in various versions, there is no "original" or single hypotext. On this basis, Bacchilega uses an intertextual approach in her exploration of three different fairy-tale retellings in the form of short stories, poetry, and short film: Nalo Hopkinson's *Skin Folk*, Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch*, and Dan Taulapapa McMullin's intermedial *Sinalela* (Cinderella) narratives. Bacchilega focuses on the adaptive strategy of relocation, which she identifies as politicized remappings of texts, genres, and knowledge that have become normative in cultural popular memory. By demonstrating how Hopkinson, Donoghue, and McMullin adapt the fairy tale to different social projects, Bacchilega validates what she terms "the fairy-tale web" as a methodological field that can enable the critical decentering of the European literary fairy-tale tradition.

The second chapter looks at the representations of books, the act of reading, and the gendered child in the fairy-tale films of Disney's *Enchanted*, Guillermo

del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*, Catherine Breillat's *Bluebeard*, and Pil-Sung Yim's *Hansel and Gretel*. In this carefully argued chapter, Bacchilega suggests that *Enchanted* reaffirms the romance-and-magic formula as a core ingredient for wish fulfillment and success in our consumer-driven society. The Disney movie thus is at odds with the other films, which invoke the fairy-tale genre to confront social trauma instead. Referencing blogs, online interviews, responses of fan communities, and offering original readings of the films, Bacchilega develops strong arguments and convincingly shows how Del Toro, Breillat, and Pil-Sung Yim de-commodify magic and critique the use of commodified fairy-tales in their films.

In Chapter Three, Bacchilega revisits the big-budget films *Enchanted* and *Pan's Labyrinth* but also discusses two independent films that bring different investments to the fairy-tale remix: *Year of the Fish* (Dir. David Kaplan) and *Dancehall Queen* (Dir. Rick Elgood and Don Letts). The chapter investigates the choices and effects of mixing fairy tales with other narrative genres, thereby foregrounding the topic of generic complexity in fairy-tale films. Bacchilega's analysis is framed by the overarching questions of how mixing genres and worlds create different effects of reality and of how generic remixes hybridize and creolize folk and fairy tales on the screen. Further, the author elucidates the problems associated with genrification and reminds the reader that the genre of what we call "fairy-tale film" is contested territory.

Aspects of (re)translation and transformative strategies of several modern retellings of *The Arabian Nights* are at the heart of the fourth chapter. Bacchilega's

insightful discussion juxtaposes translation as adaptation and adaptation as translation, focusing on ways in which adaptations of *The Arabian Nights* contest the vilification of Arabs (or not) and the subordination of exoticized *wonder* to fairy-tale hegemony. She goes beyond analyzing mainstream North American retellings such as an episode of ABC's television series *Once Upon A Time*, Bill Willingham's comic book series *Fables*, and Mary Zimmerman's play *The Arabian Nights*, by tying them skillfully to the politics in a post-9/11 world and contemporary struggles in the Middle East.

The book closes with an epilogue tracing the concept of *wonder* brought about by transformative processes that inhabit fairy tales. Bacchilega uses the example of the Grimms' "The Golden Key" and underlines the tale's metanarrative shift to illuminate how the poetics of wonder affect listeners, readers, translators, and storytellers. After suggesting that more research needs to be done about *wonder* in today's fairy tales, she urges fairy-tale scholars to intensify our attention to the significance of orality and epistemologies in multimedia fairy-tale traditions. Especially thought-provoking are her final pages concerning the need to decolonize the field of fairy-tale studies and answer the question of "how we conceptualize the genre's history in relation to a politics of inequality" (196). Bacchilega critically engages with Ruth B. Bottigheimer's *Fairy Tales: A New History*, arguing that Bottigheimer's exclusively book-centered approach to the genre "limits our view of fairy tales as cultural practices in the past as in the present" (201).

This is not light, casual reading but a well-researched study principally geared towards an academic readership. The author incorporates numerous colorful graphics and illustrations to make her arguments more vivid. Each chapter can stand alone, but read together they offer compelling testimony to Bacchilega's sheer range of expertise and analytical insight. *Fairy Tales Transformed?* is a model of scholarship highly recommended to anyone interested in fairy-tale studies and modern fairy-tale adaptations.

Claudia Schwabe
Utah State University

Sensing the Past: Hollywood Stars and Historical Visions. By Jim Cullen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. x + 252, acknowledgements, notes, index.

Outside of a few prominent names—ones that often appear above the title—a director is not a movie’s main attraction. The Hollywood moguls knew this. Rather than create the director system, they created the *star* system. In *Sensing the Past*, Jim Cullen proposes an alternative to auteur theory for American culture scholars that puts actors first. Instead of approaching film through genres, periods, or directors, Cullen analyzes movie stars—six specifically—as bastions and purveyors of American historical worldview. Cullen wants to take actors seriously, specifically prominent leading men and women who choose historical roles over careers that span decades. For the book’s central question, Cullen asks, “Could it make sense to think of actors as historians? That people, in the process of doing a job whose primary focus was *not* thinking in terms of an interpretation of the past, were nevertheless performing one? And that in doing so, repeatedly over the course of a career they would articulate an interpretive version of American history as a whole?” (3-4). Cullen seeks to prove the affirmative by sifting through actors’ corpuses to discern overarching historical master narratives at play in their work. Regardless of whether these master narratives are true or false, Cullen argues, actors portray “mythic truths that bear *some* relationship to fact, and to a shared collective memory” (11). It is these “mythic truths” and this “shared collective memory” that Cullen wants historians to take more seriously.

Cullen’s argument addresses an actor’s repeated choice of script rather than individual, momentary acting choices. His larger purpose here is to evaluate how the production of history emerges outside of the academy. In this framework, movie stars are only a beginning, but a useful beginning, because the choices they make over a career are explicit and public. For example, in Cullen’s estimation, John Wayne “repeatedly portrayed tortured souls who do dirty work, and yet in the process of doing so create or preserve a life of decency for others, even if they cannot cross over into the promised land themselves” (9). In Cullen’s view, this is not a popular but typecast player settling into familiar characters in comfortable genres. This is a declaration by John Wayne about the world John Wayne and the rest of us inhabit. In the John Wayne example alone, Cullen draws connections to Moses, Frederick Jackson Turner, James Fenimore Cooper, and Mary Rowlandson. It is these career-long patterns that Cullen sees as statements about American history. Actors show “what they understand about the world that preceded them,” and by doing so “dramatize the consequences of accepting or rejecting those lessons in their master narratives of American history” (16). In this sense, movie stars are historians because they project for mass audiences these discernible historical master narratives.

With this premise in mind, Cullen offers six case studies of prominent twentieth century actors, linking each with a U.S. history master narrative and a prominent intellectual or public figure. In “Tending to the Flock: Clint Eastwood, Ambivalent Wanderer,” Cullen connects

Clint Eastwood to Thomas Jefferson and Jeffersonian democracy, proposing the master narrative of "U.S. history as a struggle over—and for—small communities" (17). In "Shooting Star: Daniel Day-Lewis and the Persistent Significance of the Frontier in American History," Cullen links Day-Lewis to Frederick Jackson Turner and the frontier thesis, advancing the master narrative of "U.S. history as the rise and fall of rugged individualists" (53). In "Equal Work: The Mystique of Meryl Streep," Cullen ties Streep to Betty Friedan and second-wave feminism, seeing the master narrative of "U.S. history as a journey for women from private to public" (89). In "Rising Sons: Denzel Washington, Affirmative Actor," Cullen relates Washington to Malcolm X, putting forward the master narrative of "U.S. history as an intergenerational family drama" (121). In "Team Player: Tom Hanks, Company Man," Cullen associates Hank's with Abraham Lincoln, observing the master narrative of "U.S. history as a saga of collective enterprises." And in "The Brave One: Jodie Foster, (American) Loner," Cullen intentionally has Foster stand alone, suggesting the master narrative of "U.S. history as a pilgrim's progress" (179).

Daniel Day-Lewis stars in Cullen's strongest chapter—it is no surprise that his conception of the book project began here. I suspect that Cullen set out to write all of his chapters in the Day-Lewis mode, only to find that most actors do not have such a clear, sequential corpus. Cullen chooses to address Day-Lewis's filmography by the chronology of setting, differentiating this chapter from the others, where he ordinarily addresses films by order of production. Day-Lewis

has indeed shown a commitment to portraying characters on the many American frontiers—an interesting choice for a British actor with Irish citizenship. By examining *The Crucible* (1996), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), *Gangs of New York* (2002), *The Age of Innocence* (1993), and *There Will Be Blood* (2007), among others, Cullen shows how Day-Lewis's filmography corresponds to Frederick Jackson Turner's conception of the "frontier" as the key factor in American development, whether that frontier was in seventeenth century New England, eighteenth century upstate New York, nineteenth century Manhattan, or early twentieth century California.

The strength of this book is Cullen's devoted attention to actors and how they can democratize our conception of history. Although academics give directors the credit, American audiences attend movies to see the stars. At the very least, Cullen's case studies prove actors show remarkable consistency with their script choices over the span of a career. Cullen drops intriguing tidbits in his many meditations on individual movies, and it becomes clear that he has been considering the relationship between modern American culture and pivotal American figures and texts for many years. The book will prove valuable to scholars from a variety of disciplines. Those coming from a historical background will take away insights on the analysis of film; those coming from film will be exposed to pivotal American figures and texts and their connections to actors and scripts. Some may reject Cullen's premise outright—that actors can embody a sense of history and perform their understanding of it beyond the machinations of directors, scriptwriters, editors, etc. But for those intrigued by his approach, Cullen has left acres of terrain available for future research.

Reviews

Using the metaphor of brain scans, Cullen concludes that “these formations are part of much larger neurological operations that take place unseen and otherwise undetected inside the heads of these artists—electric signals that comprise a larger enterprise we call acting” (213). He believes the historical patterns pulled from these actors oeuvres are the same patterns we enact in our daily lives, and it is for this reason that he calls on professional historians to begin to acknowledge the production of history by alternative sources. At its heart, Cullen’s method is a more democratic and populist approach to American history, one that allows for history to be interpreted, performed, and taught by people outside of the history establishment.

Sensing the Past is about more than film. Movies are an (enjoyable) means to an end. By opening the production of history to a broader segment of the population, Cullen shows how Americans from different backgrounds can project a wide variety of historical master narratives. It takes courage for a professional historian to admit that the most important “historians” may not be members of the American Historical Association. As Cullen puts it, “what actors do comes closer than what historians do to capturing the ways ordinary people actually think and feel about the past” (11). We are all, unconsciously, historians. Those who grace the silver screen dramatically expose the many writers, the many messages, and the many understandings of American history.

David J. Puglia

Penn State University, Harrisburg

Stuff. By Daniel Miller. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010. Pp. vi + 169, notes, index.

Daniel Miller's *Stuff* is a call to anthropologists and the everyday man alike to open their eyes and to look closely at the "stuff" that has piled up and disappeared around them. Throughout his chapters on clothing, houses, media and mobile phones, and matters of life and death, Miller tries to get us to see the stuff around us for the agency and influence it has, not just over us, but over culture as well. Why does stuff matter to Miller? Stuff creates us in the first place, he claims, and in today's globalizing, modernizing world, where material goods are a source of cross-cultural connection, it is the particular use, meanings, and relationships between an individual and stuff that ultimately keeps cultural diversity alive.

In his first chapter on "Why Clothing is Not Superficial," Miller sets out to prove that anthropology and its role in mapping out the particulars of humanity has not been reduced by modernity, the capitalist market, and the material homogenization across the globe as some scholars feared. Through examples from India, England, and Trinidad, Miller highlights the layers of meaning behind clothing, emphasizing that clothing is not just a three-dimensional means of style or superficial representation. Material stuff isn't important to us just because of its functionalism. If we made things, bought things and owned things just because of their functional qualities, then humans would be rather homogenous in their use of things, with variation occurring only across an environmental spec-

trum, claims Miller. Rather, clothing carries with it the feelings and emotions of the person it covers, along with their societal experiences: all the particulars that anthropologists identify among today's mass-produced and widely-distributed t-shirts and blue jeans.

The meat of *Stuff* that ties all Miller's anecdotes and case studies together is his chapter on "Theories of Things," where Miller looks through past theories in anthropology and sociology in search of a theory of stuff that doesn't reduce it to material representations of social relations. In this chapter, Miller takes the reader on a trek from the base of a mountain—where he introduces his own early attempts at theorizing about stuff based upon the structuralist ideas of Lévi-Strauss—up the cliffs to a Marxist perspective centered around self-alienation and oppression under the power of stuff, where every object we create develops its own interests, gains agency, and slowly defines who we are as humans. Miller continues the climb up to Hegel's philosophical interpretation of objectification, the order of the world and the constitution of persons, aligning with the notion that an object born out of a desire ultimately slips out of the ties that once connected it to its creator, taking on a life of its own. Miller finally comes down the other side of the mountain and identifies the reality of these theories and their wider consequences.

Throughout the course of his ethnographic examples and his personal histories, it becomes clear that Miller believes objects have agency, suggesting that objects are powerful in that they determine our actions so much so that we are blind to their ability to do so. Ultimately, the

less we see material objects in our space, the more power they assume over us, as they disappear into our habitus, making us unconsciously aware of what is appropriate and what is not within their environment, just as a large table in the middle of a room indicates that we are able to eat there.

As Miller puts it, these theories of objects glorify the object, which seems appropriate since, according to Miller, culture comes from the stuff that has slowly and unconsciously ingrained itself in our lives and our spaces. Since Malinowski first wrote *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, we have been aware of the importance of things, as seen in the continuous cycle of gift giving. The circulation of things is what creates society. Over the course of modernization, humanity has become synonymous with materiality. How much stuff and what kind of stuff one has defines one as a person. As humans, we are constantly grappling with the binary opposites of materiality: whether we are trying to maintain a materialistic life, or whether we are trying to avoid one. In either sense, the stuff seems to have the power, and it definitely has agency, for after all, we cannot do whatever we damn well please with things that will refuse to grow in shady spots, with items that fall off of a shelf and break, and with stuff on the floor that makes us trip (94).

In the chapter “Houses: Accommodating Theory,” the reader becomes aware of how much agency we give to our houses as well. We admit to ourselves that there is life within the walls of houses. It is an independent and autonomous entity as Miller points out, just as it is a representation of ourselves. Do we have control over this representation in the way in which we choose to organize and restructure the space? Is it instead

the structure and function of the objects within the home that assert agency over how we decorate and organize the space, within the parameters that the walls allow, and within the design of the original construction? Do objects define culture, or are they simply an influence over the direction in which culture develops? While Miller offers no definitive answers to these questions, *Stuff* forces us to consider them.

In his last chapter, “Matter of Life and Death,” Miller argues that objects do define us and they do represent us, as can be seen so clearly when someone dies, and we are left with objects or relics that embody the deceased: the objects that family members know not to toss, but choose to keep and to protect. Whether or not it is we who give agency to the objects that come to bear our memories, these objects do have agency, and we start giving agency to stuff at a very early age. One begins in life with unique relationships to powerful “stuff” that varies from culture to culture and person to person. There are the universals such as homes, clothing, and life and death, but the particulars of these universals are unique to each culture. Ultimately, what makes the particulars of stuff so ubiquitous and so overlooked cross-culturally inspires Miller to write an engaging and intriguing mixed ethnography. *Stuff* forces us to think about the hold that objects have over us, our relationships—whether healthy or unhealthy—with the things that build up in our homes, why we hold on to some things and not others, and why some things seem to take on a life of their own.

Adrienne Gerard

University of Southern California

Latter-day Lore: Mormon Folklore Studies Edited by Eric A. Eliason and Tom Mould. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press. 2013. Pp. xi + 591, introduction, notes, bibliography, contributors, sources of previously published chapters, index.

Austin and Alta Fife's *Saints of Sage and Saddle*, published in 1956, is still seen by most scholars as the most comprehensive treatment of Mormon folklore. However, *Latter-Day Lore: Mormon Folklore Studies* stands firmly as a long-needed update to the Fife's seminal work, offering a great retrospective of where Mormon folklore scholarship has been, and pointing to some promising places it can go next. Given such breadth, *Latter-day Lore* offers a fairly comprehensive—but by no means exhaustive—collection of Mormon folklore, covering a wide breadth of topics, genres, and themes. If a topic is not included in the collection, chances are it can be found in the “notes” or “bibliography” sections in the back. As such, it provides a great “where have we been?” of Mormon folklore scholarship and will surely take its place next to the Fife's work as a cornerstone of Mormon folklore.

The book is divided into six sections covering the Mormon Cultural Region (MCR), customs and traditions, supernatural folklore, Mormon history, humor, and, finally, international Mormon folklore. Each section opens with an introduction written by the editors and filled with a collection of previously published articles and chapters from prominent scholars of Mormon Folklore. The organization may seem arbitrary since it mixes genre, theme, topic, and geography as organizing principles; however,

the introductions ground each section in Mormon history even as it echoes the history of Mormon folkloristics. The sections are then comprised of chapters of previously published work from prominent and emerging scholars famous in and outside of Mormon folklore. The section introductions provide concise historical overviews that help contextualize the succeeding chapter within Mormon history and folkloristics. This is a great strength of the collection and could have been even more emphasized. One way to do this would have been to incorporate original publication dates of the chapters more prominently. Because *Latter-day Lore* does want to show where the scholarship has been, foregrounding the original publication dates would help emphasize the historical contexts of each article within Mormon folkloristics. In addition to addressing the history of Mormon folkloristics, the section introductions also discuss key tensions within Mormonism and Mormon folkloristics. Some of these tensions are at the heart of chapters, such as the tension between superstition and belief, the sacred and the supernatural, and belief and skepticism. Other tensions are explored more within and between articles, such as the tensions between official doctrine and vernacular traditions, history and historical memory, and humor and social anxieties. In exploring these tensions, Eliason and Mould's joint editorship, as well as contributions from “Mormons of various levels of belief and commitment and members of other faiths or no particular faith” (19) help *Latter-Day Lore* benefit from both insider and outsider perspectives. Whatever their affiliation, the chapters included in *Latter-day Lore* mix some compassion with their insightful analysis of Mormon culture in both etic and emic approaches.

Perhaps no aspect of Mormon folklore is better known, more iconic, and more lamented for being overemphasized, than Three Nephite legends. Inevitably but appropriately, Eliason and Mould begin by addressing these legends. Because the collection is dedicated to William A. "Bert" Wilson, it is fitting to begin with the Three Nephites—as Wilson did—and encourage scholarship to move beyond the traditional borders of Mormon folkloristics: Utah, rural populations, America, the supernatural, etc—as Wilson also did. Echoing Wilson's call for where Mormon folklore research should go can be seen as a critique of Mormon folkloristics, since it suggests that folklorists have yet to follow through with Wilson's 1989 call to focus more on Mormon's daily lives rather than the fantastic and supernatural. David A. Allred's chapter on "Early Mormon 'Magic,'" included in "The Sacred and the Supernatural" section is one answer to Wilson's call. He reminds us that rather than arguing repeatedly for how scholarship should proceed, someone needs to actually proceed down those avenues. *Latter-day Lore* reveals this weakness even as it points it out. While the supernatural is still a feature of Mormon folklore, chapters on jokes, folk songs, creative dating, and missionary stories all represent work that focuses on the regular lives of Mormons.

Beyond the focus in Mormon folklore on the supernatural, the editors suggest areas remain that are still underrepresented in scholarship, such as gender, race, and international cultures, yet there are indications that scholarship is beginning to look at these issues. For instance, they bring up the lack of feminist approaches or feminist scholarship in

Mormon folkloristics. In this work, Kristi Bell Young's "Now that I've Kissed the Ground You Walk On: A Look at Gender in Creative Date Invitations," and Margaret K. Brady's "Transformations of Power: Mormon Women's Visionary Narratives," both look at gender and, to some degree, gender power structures in Mormonism. While there is still plenty of room for development and more focused attention, this collection provides evidence that many of these areas, including gender and feminism, which, while they have not received the attention they deserve, have not been completely ignored.

Despite being a collection of previously published work, there is much gained from combining these excellent and wide-ranging chapters. For instance, in one chapter William A. Wilson discusses the three Nephites giving warnings and experiences that encourage Mormons to "obey the commandments," and faithfully perform their "genealogical research, home teaching, missionary work" among other duties. Three chapters later Susan Peterson describes how folklore of the Apocalypse encourages saints to do the exact same things. While this may not be surprising, what emerges from the many articles are those concerns and daily experiences that lay at the heart of what it means to be Mormon. In this way, the collation of all these studies accomplishes what none of them could alone as they explore the themes and tensions within Mormon culture.

Besides being a condensed roadmap of where Mormon folklore scholarship has been, the various sections in *Latter-day Lore* will surely appeal to scholars and non-scholars, Mormons and non-

Mormons. The section on "Pioneers, Heroes, and the Historical Imagination" is framed as an exploration of violence that could interest not just folklorists and Mormon scholars, but also scholars of the West in general. The sections on humor could be of interest to a wide-range of folklorists... as well as anyone looking for a good polygamy joke.

The final section, "Beyond Deseret," points towards possible futures for Mormon folklore scholarship, as international as the church has become. Eliason and Mould's focus on Pioneer Day celebrations to discuss local repetition and variations seen throughout America and internationally. At first it seems an odd choice to use a distinctive tradition of the MCR to discuss the church "beyond Deseret" , but as the discussion moves from Utah to California, Rhode Island, Denmark, Germany, South Africa, and finally Laie where "Laie Day" celebrates both Mormonism and Polynesian heritage. This example thus provides a good case study for how internationally-themed studies of Mormonism might examine how folkways adapt to different contexts. The editors also point out that folklorists can still study international folklore in the MCR among Latin-American, Asian-American, and African-American immigrant populations.

Latter-day Lore uncovers the gaps in the scholarship even as it affirms the continued richness and relevance of the topics and themes that have already been well-explored. In this way it imagines, and even lays the groundwork for, a bright future for Mormon folklore studies.

Spencer Green

Penn State University, Harrisburg