

## New News: How Do We Find Some Trues?

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## Editorial Appraisals:

Some qualified reviewers offer their own brief evaluation of the book summarized. Otherwise most of our content represents the authors'-editors' own words as a preview to their approach to the subject, their style and point-of-view. <>

### [High Culture: Drugs, Mysticism, and the Pursuit of Transcendence in the Modern World](#) by

Christopher Partridge [Oxford University Press, 9780190459116]

History is littered with evidence of humanity's fascination with drugs and the pursuit of altered states. From early Romanticism to late-nineteenth-century occultism and from fin de siècle Paris to contemporary psychedelic shamanism, psychoactive substances have played catalyzing people. Yet serious analysis of the religious dimensions of modern drug use is still lacking.

the use of drugs and the pursuit of transcendence from the nineteenth century to the present day. Beginning with the Romantic fascination with opium, it chronicles the discovery of anesthetics, the psychiatric and religious interest in hashish, the bewitching power of mescaline and hallucinogenic fungi, the more recent uses of LSD, as well as the debates surrounding drugs and religious experience. This fascinating and wide-ranging sociological and cultural history fills a major gap in the study of religion in the modern world and our understanding of the importance of countercultural thought, offering new and timely insights into the controversial relationship between drugs and mystical experience.

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Excerpt: Who will ever relate the whole history of narcotics?—It is nearly the history of 'culture,' of our so-called high culture! -FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

That humanity at large will ever be able to dispense with Artificial Paradises seems very unlikely .... The urge to transcend self-conscious selfhood is ... a principal appetite of the soul. -ALDOUS HUXLEY

Who has not, from time to time, longed to "transcend self-conscious selfhood"? Surely we can all recognize what Allen Ginsberg referred to as the "gnostic impulse," the urge to leave everyday life behind and slip through the looking glass into another world of immersive experiences.' Many people have found the use of psychoactive drugs an effective method of opening up new meaning-making spaces. This is a book about their experiences. It traces key moments in psychedelic history from the turn of the nineteenth century up to the present day.

While people take drugs for a number of different reasons, some of which are complex, it needs to be borne in mind that underlying the high culture of modernity are, as Aldous Huxley put it, men and women who "lead lives at the worst so painful, at the best so monotonous, poor and limited that the urge to escape, the longing to transcend themselves if only for a few moments" has become "one of the principal appetites of the soul." As Leslie Iversen, visiting professor of neuropharmacology at Oxford University, noted, "As a species, we have a unique propensity to seek out mind-altering chemicals .... People in both rich and poor countries seem to have a constant desire to alter their state of consciousness ... and to forget the troubles of everyday life." While accurate figures are almost impossible to obtain, it is clear that recreational drug use is rising. For example, between 1998 and 2000, users of opiates rose from 12.9 million to 17.35 million, users of cocaine rose from 83.4 million to 87 million, and users of cannabis rose from 147.4 million to 160 million.<sup>6</sup> High culture is

often also a culture of tragic misadventure.' As the Czech psychiatrist and psychedelic researcher Stanislav Grof found, "a consuming need for transcendence seems to be the core problem of alcoholism and narcotic drug addiction."<sup>7</sup> The problem is that "for a hurting individual who is desperately looking for help and is incapable of accurate discrimination, the resemblance [between mystical states and inebriation] seems close enough to seduce him or her into systematic abuse." Grof, we will see, made a distinction between altered states induced by psychedelics, which he understood to be genuinely mystical and psychologically beneficial, and states induced by alcohol and opiates, which are fundamentally detrimental to physical, psychological, and spiritual health.

This brings us directly to the subject of this book. Psychoactive substances induce states of transcendence that frequently are invested with mystical significance. As Robert Masters and Jean Houston found during their research in the early 1960s:

When we examine those psychedelic experiences which seem to be authentically religious, we find that during the session the subject has been able to reach the deep integral level wherein lies the possibility of confrontation with a Presence variously described as God, Spirit, Ground of Being, Mysterium, Noumenon, Essence, and Ultimate or Fundamental Reality. In this confrontation there no longer is any question of surrogate sacrality. The experience is one of direct and unmediated encounter with the source level of reality, felt as Holy, Awful, Ultimate, and Ineffable.

Drug-induced states of transcendence, of course, need not be interpreted in this explicitly religious sense. Certainly they are not all interpreted in terms of a relationship to a single transcendent reality. Nevertheless, such experiences of transcendence, whether induced by drugs or not, do tend to lead to a suspicion that, to quote Peter Berger, "there is an other reality, and one of ultimate significance for man, which transcends the reality within which our everyday experience unfolds."<sup>8</sup> We will see that William James, for

example, following his inhalation of nitrous oxide in the 1880s, was persuaded that "the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also." In using the slippery term "transcendence; I am not simply referring to encounters with deities, or to those experiences that lead individuals to "the impression that they are in contact with something boundless and limitless, which they cannot grasp, and which utterly surpasses human capacities." Although these understandings typically inform the interpretation of drug-induced states of transcendence, my starting point is simply the meaning-making experience itself, the experience of that which is Other, of that which is beyond the ordinary, the finite, and the everyday.

The lure of that which is beyond the ordinary is conspicuous within human culture. Central to what might be understood as a bias toward enchantment is "occulture." Like culture, occulture is part of everyday lived experience. Much as in premodern magical cultures, in modern societies occulture typically includes nonsecular discourses that thrive beyond the privileged cultures of "official" religion. Occultural ideas are "occulted" in the sense that they are othered as profane, ephemeral, or irrational by the dominant discourses of both secular and nonsecular institutions. Occulture also refers to the everyday processes by which particular nonsecular meanings emerge, are disseminated, and become influential in societies and the lives of individuals.

Whether one considers the paranormal phenomena encountered by characters in popular literature, television series, or films, or the patchwork of ideas circulated within popular music, or simply urban legends and shared anomalous experiences, the everyday culture of modernity is saturated with discourses that transgress the secular. Popular culture circulates occultural content and opens up spaces within which new constructions of the nonsecular emerge. Psychedelic occulture—often central to "high culture"—has been particularly fertile in this respect.

This can be related to Howard Becker's discussion in his 1953 essay on cannabis use, in which he argued that users "learn to be high." That is to say, the user "learns to smoke it in a way that will produce real effects ... learns to recognize the effects and connect them with drug use," and "learns to enjoy the sensations he perceives." The point here is that it's not simply a case of recognizing that a particular drug has altered one's perception, which would be difficult for even the most inattentive mind to ignore, but rather that one learns that this is what this drug does. As we will see, while there are always a number of available interpretations of the effects of powerful psychoactive substances, these are typically informed by what, as Becker says, could "properly be called a drug culture, a widely shared body of knowledge about what [a particular drug] is, how to use it effectively, what experience that might produce, which results you should enjoy," and so on. This is high culture, which is important, because not only does it reduce the incidence of unpleasant effects, but it does so by providing a vocabulary and an interpretative framework that help users both to expect certain experiences and to make sense of them. Moreover, not only are techniques, technologies, and interpretations shared within high culture, but psychedelic occulture constructs the experience as enchanted reality. As we will see in Chapter 1 and particularly Chapter 7, this type of thinking is often discussed in relation to the "set" (the user's mind-set) and the "setting" (the physical and sociocultural environment within which the drug is taken).

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## Technologies of Transcendence

Who among us does not dream of breaking open the gates of the mystical realm? -GEORGES BATAILLE

Over the previous two centuries, and particularly since the 1960s, the West has witnessed an increasingly expansive literature on psychoactive substances, some of which discusses their apparent ability to induce, as William James put it, "religious mysticism pure and simple." This understanding of psychedelic experience is a good example of what Michel de Certeau called the psychologization of mysticism. Particularly since James's *Varieties*

of Religious Experience (1902), Certeau argued, discussions of mysticism have focused on subjective experience and have become detached from religious institutions, traditions, and dogma: "The Absolute the mystics spoke of is ... regarded as an obscure, universal dimension of man, perceived or experienced as a reality hidden beneath a diversity of institutions, religions and doctrines." The Absolute became "something without limits, infinite, in a word, oceanic." Consequently, mysticism "had for its place an elsewhere and for its sign an anti-society which nevertheless would represent the initial ground of man." Mystical experience came to be understood as a universal feature of human experience that could be induced by individuals and studied from within. Again, this describes much of what will be discussed in the following pages.

### Technologies of the Self

Technology (from the Greek *techne*) is any repeatable practice that maximizes the efficiency of life. Technology, in other words, is an extension of life's potential. The term "technologies of transcendence," while admittedly inspired by Mircea Eliade's discussion of "techniques of ecstasy", was principally informed by Michel Foucault's entirely unrelated discussion of "technologies of the self."

For Foucault, "the subject" is "dead," in that rather than being an independent source of meaning, it is constructed by discourses, institutions, and power relations. Particularly in his earlier work, he was so exercised by the effects of power on the body that humans were no longer understood to be social agents, but rather were reduced to passive bodies unable to act meaningfully in an autonomous sense. Unlike much of the thought discussed in the following pages (but not all of it), he insisted that there is no autonomous, transcendent subject that operates apart from its context. The subject and its identity are historical and cultural constructions. Consequently, his work was understandably criticized for its lack of a cogent theory of subjectivity, in that it denied the potential for personal agency and self-determination. By 1980, however, he had begun to complement this earlier, largely negative understanding of power as prohibitive and repressive with a more positive

understanding of power in terms of technologies of subjectification. He understood these "technologies of self" as practices and techniques by means of which subjects actively construct their own identities. Because the subject and its identity are historical and cultural constructions, they are not fixed. Rather, the subject is fluid and constantly in the process of modification as it engages with what he referred to as "games of truth"—"an ensemble of rules for the production of the truth." There are, he argued, "games of truth which take on the form of science or which refer to a scientific model, or games of truth like those that can be found in institutions or practices of control." He became interested in the relationship between games of truth and the construction of the subject.

He identified four types of technologies that "human beings use to understand themselves": technologies of production, technologies of sign systems, technologies of power, and technologies of the self. He focused on the final two. The former of these had occupied his thought throughout much of his career, and the latter became increasingly important toward the end of his life. "Technologies of power," such as religion, "determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject"; "technologies of the self ... permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and the way of being, so as to transform themselves." Of course, the two are bound together in a continually negotiated relationship: "They are patterns that [the individual] finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group." Because technologies of domination and technologies of the self rarely function separately, "the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them." Put differently, technologies of the self engender questions about how we might transcend the limits imposed on us by anonymous structures, networks of knowledge, and social and cultural institutions. While subjects are never fully able to transcend the influence of technologies of

domination, technologies of the self do provide them with the possibility to interrogate and subvert them. It is in this countercultural sense that I find Foucault's thought so helpful. We can think of psychoactive substances as subversive "technologies of transcendence."

Those who use psychedelics tend to understand them as technologies that have the power to induce a transcendence of the hegemonic forces of domination. "I speculated in fictional terms," noted Aldous Huxley in a discussion of his book *Island*, "about the ways in which a substance akin to psilocybin could be used to potentiate the non-verbal education of adolescents and to remind adults that the real world is very different from the misshapen universe they have created for themselves by means of their culture-conditioned prejudices." Interestingly, we will see in Chapter 7 that Timothy Leary—as well as others such as Robert de Ropp—thought of the psychedelic experience in terms of the subversion of "game reality," a concept not entirely dissimilar to Foucault's notion of "games of truth." Psychoactive substances are able to expose technologies of domination. In so doing, they neutralize or at least weaken hegemonic social forces and thereby open up new ways for individuals "to understand themselves."

At this point, it's worth noting that although Foucault didn't write a great deal about drugs, he was certainly alive to their significance: "It's a subject that interests me greatly, but one which I've had to put aside—the study of the culture of drugs or drugs as culture in the West from the beginning of the nineteenth century." Indeed, as is fairly well known, he was himself no stranger to psychoactive substances, having used cannabis, LSD, and possibly opium. He first took LSD at Zabriskie Point in Death Valley National Park while listening to Stockhausen on a portable tape player. According to James Miller, he later identified this moment as "the greatest experience of his life—an epiphany that climaxed a series of similarly intense 'limit experiences' in the gay community in San Francisco." Although David Macey has noted that "reports from those who claim that he told them that it changed his life should probably be treated with some skepticism," it was undoubtedly a

significant event. For example, some months later, in a conversation with Claude Mauriac, he recalled an "unforgettable evening on LSD," during which he took "carefully prepared doses, in the desert night, with delicious music, nice people and some chartreuse." More significantly, as Sadie Plant has noted, it would seem that LSD introduced him to:

a shortcut between and beyond the categories of illusion and reality, the false and the true. It induced an accelerated thinking that "no sooner eliminates the supremacy of categories than it tears away the ground of its indifference and disintegrates the gloomy dumbshow of stupidity" to the point at which he encounters a "univocal and acategorical mass" that is not only "variegated, mobile, asymmetrical, decentered, spiraloid, and reverberating, but causes it to rise, at each instant, as a swarming of phantasm-events." The processes speed up: structures are displayed, shattered, and surpassed in swift succession, and "as it is freed from its catatonic chrysalis, thought invariably contemplates this indefinite equivalence transformed into an acute event and a sumptuous, appareled repetition" ... Judgment is left in abeyance. The usual criteria need not apply.

A psychoactive substance can be a subversive technology of transcendence, in that it induces a state of consciousness "freed from its catatonic chrysalis." The point is that, as Plant put it, "Foucault's careful genealogies of modern power are underwritten by the conviction that it is only such dispassionate and suspended states from which the working of the world can be perceived."

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Though the above discussion has stressed the centripetal nature of psychedelic shamanic gnosis, it should be noted that this is sometimes attenuated by centrifugal relational and ethical perspectives. For example, Australian ayahuasca drinkers "describe receiving insights or perspectives on how they 'ought' to live with regard to issues internal to domains of family, friend, and workplace relations, and these insights are understood as 'healing insights'." Indeed, Gearin challenges the portrayal of indigenous approaches as relational and

Western approaches as individualistic: "A neat analytical Othering and bifurcation of modern and pre-modern along the lines of individualistic and relational does not appear sufficient in light of the evidence of indigenous individualisms." He is surely correct. Normative constructions lead to a Procrustean simplification of complex social systems. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore the significance of the subjective turn in the modern world, which is, we have seen, amplified by the psychedelic experience.

With the above comments in mind, it is worth noting what Mary Douglas referred to as "the myth of primitive piety." In an article written in 1970 (the timing is significant) and illustrated with well-known countercultural images, such as the covers of the *International Times* and *The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* (which is also significant), Douglas observed that "in the 19th century the heathen was thought to be sunk in darkness. Now there is a widespread idea that primitive peoples are and always have been religious. Sometimes the religious form is thought to be highly magical. Sometimes it is supposed to be ecstatic. But, it seems to be an important premise of popular thinking about us, the civilised, and them, the primitives, that we are secular, skeptical and frankly tending more and more away from religious belief, and that they are religious." In his criticism of Adolf von Harnack's construction of the historical Jesus, George Tyrell famously commented that "the Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well." I often recall this comment when I need a reminder that we tend to tailor the past to serve our own needs and wants. Much psychedelic shamanism, central to which is often an account of "the long trip," is conspicuously guilty of this. Its articulation of the "myth of primitive piety" encourages devotees to look down the deep well of history to discover the epitome of the "healed human"—the Romantic "noble savage" uncorrupted by the modern world and in tune with nature and its elemental forces. The face looking back at them, of course, is none other than their own reflection, a late modern construction of the ideal human, the archetypal

shamanic being. This is evident in McKenna's work. For McKenna, the shaman is able to function as "a doctor of the soul," because s/he is "a real and living exemplar of the primordial, mythical human condition, and in being so maintains the reality and the immediacy of the sacred."

Another example of a psychedelic explorer who peered down the well of history only to gaze upon his own reflection was Antonin Artaud. As we have seen, he traveled to Mexico in 1936 after reading about the revolution, the aim of which, he believed, was to restore an early pre-Columbian civilization (he was wrong about that). He was also inspired by Henri Bergson's vitalism to believe that the peyote rituals of the Tarahumara would provide direct access to a "sense of sacredness," engendered by primal, natural forces, the connection with which had been severed by the materialistic, rationalist culture of Europe. An existential breakthrough into a state of healing and transformation would, he was convinced, occur only when the connection had been re-established during his immersion in the peyote rituals of the Tarahumara. As Uri Hertz has commented, his aim was "the harnessing of shamanistic forces of pre-Columbian sorcery to subvert European ideology and heal what he perceived to be a plague threatening the collective body and psyche."

Concerning the content of the psychedelic experience, what Artaud identified as the "shamanistic forces of pre-Columbian sorcery" was sometimes experienced as what we might call "the personal Other"—McKenna's "machine elves" and Castaneda's "allies." As in the history of mysticism, it would appear that the discourse of the personal Other articulates certain core aspects of the psychedelic experience (particularly during DMT intoxication). In other words, regardless of the idiosyncratic terms in which it is expressed, along with the monistic bias of the psychedelic experience, there is a perception of an "I-thou" encounter. As noted in the first chapter, Rick Strassman's psychedelic research revealed that "at least half" of his volunteers reported encounters with manifestations of the personal Other. They "used expressions like 'entities,' 'beings,' 'aliens,' 'guides,' and 'helpers' to describe them ... It is still startling to see my written records of comments like,

'there were these beings,' 'I was being led' ..."

Likewise, in his later work on the psychedelic experience, Metzner argued that hallucinogens induce a "perception of nonmaterial, normally invisible, spirit beings or entities," which are "recognized as being associated with particular animals (e.g., serpent, jaguar), certain plants, trees or fungi, certain places (e.g., river, rain forest), deceased ancestors, and other nonordinary entities (e.g., extraterrestrials, elves)." From a slightly different perspective, the theologian Harvey Cox recorded the following mescaline-induced experience: "What I felt was an Other moving towards me with a power of affirmation beyond anything I had ever imagined could exist. I was glad and grateful. No theory that what happened to me was 'artificially induced' or psychotic or hallucinatory can erase its mark." We have seen that Thomas De Quincey encountered an enigmatic entity he called "the Dark Interpreter" who helped him to understand the meaning of his visions and that Humphry Davy spoke of his encounters with "the Genius" and "the Unknown." Such experiences of the personal Other raise an important and obvious ontological issue. De Quincey, for example, was aware that the Interpreter was not an exogenous being with an independent existence, but rather "a mere reflex of my inner nature." Even so, there were times when he seemed convinced that the entity was actually in possession of an independent will: "The Interpreter sometimes swerves out of my orbit, and mixes a little with alien natures. I do not always know him in these cases as my own parhelion." This ambiguity is conspicuous in psychedelic occulture, with many experiencers accepting the existence of entities within the imaginal realm without thereby dismissing them as hallucinations. For example, David Luke concludes that the elves of psychedelic experience "are not actually outside, but then inside is the wrong term as well." For others, because they are complex, socially significant, personal agents that have an impact on the everyday lives of experiencers—"actions in alternate reality can affect ordinary reality"—they need to be understood as having some form of independent existence. Indeed, for some, the psychedelic experience could be framed as an exercise in "Tulpamancy." As Samuel Veissière discusses,

"Tulpas (a term borrowed from Tibetan Buddhism) are imaginary companions who are said to have achieved full sentience after being conjured through 'thoughtform' meditative practice."

Finally, we have seen that, as Harper discusses, "one of the most interesting things about shamanism is that it is very democratic. All have the potential to get spiritual revelation directly from the highest possible (and nonordinary) sources if they have the methods. It is not necessary to get much secondhand information from ordinary-reality teachers. The human mind, heart, and spirit are lying dormant, waiting ... to come alive." This makes good sense within Western high culture. With access to the right psychoactive substances, gnosis can be experienced, mystical states enjoyed, and nonordinary reality added to anyone's itinerary of places to visit. <>

[Secret Body: Erotic and Esoteric Currents in the History of Religions](#) by Jeffrey J. Kripal [University of Chicago Press, 9780226126821]

Over the course of his twenty-five-year career, Jeffrey J. Kripal's study of religion has had two major areas of focus: the erotic expression of mystical experience and the rise of the paranormal in American culture. This book brings these two halves together in surprising ways through a blend of memoir, manifesto, and anthology, drawing new connections between these two realms of human experience and revealing Kripal's body of work to be a dynamic whole that has the potential to renew and reshape the study of religion.

Kripal tells his story, biographically, historically and politically contextualizing each of the six books of his Chicago corpus, from *Kali's Child* to *Mutants and Mystics*, all the while answering his censors and critics and exploring new implications of his thought. In the process, he begins to sketch out a speculative "new comparativism" in twenty theses. The result is a new vision for the study of religion, one that takes in the best of the past, engages with outside critiques from the sciences and the humanities, and begins to blaze a new positive path forward. A major work decades in the making, *Secret Body* will become a landmark in the study of religion.

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CHAT WITH JACQUES VALLÉE (JANUARY  
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LA MADONNA DELL'UFO (2015)

Comparing Religions in Public: Rural  
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Excerpt: "You Should Write Fiction"

To see if you will balk against your script. -PHILIP  
K. DICK, THE EXEGESIS

After reading my work, more than a few readers  
and editors have said to me: "You should write  
fiction." To which I immediately reply: "But that's  
what my critics say I've been writing all along."

Still, they have a point (the readers and editors  
now), and I am finally following their advice in the  
pages that follow.

Sort of.

What follows is a kind of Reader, in the sense that  
it attempts to summarize the thought of a single  
individual through a selection of representative  
essays, public lectures, experimental pieces, and  
responses to book reviews, censors, emails, and  
bloggers. It also participates in the genres of  
memoir (since this individual happens to be me) and  
manifesto (since my goal is to express my thought  
as transparently and boldly as I can). The thing is  
admittedly more than a little eccentric. The point of  
this introduction is to explain why and how.

Secret Body is definitely not fiction, but it is also  
more than straight history or conventional memoir.  
In other books, particularly Authors of the  
Impossible, I have written a good deal about the  
literary or narrative dimensions of social and  
physical reality and how these narrative dimensions  
can be glimpsed most clearly in paranormal events.  
The paranormal here is a potential story that wants

to be told in and as us, a kind of writing of the real writing us. In the mirror of that weird thought, I have reflected back on my own life as if it were just such an occulted text trying to express itself in the physical world through historical events, uncanny correspondences between subjective states and objective events (living "comparisons"), and gifted readers in whose reflections I have recognized something of my own hidden face. I have written this book as if ... there is no other way to put it ... as if I were a myth become real.

I mean this quite seriously. The unvarnished truth is that things have been very trippy. Telling it like it is is telling it trippy. In all truth, I have often felt what I imagine the mythical figure of Professor Xavier, or Professor X, in the X-Men films must feel when "mutants"—individuals of various ethnicities, sexualities, and religious backgrounds traumatically transformed by some life event or genetic difference and rejected or persecuted by their families and cultures—come to his secret school for training, advice, and, above all, moral support and human community. Of course, I am not Prof. X. But I do my best to provide this help and community. These people are real. These extraordinary experiences happen. These capacities and gifts are part of our shared world. So are the attempts to deny and shame them, or explain them away as something else. The myth is true.

I am not exaggerating. Because of the books I write and the material I speak openly about in lectures and public media, mutant souls seek me out and, yes, come to my school, where I am indeed a professor. My head bobs in an ocean of intimate reports of human abilities that render any science fiction film or spandex-clad punching brawl banal, ordinary, or just plain silly. These are the real X-Men and X-Women of the world.

Much of what follows could be described as a reception history of the books I have written, were it all not so terribly strange. I am not sure "reception" or, frankly, "history" quite does it. One academic colleague described the books, particularly *Authors of the Impossible*, as psychedelic, as her "gateway drug," and reported strange paranormal effects around reading it. Christine calls this the "Authors effect." She should

know. She is a professor of rhetoric. Others have described their reading experiences of invisible presences, erotic encounters with a discarnate saint, profound moments of sexual-spiritual healing, poltergeist activity, synchronicities around UFO phenomena, states of hyper-awareness while reading, and new scholarly understandings of previously puzzling historical material. To take just one example of the latter reading phenomenon, during the night of December 17, 2010, "I" showed up, as an augoeides or shining etheric body, in the dream of a scholar of Neoplatonism to help him resolve a particular theoretical question with which he was struggling.

Obviously, such reading practices are not simple ones. They are not about moving arbitrary cultural signs around in some neural game in a brain. Rather, they show every appearance of fundamentally changing how such readers receive, perceive, and cocreate the very texture of reality. If our public secular and materialist culture has systematically repressed and denied what I have called the impossible, these reading and writing practices are all about making the impossible possible again.

As a historian of religions who specializes in the study of extreme religious experiences, I take these modern "mutant" forms of esotericism and these reports of strange experiences around the reading of my books very seriously, just as seriously as I would take any other in the historical record. Why wouldn't I? Because the past is more important than the present? Because premodern people are more special than living ones?

To be frank, I think that these super-readers' anomalous responses to my texts are not anomalous at all but point toward some of the most fantastic potentials of reading and writing and, indeed, of consciousness itself. I do not cause these reading events and experiences in my readers. Prof. X aside, I am no super-mutant working wonders in other people's dreams, bodies, and rooms. I am simply an author who takes these dimensions of human nature as real, as part of who we all already are, wherever and whenever we are. By acknowledging as much and then exploring the implications of this acceptance, my books give

permission to their readers to access and experience these realities for themselves. In effect, the books encourage them to ignore the cultural censor and talk about their experiences openly and honestly. The readers make the impossible possible, which, of course, was never really impossible.

Following the lead of these readers and walking the talk of decades now, I have come to read my own essays and books as if these texts were unconscious chapters in an emergent myth, surface signs of something much deeper and stranger. Nietzsche had it just right when he asked: "Do I have to add ... that all our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text?"<sup>2</sup> I have tried to access, read out, and interpret that occulted text in the pages that follow.

In this true tall tale, this "I" of mine, this "me;" is a character who gradually wakes up inside a set of conflicting cultural and religious stories that he himself did not write but that are very much a part of him, indeed, that have written him. After realizing this shocking fact, the same character balks at the scripts he has been given and attempts to "step off the page" of his familial, cultural, and professional stories and rewrite himself (and them) anew through another kind of writing—oddly enough, a quarter century of technical scholarship on religion—and, eventually, through a new kind of book: this one. Finally, in the very last pages of the story, this character begins to suspect that he, like everyone else, is not just written or influenced by culture and religion. He begins to suspect that the self itself is a reproduction, a representation, a neurological trick of memory and sensory display, a nonexistent absence (I literally don't believe in myself), but also, paradoxically, a portal of some vast unfathomable presence.

I am the only fiction I will ever write, and I have written it here.

I have taken this mythical turn in my writing practice for a number of reasons. Foremost among these is the conviction that this awareness of being a myth is not simply personal. It is also a deeply social, moral, and political act. As far as I can tell, most of our countless social sufferings and violences arise from the simple fact that we actually believe the

social constructions that are our familial, religious, and national identities. We really think we are our masks and language games. We privilege our religious egos over our humanity, our societies over our species, our cultures over consciousness as such. We have it exactly backward. This book is about reversing that reversal. There is no more urgent political project than this.

In my own case, it is my own growing conviction that my social sense of self—this dingbat other people keep calling "Jeff" or, astonishingly, "Prof. Kripal"—is in actual and literal fact a fiction, in short, a "myth" as most people understand that word. "Jeff Kripal" is a little unstable story that I tell myself over and over again (apparently, I need reassuring) from a few bits of memory, which I have selected out of millions of potential bits, that are then strung loosely together to make up a story line or plot that is "me." You are such a myth, too, of course. We all are. As are all our cultures and religions. It's all fiction.

But it's enchanted fiction. And that's what makes it myth in the deeper sense of that word. All of this fiction is enchanted in the simple but profound sense that it is authored by forms of mind that are not fictional at all but that can never be known directly by us, not at least as egos or characters in their stories. We are fictional characters on the screen, alter egos thrown up here by a powerful and very real projector "at the back." As hard as we try, we cannot know that projector, not at least as characters on the screen. But this hardly means that it does not exist. For the sake of communication and simplicity, let us refer to this projector of egos in the abstract singular and give this mysterious enchanter, this flickering projector of all the movies of ego and culture, a name. Let us call it simply "consciousness."

Here is the loopy truth. This consciousness is us, and it is not us. There are numerous psychological, neuroscientific, and spiritual expressions of this twoness, many of which I have gathered under my central poetics of the Human as Two. This doubleness is the fundamental structure and central paradox of the present book and, or so I have concluded, of all of my work.

Multiple explanations, qualifications, and nuances will follow. For now, let me keep it brief, if also admittedly enigmatic.

On the professionally acceptable level, this twoness is the basis of the bedrock insight of modern psychology regarding the ego and the unconscious, from psychoanalysis to contemporary cognitive science. On a more challenging and contested level, this twoness defines the most basic structures of religious practice and experience and so the most basic shape and language of the phenomenology of religion: this is why "the sacred" is so eerie, so at once strangely familiar, and yet so seemingly Other, so alluring and so terrifying. It's us, and it's not us. This is also what makes the study of religion a paradoxical hermeneutical practice, in principle, and why any simple "scientific" or purely "descriptive" or "historical" approach can never get at what makes religion religious. At the end of the day, "religion" is not about objects that can be measured or described or tracked in archives, much less organized and statistically analyzed in a computer database. It is about subjects caught in and freed from their own stories.

Put most simply, the Human as Two is finally about the dual structures and existential paradoxes of our mythical existence. We are split in two. We author ourselves, and we are authored. We make things up, and we are made up. We are at once insiders and outsiders to our own stories. So we believe and suffer them, and yet we can see right through them and do not believe them. We watch them from some esoteric space that we can never quite locate.

"You should write fiction:"

Tell me about it.

### To Imagine

Who is doing all of this? Who or what is the "implied spider" spinning all the webs of myth that constitute the history of human culture and religion, including each of us as actors, agents, and victims in those stories?<sup>3</sup> This is where the negative sense of myth as untruth, coded ideology, or oppressive fiction flips over into its positive, really fantastic, sense as symbolic mediation, translated truth or cosmic enigma. This is the enchanted part. How,

after all, can that part of us that authors us speak to that part of us that is authored? How can the author outside the page communicate with the characters on the page? How can the shining projector communicate with the actors on the screen?

If the history of religions means anything, the answer to such questions comes down to this: through symbol and story. Which is another way of saying: through the imagination. We desperately need a new theory of the imagination (or a revived old one), one that can re-vision the imagination not as simply a spinner of fancy and distracting daydream but also, at least in rare moments, as an ecstatic mediator, expressive artist, and translator of the really real.

Clearly, however, our present dilemma with respect to the imagination is not simply a function of a particular history of ideas. It is also a function of material, biological, and neurological structures. It also has something to do with our double brains—another kind of Human as Two. To speak neuroanatomically for a moment, I think it remains more revealing than concealing, more fruitful than false, to think of mythical thinking or enchanted imagining as expressive of dimensions of mind that are correlated with the right hemisphere of the brain and so are confusing or simply nonsensical to more left-brain ways of knowing. These mythical dimensions of mind cannot speak directly to the ego for a simple reason: ego is primarily a left-brain function. Indeed, these other dimensions of mind cannot "speak" at all, since language as such is also primarily a left brain function. So these presences show us pictures and tell us stories in dream and vision. They possess us. They claim to be gods, or God. They blast us with altered states of energy and pull us, like a magnet, outside our bodies into other worlds and dimensions. They trick us. They mess with us. They seem at once familiar and alien. That's because they are.

We know too much about the brain to take such a duality too simply. Most brain functions are "global" and not restricted to one hemisphere. But the human brain is literally split in two (there are really two of you in there). That is a nonnegotiable, neuroanatomical, universal fact. Accordingly, the

bimodal model of human functioning remains heuristically fruitful to address the binaries of any number of human experiences and expressions, including those of the study of religion and what I have hymned as the Human as Two.

The same bi-hemispherical model, I should add, has recently attracted some very sophisticated proponents from the realms of psychiatry and neuroanatomy in order to understand the lopsided, hyper-mechanistic nature of Western culture and the neurological coordinates (not necessarily causes) of mystical states of consciousness. I find the framing of some of this most recent work by historian of esotericism and occultism Gary Lachman especially germane to my goals in the following pages:

The left cerebral hemisphere deals with language, it is the home of our ego, the verbal "I" with which we identify. Next door to it—or "us"—separated by a bundle of neural fibers called the corpus callosum or commissure, resides, for all intents and purposes, a stranger. This stranger does not speak but communicates in symbols, images, intuitions, hunches, even physical sensations, and may, as some theorists have speculated, be involved in paranormal phenomena.

That is more or less what I think. Both of me. Regardless, I am not bound to the hemispherical model in any slavish way. I am no neurological literalist. It is simply another heuristic device, one of numerous models of the Human as Two that I will be exploring in the pages that follow, from the immortal Self (atman) that is not the mortal "I-maker" (ahamkara) of ancient Hindu thought, through the divine and human natures of Christ in Christian theology and mysticism, through the modern Freudian ego and unconscious, to the Eliadean sacred and profane, the former shining most brightly as different forms of tranconsciousness refracted through the histories of yoga, shamanism, myth, symbol, and occultism.

All of these speculative engagements are aimed at a larger point, to which I definitely am committed, namely, that we must learn to be more comfortable with these visions, zappings, and apparent entities, no matter how baroque or zany they appear to our rational egos and conventional materialisms.

Indeed, in some sense, the more bizarre, the better. That's their point. They are not supposed to "make sense" (a phrase, please note, that neatly implies that the human senses have access to all of reality, which is utter nonsense). Indeed, explanation and the language of cause (left-brain functions again) are, in some sense, beside the point (and literally beside the right hemisphere and its symbolic beamings). These religious phenomena are not about mechanisms. They are about meaning. Moreover, although they certainly involve all of these dimensions of who we are, they are also not simply about reason, or cognition, or language, or ego, or anything else that the left brain can count, analyze, explain, or put on a computer chip. They are symbolic expressions of something Other or More. To borrow (and change) a phrase from a historian of mystical literature whom we will meet in due time, they are about "the visitation of the Stranger," a stranger whom, as speaking egos, we seldom recognize or welcome.

"As speaking egos." That is the key phrase, since we are not simply speaking egos. We are not just the ego circuits of our left brains. Consciousness is not just cognition. And, as the history of mystical literature demonstrates in abundance, we can intuit and even "know" this Other or More, this Stranger before us. How? Well, for one thing there appear to be other circuits in the brain, neurognostic structures that, in effect, open the veil to other dimensions of mind and reality, a mind and a reality that show every sign of being coterminous with one another.

But there is likely a deeper reason still. We can know these other dimensions of mind and reality because these other dimensions are us communicating with us. We are the characters up on the screen. But we are also the projector projecting them. Again, it's all fiction up on the screen, but it's fiction enchanted or illuminated by a very real projector at the back of the room, which is us, too. We are the Stranger. That's the Human as Two. That's the esoteric paradox at the heart of the history of religions that I seek to express and explore here.

## To Reason

But *Secret Body* is not just about coming to terms with the mythical facts of our existence as projected and enchanted egos on the screen of history. It is also very much about public reason, about the primary powers of the left brain, about critical thinking with a professional purpose, about systematization and theory building. Imagine and intuit I will, but, first and foremost, I am interested here in having a public conversation with my colleagues and critics in the study of religion and the interested public at large.

Although I engage in autobiographical reflection, then, in the end the work is not about me. It is about the comparative study of religion as a philosophical, political, moral, and spiritual force in the world of vast, still unseen implications. The secret body emerges from and is an expression of this much larger and much more important professional body and multigenerational project. That is why some of the pieces anthologized or integrated here are not technical essays but public lectures, media pieces, blog responses, and experimental essays. Yes, I want to be a parable, a piece of entertaining fiction. But I want to be a parable for others.

The public work and the personal life are always connected. *Secret Body* is about working through this fact. It is about struggling with what was given to me within a single remarkable event, recognizing that which was given in the mirrors of history and culture, and then shaping these reflections into a set of reasoned arguments that can be discussed, debated, and—most important of all—applied in other historical and cultural contexts.<sup>1</sup> I do not expect you to care about my personal life, much less about my dreams and altered states of mind and energy. But if you have picked up this book, you may well care about the public reasons and the published work, which—and this is my point—was produced by this life and these same strange energies. You don't get the one without the other. That's how it happened. That's what it is.

Accordingly, I have systematized and summarized (that is, rationalized) my total body of work in the form of twenty theses or gnomons, as I call them. Since all of *Secret Body* points toward these

gnomons, some explanation is in order about this term I use: a "gnomon: I first encountered the expression in another writer whom, alas, I have now forgotten. The word has since struck me as perfect for what I am trying to express in this particular context, since it seems to allude to a short aphorism or maxim (Greek: gnome) that is "gnostic" in nature. That an entirely different Greek word (gnomon) literally means "interpreter" but refers more specifically to the triangular instrument on a sundial, which tracks the apparent movement of the sun (really the spin and orbit of the earth), seems too good to be true. My gnomons, after all, each attempt to track the apparent movement of the sun of consciousness as it casts its shadows over time and history. Finally, that any English reader might also think of a gnome, the little guy with the pointy hat in our gardens, simply makes me smile, as I know this silly piece of popular culture can be traced at least as far back as the occult philosophy of Paracelsus (1493-1541) and originally referred to an earth elemental (Latin: gnomus), of which the modern ufological literature is also chockful. For all of these etymological, historical, and eccentric reasons, yes, "gnomon" is just right.

I fully recognize, of course, that these are my conclusions and do not reflect the consensus of the field as it stands now, much less the doctrines and theologies of the religions in question. But I am also convinced that these twenty theses are not just mine; that they are the result of countless swirling currents of pedagogical, social, and hermeneutical interaction; that they accurately reflect powerful and productive currents of thought and experience that have long been an intimate part of the study of religion, even if they are at present suppressed and hushed; and that they constitute a body of public knowledge that can be picked up by others in order to engage different historical materials and cultures to significant and often provocative effect. Indeed, the full implications of some of these theses, if they turn out to be even approximately true, are dramatic beyond measure. If we took them seriously, they would fundamentally reshape our cultures, if not our experience of reality itself. This is another reason that I have labeled them "secret." At this point in time, such sayings cannot be

integrated into either the social body or our ordinary conceptual shaping of the real.

Let me immediately add that such gnomons are not offered as certainties, much less as winning arguments. They are not meant to shout over other voices. They are provocations, earnest voices in the corner of the room designed to interrupt the conversation for a moment, perhaps shift it into a new direction someday. Nothing more. But nothing less.

Considering them, then, does not mean that other, much more developed and established voices at the center of the room are unimportant or should not remain central. I consider the established historical-critical, philosophical, sociological, and psychological methods to be the *sine qua non* features of the field, without which there could be no study of religion. Although I will make my disagreements clear, I do not want to work in a profession in which the thought of such thinkers do not hold a central and distinguished place.

Put a bit differently, I intend to add things to the discipline (that were already there), not take anything away. There is no zero-sum game here. When I write about "esoteric currents" in the history of religions, I mean exactly that. These are esoteric currents, and will probably remain so for a long time.

So I will claim. I will complain. I will invoke my defenders. I will answer my critics. I will celebrate. I will polemicize. I will hiss. I will humor. I will tell secrets. I will keep secrets. It is for others to take this thought up and hone it, or to ignore it. In any case, I trust the long arc of the professional and public conversations, wherever they bend. And, of course, I may well be mistaken about any number of things imagined in these pages, including my central speculative suggestions regarding the centrality of consciousness to the future study of religion. But so what? Again, I am writing here to provoke, not to "be right" (what a telling but odd, left-brained expression that is, since the left brain controls the right side of the body).

I have shared this text with many colleagues, and I have received significant critical feedback, much of which I have incorporated, and some of which I

have not. The latter criticisms generally boiled down to the earnest request that I return to the rules of the academic game, that I pretend, like everyone else, that I do not really care about transcendence and truth, that I return to the center of the room and sit down. My reply was and remains a simple one: "No. That is not what this book is about. That is not what I am here for, not at least now at this stage of my life and writing. Nor is that really what the intellectual life is about. How else did we get a Freud, a Foucault, or feminism? Certainly not by obeying the established rules of the place and time."

So I say this: if you seek an established, respectable, fully rational, fully defensible program for the study of religion, then go elsewhere. I have none. Put me down. If, on the other hand, you seek an intimate view into the inner workings and future speculative directions of one historian of religions' thoughts on the field and how these esoteric currents might flow out of a much richer history and into a much brighter future, read on.

### To Be Read Whole

On another level still, this book is an attempt to understand what it is that I have been trying to say in print for the last quarter century. I have long sensed that there was an unconscious narrative, a knowing dream, a secret body behind all the manifest essays and books, but until recently I could not have articulated what this secret body looks like. I was a dreamer still at work on the dream.

There is another way to put this. I write here first and foremost to be read whole.

This aspect of the project is born of a common experience of mine, which goes like this: I receive a letter from a reader or encounter a colleague at another university, after which a conversation ensues about a particular book or essay that I have written. I quickly realize that the reader is reading me through this single topic and not through my total body of work. Rather than a zapped or irradiated historian of religions (which is how I understand myself), I become a harassed or even threatened Indologist (they love that one), or a straight gender theorist writing about gay men (very confusing), or an Aldous Huxley enthusiast

(understandable, but far too restricting), or a historian of Western esotericism (close), or a parapsychologist (deeply sympathetic, but no), or a historian of comic book culture (nope), or whatever it is that the person wants me to be.

I become frustrated in these situations, until I ask myself: "But who can read an entire body of work?" This self-questioning is usually followed by an admission in my head: "Well, I suppose it is just a bit confusing what a man might be about who started out writing about Tantric traditions in colonial Bengal and Roman Catholic homoeroticism, ended up writing about science fiction and UFO encounters in Cold War America, and never stopped writing about sex." I mean, really, just who is confused here?

This confusion, be it mine or that of my readers, is compounded by the fact that the public responses to my individual books have often been extreme ones. Consider two tall tales.

My first book, *Kālī's Child* (1995), a study of the censored "secret talk" and homoerotic mystical ecstasies of the nineteenth-century Hindu saint Ramakrishna, was the object of both a major book award ("Best First Book in the

History of Religions") and two organized ban movements in India, the second of which went all the way up to Parliament, in the spring of 2001. I was the first American scholar of Hinduism to be blacklisted and targeted for systematic harassment by Hindutva fundamentalists, in both the States and India, in a wave of attempted censorship that has not abated since, twenty years later.

My sixth book, *Mutants and Mystics* (2011), takes a close look at the paranormal currents of American popular culture, particularly as experienced by the authors and artists of the science fiction and comic book worlds. Just such a writer, a screenwriter for one of the superhero films I write about in the book, wrote to me after the book came out. He was sitting on the set of a superhero film shoot between two of my favorite actors, reading my book to them. He then asked for a dozen inscribed copies of the book so that they could be formally gifted to

the main cast, director, and producers at their closing party.

So I write a book about the textual history of a censored saint and find that book becoming an object of the same political processes of censorship that I had written about. I write a book about the emergent mythology of "mutants and mystics" and find myself gifting that book to the human backstage of the mythical world I have just written about. What is going on here? I mention these stories at the beginning not to brag or to boast (remember: I'm a myth), but simply to observe that there is something highly unusual about the particular books I have written, something that somehow brings about what they are about.

### Secret Body

The traditional name for this kind of reading and writing is "magic." Magical language is language that brings about that which it is about. My own expression for this fantastic capacity of language is "secret body." I mean something very specific by this expression. Actually, I mean four specific things.

First, I mean to point to the underlying wholeness of the corpus, which is never made apparent in any single essay or book but that nevertheless produces them all. In this sense, *Secret Body* is a kind of Reader, an attempt to express the whole through a careful selection of its parts.

Second, by the expression "secret body" I mean to point to the fact that the published corpus is a public expression of a paranormal gnosis that, as I will explain in some detail, I received about a quarter of a century ago during an event I have come to call simply "that Night" and have tried, with some success and many failures, to "write out" ever since. *Secret Body*, then, is a linguistic expression of something that, in the end, cannot be fully languaged and to which, let me underline, I myself (again, as an ego up on the screen and not the light at the back of the room) do not have any direct or reliable access. In this sense, such a book is not simply a report on what has been thought. It is also a development and evolution of this thought, a disciplined attempt to nuance and take that Night further still.



Third, these pages constitute a "secret body" in the sense that they express my own physical body and its desires. As such, the book advances again one of my central and long-standing historical arguments, namely, that the male heterosexual body is "heretical" within most orthodox male mystical traditions, particularly when these employ erotic imagery to express the union of the human and the divine. I will explain this comparative thesis in detail below. For now, it is enough to know that the male heterosexual body generally "does not fit" into these theological, spiritual, and liturgical systems. Hence it can only become "secret," heterodox, silenced, and religiously marginalized.

I will speak from and as this secret body once again here, arguing, in effect, that the traditional mystical language of a "marriage" between the human and divine (as evident in the Hebrew prophets and the Christian mystics as in Hindu and Buddhist Tantra) is gradually being left behind for more expansive and queerer languages of an erotic evolutionary impulse and spiritual mutation. Human transformation remains the central concern, but the symbolic and mythical frameworks of this transformation are dramatically morphing.

Fourth, *Secret Body* is a secret body in the sense that I have come to intuit the public work's shape and nature in light of what can only be called an esoteric reception history of correspondence and conversation. "Secret" here refers to the "private; intimate;" and "confidential" contexts of this mirroring, which took place mostly via private email correspondence and, in some cases, through face-to-face meetings. But it also refers to the profound hermeneutical and social fact that I would not have come to an understanding of my own work, or myself, without these secret readers. I literally understood myself and came to be "me" through them.

### Paranormal Reading And Writing

Precisely because of the same esoteric reception, I know that the meanings and effects of particular kinds of texts do not lie solely in the past, in the author, or in any single reading. I know that they sometimes appear, like a UFO hovering just above the page, between the author and the text, and then between the author, text, and reader. They

thus speak of self-reflections, doubled selves, parasocial fields, flows of energy, strange synchronicities, and profound human connections in ways that no standard historiography, sociology, psychology, or literary theory has yet been able to capture.

The only places that I have been able to find remotely adequate resources for thinking about such extraordinary processes is in the world of science fiction and in the shared histories of the British psychical research tradition, American parapsychology, and the French *métapsychique* tradition (a specific lineage of psychical research within France that I will engage below). Here, then, is the reason that so much of my later work has been about the paranormal potentials of reading and writing. That is my experience of reading, writing and, above all, of being read. That is my experience of the secret body.

Along the way, I have become especially intrigued by the semiotic or symbolic function of paranormal events, by which I mean that they often work like texts that are taking expression in the physical world of objects and events. This is the idea with which I opened this opening. I will also close with it.

I have in mind here the ancient Platonic notions of the daimonic or divine sign (*daimonion semeion*), literally the "little daemon that gives signs" that guides the philosopher's life, as we see in the case of Socrates and his guardian spirit or *daimonion*, who famously prevented him throughout his life from making the wrong decisions. As Charles Stang has demonstrated, this notion of a "divine double" that inspires the philosopher in life through signs and leads the soul into the afterlife and into the next life via rebirth is in fact a major theme throughout the Platonic corpus. In a very similar spirit, Peter Struck has explored the ancient Greek birth of the "symbol" as the enigmatic sign or chance meeting on the road that was linked to the experience of oracle, omen, talisman, dream, revelation, and meaningful coincidence, that is, to an order of truth and mind beyond discursive reason. Here were the furthest "limits of the text" in ancient Greece.

These ancient Greek notions of the daimonic sign or uncanny symbol are incredibly important, as they

give witness to a collection of human experiences that I believe are also at the heart of the modern American "paranormal." They also give witness to a deep link between paranormal experiences and the life of the intellect (nous), that is, to philosophy as a way of life, as a calling. Such daimonic signs have certainly functioned as such in my own life and work. Like Milan Kundera in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in the opening epigraph, I have taken these as aesthetic calls to "a dimension of beauty" and as "a hidden structure or web of connections" and, accordingly, have followed them at every step and with every book, including this one, as will become evident in what follows to the very last page.

I have suggested that these paranormal signs and symbols have something to do in turn with the ways that "we are written" by culture and religion. In this model at least, paranormal events—at once objective and subjective—can be understood as both little realizations of this "being written" and as inspirational goads aimed at getting us to "write ourselves anew:" that is, to conjure other realities out of the cultural texts or inherited stories in which we are presently embedded.

Or trapped. Hence two of the most common descriptors of a paranormal experience: "It was as if I were a character in a novel" or "It was as if I were in a movie." Well, we all are, aren't we? We are all characters in those novels and movies we call "culture" or "religion." Here, writing and reading become, in effect, paranormal powers capable of freeing us from our deeply inscribed beliefs and assumptions, be these cultural, religious, or intellectual. We rely on these cultural scripts and languages to become human, self-reflexive, and social. But some of us also grow weary or suspicious of this scripting. We see its dark and dangerous sides. We sometimes write and read, then, to not be so completely written and read. We write to balk against our script, as Philip K. Dick came to understand his writing practice after his own experience of Valis, his name for the cosmic mind at the back of the movie theater.

I am hardly the first to become convinced of the paranormal potentials of language. As authors from Mark Twain, Henry Miller, and Stephen King

to Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Nicolas Royle, and, most recently, Jason Josephson-Storm have observed, reading and writing display all sorts of deep resonances with another phenomenon: telepathy." We forget just how utterly strange is the fact that a text created in one place and time can be picked up in another and be reactivated in the mind of the reader, down to minute particulars of mood and nuance. We forget how we write and read one another constantly. Textuality, potentially at least, is telepathy. And telepathy is certainly a kind of textuality. In both the deep act of reading and in the telepathic event, what we have is one form of mind "reading" another, often at a great distance in space-time. Are you are not reading my mind right now? And have I not gotten inside your head?

I am not really "inside" your head, of course. But—and this is the final secret of Secret Body—neither are you. <>

[My Name Was Never Frankenstein: And Other Classic Adventure Tales Reanimated](#) edited by Bryan Furuness [Indiana University Press, 9780253036346]

[My Name Was Never Frankenstein: And Other Classic Adventure Tales Reanimated](#) brings your favorite characters back to life in new and exciting escapades. In this inventive collection, a stellar cast of writers uses classic adventure tales as a launch pad for an eclectic mix of prequels, alternate universes, spin-offs, and total reboots. Imagine Ahab is shipwrecked on an island of cannibals, or Mr. Hyde tells his side of the story, or the scarecrow from Oz struggles with the mystery of his existence. By turns wry and haunting, [My Name Was Never Frankenstein](#) upends old territory and classic characters to reclaim them for a new generation.

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Excerpt: At the beginning of [The Magician King](#) by Lev Grossman, the main character—Quentin—is a king in the land of Fillory. He's a magician in a magical land, but he's grown a little bored of the whole scene. Then one day the royal court comes upon an ancient clock tree thrashing in a wind that no one else can feel. "It was a Fillorian wonder, a real one, wild and grand and strange," and Quentin feels "a twinge of ... fear, and something more. Awe. They were looking the mystery in the face. This was the raw stuff, the main line, the old, old magic."

As you might predict, Quentin is drawn toward the clock tree, and an adventure begins.

In our world, stories are old magic. Some stories are more raw and elemental than others, though. Some fictional universes are wild frontiers, begging for exploration. Myths, for example. Fairy tales. And the newer territory of adventure tales.

Consider Tarzan. Zorro. Ahab. Nemo. You know them, even if you have never read the books or seen the movies. They're embedded in the cloud of our culture, our network of subconscious minds. Classic adventure tales are our new myths (though old enough, fortunately for this project, to be in the public domain). The characters from adventure tales are endlessly fascinating, their universes expansive. Like Quentin, I'm drawn toward this magic.

Fortunately, I'm not alone. Plenty of writers want to play with this magic, too. All the stories in this book use a classic adventure tale as a jumping-off point, but they jump in different directions. You'll see prequels, alternate universes, spin-offs, and total reboots. The result is an eclectic mix of tales, some wry, some haunting, but all captivating. It's wild and grand and strange, so let's get to it. And, who knows, maybe in the end you'll want to enter these mysteries and play with this magic, too. <>

[The Made-Up Man: A Novel](#) by Joseph Scapellato [Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 9780374200077]

Existential noir meets absurd comedy when a young man reluctantly enlists as source material for an art project

Stanley had known it was a mistake to accept his uncle Lech's offer to apartment-sit in Prague—he'd known it was one of Lech's proposals, a thinly veiled setup for some invasive, potentially dangerous performance art project. But whatever Lech had planned for Stanley, it would get him to Prague and maybe offer a chance to make things right with T after his failed attempt to propose.

Stanley can take it. He can ignore their hijinks, resist being drafted into their evolving, darkening script. As the operation unfolds it becomes clear there's more to this performance than he expected; they know more about Stanley's state of mind than he knows himself. He may be able to step over chalk outlines in the hallway, may be able to turn away from the women acting as his mother or the men performing as his father, but when a man made up to look like Stanley begins to play out his most devastating memory, he won't be able to stand outside this imitation of his life any longer.

Immediately and wholly immersive, Joseph Scapellato's debut novel, [The Made-Up Man](#), is a hilarious examination of art's role in self-knowledge, a sinister send-up of self-deception, and a big-hearted investigation into the cast of characters necessary to help us finally meet ourselves.

Excerpt: PART I

ONLY THE STUPID CAN BE HAPPY

Stanley Arrives in Prague

The man who met me at the airport was made up. He wore concealer and low-key lipstick. On both hands, his fingernails had been lacquered in clear polish. I was meant to notice these unobtrusive subtleties, which I did, and I was meant to feel dropped at the front door to a dark, deviant, and complicated mystery, which I didn't.

"I am representative of your uncle," he said, presenting me the key to the apartment.

He was stooped and saggy-faced, a man dragged all the way to the end of middle age. English sounded hairy in his mouth. He wore a black suit, shirt, and tie, but his sleeve cuffs were streaked with white chalk. The chalk, still powdery, poofed when he moved.

He held a poster-board sign that read:

STANLEY?

and included an impressionistic charcoal portrait of a figure that was meant to be me. No white chalk was in it. The way the face was arranged, it looked about to eat itself.

On the intercom a woman spoke in sternly bored Czech. We were standing near the exit, under the airport's huge hangar-like ceiling. I felt sore and foul from the long flight.

Around us, backpackers, traveling retirees, and businesspeople tapped out cigarettes on their way to the street, where they stopped to smoke, the gathered cloud looming up above them like a ledge full of gargoyles.

"We are thanking you," said the man.

I took the key from his palm. He stared at me with an exaggerated indifference, as if he wanted me to suspect that he was masking spite, as if his goal, outside of key-delivery, was to make me think myself observant. There was a chance I'd seen him in Chicago sometime, slinking out of my uncle's garage with the other artists. To tell them apart was tricky: their work was to change who they were.

He said, "Are you having question?"

My eyes adjusted to his face: its texture shifted, seeming caked and rubbery. He was maybe more

made up than I'd thought. I imagined what it would be like to be him—a willing "representative of" my uncle, an adult who'd agreed to participate in another adult's game of pretend—and what I found myself feeling, instead of pity, was disgust. There were many hateful things I could've said to this man. But if I said them, I might shout them, and if I shouted them, I might shove him. It would be the mess my uncle wanted. I put the key in my pocket.

"I won't have questions," I said.

He lowered the sign. His face jerked. "You will find yourself around?"

I left—I crossed the lobby, I went through the doors. Outside I paused in the smoker's cloud to study my map. The urge to smoke was a stake in my chest. I breathed indulgently.

The made-up man watched me from inside the airport, acting like I couldn't see him. He had put a hand to the glass. He was crying.

A bus took me to a tram that took me to the city center. It worked the way the guidebook said it would. From there I walked, and the closer I came to Old Town Square, the more the tourists, travelers, and citizens clotted up the cobblestoned streets and corners, stuck together with their separate languages. Buildings stacked on the centuries, each one older than the last. The streets narrowed and twisted. Through intersections I caught glimpses of the Square, its broad spaces, its mob, its murmur.

The alley that led to where my uncle had said the main door to the apartment was, though, I couldn't find—I went up and down the same set of streets; I squeezed past the same sidewalk cafés and tour guide stands. The alley wasn't where it should have been.

I widened my search, walking bigger boxes-within-boxes.

The streets re-straightened. Tourist spillage shrank. Locals strode into grocery stores and pharmacies, out of banks and boutiques. They plodded up to their apartments above storefronts. I paused at the open door to a butcher shop, where men and women waited in ordinary boredom. An old man paid for a package of hog guts, and a young

woman motioned for a bigger hunk of pork, and a little boy kicked another little boy in the butt.

I didn't want to, but I started to double back to the Square. At a corner that I thought I'd recognize, but didn't, I stopped. I stood through several cycles of traffic lights. Citizens coursed by on foot, not speaking, and in cars and on scooters, not honking. I shifted my bag to my other shoulder.

More people passed, their faces firm.

I didn't know what to say to myself: I was afraid.

A fashionable old woman came to a stop in front of me. She glared. I glared back. She looked like the sort of old woman who completed every task on her own, who maintained her solidity through an unreflective commitment to routine. My being there had bent that routine.

She spoke Czech. Her voice was loud and wet.

I told her, in Czech, that I didn't speak Czech, did she speak English?

The light changed again. She snatched my arm and made me help her cross the street, scolding me, shaming me, and at the opposite corner she tried to tug me off-course, her way. I blushed. When I wriggled my arm free, she raised her voice.

People slowed to watch.

She poked me in the chest, yelling now. Her hands had a pickled stink.

A young mother carrying a kid in a body-sling intervened. The two spoke. The kid squirmed to get a look at my face. He was mustached in snot.

The young mother squinted at me and said something.

I asked her if she spoke English.

"She is saying you are a relative," she said.

"I'm not."

"You look as if you are from here."

"I'm not."

"I am seeing that."

They turned their backs on me together.

For a moment, I didn't move or speak. I couldn't. My fear had peeled away to panic. All of my reasons for being in Prague went bad at once. This was a separate country, a separate people. These were Czechs building Czech lives in a Czech city, thinking and feeling Czech. They themselves were their own reasons for where they were.

A man slammed my bag as he walked by.

The panic crumbled. My mouth was dry, my face was sweaty.

I wandered back the way I'd come.

Near the Square I found the alley I'd been looking for, the entrance shadowed by a busted archway. It could've been a path to a private courtyard. I'd passed it I didn't know how many times. The alley ran straight to my uncle's three-story apartment building, which stood with a sullen pride, shoulder-to-shoulder with its more dignified neighbors. It was wall-like. No first-floor windows, a door that looked like it'd been installed that day. I double-checked the address. The key fit the lock when I jammed and wrenched it. I walked through the lobby and took noisy stairs to the third floor, every step a wincing creak.

The apartment stank a little, a kind of pesticidal sweat worked into the living room, the kitchen, the bedroom. The bed was a full, its sheets coarse to the touch. When I sat on the living room couch the cushions gave out a muffled toot. I slumped. My body deadened, going heavy, and at the same time, my head loosened, going light. It wasn't even noon. I stood up, just to stand up.

That was when a window in me broke.

What broke it came through it: a very bad feeling.

I sat down. The very bad feeling sat down too.

I decided not to think about it.

### Stanley Thinks About It

The very bad feeling hadn't been hurled through the window in me by the made-up man or the fashionable old woman. It wasn't the work of panic. It had no connection to jet lag or culture shock, or to recent sleeplessness, or to an old grade of anger that was being hammered into guilt and buffed into dread. It didn't originate in any of the members of

my family. It wasn't T—it wasn't anything I hadn't already thought about T, felt about T, and done or not done to T. I put my hands on top of my head. I didn't know what it was.

### Stanley Knows What It Was

It was a space at the center of myself that wasn't me.

### Stanley Tries to Feel the Space at the Center of Himself That Isn't Him

The space at the center of myself that wasn't me had shoved whatever it was that should have been there—my actual center, a central me—flat up against the outlines of myself. I could smell my own stupid breath. The space took up space it had no claim to. It was impenetrable. I couldn't understand it: it was in me, but not me.

I lay on the couch, dizzied. My borders began to warp. Memories of awful things I'd felt as a kid came crowding back:

Me stomping barefoot on a dead baby bird on accident. Me slugging a best friend in the face on purpose.

Me hearing my dad trip down the basement stairs, thumping and slapping and shouting hate.

Me seeing my mom raise the chair she'd been sitting on as if to smash it, only to lower it, sit again, and smile.

Me helping Busia from the living room couch to her walker so incorrectly that she slapped me in the throat.

Me and my brother hiding in the bathroom while my brother explained with a calm that I despised how our parents weren't divorcing but weren't planning on spending time together anymore, and although they'd say separately that it wasn't our fault, he knew, for reasons he'd made a list of, that we were to blame.

"Look," he'd said, pressing the list into my hand. Downstairs our dad yelled, sounding armed, and our mom laughed, sounding armored. They took their act from the kitchen to the living room, from the living room to the dining room, from the dining room to the kitchen. Whoever veered out of character first, lost.

Our dad kicked the stove and hollered.

Our mom clapped out ovations.

My brother said, "Read the list!"

He was at the end of junior high and I was at the end of elementary school. He didn't hide his crying, or couldn't.

I took the matches off the toilet tank and I burned the list in the sink.

My brother didn't smack me—I didn't know it at the time, but he never would again. He put his hand on my shoulder like we were in a movie and we'd made it to the end. He felt better, I saw, and from behind that feeling, he couldn't see that I felt worse. The paper flared and crumpled, smoking. We watched it go out on its own. <>

[The Handsome Monk and Other Stories](#) by Tsering Döndrup, translated by Christopher Peacock [Weatherhead Books on Asia, Columbia University Press, 9780231190220]

Tsering Döndrup is one of the most popular and critically acclaimed authors writing in Tibetan today. In a distinct voice rich in black humor and irony, he describes the lives of Tibetans in contemporary China with wit, empathy, and a passionate sense of justice. *The Handsome Monk and Other Stories* brings together short stories from across Tsering Döndrup's career to create a panorama of Tibetan society.

With a love for the sparse yet vivid language of traditional Tibetan life, Tsering Döndrup tells tales of hypocritical lamas, crooked officials, violent conflicts, and loyal yaks. His nomad characters find themselves in scenarios that are at once strange and familiar, satirical yet poignant. The stories are set in the fictional county of Tsezhung, where Tsering Döndrup's characters live their lives against the striking backdrop of Tibet's natural landscape and go about their daily business to the ever-present rhythms of Tibetan religious life. Tsering Döndrup confronts pressing issues: the corruption of religious institutions; the indignities and injustices of Chinese rule; poverty and social ills such as gambling and alcoholism; and the hardships of a minority group struggling to maintain its identity in the face of overwhelming odds. Ranging in style

from playful updates of traditional storytelling techniques to narrative experimentation, Tsering Döndrup's tales pay tribute to the resilience of Tibetan culture.

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**Excerpt: Corrupt Lamas, Reliable Yaks:  
The Fictional World of Tsering Döndrup**  
A monk and a prostitute. Aren't we the perfect match?"

So says the protagonist of "The Handsome Monk" when he finds himself entangled in a relationship hardly appropriate for a man of his occupation. For the wayward monk the match may not be ideal, but as a juxtaposition that captures the unique fictional world contained in these pages, it couldn't be more fitting. This is Tibet, where to this day monastic life remains commonplace and some form of religious devotion is the norm for most. But Tibet is also a place in the real world, where real problems exist and human motivations and failings are as applicable as anywhere else. The stories in this volume bring to life modern Tibet as imagined by the perceptive, critical, and humorous author Tsering Döndrup, a writer who has been a fixture on the Tibetan literary scene since his debut in the 1980s. His is a world where lamas drive expensive cars, where nomads consider committing murder to escape gambling debts, where corruption is rife and happy resolutions are hard to come by. Shangri-La it is not.

Tsering Döndrup's first story appeared in 1983, and to date he has published two collections of

short stories, a collection of novellas, and four full-length novels. He was born in 1961 in Malho (Ch.: Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County in Qinghai province, China. To Tibetans, this broader region is known as Amdo, the easternmost part of the Tibetan-inhabited areas, which now spreads largely across China's northwest provinces of Qinghai and Gansu. As a child, Tsering Döndrup helped his family tend their livestock and didn't begin attending school until the age of thirteen. In 1982 he graduated from the Huangnan Teacher's Training School, and he continued his studies at the Qinghai Nationalities Institute in Xining and the Northwest Nationalities Institute in Lanzhou (both since renamed as "universities"), two of the most prestigious institutions for the study of Tibetan culture. It is virtually impossible for modern Tibetan writers to live off the income from their art alone, and Tsering Döndrup is no exception: he has worked as a schoolteacher, a legal secretary, and an editor at the office of the Henan County Annals. In 2013, however, he retired to focus on his writing full-time, a promising indication that his career shows no signs of slowing down.

While he is widely considered to be a Tibetan author, Tsering Döndrup is, by ethnicity, Mongolian. The author's home county of Malho (also referred to by Tibetans as sogpo, the Tibetan word for "Mongolian") is a historically Mongolian county in a Tibetan region whose inhabitants trace their heritage to the arrival of Gushri Khan in the seventeenth century. Over time, however, its people gradually assimilated into Tibetan culture and adopted the Tibetan language, and today the people of Malho occupy something of an in-between space: ethnically Mongolian, culturally and linguistically Tibetan.<sup>1</sup> Though this intermediate status has reportedly led some to question the extent of Tsering Döndrup's "Tibetanness," the vast majority of Tibetan readers have embraced him as their own, and his reputation as one of modern Tibet's most talented, popular, and critically acclaimed authors is beyond question.

His identity as a Tibetan writer is reflected in his deep engagement with the long and rich traditions of Tibetan literature, which stretch all the way back to the glu and mgur poem-songs found in the caves of Dunhuang. Much premodern Tibetan writing

relates in one form or another to the subject of Buddhism, and it comes in all shapes and sizes. In terms of poetry (and Tibetan belles lettres in general), one text above all looms large, and that is Dandin's *Kāvyaḍarsa* (The Mirror of Poetry). Translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit in the thirteenth century, Dandin's text had an impact that is hard to overstate, setting poetic guidelines for everything from metrics to specific synonyms. Narrative prose also existed (though more often than not it was interspersed with verse of various kinds, making many premodern Tibetan texts rather stylistically eclectic), particularly in the numerous examples of biography and autobiography.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, there is the broad category of folk and oral literature, included in which is the Epic of King Gesar, sometimes said to be the longest epic in the world.

In the present collection, one need only read "A Show to Delight the Masses" to see how Tsering Döndrup has inherited key aspects of this legacy. The story borrows the traditional narrative form of mixed prose and poetry and updates it in a distinctly playful, modern fashion, and its subject matter references at least two kinds of traditional texts. It is a close relative of the genre of *delok* tales, which narrate the experiences of ordinary people who, like the story's protagonist, Lozang Gyatso, take a brief trip to Hell and back (in Lozang Gyatso's case, however, that return is short-lived).<sup>3</sup> The story also recalls a famous episode from The Epic of King Gesar in which the king travels to Hell to rescue his wife, who has been put on trial before the Lord of Death.

But it will be immediately clear to the reader that these are no traditional Tibetan texts. They are composed as modern short stories, and in that sense are perfectly legible to a contemporary global audience. At times, Tsering Döndrup even plays with narrative style in a way that pushes his work into the territory of avant-garde experimentation: "A Formula," for example, leaps through time in a manner disorienting for reader and protagonist alike. A recent study has cautioned us not to see a gulf between Tibet's rich writing traditions and its modern literature, and there is certainly a case to be made for continuity, be it in terms of *kāvya*

poetics or the influence of oral storytelling on modern narrative. But for all the ways the Tibetan literature we now call modern may be building on its past, there are countless more ways it is forging ahead to create new and unexplored possibilities. The introduction of short stories and novels, never before recognized forms in Tibetan literature, is but one example of these revolutionary developments (the eighteenth-century Tale of the Incomparable Prince, a Buddhist-themed retelling of the Ramayana, is somewhat exceptional for having an overtly fictional plot, but it possesses all the traits of an epic and none of the modern novel).

Modern Tibetan literature has also undergone a transformation in content. There are still stories or poems about religion—Buddhism remains an integral part of Tibetan life—but they are likely to be about the practice or the effects of religion in the everyday world; no longer is this literature that we would call explicitly "religious." Moreover, this everyday life is that of Tibetans in modern China, which brings us to an entirely different literary landscape that Tsering Döndrup also inhabits.

The very fact of Tibet's inclusion in the People's Republic of China (PRC) has necessarily produced an enormous shift in its literature, as writing that reflects the experiences of modern Tibetans must now reflect a life colored and conditioned by the experience of existing in contemporary China. In addition, Tibetans now find themselves labeled a "minority nationality"—along with China's fifty-four officially designated others—and their literature therefore also labeled a "minority literature." In terms of production, Tibetan creative writing is entirely integrated into China's state and private literary systems. Tibetan authors publish through journals and publishers organized under Chinese state practices, and likewise, online literature is largely circulated on websites and platforms hosted in China. Unlike the multifaceted heritage of belles lettres described previously, these developments are all recent. It was, by and large, in the political thaw that followed the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) that this new kind of literature began to emerge. Two journals in particular, Tibetan Art and Literature, launched in Lhasa in 1980, and Light Rain, launched in Xining in 1981, helped to foment a virtual explosion of new



Tibetan writing (many of Tsering Döndrup's stories have been published in both over the years).

In 1983, the latter journal published a free-verse poem, often said to be the first of its kind in Tibetan, called "Waterfall of Youth." This freewheeling, impassioned call for a progressive renewal of Tibetan culture to be led by a new generation was a writers and is particularly fond of a number of nineteenth-century Russian authors: Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Goncharov, and Mikhail Lermontov, among others. While foreign literature in translation has been influencing Tibetan writers in new and unexpected ways, Tsering Döndrup's work itself has begun to enter into global conversations, having already been translated into English, French, German, Chinese, Mongolian, Japanese, and other languages. Through these multidirectional engagements, his writing is beginning to find the audiences it merits and helping to create a space for modern Tibetan literature on a global stage from which it has too long been absent.

English-language readers experiencing Tsering Döndrup's stories for the first time will discover a vivid fictional world that repeatedly returns to the same settings, the same themes, the same issues, and sometimes even the same characters. Almost all of the stories take place in the fictional county of Tsezhung, a rural nomad locale that lies along the real-life Tsechu River in his home region of Malho, Qinghai. The author's creation of a consistent setting for his fictional world immediately calls to mind illustrious counterparts such as Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County or, slightly closer to home, Mo Yan's Northeast Gaomi Township, but the reader will never have encountered a setting quite like Tsezhung, a quintessential Tibetan nomadic landscape where small communities of herders shepherd their flocks across vast, open grasslands thousands of feet above sea level. The characters subsist on a diet of staple nomad fare—meat, butter, cheese, tsampa (a doughlike ball of roasted barely flour mixed with other ingredients)—and go about their daily business to the ever-present rhythms of Tibetan religious life.

But the briefest dip into "Brothers" or "Revenge," both of which portray violent feuds between nomad clans, will be enough to show that Tsering

Döndrup hardly presents an idealized or idyllic picture of this striking setting. Tsering Döndrup's fiction is unflaggingly critical, reflective, and above all, satirical. There is also a practical reason for his invention of a fictional county: to insulate himself against the potential for readers to see in his stories reflections of real-life events or people, not entirely unlikely given that the author has lived his entire life in a relatively close-knit community. For example, Alak Drong is a recurring character whose unscrupulous ways will quickly become all too familiar to the reader. In the Amdo dialect of Tibetan, "Alak" is the equivalent of "Rinpoché," a term used in Central Tibet and in exile as a respectful form of address for a senior religious teacher. This could be a lama (a term for various types of Buddhist teacher) or a trülku (a reincarnated lama). "Drong" is the Tibetan word for a wild yak, a particularly fierce and untamable ancestor of Tibet's emblematic animal. This is a comically improbable name for a revered master of the Buddha Dharma, and it was a very conscious choice on Tsering Döndrup's part, as any name that inadvertently resembled that of an actual lama or trülku could have brought down unwanted troubles on the author's head.

Alak Drong is the foremost symbol of Tsering Döndrup's wideranging and unflinching critique of corruption and hypocrisy in the modern-day practice of Tibetan Buddhism. This comes in the form of an excessive alms-giving campaign that reduces an already impoverished community to virtual destitution in "The Disturbance in D—Camp," the protagonist's various naïve misadventures in "Ralo," and the profane hypocrisies of Gendün Gyatso in "The Handsome Monk." But we must also be cautious not to read his work over simplistically as being somehow "antireligious." The last story is a case in point. Like the best of authors, Tsering Döndrup is not didactic but explorative and, while critical, empathetic. "The Handsome Monk" does not condemn its protagonist; rather, it paints a brutally honest picture of the psychological traumas and dilemmas faced by a man who, while he may be a monk, is also a person, complete with the flaws, desires, and contradictions of all human beings. We might even say that "The Handsome Monk" could be read as a

deft fictional rendering of Buddhist philosophical concerns about the insignificance of the mundane world, not unlike a tale about the worldly temptations of a Catholic priest. In general, readers looking for modern-day reflections of Tibetan Buddhist practice in these pages will find them in abundance. "Revenge," for instance, is an exploration of karmic cause and effect executed with a conciseness and poignancy that is particular to the short story form. Unlike the great corpus of Tibetan literature that precedes his work, however, Tsering Döndrup's fiction does not advocate any particular solution to the problems he poses; we are not told that the cycle of samsaric suffering can only end through Buddhist practice leading to liberation. Perhaps the answer does lie in the cultivation of compassion and merit, or in very real-world laws and policies, or both: his stories, tantalizingly ambiguous, give readers room to consider these problems for themselves.

Religious figures are by no means the only target of the author's satire. Again and again we witness the corruption of insatiable officials in a socialist system whose *raison d'être* is supposedly to "serve the people"—the very people they end up exploiting. These are officials of the Chinese government bureaucracy, but more often than not they are corrupt and callous Tibetan cadres, such as the farcically devious Lozang Gyatso in "A Show to Delight the Masses," the red-haired woman in "Black Fox Valley," and the unnamed narrator of "Notes of a Volunteer AIDS Worker." In fact, virtually no one emerges unscathed from the author's barbed pen, bar the ever-reliable yak. In "Ralo," we are even treated to a skewering of naïve Western tourists with their romantic preconceptions of an untainted Tibetan "pure land." Beyond his critiques of individual and institutional failings, Tsering Döndrup is often at his best when examining the social consequences that China's unchecked drive to modernization has brought to the Tibetan highlands: gambling, prostitution, and alcoholism are just some of the social ills in "Mahjong," "Nose Rings," "The Handsome Monk," and "Notes of a Volunteer AIDS Worker" (gambling also brings with it a dimension of ethnic politics, as it most often comes in the form of an addiction to the Chinese game of mahjong). But no

matter what the context, Tsering Döndrup is above all concerned with the hardships faced by ordinary Tibetans in a world that is both rapidly changing and yet somehow immutable. With knowledge acquired through a lifetime of firsthand experience, he presents his nomad characters in countless guises: hardworking, lazy, clever, gullible, strong, vulnerable—but never idealized and never demonized.

The setting for Tsering Döndrup's fiction also plays a role that goes beyond mere backdrop. The author has exhibited a consistent concern with environmental issues, and in the case of Tibet—home to numerous endangered species and a vast repository of fresh water resources (many of Asia's largest rivers originate on the Tibetan plateau)—these are problems with global repercussions. In recent decades Tibetan Buddhism has become closely aligned in many quarters with environmental awareness and activism, but Tsering Döndrup's approach to the question as a writer is perhaps more resonant with the global environmental justice movement, particularly in his concern for the traditional relationship between people and land (in that sense, not unlike the way many Native American groups have been prominent in environmental justice efforts in the United States).

In Tsering Döndrup's fiction, the degradation of Tibet's environment goes hand in hand with the decline of traditional nomad life brought about by industrialization and China's rapid charge to modernity. "The Story of the Moon," a dystopias sci-fi vignette, casts a pessimistic eye over the consequences of humanity embracing reckless technological development as its guiding ethos. "Black Fox Valley," meanwhile, shows this process on a much more human scale. The story opens with a description of the Edenic valley, filled with an abundance of natural riches that even "an expert in botany would be hard pressed to identify." When Sangyé's family leaves Black Fox Valley, they become mired in the realities of modern industrial and consumer life, every example of which turns out to be a pale and impractical imitation of their tried-and-tested traditional ways. Finally, they give up on this new world and return home only to discover, in a tragic inversion of the story's

introduction, that the idyllic valley has been turned into one giant coal mine (rampant strip mining is one of the gravest threats to Tibet's pastoral lands). Tsering Döndrup's story illustrates that Tibetan nomads, who have lived in harmony with their environment for centuries, have a lot more to tell us about modernity than we might think... <>

[Mass Communication: Living in a Media World, Seventh edition](#) by Ralph E. Hanson [SAGE Publications, 9781544332345]

A book that students find fun to read and instructors consider educationally valuable, [Mass Communication: Living in a Media World](#) provides the media literacy principles and critical thinking skills that students need to become self-aware media consumers. Known for his storytelling approach, bestselling author Ralph E. Hanson uses examples drawn from everyday life to explain the many dimensions of mass media that operate in our society. This newly revised Seventh Edition is packed with contemporary examples and compelling stories that illustrate the latest developments and recent events that are changing the face of media today.

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Excerpt: Many of the defining moments of our lives come from our shared experiences with the media. It could be witnessing mass shootings through social media coverage, experiencing the thrill of the World Cup competition viewed streaming on the Internet, going to the latest Marvel Cinematic Universe movie as the backdrop to a first date, or hearing "that" song from the summer you turned sixteen. For my generation, it was the Moon walk. Parents all across the United States let their nine-year-olds stay up way past their bedtimes to watch on television the biggest show of their lives Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon. On September 11, 2001, my eldest son and his fellow fifth-grade classmates sat mesmerized by news coverage of the airplanes crashing into the World Trade Center Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and a field in southwestern Pennsylvania. Some parents questioned whether their children ought to have watched these events, but my son said, "We begged the teacher to keep the TV on. We had to know." As I write this, my former fifth-grader has his master's degree and has lived in Canada, Europe, and Asia with a global perspective brought on in part by that fateful day in 2001. In the fall of 2019, I will have incoming freshman students for whom 9/11 is something that happened before they were born. It will simply be a thing that has always been. Now their top media memory might be watching Hannah Montana (Miley Cyrus, was that really you?), Pixar's Finding Nemo, or listening

to Michael Jackson songs on the radio with their parents.

Then there are the myriad trivial aspects of everyday life that come from our time with the media: finding the perfect little brunch café through restaurant review site Yelp, watching the rapper Drake play Fortnite on a Twitch stream, or arguing on social media as to who should be the top pick in your fantasy football league.

The media world we inhabit is constantly changing, as is our relationship with the media. In my first job as a college professor, I taught a course in media effects. On the first day of class, a student raised his hand and asked, "When do we get to the part where we talk about how television turns people into zombies?" His question has stayed with me through the years because it represents the view many people have about the media. The student's attitude had been fostered by media critics with an agenda—getting elected to office, getting a regulation approved, promoting a product, or even pushing a moral choice. I have long taken the view that the successful study of mass communication is also a journey of self-awareness. We are students of media and also players in a media world.

### Approach of the Book

A study conducted by eMarketer in 2017 shows that people spend an average of more than twelve hours a day interacting with mass media of one form or another. Time-wise, the biggest medium is television, but in terms of growth, it's online media—much of it mobile. Much of this time is also multitasking, interacting with your phone while watching TV, for example. That's how people squeeze in that much time with the media.

[Mass Communication: Living in a Media World](#) views the media in our world not as isolated institutions that somehow "do something" to us, but rather as forces that are central to how we live, work, and play. The media are not outside influences; they are part of who we are. From mobile media devices to streaming video, the pervasiveness of mass communication in our daily lives complicates our ability to understand the media's rich history of technical, cultural, sociological, political, economic, and artistic achievements. [Mass Communication](#) reveals the

forces that drive the industry, while at the same time motivating readers to think critically about how they consume media. It uses compelling stories and examples drawn from everyday life. Readers are encouraged to consider the media industry from the inside out and, in so doing, to explore the many dimensions of mass communication that operate in our society.

My students over the years have told me that they remember information better if it is presented as a story, and so I strive to be a storyteller. Some of these stories are unpleasant and ugly. But that doesn't mean we don't need to tell them. The narrative style of this book will help motivate students to do the reading and facilitate their recall of the material. Many of the Test Your Media Literacy exercises are based on writing assignments I've used in classroom settings, as well as in more writing-intensive online sections. These exercises connect the material from the book to the media that students use every day, and students say that these assignments make them really think about how they experience the media.

### Organization

The book is organized into five parts, each examining critical dimensions that comprise the world of mass communication. Part I: Introduction to the Media presents the institutions, social effects, and business workings of the media in order to lay the foundation for understanding mass communication. Part II: Written Media explores the development of mass literacy and mass communication and what has traditionally been the paper-oriented print media, including newspapers, books, and magazines. But these media are now increasingly delivered in digital form as well. Part III: Electronic Media covers the media of sound and motion, from radio and music to movies, television, and online. Part IV: Strategic Communication delves into the advertising and public relations industries. Part V: Regulation and Control of the Media looks at the institutions, conventions, and rules that regulate and control the media in the United States and around the world, critiques normative theories of the press in various countries, and looks at how the media operate around the globe.

Most of the chapters about the individual print or electronic media (Parts II and III) are organized around the same basic structure. Following an opening vignette come four major sections:

How the medium developed along with major changes in society and culture.

- More than just a history of the medium, this section considers how societal, cultural, and technological elements came together to create the medium we have today.
- How the medium operates within the business and social world. This section looks at why the medium behaves the way it does within our economy.
- Current issues and controversies between the medium and society. These often include issues involving media effects, such as the concern about the importance of seeing people like yourself portrayed in the media.
- The future of the medium, including the effects mobile technology and the long tail have had on it.

### New to the Seventh Edition

The media world of 2019 is very different from that of 2015 or 2010, and it's unimaginably different from the year 2000 and the change of the millennium. "Fake news" used to refer to late-night satirical comedy from Saturday Night Live or The Daily Show. Now it's an attack on the news media or a description of deceptive social media propaganda efforts. Powerful men showing up unexpectedly in the news used to mean they had completed some big business deal or died. Now it often means they have been accused of sexual misconduct. Talk about hip-hop used to be talk about BET videos. Now it's a discussion of the Broadway hit show Hamilton or the Pulitzer Prize-winning album DAMN. from Kendrick Lamar.

In the sixth edition of Mass Communication I offered a strengthened focus on critical/cultural theory. With this seventh edition, I've tried to build on this with the importance of representation, inclusion, and diversity with an emphasis on whose voices get heard. Your author is a firm believer that everything can be explained by the hip-hop

musical Hamilton. In this case, the line comes at the end from President George Washington, who asks the musical question, "Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?" In the Oscar-winning animated musical Coco, the characters who are dead live on in the afterlife as long as there is someone to tell their story. But when no one remembers their story, who they are, on el Día de Muertos (the Day of the Dead), the dead truly die. It is almost exactly 214 years after the death of founding father and treasury secretary Alexander Hamilton as I write this preface. And the reason that no one questions why I would bring him up is that Ron Chernow wrote a brilliant biography of Hamilton that Lin-Manuel Miranda used as the basis for a musical. Hamilton, his nemesis Aaron Burr, his wife Eliza, and his sister-in-law Angelica live on for us because we tell their stories.

In 2017 and 2018, we started hearing the stories of women who had suffered harassment and abuse by powerful men in Hollywood. We heard the story of people who grew up in poor African American neighborhoods through voices such as Ryan Coogler, writer and director of the hit superhero movie Black Panther. While the hero King T'Challa is a man of royal privilege, our somewhat sympathetic villain is Erik Killmonger, who grew up in the housing projects of Oakland, California. The point here is that what we talk about in our media matters a lot. The stories we talk about are the stories that get told.

**Updated Media Transformations Boxes.** These boxes use text and images to help students understand the rapid rate of media changes over recent decades. Each Media Transformations feature includes text telling the story of one specific transformation such as how consumers pick news sources that match their ideology, how the movement from stone tablets to paper to electronic documents has transformed the world, how independent musicians are making a living in the era of streaming music and file sharing, and how video games have been transformed from something you play with a friend to something you watch being played by celebrities. New for this edition, each story is accompanied by an online animation that depicts the transformation.

**New Chapter-Opening Vignette.** Fourteen of the chapters feature brand-new stories about key figures and issues in the media to provide a powerful narrative thread exemplifying the major themes of each chapter. These vignettes convey the excitement and relevance of media studies and critical enquiry by way of those whose lives have been profoundly affected by the media. New vignettes include the problem of consumer brands depending on erratic young YouTube stars like Logan Paul as endorsers; Keah Brown's social media hashtag campaign #DisabledAndCute; the #MeToo movement that brought down movie mogul Harvey Weinstein; and how journalist Marie Colvin was murdered by the Syrian military to stop her from reporting on that country's civil war.

**Review Questions.** The central concepts that were listed at the end of each chapter have been converted to review questions. These questions will encourage students to apply critical thinking skills to examples of mass communication from literature and popular culture.

**Updated Chapters.** Each chapter has been thoroughly updated to include new developments, new scholarship, and recent events in mass communication. Highlights of the revisions include the following:

- Chapter 1, *Living in a Media World*, kicks off our discussion of the concept of fake news with a new vignette that tracks the concept from England of the 1720s to the present day. The chapter also starts off the edition-long discussion of issues of representation and diversity by looking at the hit movie *Wonder Woman*.
- Chapter 2, *Mass Communication Effects*, opens with a new vignette on how the press covered (and didn't cover) sexual harassment and abuse in the media industry. This is part of the seventh edition's look at the role of diversity and inclusion in our media industry. The chapter also makes use of examples from John Williams's career as our most famous film composer and of Omarosa Manigault Newman's move from reality TV star to government official and back to reality TV

star. Finally, there's a new media literacy box that lets students see how the communication theories we use help shape the results we find.

- Chapter 3, *The Media Business*, begins with an in-depth look at Mark Zuckerberg and his company Facebook. The opening vignette looks at Facebook not only for its possible role in shaping the 2016 election but also as one of our most wide-reaching media. A second major theme for this chapter is how multiple companies are scrambling to buy up the most valuable parts of their competitors. Finally, as a more lighthearted, but still contentious, bit of media business, we look at how various people and organizations argue over the people and events that Google chooses to honor with its homepage "Doodles."
- Chapter 4, *Books*, considers the role that young adult novels play in our culture by looking at how author John Green, who wrote *The Fault in Our Stars* and *Turtles All the Way Down*, has brought attention to the problems of mental illness. Along with being a best-selling author, Green has partnered with his brother to create a popular teen-oriented video blog. The chapter also considers Mass Communication's tradition of taking a deep dive into how textbooks are created and sold. A third major area for this edition's coverage of books is a much expanded look at the role of libraries throughout history.
- Chapter 5, *Magazines*, looks at how a short story by a young author went viral after being published in the *New Yorker*. This was one of the first times a new short story had captured the attention of social media. The chapter also looks at a couple of ways that social media have shaped our perceptions and acceptance of two seemingly unconventional magazine fashion models.
- Chapter 6, *Newspapers and the News*, takes a fresh look at how the news media did (and did not) cover the Flint, Michigan, water crisis, and considers the role of local

media in breaking important national stories. A major theme of this chapter is how both journalists and news consumers deal with the issue of bias in the news. One approach is by looking at what NYU professor Jay Rosen calls "The View From Nowhere" and how it affects news coverage of controversial issues. A second is with a new Media Transformations feature that lets students evaluate the quality of the sources they turn to for the news.

- Chapters 7 and 8, Audio and Movies, give the biggest look at hip-hop we've had in this book, considering two prize-winning examples: Rapper Kendrick Lamar, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his album DAMN. as well as serving as the music consultant for the hit movie Black Panther; and Lin-Manuel Miranda, whose hip-hop musical Hamilton brought attention to both "the \$10 founding father" and hip-hop as part of a Broadway musical. Chapter 8 also takes a look at the reasons behind the success of faith-based movie I Can Only Imagine.
- Chapter 9, Television, looks at the business side of the medium along with the cultural and technical aspects by taking a deep dive into the Sinclair Broadcast Group, the biggest owner of local TV broadcast stations in the United States. The chapter also considers the impact of streaming video by individuals and corporations in a way that brings up five of the Seven Secrets About the Media "They" Don't Want You to Know.
- Chapter 10, Online Media, continues this edition's examination of diversity and inclusion by looking at journalist Keah Brown's #DisabledAndCute hashtag campaign. It also looks at President Trump's unprecedented use of social media to take his message directly to voters, as well as the controversy over the Russians' involvement in social media hacking of the 2016 presidential election.
- Chapter 11, Advertising, considers the rewards and risks of brands putting their

reputations in the hands of young YouTube and Instagram stars who may be better at knowing what will attract attention than whether it is a good kind of attention. Actually, it's not just young social media folks—there's also a look at how entrepreneur Elon Musk used his SpaceX rocket launch business to generate attention for his electric car business.

- Chapter 12, Public Relations, speaking of irresponsible social media use's influence on major brands, discusses how Procter & Gamble's Tide laundry detergent has had to build a communication strategy to deal with young people posting videos of themselves biting into liquid laundry packs. The chapter also looks at how Coca-Cola used integrated marketing communication to promote its new "Coke machine of the future."
- Chapter 13, Media Law, begins with a vignette about a group of Kansas high school journalists who discovered what their school district had not found—that their new principal was claiming teaching and education credentials she didn't have. The students were able to report and write these stories because they were protected by a Kansas state law that protected their student free speech/free press rights. There's also an in-depth look at the changes that have taken place in net neutrality.
- Chapter 14, Media Ethics, opens up with a look at the difficult issue of how news organizations deal with reporting the vulgar and offensive things presidents have said, ranging from legendarily crude Lyndon Johnson to President Donald Trump. Both Chapters 14 and 15 (on Global Media) deal with the challenges journalists face trying to cover dangerous situations ranging from local journalist Ryan Kelly shooting photos of a white nationalist riot in Charlottesville, Virginia, to Marie Colvin's death while covering the civil war in Syria.

## Returning Favorites

While some of the book's new features were described above, the seventh edition contains many returning features and coverage that have been updated to enhance and improve upon the existing content.

In the sixth edition, it became clear that it was time to update the Seven Secrets to better match our changing media world. These updated secrets all deal with what the media are, who controls the media, how media content is selected, why the media behave the way they do, and how society and the media interact with each other. The Seven Secrets are as follows:

- SECRET 1 The media are essential components of our lives.
- SECRET 2 There are no mainstream media.
- SECRET 3 Everything from the margin moves to the center.
- SECRET 4 Nothing's new: Everything that happened in the past will happen again.
- SECRET 5 All media are social.
- SECRET 6 Online media are mobile media.
- SECRET 7 There is no "they."

The secrets are presented in depth in the last section of Chapter 1, and they recur, when relevant, in the subsequent chapters to remind students of these concepts and also to serve as a springboard for discussions or writing assignments. These important principles of media literacy are highlighted to call attention to where the Seven Secrets appear throughout the chapters, reminding readers to be attentive and thoughtful.

**Mobile Media.** This edition continues to emphasize the dominant role mobile media are playing in how we consume both legacy and new types of media. More than two-thirds of all Americans go online with mobile devices like smartphones or tablets. Many online sites are finding they have more mobile traffic than connections from traditional computers. And mobile media have moved us from the need-to-connect of dial-up service, to the always-on of broadband, to the access-everywhere of mobile Internet.

**Social Media.** These channels for interaction are used not only on their own but as a tool for existing media to connect with their audiences. With Secret

5: All media are social, we are also reminded that there has always been a social element of media use, long before we had online social media. We look at how media recall is enhanced by social interaction, how being able to discuss issues anonymously changes the rhetoric (and usually not for the better), and how marketers depend on their best customers for social promotion. The roles of social media and interaction are integrated throughout the book.

**Chapter Objectives.** Learning objectives appear at the start of each chapter and call out key topics for close, focused reading. Students can refer back to them for study guidance as well.

**Test Your Media Literacy Boxes.** There's no better way to cultivate critical media consumers than by modeling critical thinking. These boxes present students with current research, interviews, and issues relating to the practice of mass communication, and ask questions that challenge students to evaluate and analyze the story being told. The readings are engaging and fun, but more important, the questions get students to do more than summarize what they've read—they encourage them to think.

**Test Your Visual Media Literacy Boxes.** These boxes showcase images—sometimes controversial, sometimes disturbing—from various media to seek instinctive reactions from students before providing context and questions that encourage critical assessment of how we see and interpret images, and what more may be behind them. Both media literacy boxes are supplemented with up-to-the-minute additions and further related information through my blog at <http://ralpheyhanson.com>.

**Questioning the Media Feature.** This marginal feature poses critical-thinking questions that address current media issues and encourage students to consider how they use and consume media and develop their own opinions.

**Chapter Summary.** Each chapter concludes with a brief recap of important points to assist students in reviewing key themes, events, and concepts.

**Key Terms.** A list of key terms—with page references—appears at the end of each chapter to make the terms easy to locate.



### Living in a Media World's Social Media

Located at <http://ralpkehanson.com>, my blog Living in a Media World covers the entire mass communication field and has been linked to by national websites, including FishbowlDC, Wonkette, Gawker, Eat the Press, and USA Today's On Deadline. One of the blog's biggest benefits to you is that it provides a single destination for up-to-date material on the topics covered in this book. It also provides links to current multimedia features created by media outlets across the country. Think of it as a clearinghouse for current media news and features. You may find examples of new assignments or early versions of new book features on the blog as well.

The Living in a Media World blog has now been joined by several other social media feeds. You can follow me on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/ralpkehanson>) for daily links to media news and whatever else I'm reading. I try to tag my tweets that tie most closely to this book with the hashtag #liamw (for Living In A Media World), as occasionally do other teachers and students. (Expect links to Web comics, motorcycle news, and whatever I am reading to make an appearances as well.) I also have a Tumblr (<http://ralpkehanson.tumblr.com>) that will feature a lot of great video clips that work well as a pre-class feature, along with photos and other images I've found online or created myself. Typical content includes music clips, viral videos, memes, and commentary on geek culture. The Tumblr tends to be a bit less focused than the blog and sometimes includes photos I've taken. Finally, this book has a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/livingina mediaworld>) where you can share materials and find links to what I've been posting about on the blog and on Tumblr. <>

Issues in Media: Selections from CQ Researcher Fourth Edition, Revised [SAGE Publications, 9781544350530]

What is the future of television? Do social media and big data threaten privacy rights? Do children have too much access to violent media content? Is reporting on global conflict worth the risk? These questions—and many more—are at the heart of today's media landscape.

Written by award-winning CQ Researcher journalists, this collection of non-partisan reports focuses on fifteen hot-button issues impacting the media. With reports ranging from the fight over net neutrality to social media and politics, Issues in Media promotes in-depth discussion, facilitates further research, and helps readers formulate their own positions on crucial issues. And because it's CQ Researcher, the reports are expertly researched and written, presenting readers with all sides of an issue.

### Key Features:

- Chapters follow a consistent organization, beginning with a summary of the issue, then exploring a number of key questions around the issue, next offering background to put the issue into current context, and concluding with a look ahead.
- A pro/con debate box in every chapter offer readers the opportunity to critically analyze and discuss the issues by exploring a debate between two experts in the field.
- All issues include a chronology, a bibliography, photos, charts, and figures to offer readers a more complete picture of the issue at hand.

### Annotated Table of Contents PRIVACY AND THE INTERNET

- Nearly 2 billion consumer records were stolen or accidentally exposed in the United States last year, including personal data on nearly half the U.S. population held by the Equifax credit agency. The data breaches raise questions about whether consumers' information can be protected. Privacy advocates want lawmakers to adopt rules similar to those in Europe, which require consumer consent before companies can use or share data. Congress is considering bills that would penalize companies that conceal breaches and would educate consumers on how to better safeguard their data. But little action is expected because

of disagreements over how much regulation is needed. Many Republicans warn that excessive regulation could harm online commerce, while most Democrats want greater business accountability. Technological developments make it more difficult to protect online privacy, while the rapid expansion of the Internet of Things — in which consumer devices are connected to the internet and sometimes each other — makes hacking easier and could lead to the surveillance of unwitting consumers.

#### THE FIGHT OVER NET NEUTRALITY

- Advocates of an unfettered internet are fighting to restore Obama era regulations requiring Comcast, Verizon, AT&T and other internet service providers (ISPs) to treat all internet traffic equally in terms of speed, access and cost. The so-called net neutrality rules, instituted in 2015 when Democrats controlled the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), were repealed in December 2017 after Republicans regained control of the agency. The FCC is led by former telecommunications lawyer Ajit Pai, a free-market champion of deregulation who has criticized the net neutrality rules as burdensome and unnecessary. More than 20 states are suing to preserve net neutrality, arguing that federal regulations are needed to keep the large ISPs from becoming too powerful. But defenders of the FCC vote say net neutrality harms the ability of the ISPs to improve their networks and ultimately hurts consumers and businesses. The European Union, meanwhile, has passed laws protecting net neutrality and labeled equal access to the internet a basic right.

#### DIVERSITY IN HOLLYWOOD

- Charges of gender and racial bias and sexual stereotyping continue to plague the film and broadcast entertainment industries despite decades of complaints from women, minorities and civil rights advocates. White males still dominate virtually all aspects of the business, from writers, directors and producers to actors starring in leading roles. But the movie industry may have reached a tipping point this year following a controversy over the Academy Awards nominations for best actor and actress: For the second consecutive year, all the nominees were white. Television, meanwhile, is becoming somewhat more inclusive than movies, as are emerging internet-based shows. Still, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is investigating claims of bias against female directors, and many minorities remain unpersuaded by recent Hollywood diversity initiatives. Skeptics say significant industry change is unlikely, especially in the high-cost, high-risk movie business, where box-office favorites rather than untested newcomers typically determine which films receive financing.

#### TECHNOLOGY ADDICTION

- Some addiction specialists contend that the overuse of video games, social media or other online technology can affect the brain in the same way drug or alcohol dependency does. But other experts question whether an obsessive use of technology meets the clinical definition of addiction. They argue that overuse of technology typically stems from an underlying condition, such as anxiety, depression or attention deficit disorder. Some industry insiders say technology companies such as Facebook design their products to be addictive, which

company executives deny. Child advocates and some politicians want the government to do more to address the potential harm of technology overuse, and countries such as South Korea and China have established government-sponsored treatment centers for teens and young adults considered tech-addicted. The American Psychiatric Association has not linked technology overuse with standard medical definitions of addiction but says internet gaming needs further study. The National Institutes of Health, meanwhile, is funding a study on whether online gaming is addictive.

#### TRUST IN MEDIA

- Journalism is facing a credibility crisis. Declining faith in government and other institutions and a decades-long assault by conservatives have hurt mainstream news outlets. And President Trump has called journalists "the enemy of the American people." Recent incidents involving public figures, including a Montana congressional candidate's alleged assault on a reporter, have underscored the hostility that journalists face. Some traditional media also have suffered from self-inflicted wounds by blurring the lines between news and commentary and ignoring the interests of rural readers to focus on well-off urbanites. Ad revenue and subscriptions at newspapers have plummeted, in part due to the rise of the internet and changing consumer habits. Meanwhile, social media have fostered "echo chambers" in which people seek out news that affirms their beliefs. Journalists and those studying the news business say mainstream outlets must be more transparent about how they do their jobs and

more skillful at explaining events to survive.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA EXPLOSION

- From Facebook to the photo-sharing site Pinterest to virtual adventure games, software that helps people meet, converse, work and compete with others is drawing billions online. The use of social media comes with a price, however. Every photo upload or click of a "like" button deposits users' personal data online, much of which is sold to help businesses target advertising. To some, such data mining endangers long-cherished privacy rights, but social media supporters say it is a small price to pay for the benefits of online socializing. Meanwhile, critics of social media express concern that many members of the digital generation may fail to develop vital communication skills because they prefer virtual contact over face-to-face conversations. But proponents say most people use social media not to avoid others but to stay in touch with them.

#### INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- The internet continues to pummel newspapers, which are losing advertisers to online media and failing to earn enough from their own digital operations to cover operating costs. Internet sites have proliferated, but a handful — led by Google — have corralled the vast majority of visitors and income. Privacy advocates are increasingly concerned about online companies collecting vast amounts of personal information about users. The federal government is attempting to figure out how to thwart cyber attacks by criminals, terrorists and unfriendly nations. The proposed Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA) would allow businesses and government to share cyberthreat information

without violating antitrust and privacy laws, but President Obama has threatened to veto the measure, saying it would violate consumer privacy. Meanwhile, debate rages over how to protect intellectual property in the digital age.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICS

- Social media, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, have become major battlegrounds in this year's elections. Candidates are using the platforms to identify and organize supporters and raise funds. They bypass traditional news media to send their messages unfiltered to the public. They target niche audiences with growing precision, contact hard-to-reach voters, extend their influence as online supporters forward their messages and carry out many campaign tasks at much lower cost than before. The increasing ability of campaign strategists to collect and analyze information about individual voters has raised privacy concerns, and many worry that the social networks' insular nature contributes to political polarization. But social media's low cost, ease of use and wide reach also raise hopes that they can level the campaign spending playing field.

#### INTERNET REGULATION

- Lawmakers are struggling with tough questions about how to regulate digital media and the internet. With digitized versions of feature films and recorded music playable on personal computers and cell phones, the film, television and music industries have repeatedly complained that global "pirates" use cheap, widely available computer technology and the internet to steal their intellectual property and profits. A bill to require internet service providers (ISPs) to

shut down websites suspected of posting or distributing copyrighted material stalled in Congress. Meanwhile, ISPs are fighting government attempts to bar them from discriminating against certain websites. Advocates say such "net neutrality" rules are needed to prevent situations in which, for example, a cable TV-owned ISP that also sells video content might slow the flow of video that customers buy from other companies. But ISPs argue that it wouldn't be in their financial interest to conduct business that way.

#### INTERNET AND MEDIA

- As public reliance on the internet grows, courts and government officials are facing new challenges on how best to regulate access to digital information. In Washington, the Federal Communications Commission has proposed rules that could create a dual system that would allow big companies, such as online retailers, to have faster internet connectivity than most consumers and internet entrepreneurs would enjoy. Civil rights and consumer advocates say such a system would squeeze out small websites and steer profit to big corporations. Meanwhile, critics of a proposed merger between cable giants Comcast and Time Warner Cable argue that the deal would reduce programming choices and raise consumer cable rates. And in June the Supreme Court ruled that Aereo Inc., a small company that grabbed broadcast transmissions from the airwaves and stored them in the cloud for access by consumers using a simple antenna, was violating broadcasters' copyright protections.

#### BIG DATA AND PRIVACY

- Big data — the collection and analysis of enormous amounts of information by supercomputers — is leading to huge advances in such fields as astrophysics, medicine, social science, business and crime fighting. And big data is growing exponentially: According to IBM, 90 percent of the world's data has been generated within just the past two years. But the use of big data — including tweets, Facebook images and email addresses — is controversial because of its potential to erode individual privacy, especially by governments conducting surveillance operations and companies marketing products. Some civil liberties advocates want to control the use of big data, and others think companies should pay to use people's online information. But some proponents of big data say the benefits outweigh the risks and that privacy is an outdated concept.

#### MEDIA VIOLENCE

- Recent accounts of mass school shootings and other violence have intensified the debate about whether pervasive violence in movies, television and video games negatively influences young people's behavior. Over the past century, the question has led the entertainment media to voluntarily create viewing guidelines and launch public awareness campaigns to help parents and other consumers make appropriate choices. But lawmakers' attempts to restrict or ban content have been unsuccessful because courts repeatedly have upheld the industry's right to free speech. In the wake of a 2011 Supreme Court ruling that said a direct causal link between media violence — particularly video games — and real violence has

not been proved, the Obama administration has called for more research into the question. Media and video game executives say the cause of mass shootings is multifaceted and cannot be blamed on the entertainment industry, but many researchers and lawmakers say the industry should shoulder some responsibility.

#### DIGITAL JOURNALISM: IS NEWS QUALITY BETTER OR WORSE ONLINE?

- More and more people in the United States and around the world are getting their news online instead of in print or via radio or television — the so-called legacy media. Digital news sites allow news to be continually updated, with few if any of the space or other constraints that apply to print publications or radio and television newscasts. With lower upfront costs, journalism entrepreneurs can start businesses more readily than in the past: Witness the new digital-only news sites just started by high-profile journalists who left prestigious traditional newspaper companies. Yet some observers complain about the increased partisanship seen in digital publications and the increased risk of error with less careful editing than in traditional news media. And the business plans for the new digital sites are works in progress, with uncertain long-term prospects. Meanwhile, traditional news organizations are reinventing themselves to remain relevant and profitable in the digital age.

#### MEDIA BIAS

- An unprecedented number of Americans view the news media as biased and untrustworthy, with both conservatives and liberals complaining that coverage of political races and important public policy issues is often

skewed. Polls show that 80 percent of Americans believe news stories are often influenced by the powerful, and nearly as many say the media tend to favor one side of issues over another. The proliferation of commentary by partisan cable broadcasters, talk-radio hosts and bloggers has blurred the lines between news and opinion in many people's minds, fueling concern that slanted reporting is replacing media objectivity. At the same time, newspapers and broadcasters — and even some partisan groups — have launched aggressive fact-checking efforts aimed at verifying statements by newsmakers and exposing exaggerations or outright lies. Experts question the future of U.S. democracy if American voters cannot agree on what constitutes truth.

#### FREE SPEECH AT RISK

- Governments around the globe have been weakening free-speech protections because of concerns about security or offending religious believers. After a phone-hacking scandal erupted in the British press and Muslims worldwide violently protested images in the Western media of the Prophet Muhammad, European nations enacted new restrictions on hate speech, and Britain is considering limiting press freedom. Autocratic regimes increasingly are jailing journalists and political dissidents or simply buying media companies to use them for propaganda and to negate criticism. Muslim countries are adopting and rigidly enforcing blasphemy laws, some of which carry the death penalty. Meanwhile, some governments are blocking or monitoring social media and cyber traffic, increasing the risk of arrest for those who freely express their

thoughts online and dashing hopes that new technologies would allow unlimited distribution of information and opinion.

Excerpt: What is the future of television? Do social media and big data threaten privacy rights? Do children have too much access to violent media content? Is reporting on global conflict worth the risk? These questions — and many more — are at the heart of today's media landscape. How can instructors best engage students on these crucial issues? We feel that students need objective, yet provocative, examinations of these issues to understand how they affect citizens today and will for years to come. This collection aims to promote in-depth discussion, facilitate further research, and help readers formulate their own positions on crucial issues. Get your students talking inside and outside the classroom about Issues in Media.

This fourth edition of *Issues in Media* includes fifteen up-to-date reports by CQ Researcher, an award-winning weekly policy brief that brings complicated issues down to earth. Each report chronicles and analyzes the background, current situation and future outlook of a policy issue or societal topic. This collection covers a range of issues found in most mass communication and media literacy courses.

#### CQ Researcher

CQ Researcher was founded in 1923 as *Editorial Research Reports* and was sold primarily to newspapers as a research tool. The magazine was renamed and redesigned in 1991 as CQ Researcher. Today, students are its primary audience. While still used by hundreds of journalists and newspapers, many of which reprint portions of the reports, Researcher's main subscribers are now high school, college and public libraries. In 2002, Researcher won the American Bar Association's coveted Silver Gavel Award for magazine excellence for a series of nine reports on civil liberties and other legal issues.

Researcher writers — all highly experienced journalists — sometimes compare the experience of writing a Researcher report to drafting a college term paper. Indeed, there are many similarities. Each report is as long as many term papers —

about 11,000 words — and is written by one person without any significant outside help. One of the key differences is that the writers interview leading experts, scholars and government officials for each issue.

Like students, the writers begin the creative process by choosing a topic. Working with Researcher's editors, the writer identifies a controversial subject that has important public policy implications. After a topic is selected, the writer embarks on one to two weeks of intense research. Newspaper and magazine articles are clipped or downloaded, books are ordered and information is gathered from a wide variety of sources, including interest groups, universities and the government. Once the writers are well informed, they develop a detailed outline and begin the interview process. Each report requires a minimum of ten to fifteen interviews with academics, officials, lobbyists and people working in the field. Only after all interviews are completed does the writing begin.

### Chapter Format

Each issue of CQ Researcher, and therefore each selection in this book, is structured in the same way. A selection begins with an introductory overview, which is briefly explored in greater detail in the rest of the report.

The second section chronicles the most important and current debates in the field. It is structured around a number of key issues questions, such as "Can traditional television thrive in the Internet Age?" and "Do social networking sites threaten privacy rights?" This section is the core of each selection. The questions raised are often highly controversial and usually the object of much argument among scholars and practitioners. Hence, the answers provided are never conclusive, but rather detail the range of opinion within the field.

Following those issue questions is the "Background" section, which provides a history of the issue being examined. This retrospective includes important legislative and executive actions and court decisions to inform readers on how current policy evolved.

Next, the "Current Situation" section examines important contemporary policy issues, legislation

under consideration and action being taken. Each selection ends with an "Outlook" section that gives a sense of what new regulations, court rulings and possible policy initiatives might be put into place in the next five to ten years.

Each report contains features that augment the main text: sidebars that examine issues related to the topic, a pro/con debate by two outside experts, a chronology of key dates and events and an annotated bibliography that details the major sources used by the writer.

This volume also includes two "Short Reports" (Chapter 7: Internet and Social Media and Chapter 10: Internet and Media) that provide brief coverage of timely media issues paired with a timeline of significant dates and events. <>

[Breaking News: The Remaking of Journalism and Why It Matters Now](#) by Alan Rusbridger [Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 9780374279622]

An urgent account of the revolution that has upended the news business, written by one of the most accomplished journalists of our time. Technology has radically altered the news landscape. Once-powerful newspapers have lost their clout or been purchased by owners with particular agendas. Algorithms select which stories we see. The Internet allows consequential revelations, closely guarded secrets, and dangerous misinformation to spread at the speed of a click.

In *Breaking News*, Alan Rusbridger demonstrates how these decisive shifts have occurred, and what they mean for the future of democracy. In the twenty years he spent editing *The Guardian*, Rusbridger managed the transformation of the progressive British daily into the most visited serious English-language newspaper site in the world. He oversaw an extraordinary run of world-shaking scoops, including the exposure of phone hacking by London tabloids, the Wikileaks release of U.S. diplomatic cables, and later the revelation of Edward Snowden's National Security Agency files. At the same time, Rusbridger helped *The Guardian* become a pioneer in Internet journalism, stressing free access and robust interactions with readers. Here, Rusbridger vividly observes the media's

transformation from close range while also offering a vital assessment of the risks and rewards of practicing journalism in a high-impact, high-stress time.

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Excerpt: By early 2017 the world had woken up to a problem that, with a mixture of impotence, incomprehension and dread, journalists had seen coming for some time. News — the thing that helped people understand their world; that oiled the wheels of society; that pollinated communities; that kept the powerful honest — news was broken.

The problem had many different names and diagnoses. Some thought we were drowning in too much news; others feared we were in danger of becoming newsless. Some believed we had too much free news: others, that paid-for news was leaving behind it a long caravan of ignorance.

No one could agree on one narrative. The old media were lazy and corrupt: and/or the new players were greedy and secretive. We were

newly penned into filter bubbles: rubbish — they had always been there. There was a new democracy of information: bunkum — the mob were now in control. The old elites were dying: read your history — power simply changes shape.

On this most people could agree: we were now up to our necks in a seething, ever churning ocean of information; some of it true, much of it wrong. There was too much false news, not enough reliable news. There might soon be entire communities without news. Or without news they could trust.

There was a swamp of stuff we were learning to call 'fake news'. The recently elected 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, used the term so indiscriminately it rapidly lost any meaning. The best that traditional journalism could offer was — or so he repeatedly told us — fake. We should believe him, not lying journalists.

Truth was fake; fake was true.

And that's when the problem suddenly snapped into focus.

Throughout recent centuries anyone growing up in a western democracy had believed that it was necessary to have facts. Without facts, societies could be extremely dark places. Facts were essential to

informed debates, to progress, to coherence, to justice.

We took it for granted, perhaps, that facts were reasonably easy to obtain; and that, over time, we'd developed pretty effective methods of distinguishing truth from falsehood.

Suddenly it was not so easy to establish, or agree on, truths. The dawning realisation that we were in trouble coincided with the nearcollapse of the broad economic model for journalism. People had — sort of — known that was happening, but in a world of too much news they had stopped noticing.

In a world of too much to absorb, and never enough time, people skipped the story.

And then people started noticing. For a brief period in January 2017 George Orwell's 1984 — 'How do we know two and two make four?' — went to the top of the Amazon bestseller list while



Hannah Arendt's definitive guide to totalitarianism,' written just after the

Second World War, sold out.

'The result of a consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth is not that the lie will now be accepted as truth and truth be defamed as a lie,' Arendt had written in 1951, 'but that the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world — and the category of truth versus falsehood is among the mental means to this end — is being destroyed ...'

Nearly 70 years later many of us may be surprised to be asking the most basic question imaginable: how do you know if something is true or not?

There is just one small example playing out as I was writing this chapter. I could have chosen a thousand such illustrations, but this had most of the components of the unfolding problem.

In February 2017 Donald Trump used a rally in Melbourne, Florida, to draw attention to disturbing events he said were happening in Sweden. 'You look at what's happening in Germany. You look at what's happening last night in Sweden.'

The President of the United States paused for the name to sink in and then repeated it.

'Sweden.'

'Who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers and they're having problems like they never thought possible.'

Sweden was puzzled. The country, like others in Europe, was not without its tensions after the recent wave of migration from North Africa and the Middle East. There had been a widespread — but by no means universal — welcome to the 163,000 asylum seekers who arrived in the country that year.; But, amid a spate of really frightening terror attacks in Europe, it seemed curious to single out Sweden for a stump speech in Florida.

So little of note appeared to have happened in Sweden the previous evening — apart from a national singing competition — that social media regarded the intervention as a bit of a joke.

'Sweden? Terror Attack? What has he been smoking?' former Swedish prime minister Carl Bildt tweeted. There were spoof hashtags — #JeSuisIKEA and #IStandWithSweden — while other users questioned the safety of ABBA.

The following day Trump clarified his Sweden statement. He told his 40 million followers on Twitter that it had been 'in reference to a story that was broadcast on @FoxNews concerning immigrants & Sweden'.

And so began an anatomy of how Donald Trump arrived at his version of the truth. Which, given he was the most powerful man on earth, was quite important to understand.

The previous Friday night's Tucker Carlson Tonight had included an interview with someone we might call a media controversialist,

Ami Horowitz, about a documentary the latter was making about Sweden.

'There was an absolute surge in gun violence and rape in Sweden once they began this open-door policy,' Horowitz had told Carlson.

Who was Ami Horowitz? For 13 years he worked as an investment banker with Lehman Brothers before reinventing himself as a gonzo filmmaker. His website shows him engaged in a series of provocations

('Ami on the loose') where, for instance, he descends on the campus at the University of California, Berkeley, to alternate between waving an American flag and an Isis flag — and gauge the supposed difference

in reaction from students. That, he says, was watched 15 million times across various platforms. In another, he retaliates at Palestinians lobbing stones at an Israeli checkpoint on the West Bank ('It was time to get stupid'). His work — inspired, he says, by Michael Moore — has been called 'docutainment' or 'mockumentaries'.

In 2017 anyone can be a 'journalist' and anyone can transmit their work to a global audience. It helps if a huge mainstream news channel amplifies your work. Horowitz has described Rupert Murdoch's Fox News as 'a partner' ('They've done

a phenomenal job of disseminating the videos and my point of view'), and they duly picked up on a YouTube video he'd published in December 2016 claiming that 'rape and violence has exploded across Sweden due to its [sic] immigration policies'.

Within 15 seconds of the video, an alert viewer would see what kind of an exercise this was. Horowitz lingers on a BBC headline 'Sweden's rape rate under the spotlight'. In fact, that four-year-old, 1,200-word article — pegged to the extradition of WikiLeaks leader Julian Assange, rather than immigration — was a nuanced exploration of whether Sweden's apparently higher rates of rape were mainly down to changes in the way the police record incidents. But that was not how Horowitz used the headline.

Horowitz dealt in outrage, entertainment and provocation. It was central to his Unique Selling Point that he told uncomfortable home truths the despised Mainstream Media (MSM) ignored? He was not a reliable source for the President of the United States. Or anyone else.

Following on from Trump's discovery of Horowitz's work the Swedish paper Aftonbladet analysed his film and found it 'contained many errors and exaggerations'. Another newspaper, Dagens Nyheter, quoted two police officers interviewed by Horowitz as saying that the filmmaker had selectively edited and distorted their comments to prove his thesis. 'We don't stand behind what he says,' said one of them, Anders Goranzon. 'He is a madman.'

But the truth, or otherwise, of the film appears to have been of little concern to Fox, America's most-watched cable network — described as Murdoch's 'profit machine' by Bloomberg. The programme, seen by as many as 2.5 million viewers, gave further exposure and credibility to the video, which had itself had half a million views on social media.

Enter the President of the United States.

It's doubtful that Donald Trump had any idea of who Horowitz was, or whether he had any journalistic credentials. In general, he appears predisposed to believe Fox News tells the truth and that the New York Times tells lies. So — after his stump speech in Florida — the President then

broadcast the existence of Horowitz's gonzo docu-tainment to his 40 million-odd followers on Twitter.

Thus were half-truths blasted around the planet's new global information eco-system.

This horizontal transmission of news — from person to person — is virtually unmappable. But let us suppose that hundreds of millions of people around the world would by now have registered — at some level — this ... germ.

I use the word 'germ' in the absence of another easy label. The exercise Horowitz was engaged in, and which the President and Fox News megaphoned, was not conventional journalism. These were not 'facts'. Deeply buried in some of the assertions in a ten-minute film there may even have been some semi-truths. I will not call the rest 'lies'. The point is that most of the hundreds of millions who will have been touched by the germ will not have registered the detail. They will not have researched the origins of Trump's Swedish intervention or looked into Horowitz's techniques or motivations.

The virus is likely to have lodged itself as little more than a perception, in those ready to believe, that Muslim immigration leads to unspeakable things such as mass rape — and that the West had better wake up. A couple of days after Trump spoke there was some rioting in the northern suburbs of the Swedish capital, Stockholm. No smoke without a fire? But which was the smoke, and which the fire?

The patient analysis and denials of Swedish newspapers counted for little as the virus spread. In the UK the former UKIP" leader (and friend of Donald Trump) Nigel Farage used his radio show on LBC to announce that Malmo, a city in southern Sweden, was now the 'rape capital of Europe and, some argue, perhaps even the rape capital of the world. And there is a Swedish media that just don't report it."

Months later I was browsing through my Twitter feed and saw someone I follow — Godfrey Bloom, a leading UKIP figure and former Member of the European Parliament — retweeting news of a horrific attack on a teenage girl in Malmo. Someone calling himself @PeterSweden7 tweeted

about his 'blood being at boiling point ... While she was being raped the rapists poured lighter fuel in her vagina and set it on fire. MSM is quiet. RETWEET.'

This germ was so graphically specific and shocking that it caused understandable revulsion as it ricocheted around the Internet. On the social media website Reddit there was a bitterly angry thread. The attack was said to be the fourth rape in two months. It was taken as read that the attackers were Muslim immigrants. If you let Muslims into your country — so many commenters raged — what do you expect?

This was war.

But did the incident — with the obscene barbarity alleged by @PeterSweden7 — actually happen? That was a more complicated question and would take more than a day of patient digging to get near any kind of truth.

A 17-year-old girl had undoubtedly been raped that evening in Malmo — and the attack had been widely reported in the press. But @PeterSweden7 was right to say that newspapers had made no mention of lighter fuel being poured into the victim's vagina and set on fire. Was this out of political correctness, or because it hadn't happened?

I tweeted an appeal for help in getting some facts. A couple of Swedish journalists sent me links to reports in the so-called MSM. I tried to read both ... but, in each case, hit a paywall. One wanted me to commit to £9 a month before it would allow me to read the article; the other wanted nearly twice as much.

Chaotic information was free: good information was expensive.

In the horizontal world of twenty-first-century communications — where anyone can publish anything — the germs about rape in Malmo spread indiscriminately and freely. The virus was halfway round the world and the truth had barely even found its boots. Truth — if that's what journalism offered — was living in a gated community.

But the truth mattered. The idea that immigrants would reward a society's compassion by barbarically raping its women could — if true — profoundly shape popular attitudes and political responses to immigration in Sweden and beyond. That was especially true now Donald Trump — and numerous white nationalists and their fellow travellers — were using the country as a prime exhibit of the dangers of open borders.

I did my best, as a non-Swedish speaker, to establish some facts. For a start, who was @PeterSweden7? Many of those exploiting the horrific lighter fuel story belonged to far-right extremist groups around the world.

@PeterSweden7's previous tweets gave some clue to his politics: 'I don't like fascism, but i think hitler had some good points. I am pretty certain that the holocaust actually never happened.' Or another: 'The globalists (mainly Jews) are ones bringing in the Muslims to europe. They seem to work together.' He had 81,000 followers on Twitter, growing at a rate of 10,000 a month.

I contacted @PeterSweden7, who appears in real life to be Peter Imanuelsen, a 22-year-old photographer born in Norway, but possibly living, at least some of the time, in North Yorkshire. He told a website called hopenothate.org.uk that his Holocaust denial was simply a phase brought about by realising that 'mainstream media was lying about everything'. Imanuelsen described this website as 'fake news'. His own website claims to be 'real independent journalism'.

Via Twitter he repeated to me that Swedish media hadn't gone into detail 'on the horrible things the girl suffered'. I asked his source. He replied that 'word has gotten around in Malmo about the details and locals in Malmo have taken to social media to say what happened'.

So, a combination of local rumour and gossip, amplified instantly by horizontal transmission.

He later pointed me to a Facebook posting by a 37-year-old Chicagoeducated researcher, Tino Sanandaji, who is considered to be the most prominent social media critic of Sweden's immigration policies, and also of the established media.

I tracked down Sanandaji. He had, indeed, blogged about the incident to his 76,000 followers. He said he had two sources, 'one citing the police investigation and one friend of the family ... the same rumour was also on social media'. He was 'fairly sure' about his information, and he thought he had a duty to warn girls in the area after three rapes in Malmo in the space of seven weeks.

But here was the rub. Sanandaji claimed that the detail that had caused such revulsion and sent the germ around the world was not in his Facebook posting in its original Swedish, 'underliv' — or so he claimed. He claimed to have written that a source had told him that the victim's 'abdomen' had been sprayed with fuel. By the time it had been picked up and redistributed by a Canadian-based British 'journalist' working for the alt-right website Breitbart, 'abdomen' had become 'vagina'." Whether Sanandaji's finger-pointing at Breitbart was correct; or whether there had been inadequate automatic translation or distortion by Breitbart was difficult to establish. The Breitbart writer declined to comment.

In any event, it was untrue. Within days the police addressed the social media rumours and announced that — while the victim had other minor physical injuries — these did not include burns to the lower abdomen. Within a few weeks police announced they had dropped another rape investigation after the woman admitted the attack had never happened. Investigations into the 'lighter fuel' case were closed a few months later, with the police saying they could not show what actually happened, let alone who the offenders were.

Now, none of this is to minimise the severity of the attack, or attacks. The women of Malmo took to the streets to show how they refused to be intimidated. At the time of writing it was not known if Muslims were behind this, or any other, rape in Malmo. It was very difficult for an ordinary reader to reach a definitive conclusion about whether there was a link between increased immigration and increased rape reports in Sweden — though a painstaking investigation by Dagens Nyheter in May 2018 found no such correlation between them.

But if the facts were elusive, the digital world had transmitted half-truths and lies at a speed and

scale that would have been unimaginable even a decade earlier. The patient work of journalists to take time to discover what actually happened was buried in the avalanche of rumour — and then invisible except to the relatively tiny minority who still cared enough for old-fashioned facts to pay for them.

When challenged about their own role in spreading unchecked information, most of the pollinators seemed unbothered. Godfrey Bloom told me his attitude was the same as all other users of Twitter: 'It is a lavatory wall.'

There were, if you looked hard enough, calm pieces to be found on the subject, some of them involving detailed work with available data. The BBC — freely available to all — investigated Farage's claim about Malmo being 'the rape capital of Europe' and concluded that the high level of reported rape was 'mainly due to the strictness of Swedish laws and how rape is recorded in the country'. The Dagens Nyheter analysis agreed.

Bad information was everywhere: good information was increasingly for smaller elites. It was harder for good information to compete on equal terms with bad.

The more invisible decent journalists became, the easier it was to denigrate their work. They became part of the problem — an out of touch elite. Lamestream media. Fake news. Failing. Lies. They're all the same. Enough of experts. Drain the swamp.

It caught on.

By 2017 the newspaper industry in many parts of the world was a sickly thing. The advertising dollars that, for a century or more, had supported independent journalism were draining away and, in many communities, the local newspaper that once blazed a search beam now cast a flickering torchlight.

The New York Times still shone brightly — and it was the New York Times that the new president targeted: doing his obsessive best to denigrate and damn its reporting as fake. By the end of his first year in office, the new president had himself — in the eyes of dogged scorers — made nearly 2,000

false or misleading statements. He broke through the 3,000 barrier within 466 days, according to the Washington Post — a rate of 6.5 false claims a day. Americans had elected a liar, and now the liar turned his guns on the truth.

Within days of Trump's triumph questions were asked about the role of truth in the election. It transpired that many of the top-performing news stories on social media platforms such as Facebook were fake — generated by hoax sites and hyper-partisan blogs. BuzzFeed reporters identified more than 140 pro-Trump websites being run from a single town in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

The economic model for true news might have been failing, but there were numerous incentives — political and financial — for creating untrue news. Indeed, the market in sensationalist, conspiratorial and alarmist junk seemed to thrive in inverse proportion to the fortunes of the old media houses trying to plod the path of traditional reporting. The new automated distribution channels of social media turbo-charged the power of junk. Even before the election the World Economic Forum had identified the rapid spread of misinformation as one of the top ten perils to society — alongside cybercrime and climate change.

By 2017 social media had existed for barely a decade — a blink of the eye in the sweep of human communication, but long enough for a generation to grow up knowing no other world. Among those who had known another age there developed a kind of panic as they contemplated chaotic information systems that seemed to have emerged from nowhere.

Information chaos was, in itself, frightening enough. What made it truly alarming was that the chaos was enabled, shaped and distributed by a handful of gargantuan corporations, which — in that same blink of an eye — had become arguably the most powerful organisations the world had ever seen.

How did we get here? And how could we get back to where we once it belonged?

For 20 years I edited a newspaper in the throes of this tumultuous revolution. The paper I took over in 1995 was composed of words printed on newsprint

involving technologies that had changed little since Victorian times.

It was, in many ways, a vertically arranged world. We — the organs of information — owned printing presses and, with them, the exclusive power to hand down the news we had gathered. The readers handed up the money — and so did advertisers, who had few other ways of reaching our audience.

To be a journalist in these times was bliss — for us, anyway. I'm afraid we felt a bit superior to those without the same access to information that we enjoyed. It was easy to confuse our privileged access to information with 'authority' or 'expertise'. And when the floodgates opened — and billions of people also gained access to information and could publish themselves — journalism struggled to adjust.

Newspapers began to die in front of our eyes.

Societies may not have loved or admired journalists very much but they seemed to acknowledge that it was vital to have truthful and reliable sources of information. The fundamental importance to any community of reliable, unfettered news was one of the most important Enlightenment values.

It still is — or should be. But the significant money is for the vast majority of news organisations — gone.

We are, for the first time in modern history, facing the prospect of how societies would exist without reliable news — at least as it used to be understood. There has never been more information in the world. We know infinitely more than ever before. There is a new democracy of knowledge that has swept over us so suddenly and so overwhelmingly that it is almost impossible to glimpse, let alone comprehend. Much of it is liberating, energising and transformative. It is a revolution to rival the invention of movable type in the fifteenth century. And much of it is poisonous and dangerous. Some of it — like the Swedish saga — is sort-of-slightly-true enough to be turned into toxic demagoguery.

In the new horizontal world people are no longer so dependent on the 'wisdom' of a few authority

figures. The reach and speed of public connectedness is unbeatable by any media organisation on earth. Journalists, business and politicians are left looking out of touch and flat-footed.

'People in this country have had enough of experts,' said the (former Times of London journalist and Oxford-educated) Conservative politician Michael Gove, shortly before a referendum in which the British people defied expert opinion by voting to leave the European Union. In a way Gove was stating no more than the obvious at the end of an ugly, noisy campaign in which neither verifiable facts nor the opinion of Nobel-prize winning economists seemed any longer to count for much.

Old vertical media derided this new post-factual free-for-all. And, in a way, they were right. But much of the old media was itself biased, hectoring, blinkered and — in its own way — post-factual. Old journalism took it for granted that people would recognise its value — even its necessity. But the denizens of new media found it too easy to pick holes in the processes and fallibilities of 'professional' news.

There were admirable, brave, serious, truthful journalists out there, some of them willing to die for their craft. But the commercial and ownership models of mass communication had also created oceans of rubbish which, in lazy shorthand, was also termed 'journalism'.

The new horizontal forms of digital connection were flawed, but — as with the rise of populist movements in the US and much of Europe — they were sometimes, and in some ways, closer to public opinion than conventional forms of media were capable of seeing, let alone articulating.

We can barely begin to glimpse the implications of this sea change in mass communications. Our language struggles to capture the enormity of what has been happening. 'Social media' is a pallid catch-all phrase which equates in most minds to the ephemeral postings on Twitter and Facebook. But 'social media' is also empowering people who were never heard, creating a new form of politics and turning traditional news corporations inside out.

It is impossible to think of Donald Trump, of Brexit, of Bernie Sanders, of Podemos, of the growth of the far right in Europe, of the spasms of hope and violent despair in the Middle East and North Africa, without thinking also of the total inversion of how news is created, shared and distributed.

Much of it is liberating and inspiring. Some of it is ugly and dark. And something — the centuries-old craft of journalism — is in danger of being lost.

And all this has happened within 20 years — the blink of an eye. This is a problem for journalism, but it is an even bigger problem for society.

The new news that is replacing 'journalism' is barely understood. But it is here to stay and is revolutionising not only systems of information but also the most basic concepts of authority and power.

The transformation precisely coincided with the time I was editing the Guardian.

This book describes what it felt like to be at the eye of this storm. A tornado can turn a house into toothpicks — and there was certainly a violent destructiveness to the forces that were being unleashed all around. But there was also exhilaration. Our generation had been handed the challenge of rethinking almost everything societies had, for centuries, taken for granted about journalism.

I had spent the past 40 years as a journalist and ended my career believing as strongly as ever that reliable, unpolluted information is as necessary to a community as a legal system, an army or a police force. But at the moment of its greatest existential crisis, how much journalism lived up to the crying need for it? And were enough journalists alive to the need to rethink everything they did?

I became editor in 1995 — taking charge of a comparatively small British newspaper. We printed stories on newsprint, produced once a day. By the time I stepped down 20 years later, that world had been turned upside down. By then, just 6 per cent of young (18- to 24-year-old) readers were getting their news from print; 65 per cent were relying on proprietors who took apparently expensive

long-term decisions in order to grapple with a route to the future.

But that was the limit of our cushion. During the narrative of this book, the money very nearly ran out as the post-Lehman crash coincided with an advertising slump and the restructuring of the endowment which, for 75 years, had been there to keep the Guardian going. If the Guardian had taken the same risks as, say, Rupert Murdoch — they included buying MySpace, launching an iPad newspaper and unsuccessfully attempting to paywall the Sun — we would have been comprehensively wiped out. And, of course, our available funds were peanuts compared with the sums speculated to launch the West Coast tech giants who would ultimately pose an existential threat to all legacy news providers.

I have tried to capture the turbulence and challenges. And I have tried — while there is still a fresh collective memory — to describe what a news organisation felt like, and why its institutional quality mattered.

Great reporters are rightly celebrated. But they are — generally — only as good as the institution that supports them. If their reporting genuinely challenges power, they will need organisational courage behind them. They will need sharp-eyed text editors and ingenious lawyers. They may require people with sophisticated technological or security know-how. If they get into trouble they may need immediate logistical, medical, legal, financial or PR back-up. They need wise colleagues who have been in the same situations before. If they are lucky, they will have enlightened and strong commercial leaders to support and protect them; and gifted business minds who can bring in the money — but also observe the boundaries that preserve trust.

I was lucky enough to have worked for an institution that looked like that. In the middle of the turmoil I think we produced some great journalism that truly mattered. This is a record of those times.

The book also sets out the challenge for journalism. Journalists no longer have a near-monopoly on news and the means of distribution. The vertical world is gone forever. Journalists no longer stand

on a platform above their readers. They need to find a new voice. They have to regain trust.

Journalism has to rethink its methods; reconfigure its relationship with the new kaleidoscope of other voices. It has to be more open about what it does and how it does it.

In a sense Donald Trump has done journalism a favour. In his cavalier disregard for truth he has reminded people why societies need to be able to distinguish fact from fiction. At their best, journalists do that job well. They can now harness almost infinite resources to help them.

But, at the same time, we have created the most prodigious capability for spreading lies the world has ever seen. And the economic system for supporting journalism looks dangerously unstable. The stakes for truth have never been higher.

[Topophilia: Place, Narrative, and the Spatial Imagination](#) by Robert T. Tally Jr. [The Spatial Humanities, Indiana University Press, 9780253037701]

What is our place in the world, and how do we inhabit, understand, and represent this place to others? [Topophilia](#) gathers essays by Robert Tally that explore the relationship between space, place, and mapping, on the one hand, and literary criticism, history, and theory on the other. The book provides an introduction to spatial literary studies, exploring in detail the theory and practice of geocriticism, literary cartography, and the spatial humanities more generally. The spatial anxiety of disorientation and the need to know one's location, even if only subconsciously, is a deeply felt and shared human experience. Building on Yi Fu Tuan's "topophilia" (or love of place), Tally instead considers the notion of "topophilia" as a simultaneous sense of place-consciousness coupled with a feeling of disorder, anxiety, and "dis-ease." He argues that no effective geography could be complete without also incorporating an awareness of the lonely, loathsome, or frightening spaces that condition our understanding of that space. Tally considers the tension between the objective ordering of a space and the subjective ways in which narrative worlds are constructed. Narrative maps present a way of understanding that seems realistic but is completely figurative. So how can

these maps be used to not only understand the real world but also to put up an alternative vision of what that world might otherwise be? From Tolkien to Cervantes, Borges to More, [Topophrenia](#) provides a clear and compelling explanation of how geocriticism, the spatial humanities, and literary cartography help us to narrate, represent, and understand our place in a constantly changing world.

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### Excerpt: The Cartographic Imperative

The map is at once a rather simple tool and a powerful conceptual figure. Everyone already knows what a map is and what it is used for, yet the map is also a much-contested object or metaphor in critical theory and beyond. Mapping has been associated with empire, social repression, and all manner of ideological programs geared toward manipulating the representations of space for this or that group's political benefit, for example. Mapping has also been viewed as crucial to any sort of liberatory political project, as the need for spatial and social representation makes itself all too apparent amid the potential disorientation and alienation of unmapped territories. At a more basic, existentialist level, mapping might be seen as an inevitable (not to say neutral) activity, for the individual subject cannot help but try to orient itself by imagining its position vis-à-vis that of other subjects and in relation to a

broader, objective reality. Indeed, notwithstanding the multiple ambiguities attendant to any cartographic enterprise, one might suggest that mapping is almost essential to our being. I map, therefore I am.

The injunction to map makes itself felt most urgently, perhaps, in situations in which one is lost, desperately seeking guideposts or markers that can identify one's place in relation to other places. To call for a map or to demand that someone engage in mapping is to recognize one's own disorientation, one's displacement in space, or one's loss of a sense of place, which is undoubtedly alienating if not also terrifying. The spatial anxiety associated with being lost, somewhat like the angst that accompanies the existential condition à la Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, brings with it a visceral awareness of place and space, which might otherwise be taken for granted or left safely tucked away in the unconscious. The sudden need to map, or at least to have access to a map, propels to the fore the topophrenia that remains with humanity at all times: a constant and uneasy "place=mindedness" that characterizes a subject's interactions with his or her environment, which is itself so broadly conceived as to include the lived space of any given personal experience (the stroll about the shopping mall, for example) as well as the abstract space whose true representation is beyond any one individual's ken (a larger national, international, or ultimately universal space of a world system"). Though it may be experienced most keenly in those moments of disorientation, a persistent place-mindedness as well as a need to map are constant features of our existence. Topophrenia characterizes nearly all human activity, as a sense of place—not to mention matters of displacement and replacement, of movement between places and over spaces, and of the multifarious relations among place, space, individuals, collectivities, events, and so on—is an essential element of thought, experience, and being. Along those lines, it is worth noting that merely to think of a place is already to be mapping. This cartographic imperative lies at the heart of the spatial imagination. True, as a slogan, "Always map!" does not carry the ironic forcefulness of Fredric's Jameson's "Always



historicize!" in the preface to *The Political Unconscious*, and "Always be mapping!" certainly lacks the venomous, predatory alacrity of Alec Baldwin's unforgettable "Always be closing!" in the film version of *Glengarry Glen Ross*. But for all its deficits in pithy memorability, the cartographic imperative makes up for these shortcomings in its apparent universality. We are always mapping, whether we are aware of it or not.

Speaking of cognitive mapping in an era of globalization, an activity understood in part as the self-conscious attempt by individual and collective subjects to represent and to situate themselves in relation to an unrepresentable social totality, Jameson has asserted that it is not merely the case "that we ought to strive for it, but that we do so all the time anyway without being aware of the process." We do so through figures and narratives that carry diverse, even contradictory meanings, but that also operate as the means by which we make sense of the world we occupy and imagine. In this manner, mapping is a persistent, complex, and protean activity. The term must be understood figuratively, of course, but the map is already a figure. It provides a figurative or figural representation of the spaces and places it depicts, and this representation is more or less useful, for a variety of purposes, to those who employ it. And as a number of spatially oriented critics have long asserted, mapping may be seen as an activity not unrelated to literary production. Both practices organize and coordinate the various data of experience and abstract projections or structures in such a way as to constitute a meaningful ensemble, a self-contained whole, if only provisionally and temporarily, which can then be used to make sense of, or give form to, the world as we can then know it. These become ways of orientating ourselves, of establishing a sense of place in relation to other spaces and places, and ultimately of envisioning a somewhat coherent image of the various spatial and social frames of reference, from small-scale interior design to ever larger scales of region, nation, and planet, up to and including the vast world system itself?

As it is used throughout this book, the map needs to be understood as a metaphor, but it is no less powerful for being figurative. Indeed, I would say

that it is only just metaphorical, since the spatial imagination that is both the motive and the basis for the project of literary cartography is necessarily connected to the "real" spaces, to geography and architecture, for instance, as well as to the imagined spaces that constitute the world, whether conceived of as the social sphere, the planet, or the universe—hence, the value of Edward W. Soja's "trialectical" approach to the conception, perception, and experience of space that posited "real-and-imagined" places as the true object for analysis. Soja conceives of "thirdspace" as a way not only to bridge but also to transform and "Other" the divide between physical and mental spaces, which is to say, the "real" geography out there and the representations of space we carry in our minds (first- and secondspace, respectively). In Soja's view, "Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history." This holistic view of spatiality informs my sense of topophilia, as well as the projects of literary cartography in narrative and geocriticism in reading, since the spaces and places involved must also be considered in their persistently real, imagined, and "real-and-imagined" states.

If mapping be partly metaphorical, then it still has its literal force in the fact that spatiality is a fundamental aspect of our own being. Moreover, although it cannot be denied that a certain cartographic imperative or mapping project lies at the heart of human experience and aesthetic representation across different historical moments, it does seem that different historical and social formations have produced distinctive spatial organizations, as Henri Lefebvre has maintained,<sup>1</sup> in which case certain times and places have likely called for a greater attention to or awareness of problems of spatial representation or orientation than others. Consequently, levels of cartographic anxiety may vary depending on one's historical, social, and spatial situation, and the need to

produce figural maps may be more or less urgent. For a variety of reasons, I follow such thinkers as Michel Foucault, Lefebvre, Soja, and Jameson in recognizing that ours is, and has been for some time now, an epoch of enhanced spatiality. The so-called spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences in recent years is partly the result of this heightened sense of the importance of space, place, and mapping to these fields in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. If Jameson has conceded that his notion of cognitive mapping was really a code word for "class consciousness," for instance, it was nevertheless to be understood as a form of consciousness especially suited to "that new spatiality implicit in the postmodern," and the figure retains "the advantage of involving concrete content (imperialism, the world system, subalternity, dependency and hegemony), while necessarily involving a Program of formal analysis of a new kind (since it is centrally defined by the dilemma of representation itself)." Indeed, whether the map be considered as a literal form or as a figure for the sort of narrative representation I have in mind in my use of the term literary cartography, the flexibility and effectiveness of mapping make it an exemplary model for literary and cultural studies, if not for the humanities and social sciences tout court.

That our experience of the world and the language we use to describe it can both be considered distinctively spatial (as well as temporal) is not contested. All stories are spatial in one respect or another and more often than not, in many different ways at once. My interest in narrative is no doubt based partly on my own professional formation in the discipline of literary studies, but I also believe that there is a fundamental relationship between narrative and our engagement with the world at an epistemological as well as an aesthetic level; that is, inasmuch as humans are political animals in Aristotle's definition, we are also storytelling animals. I follow Jameson in viewing narrative as "the central function or instance of the human mind." This is also related to the cartographic imperative insofar as our comportment toward the world is necessarily topophrenic, so our narratives

help to shape the spaces and places we perceive, experience, and inhabit.

The trailblazing linguistic research of Charlotte Linde and William Labov in the 1970s demonstrated the degree to which our perceptions and utterances were guided by distinctive ways of imagining space, place, and our relationships with them. In "Spatial Networks as a Site for the Study of Language and Thought," Linde and Labov famously distinguish between the tour and the map.<sup>1</sup> The former establishes a sort of spatiotemporal narrative, one which involves a subject who moves through space in a certain sequential order or syntax, whereas the latter postulates a synoptic or synchronic spatial organization in which everything is laid out at once. Looking at the ways that residents of New York describe their apartments, Linde and Labov note the way in which their speech functions to offer a tour of the apartment (e.g., "you enter the kitchen and then you find a dining room to the left"), essentially narrating a spatial story of the environment for the auditor or reader. Only rarely do they find New Yorkers employing the more map-like discourse (e.g., "there is a dining room to the left of the kitchen"). But I would argue that the dynamic movement of the tour and the static description of the map present something of a false dichotomy, since in reality both features are present in any given narrative scenario. The subject's movement through space and among places and his or her perceptions of them presupposes, and is informed by, a more abstract or theoretical vision of a nonsubjective or suprasubjective image: a bird's-eye view that brings order and a sense of objectivity to the limited view of the itinerant subject. What is more, both of these ways of describing space and place are actually cartographic, since the tour also registers locations and their relationships with one another in an imagined space, and the map need not be considered a merely static representation. Each is informed by a spatiotemporality, even if the spatial appears to be more emphatic in the map-like description and the temporal seems highlighted in the movement of the tour. The tour/map distinction is still valuable, as it illuminates two fundamental aspects of the spatial imagination, which in the older discourse of philosophy might

simply be transcoded as subjective and objective, and yet as with the long history of this dialectic in philosophy, we find that the two registers cannot long be held separate, as each infuses the other and makes knowledge, and more importantly narrative, possible.

In his analysis of this distinction as part of the discussion of "spatial stories," Michel de Certeau notes the oscillation between alternate terms: "either seeing (the knowledge of an order of places) or going (spatializing actions)." He then uses this distinction to inform another, in the context of narrative, between the itinerary and the map. In this vision, the itinerary represents "a discursive series of operations," whereas the map offers "a plane projection totalizing observations," and de Certeau sees these as two distinctive "symbolic and anthropological languages of space." While I agree with the significance of this distinction—which comports with other productive alternatives in literary and social theory, such as narrative versus description (Georg Lukács), class struggle versus mode of production (Karl Marx), or simply, as noted above, subjectivity versus objectivity more generally—I cannot accept de Certeau's conclusion that the one (itinerary, tour) is somehow more liberatory or transgressive, while the other (the map) is repressive, because it is totalizing. In fact, the two registers inform one another, at times mutually reinforcing and at others disjointedly challenging the representations produced in accordance with them. As Jameson observed in his well-known "digression on cartography," itineraries are basically "diagrams organized around the still subject-centered or existential journey of the traveler," whereas mapping proper will require "the coordination of existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlined, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality." Moreover, the seemingly subjective, perspectival itinerary and the apparently more objective, speculative, or projective map will necessarily encounter the fundamental problem of representation as such, for "there can be no true maps." With no "true maps," no perfectly mimetic representations of the depicted places and spaces, and no God's-eye view or absolute truth on which to rely, we are left with, but also blessed with, the task of creating,

revising, polishing, perhaps discarding, then producing anew our own figural representations. And it is not merely that we ought to make the effort to map these spaces but that we do so all the time. This is the cartographic imperative.

This is also the core concept of literary cartography, for it is through narrative that this figural mapmaking, broadly conceived, takes place. Narrative also makes place, establishing relations among places and assigning various levels of significance to different spaces and places. In identifying places, delineating relations among them in space, connecting some while disconnecting others, aggrandizing the importance of some and diminishing that of others, and so on, we are drafting various maps and telling different stories. As Peter Turchi puts it, "To ask for a map is to say, 'Tell me a story,' to which may be added, and vice versa.

This book is concerned with literary cartography, and my approach to the subject is accordingly that of a literary critic. Some of my readers have asked why I do not include actual maps or other spatial diagrams in any of my writings on the subject, and my answer is in part that literary cartography, strictly speaking, is undertaken and accomplished through literature, understood here in its narrower sense as being constituted through the written word." I am not at all suggesting that those spatially oriented critics who do employ maps or other graphics, whether as illustrations, models, or tools, are doing anything wrong, and indeed, my own understanding of these subjects has benefited immensely from their projects. Nevertheless, I do find there to be a certain tension, perhaps a more or less productive rivalry, between text and image, narrative and picture, that can sometimes confuse the issue by causing readers either to conflate one with the other or to feel the need to choose sides. One inevitably compares or contrasts the map created and presented in the language of a text's literary cartography with the visualization of the imaginary space in the map or diagram. In texts that include maps, which are almost always quite helpful to the reader, one cannot help but question the authority of the text relative to its accompanying image. This can lead to productive controversies, but it also takes the reader away

from the literary text itself and into entirely different places.

The spatial humanities quite rightly involve interdisciplinary approaches to their areas of inquiry. Whether we name these practices geocriticism, literary geography, the spatial humanities, or whatever, researchers engaged in such work cannot help but find themselves working amid the fields of history, literature, philosophy, religion, art and art history, urban studies, architecture, social theory, political economy, sometimes archaeology or geology, even physics and mathematics, and of course geography. Much of the innovation and excitement in the spatial humanities comes from these productive interactions across disciplinary boundaries. Yet I would caution against seeing interdisciplinarity as itself a wholly salubrious phenomenon or an inherently worthy goal. As much as we might value the fruitful collaborations with our peers in other departments, we must also recognize the degree to which disciplinary conventions and practices, while perhaps arbitrary in a purely ontological sense, have developed historically and instantiated themselves within structures of scholarly activity that themselves have value. It is enough to note that philosophers, geographers, and literary critics do not approach their subjects in the same ways, but I would also observe that we do a disservice to ourselves and our colleagues by too eagerly eliding the difference between disciplinary fields. Interdisciplinary scholarship has yielded significant results, but the distinctive power and effectiveness of certain disciplinary practices ought not be disregarded. In this book I maintain an approach that is very much based in literature as a disciplinary field, with literary criticism, literary theory, and literary history understood as key subdivisions of that field. This is not to say that my approach is superior to that of a philosopher, geographer, historian, or other, but only that the perspective of literary studies is distinctive.

In addition to my own comfort level in the field for which my own scholarly training prepared me, I would say that three other considerations have led me to conclude that a literary approach is the right one for this study. First, as noted, Yi-Fu Tuan's definition of place with respect to space positions

the former squarely within the disciplinary bailiwick of literary studies, since place is understood by Tuan to be endowed with meaning and subject to interpretation, and literary criticism (among others fields) takes interpretation, along with analysis and evaluation, to be central to its mission." Second, as Jameson has pointed out, the field of literary studies—in its focus on language and its attention to the need to interpret—prepares us rather effectively to deal with the mystifications or complexities of our current condition:

Unfortunately, no society has ever been quite so mystified in quite so many ways as our own, saturated as it is with messages and information, the very vehicles of mystification (language, as Talleyrand put it, having been given us in order to conceal our thoughts). If everything were transparent, then no ideology would be possible, and no domination either: evidently that is not our case. But above and beyond the sheer fact of mystification, we must point to the supplementary problem involved in the study of cultural or literary texts, or in other words, essentially, of narratives: for even if discursive language were to be taken literally, there is always, and constitutively, a problem about the "meaning" of narratives as such.

The narrative maps produced through literary cartography are equally subject to hermeneutic investigation, even as they also serve as means by which to interpret the underlying spaces they endeavor to represent. And third, I cite Northrop Frye's impassioned defense and presentation of literary studies as a means of educating the imagination." If the study of literature produces an educated imagination, then the spatially oriented study of literature, focused on literary cartography and geocritical inquiry, can only strengthen the spatial imagination, a faculty all too necessary for making sense of our place and our world today.

For the most part, my examples and my criticism in general focus on the novel, which some readers might consider an odd choice, all the more odd considering the degree to which I rely on fairly traditional or canonical works. After all, many other genres and narrative forms today are arguably

more interesting, more relevant to our own time, or more obviously spatial. Cinema, television, video games, comic books, graphic texts, and other media might appear more suited to spatial analysis, and they likely have the additional advantage of being more fashionable. Such forms have perhaps supplanted the novel as the dominant practice of narrative in recent decades. For example, Jonathan Arac has argued that "the age of the novel," the age in which the novel was preeminent in speaking to the broader cultural sphere in modern society, basically ran from the early to mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth in the United States, "from about the time of *Moby-Dick* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to that of *Invisible Man* and *Lolita*." This obviously does not mean that novels are not still produced and consumed in great abundance, merely that the cultural significance of the novel or novelist is no longer as notable, particularly in the public sphere. Nevertheless, I would argue that these various newer or more dominant forms are fundamentally novelistic in both their creators' intentions and in their effects. I do not have the space to delve into this here, but one might argue that the emergence, development, proliferation, and (yes) dominance of these new narrative forms has to do with the power of novelistic discourse to transcend its own physical frame, the hardcover's bound volume or paperback, and render other modes more novel-like in the process. That a television series like *The Wire* or a video game franchise like *BioShock* can be compared to the novels of Charles Dickens in its large cast of characters, its narrative complexity, and its realism is merely to say that we are finding different ways to produce novels. In any event, the theory of the novel may be all the more useful and desirable in a moment when novelistic discourse is so pervasive throughout the galaxy of cultural forms available to consumers today. And if the novel is indeed a residual form as Arac suggests, then that residue is nonetheless ample, rich, and rewarding.

The chapters that follow are all devoted to exploring the idea of literary cartography, and in focusing on place, narrative, and the spatial imagination, I attempt to establish the basic terms for such an exploration. A number of these chapters

have appeared in earlier versions elsewhere, and as a collection of distinctive essays, each chapter may be viewed as having some degree of semiautonomy. However, I have ordered them in such a way as to suggest a certain logical trajectory that will offer the reader a tour or itinerary through various points on the map of my recent thinking about literary cartography and issues related to it. Given the places and times in which these chapters were first conceived, there is some repetition and overlap among them, which I have tried to alleviate through my revisions to the original versions. Most significant of these repeated points is the fundamental observation, drawn from Tuan, among others, that place is constructed or created as a locus of meaning subject to interpretation and that the representation of place, broadly imagined, necessarily brings with it a literary sensibility. As a unit of literary cartography, place is crucial to the project of narrative mapping and to the more generalized spatial imagination.

In addition to this introduction and a brief conclusion, the contents are arranged in three parts, each comprising three chapters, which correspond more or less directly to the three terms of *Topophilia's* subtitle: place, narrative, and the spatial imagination. However, these concepts also appear throughout the book, as they ceaselessly inform my discussion of spatiality, geocriticism, and literary cartography. As with the legends and symbols on a map, the arrangement of the parts and chapters, including their titles, is intended to be helpful and informative, but they are not to be granted a sort of ontological privilege, as they are merely guideposts for explorers of the territories surveyed within and not themselves sights worth seeing. Although I have arranged the chapters with order in mind, readers are certainly free to select their own routes through the book.

Part I focuses on the importance of place for geocritical theory and practice. In chapter i. I discuss the problem of place while also elaborating on the meaning of the term *topophilia*, which literally indicates a certain "placeminded-ness" while also by implication suggesting a condition of disorder or "dis-ease." Drawing on Tuan's earlier concept of *topophilia*, I look at the ways in which

an affective geography of place would necessarily involve the less salutary or utopian visions of place, such as places of fear or loathing that nevertheless condition our approaches to space and place in narrative. Then I discuss how narratives function as mapping machines, dynamic ensembles designed to represent places, spaces, and events in a figural organization that may stand in for the totality of social relations of a given text.

Chapter 2 offers a brief introduction to the theory and practice of geocriticism, an approach to literary and cultural texts that focuses critical attention on place, spatial relations, and the interconnections among literature and geography. Here I discuss the recent work of Bertrand Westphal, the French literary critic who, along with his research team at the Université de Limoges, has done the most to define, elaborate, and promote a geocentric approach to literary and cultural studies. Westphal's *La Géocritique* provided the theoretical and methodological justification of the geocritical endeavor, while his more recent work (most notably in *Le Monde plausible* and *La Cage des méridiens*) has extended and complicated the geocritical project in relation to the exigencies of a truly global approach to world literature. I distinguish my own use of the term geocriticism from Westphal's, but I acknowledge the lasting importance of Westphal's work for geocritical explorations in the present. I take geocriticism, conceived somewhat broadly, to be the most effective approach to a critical reading of the narrative maps or literary cartography produced by creative writers. Following the spatial turn in the humanities, the moment is particularly ripe for further geocritical theory and practice.

Chapter 3 takes up this call for theoretical practice in an era that some have suggested is, or ought to be, postcritical or even "posttheory." Looking at the a tool of knowledge exploit the productive tension between these ways of knowing in order to create a more dynamic *theatrum geographicum* by which to envision the world system. I also look at Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* as a perversely modernist attempt to analyze the novel as a form of literary cartography. Using Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Daniel Kehlmann's *Measuring the World* as exemplary novels, early modern and

postmodern visions published four hundred years apart, I show how the artificiality of the novel and the map, both powerful fictions used to make sense of the world, make possible alternative visions.

The chapters in part III deal in different ways with the fantastic nature of mapping, partly by exploring the discursive mode of fantasy as it is employed by a spatial imagination in literature. Chapter 7 continues the discussion of the ways in which novels produce a literary cartography of their worlds, but here my focus is on the trope of adventure. The adventure story holds a privileged place in the history of narrative, as the hero's departure and homecoming emphasize the spatial displacement and return while also mapping out a trajectory of adventures across a variety of distinctive places. Drawing on J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, I argue that the novel of adventure offers an exemplary model for literary cartography, as the itinerary of the adventurers gives supplementary meaning to the map of the world in which these adventures take place, thus combining the power of each register of literary geography to enhance the experience of spatiality in the text. I examine the way that the tale figures forth spaces and places in the imaginary realms of the novel, and I argue that literary cartography has a fundamentally fantastic or utopian aspect.

Chapter 8 deals more directly with fantasy and utopia as genres and as modes of thought. I argue not only that these genres are necessarily and inherently spatial but also that spatial literary studies must embrace fantastic and utopian criticism. I focus especially on Thomas More's *Utopia*, looking at both the text and the accompanying illustration from its 1516 publication, *Utopiae Insulae Figura*, to show the contrast between the highly rationalized order of the Utopian society and the utterly fanciful or fantastic presentation of it. I argue that, contrary to those critics who would sever utopia from fantasy, favoring the former and disavowing the latter, fantasy is an essential element of the literary cartographic project that, in turn, is indispensable for any utopian thinking in the present.<sup>9</sup> Following China Miéville's critique of cognition as ideology, I embrace a fantastic geocritical theory that makes room for dragons even as it explores space. I

elaborate this need for a sort of fantastic thinking in chapter 9, "Beyond the Flaming Walls of the World," which takes its title from an apt phrase in Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*. Beginning with the apparently otherworldly perspective of a space alien, which is actually the image of the Earth as photographed by Apollo astronauts, I argue that any literary cartography, even that which strives to appear realistic, must involve the discursive mode of fantasy. The figuration required for literary cartography is related to the fundamentally projective, speculative, or theoretical project associated with fantasy, and I argue that the alterity of fantasy is necessary for resisting the persistent appeals to the status quo or to nostalgic, reactionary formations, particularly nationalism. I move that critics embrace a literary cartography suited to a postnational condition, which would be animated by the critical distance and attention to alterity afforded by the fantastic, whose motive force is theory itself in its vocation as speculative and transformative activity.

Finally, by way of a conclusion, I return to the idea of a cartographic imperative, looking at the ways in which figurative mapping is a necessary and unavoidable aspect of our being-in-the-world. I briefly survey the current landscape of spatial literary studies, which I take to be still in their early stages of development, and I suggest that a geocritical or spatially oriented approach to literature and culture will lead to particularly fecund and fascinating interpretations and analyses. The conclusion is necessarily open-ended, since so much of what is exciting about the spatial humanities likely lies before us in the future. But there is also ample evidence to suggest that the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences has already produced insightful research on which to produce novel approaches and effects.

If all narratives may be taken as forms of literary cartography, it is in part because of this ineluctable topophrenia at the core of what used to be called the human condition. In telling stories we orient ourselves and others with respect to place and space, not to mention moments in time, and we produce dynamic, multiform, and protean cartographies. A geocritical approach to reading these narrative maps enables us to sense more

emphatically the ways that space, place, and mapping condition our lives, attitudes, thoughts, and experiences, as well as our more critically distant claims to knowledge about them. As Frank Kermode once said, it is not for critics to help us make sense of our lives—that is, the burden of the poets and other creative writers—but merely to attempt the lesser task of "making sense of the ways we try to make sense of our lives." In our time, after the "spatial turn," geocritics, spatially oriented critics, and others working in the spatial humanities can offer new interpretations, analyses, and evaluations of these ways of making sense or giving form to our lives. By paying particular attention to the spatial imagination, its motivations, and its results, we may come to see the world, and ourselves, in interesting, new ways. <>

[Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists, Fifth Edition](#) by Jerry D. Moore [Rowman & Littlefield, 9781442266643]

[Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists, Fifth Edition](#), has been updated and expanded and provides a succinct, clear, and balanced introduction to theoretical developments in the field. The key ideas of thirty major theorists are briefly described and—unique to this textbook—linked to the biographical and fieldwork experiences that helped shape their theories. The impact of each scholar on contemporary anthropology is presented, along with numerous examples, quotations from the theorists' writings, and a description of the broader intellectual setting in which these anthropologists worked. In addition to six new chapters, Moore has updated all the profiles to incorporate recent scholarship. The book is linked to the companion work, [Visions of Culture: A Reader, Second Edition](#), to encourage the fullest intellectual engagement for students.

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### Excerpt: What is the Point?

Over thirty years ago, I attended a weekend conference organized by a group of undergraduate anthropology students from a major Midwestern public university. The annual conference was held in a group of cabins on the edge of a beautiful lake. The setting was conducive to serious presentations and also provided an opportunity for professors and students to discuss ideas in an informal environment, an informality enhanced by several kegs of beer.

Toward the end of an exhausting day of dialogue, the discussion turned to theoretical matters. Many of the students were enrolled in Professor X's course on anthropological theory and theorists, and they began to complain about the course, emboldened by beer and the absence of Professor X, who was simply too busy to attend the conference.

A young man stood up and said, "We start off with Edward Tylor, but Professor X tells us that Tylor was just an armchair anthropologist. So we read Malinowski, who everyone says was a good fieldworker, but then Professor X says Malinowski was a racist. And then we read Margaret Mead, and Professor X says Mead was a liar."

The young man swayed slightly and demanded, "What's the goddamn point of it all?"

It was a very good question.

It is commonplace to assert that anthropology is in a crisis, but if that is true, it is a crisis of our own making. James Peacock, a former president of the American Anthropological Association, summarized anthropology's potential contributions and reflected on its shortcomings: "Poised for victory, we retreat, turn within, luxuriate in ourselves, squander our resources in silly arguments, shrink our vision to the smallest world, fiddle while Rome burns and barbarians are at the gate".



In a field as diverse as anthropology, it is inevitable that conflicting opinions exist. But in the midst of conflict, we lose sight of the intellectual achievements of anthropology and the personal contributions of anthropologists. And worse, we fail as teachers to communicate to our students the legacies of anthropologists who are worthy of attention, scrutiny, and respect.

This book is written for anthropology students, specifically advanced undergraduate and graduate students. It is an introduction to the principal theorists and theories that shaped and continue to influence modern anthropology. Organized in a series of profiles, I summarize the major theoretical concepts of thirty scholars and relate those concepts to each scholar's formative influences, anthropological research, and intellectual framework.

The chapters are organized into eight thematic sections beginning with a brief introductory essay outlining the problems and issues common to the anthropologists discussed in the section. Each chapter introduces a scholar's contribution to anthropology, profiles her or his professional life with an emphasis on fieldwork and publications, and discusses major aspects of the anthropologist's work: Morgan's comparative approach to kin systems, Durkheim's conscience collective, Malinowski's theory of needs, Lévi-Strauss's structural approach to myth, Turner's concept of social drama, Ortner's analysis of key symbols, Boyd and Richerson on dual inheritance theory, Ingold's argument about nonhuman agency, and so on. The chapter conclusion is followed by a list of references students can pursue in more depth. I have cited readily available sources in English that provide substantive discussions or examples of an anthropologist's work and not every source with a passing reference to a particular scholar's work. These references provide an initial bibliography of major sources and recent critical assessments.

*Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists* is organized differently from other texts on anthropological theory. First, I have attempted to represent a broader range of anthropological viewpoints than, for example, what Adam Kuper describes in his

excellent study of British social anthropologists (Kuper 1983). Second, I have attempted to sample more current trends in anthropology than are discussed in Elvin Hatch's (1973) *Theories of Man and Culture*. Third, I try to provide a balanced, though not uncritical, reading of each anthropologist's contribution to anthropological theory. I do not personally advocate a specific theory as Marvin Harris (1968) does in *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*. The scholars discussed in *Visions of Culture* are not straw men or whipping boys. Each anthropologist discussed in this book has intellectual merit; they were included because their ideas are important and deserve to be understood. Finally, I have presented each anthropologist in the context of her or his intellectual milieu; I have not measured each scholar against current theoretical trends in anthropology. The several variations on functionalism were important to anthropology from the mid-1920s to the mid-1960s, although they are less so now. Because of their impact on the development of anthropological theory, I discuss these works.

*Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists* is organized around the women and men who shaped modern anthropology. Other texts on anthropological theory emphasize ideas over individuals, but I believe there are good reasons for a biographical structure. Ideas do not exist in the ether; they take shape in the experiences of individuals. Obviously, certain ideas become generally held, common properties. The organic analogy, the idea of progress, the function of society, evolutionary theory, the ontological turn, and so on have broad existences; they are not the single-handed creations of "Great Men." In my reading of anthropologists' theories, such broad concepts seem to be generic foundations on which specific scholars build their theoretical structures. Other factors and more immediate issues configure individual anthropologists' ideas.

Preeminent among these is the experience of anthropological fieldwork. Repeatedly, one discovers that anthropologists arrive at their theoretical positions in the process of trying to understand another human culture. Benedict and the Zuni, Mead and the Samoans, Radcliffe-Brown and

the Andamanese, Malinowski and the Trobriand Islanders, Evans-Pritchard and the Azande, Steward and the Shoshone, Harris and rural Brazilians, Turner and the Ndembu, Geertz and the Javanese, Ortner and the Sherpas, Bourdieu in Algeria, Sahlins and historic Oceania, Smith and the Inuit, Descola and the Achuar, Ingold and the Sáami, Latour and the Salk Institute—there is a recurrent dialectic that occurs in the context of research. In general discussions of theory, the empirical contexts of fieldwork are too often ignored. This is a shame since ethnographic research is anthropology's most important addition to the social sciences, and our translations of other cultures' experiences are anthropology's most lasting contribution to intellectual life.

Obviously, I could not write about every major anthropological figure, so my selections require justification. First, I have considered anthropologists who dealt with central issues, such as "What is culture?" "What is the relationship between the individual and society?" and "How can another culture be understood by an anthropological outsider?" These are fundamental issues with which anthropologists have struggled since the late nineteenth century, but not all anthropologists have focused on these theoretical issues. I realize that I have ignored major figures who made significant theoretical and substantive contributions to anthropology, and I apologize to them, their students, and their posthumous advocates. Second, I have not considered scholars whose works were important during their lifetimes but have since become marginal to major currents in the field (see, e.g., Ackerman on Sir James Frazer). Third, I have selected anthropologists who reflect basic trends within anthropology—unilineal evolution, Boasian historicism, functionalism, cultural materialism, structuralism, semiotics, feminism, practice theory, evolutionary approaches, and ontology. Fourth, I have limited myself to anthropologists from the United States, Great Britain, and France whose writings appeared originally or in translation in English, which I assume is of most interest to my audience. Finally, except in passing, I have not discussed social thinkers in related fields who have made huge impacts on anthropology: Darwin, Marx, Freud, Weber; Giddens, among others. That

would involve writing a biographical encyclopedia of the social sciences, which is not my goal and beyond my expertise.

This, the fifth edition of *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists*, has been revised in several fundamental ways. First, I have added six new chapters representing two current theoretical trends on "Neo-Darwinian Evolutionary Theories" (Part VII) and "The Ontological Turn" (Part VIII). I have updated many of the chapters to take into account new information from publications and scholarly treatments that have appeared since 2012. The bibliographies associated with each anthropologist are thus updated. Although a detailed history of anthropological theory is beyond the objective of this textbook, these revisions will lead the student to additional relevant and recent literature. The text has also been revised to align it with the companion volume, the second edition of *Visions of Culture: An Annotated Reader* (Moore 2019, second edition). Although either book can be used separately, they are also effective as a complementary set in which intellectual biographies and theoretical summaries are paired with primary texts. Throughout the fifth edition of *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists*, there are cross-references to relevant articles in the second edition of the Reader, which take the form of.

Finally, the selection of thirty-two scholars—Edward Tylor, Lewis Henry Morgan, Franz Boas, Emile Durkheim, Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, Edward Sapir, Margaret Mead, Marcel Mauss, Bronislaw Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Edward Evans-Pritchard, Leslie White, Julian Steward, Marvin Harris, Eleanor Burke Leacock, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas, Sherry Ortner, Pierre Bourdieu, Eric Wolf, Marshall Sahlins, John Tooby, Leda Cosmides, Eric Alden Smith, Robert Boyd, Peter Richerson, Philippe Descola, Tim Ingold, and Bruno Latour—is not an exhaustive list but a starting point for further research, classroom discussion, and student inquiry into the ideas and individuals who have shaped anthropology by contributing their particular and creative visions of culture.

## Emerging Matters

In 2002, Clifford Geertz observed that the world was characterized by "the simultaneous increase in cosmopolitanism and parochialism" in which, in the aftermath of the polarities of the Cold War, the broad reaches of a globe interconnected by the Internet, the flow of capital, and multinational companies contrasted with "intensely parochial provincialisms"—such as Afghan tribes; the struggles of Chechen or Kurdish separatists; and turf battles between African American, Latino, and Salvadoran gangs in south central Los Angeles (Geertz 2002:13-14). While it may seem paradoxical that humanity is simultaneously becoming more fragmented and more interconnected, Geertz suggested that this is actually "a single, deeply interconnected phenomenon" requiring anthropologists to reconsider basic ideas about concepts such as nation, society, and culture.

Not surprisingly, the discipline of anthropology is experiencing a similar sense of fission. Geertz writes,

Things are thus not, or at least in my view they are not, coming progressively together as the discipline moves raggedly on. And this, too, reflects the direction, if it can be called a direction, in which the wider world is moving: toward fragmentation, dispersion, pluralism, disassembly, multi-, multi-, multi-. Anthropologists are going to have to work under conditions even less orderly, shapely, and predictable, and even less susceptible of moral and ideological reduction and political quick fixes, than those I have worked under.

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) is the largest professional organization of anthropologists, with more than ten thousand members. The AAA's statement of purpose defines anthropology as "the science that studies humankind in all its aspects, through archaeological, biological, ethnological and linguistic research"—a definition that probably seemed more solid in 1903 when it was first published than it does today.

Some of the changes within anthropology are indicated by the topics of symposia and paper sessions at the annual AAA meetings. For example, in November 1988, among the more than 370 sessions, there were symposia on "Paleolithic Europe," "Gender Representation in Mexico and the Andes," "Current Research in Orang Ai (Malay Aboriginal) Studies,"

"Reconceptualizing Carnival," "Guatemalan Indian Identity in Transition," "Primate Biology and Behavior," "Cultural Dimensions in North American Society," "Post-Transitional Iberia," "Visions in the Sky: Studies in North American Ethnoastronomy," "Reconsidering African Kinship," and "Cognition and Ideology in European Culture." Most of these sessions combined an analytical theme—such as kinship, gender, and identity—with a region: North America, Africa, Iberia, or wherever. The session titles in 1988 implied that these topical themes were illuminated by case studies from a specified region, a geographic unit within which comparisons were relevant.

Thirty years later the situation had changed. The 2017 AAA meetings were held in Washington, D.C., and the meetings took on an additional element of advocacy with the conference theme of "Anthropology Matters," an obvious borrowing from the Black Lives Matter movement (see chapter 30). The intersection of venue, theme, and current political events made for a very activist program, with sessions titled "Gender Matters: The 2016 U.S. Presidential Election" and "Protest Matters: The Objects, Art, and Affect of Resistance" or "Agricultural Matters: Understanding Current Issues in Food Security, Weather, and Markets." Other sessions argued for a more generalized relevance for anthropology as in "How 'Anthropology Matters' for Science," "Why Anthropology Matters: Making Anthropology Relevant and Engaging a Larger Public Audience through Pedagogy," or "Anthropology Matters for Global Mental Health: Articulating Anthropological Contributions to a Rapidly Expanding Field." Titles for sessions and individual presentations often played on the different connotations of "matter"—as material, event, instantiation, or significance. More than 1170 symposia, roundtables, and other sessions

were held over five days, and 104 had the word "matters" in their title.

The word "theory" was less prominent, appearing in only nine of the more than a thousand session titles. Admittedly, this may underrepresent the actual prominence of anthropological theory; for example, sessions often addressed theoretical concerns without having the word in the title. (For example, in the 2015 annual meeting in which more than a thousand presentations were made, only three sessions had "theory" in their titles, although organizers identified "theory" as a keyword for sixteen sessions.) This makes one wonder about the role of "theory" as anthropology responds to and attempts to explain the human experience.

At the same time, there is evidence of global interconnections, and there are indications that the profession of American anthropology became more fragmented between 1988 and 2018. The AAA is composed of a number of constituent units—variously referred as divisions, sections, or societies (societies are once-separate organizations that have joined the AAA). In 1998, there were twenty divisions, sections, or societies within the AAA; in 2018, there were forty sections supplemented by nine interest groups. The proliferation of units reflects two dimensions of distinction: new units were defined by either (1) the topics or themes of study or (2) the self-identities of the anthropologists. Most of the new constituencies were thematic—such as the Anthropology and Environment Section, the Association for Feminist Anthropology, the Society for East Asian Anthropology, the Evolutionary Anthropology Section, the Middle East Section, or the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness—yet a few of the new constituencies were based on the identities of the anthropologists themselves. By 2018, the National Association of Student Anthropologists and the Association for Black Anthropologists (present at the 1988 meetings) were joined by the Association for Latina and Latino Anthropologists, the Associations of Indigenous Anthropologists, the Association of Senior Anthropologists, and the Association for Queer Anthropology (formerly known as the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists).

Not every anthropologist is a member of or participates in the AAA, but the AAA is broadly representative of the trends Geertz identified: interconnection and fragmentation. First, there are many more anthropologists, working in diverse applied and academic settings. That their interests have diversified is not surprising. Second, it may be that anthropology was never a unified field, but its internal fractures were camouflaged by the discipline's own self-myths. American anthropology has enshrined its diversity in the "Four Fields Approach," comprising sociocultural anthropology, biological anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics. Various scholars contend that this is more an ideological construct than an accurate description of intellectual practice. For example, Robert Borofsky (2002) conducted a thematic analysis of 3,264 articles published in *American Anthropologist* between 1899 and 1998 and found that a mere 9.5 percent actually drew on more than a single subfield. Borofsky concluded that the collaborations between fields have never been significant and that the "Four Fields Approach" is a disciplinary "myth," a symbolic scheme that resolves but does not eliminate anthropology's central contradiction as a scholarly field: "The contradiction anthropology lives with is its tendency toward specialization, all the while aspiring to be an intellectually holistic discipline".

Perhaps anthropology is changing in the same way the world is. If the world is simultaneously becoming more "cosmopolitan and parochial," then we should not be surprised that anthropology reflects those trends, with specific sets of research becoming intertwined in surprising ways at the same time the discipline of anthropology is less unitary.

"One of the advantages of anthropology as a scholarly enterprise," Clifford Geertz once noted, "is that no one, including its practitioners, quite knows what it is" (2000:89). Inevitably, we fail at the attempt to define anthropology as the study of something—as geology is the study of earth's formation processes or entomology is the study of insects. Rather, anthropology is "a loose collection of intellectual careers," Geertz suggested, an "indisciplined discipline" that "is a far from stable enterprise". Geertz referred to the field as

a kind of gathering-of-fugitives consortium whose rationale has always been as obscure as its rightness has been affirmed. The "Four Fields" ideology, proclaimed in addresses and enshrined in departments, has held together an uncentered discipline of disparate visions, ill-connected researches, and improbable allies: a triumph, and a genuine one, of life over logic.

Lacking a crystal ball, we cannot know the future of these debates, but alternative and integrative positions may be emergent. The anthropologist Roy Rappaport wrote,

Two traditions have proceeded in anthropology since its inception. One, objective in its aspirations and inspired by the biological sciences, seeks explanation and is concerned to discover causes, or even, in the view of the ambitious, laws. The other, influenced by philosophy, linguistics, and the humanities and open to more subjectively derived knowledge, attempts interpretation and seeks to elucidate meanings....

Our two traditions have not always lived very easily together even when, or perhaps especially when, they have cohabited in the same minds. But any radical separation of the two is misguided, and not only because meanings are often causal and causes are often meaningful but because, more fundamentally, the relationship between them, in all its difficulty, tension, and ambiguity, expresses the condition of a species that lives, and can only live, in terms of meanings it itself must construct in a world devoid of intrinsic meaning but subject to natural law. Any adequate anthropology must attempt to comprehend the fullness of its subject matter's condition.

Anthropology, thus, is complex and diverse because humans are complex and diverse. Our theories, inquiries, and data reflect that challenging, but fascinating, complexity. As Laura Nader wrote, "An anthropology between science and humanism, nature and culture, the past and the present, Us and Them, and anthropology and the wider world, forces fuller consideration, a different kind of breadth, and a different kind of science".

As we follow these theoretical debates, we should remember the importance of anthropological fieldwork in shaping our theoretical perspectives. In everyone of the thirty profiles in this book, there is an example of an anthropologist revising her or his theoretical position in light of anthropological data. Notably, Geertz, despite being a major figure in anthropological theory, wrote, "It has not been anthropological theory, such as it is, that has made our field seem to be a massive judgment against absolutism in thought, morals and esthetic judgment; it has been anthropological data: customs, crania, living floors, and lexicons" (1984:264).

There is a vital intellectual synergy between theory and data in anthropology. As we acquire insights into specific moments of the human experience, we gain basic insights into human nature. A partial list includes the following:

- Race does not account for variations in human behavior.
- Other cultures are not "fossilized" representatives of earlier stages in human evolution.
- There is a complex dialectic between individual and culture in every society. Individuals are shaped by and shape the culture they experience.
- Culture is not a thing of "shreds and patches," nor is it a smoothly integrated machine.
- Different elements of culture meet the adaptive requisites of human existence, express the creativity of human actors in their use of symbols, and reflect the transmitted experiences of humanity.
- Our knowledge of other peoples is shaped by our own cultural experience.
- There is nothing simple about understanding another culture.

The anthropologist Eric Wolf called anthropology "the most scientific of the humanities, the most humanist of the sciences". This is not only the source of controversies but also the basis of our intellectual contributions. As Gregory Reck has written,

Anthropology's uniqueness and contributions [have] resided, as always, in

its simultaneously comfortable and uneasy location between things, between the sciences and the humanities, between history and literature, between ourselves and the other, between objectivity and subjectivity, between the concrete and the abstract, between the specific and the general.

Living in the cracks between these worlds comes with the territory. It is our nature and strength. For as long as we are anthropologists ... we will retain the primary goal of understanding the human species, realizing that multiple routes lead to that understanding.

The pursuit of that understanding is reflected in anthropology's multifaceted, multidimensional visions of culture. <>

[The Praiseworthy One: The Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Texts and Images](#) by Christiane Gruber [Indiana University Press, 9780253025265]

In the wake of controversies over printing or displaying images of the Prophet Muhammad, Christiane Gruber's aim is to bring back into scholarly and public discussion the 'lost' history of imagining the Prophet in Islamic cultures. By studying the various verbal and visual constructions of the Prophet's character and persona over the course of more than one thousand years, Gruber seeks to correct public misconceptions and restore to Islam its rich artistic heritage, illuminating the critical role Muhammad has played in Muslim constructions of self and community at different times and in various cultural contexts.

[The Praiseworthy One](#) is an exploration of the Prophet Muhammad's significance in Muslim life and thought from the beginning of Islam to today. It pays particular attention to procedures of narration, veneration, and sacralization. Gruber stresses that a fruitful approach to extant textual and visual materials is one that emphasizes the harnessing of Muhammad's persona as a larger metaphor to explain both past and present historical events, to build and delineate a sense of community, and to help individuals conceive of and communicate with the realm of the sacred. [The Praiseworthy One](#) shows that Muhammad has

served as a polyvalent symbol rather than a historical figure with fixed significance.

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Excerpt: The apostle of Islam is known in Arabic as Muhammad, or "The Praiseworthy One." While Muhammad has long been used in Islamic sources as the Prophet's personal name, it also functions as an honorary epithet that was conferred on him at the beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an.<sup>1</sup> This anointment or appointment name is, however, only one of many praise terms by which Muhammad is called. Classified as the "names of the Prophet" (asma' al-nabi), Muhammad's many appellations encompass nouns and adjectives that collectively pay tribute to his supreme prophetic standing and impeccable moral character. Sometimes numbering in the hundreds, these names adorn religious manuscripts and talismanic objects; they also are recited aloud as a way of remembering and invoking the Prophet within various Islamic devotional practices.

Intriguingly, the Qur'an mentions Moses 136 times, Abraham 69 times, and Jesus 25 times. There exist hundreds of mentions of "messenger" (rasul) and "prophet" (nabi), but Muhammad appears only four times in Islamic scripture.<sup>2</sup> As Tarif Khalidi stresses, Muhammad's personal name (if Muhammad is to be considered a personal rather than a praise name) retreats behind his qur'anic image as a "divinely appointed universal missionary."<sup>3</sup> Within the Qur'an, Muhammad's illustrious position indeed is promoted by his other titles and soubriquets, including "seal of prophets" (khatam al-nabiyyin), "bearer of glad tidings" (bashir), and "warner [of

hell and calamities]" (nadhira). Moreover, Muslim exegetes contend that the Qur'an records Jesus foretelling Muhammad's status as "Ahmad," that is, "The Most Praiseworthy One," who serves as the ultimate comforter and intercessor.<sup>1</sup> This type of qur'anic prophetology, catalyzed by Muhammad's many names, without a doubt laid the ground for elaborations of his personal attributes in a variety of Islamic textual sources, including the Sayings of the Prophet (Hadith), biographies, historical narratives, and mystical poems.

Muhammad's many names follow the pattern of God's "beautiful names" (al-asma' al-husna), aligning them with notions of the divine.<sup>1</sup> In Islamic traditions, both God and Muhammad are believed to necessitate an expansive nomenclature in order to fully capture the multifaceted ontological reality of each. As a complex totality, the many names of Muhammad thus construct a range of conceptual images via the power of linguistic articulation. Through the use of terminology alone, at times Muhammad is described as a mere mortal being who serves as the human carrier of God's message, while at others he is lauded as an ineffable, transcendental, metahistorical, and everlasting flux of light emitted into the world.

At first glance, expressive strategies praising Muhammad's human and his superhuman characteristics may seem mutually exclusive. However, they coalesce into a colorful mosaic of images, some of which were especially popular in particular times and places. Such creative imaginings of the Prophet—whether through the crafting of praise names, textual descriptions, or the visual arts—have proved a hallmark of many Islamic cultures from the seventh century to the present day.

This book's primary aim consists in exploring this textured miscellany, in the process highlighting the fact that Muhammad, "The Praiseworthy One," has served as the beating heart of his followers' devotional energy for well over a millennium. Its second goal is to emphasize Islam's rich literary and artistic heritage by illuminating the many pivotal roles Muhammad has played in Muslim constructions of self and community in various religious, political, and cultural contexts. In

exploring the Prophet's significance in Muslim life, thought, and creative activity, this study pays particular attention to processes of narration and imagination, stressing that a fruitful approach to both textual and visual materials emphasizes Muhammad's personhood as a larger metaphor that helps to explain both past and present events, to build and delineate a sense of community, and to help individuals conceive of and communicate with the realm of the sacred.

This book is also defined by what it is not: it is not concerned with unearthing an ostensibly historical Muhammad, especially due to the fact that the Prophet gained mythical status already during his lifetime. In other words, it does not attempt to parse myth from fact in order to delineate what may have been, or may have happened, in actuality. To the contrary, this study highlights the ways in which writers and artists developed their own symbolic lexicon in order to conjure a more metaphorical Muhammad, whose larger-than-life persona often transcended historical specificity. From such intellectual and creative efforts emerged rather malleable prophetic images, which could be tinged and tailored to suit the various cultural and devotional needs of their epochs. More often than not, Muhammad thus has served as a polyvalent symbol rather than a fixed empirical datum. Unshackled from the confines of verifiable truth, he has thrived as a capacious repository of meaning, largely within the domains of mythmaking, allegory, and creative imagination.

The man and the metaphor have yielded many "praiseworthy" images—cerebral and aural as well as textual and visual—within Islamic expressive traditions. Such conceptual imaginings, or pious "picturations" (tasawwurat), of the Prophet began very early and have flourished throughout the centuries. At times, Muhammad is described in quite literal ways: he is said to be neither too tall nor too short; his eyes are almond shaped, and his hair is black. However, even the most mimetic of sketches incorporate descriptions that are allegorical or otherworldly. Biographies of the Prophet, texts that record his physical and Such differing positions vis-à-vis the permissibility of representing Muhammad do not emerge due to a fear or aversion of the image qua image 88 Much

more critically, they adjudicate its modality, determine its tenor, and foresee its effects, with an eye toward ensuring its suppression or regulating its diffusion. Additionally, these divergent positions on prophetic images increasingly are embedded within a larger geopolitical fight between Saudi Arabia and Iran—and therefore have come to be interpreted along an axis that pits an Arab-Sunni versus an Iranian-Shi'i worldview. While such an ethnosectarian divide is oversimplified, it nevertheless carries some validity. Indeed, historically, images of the Prophet Muhammad have thrived mostly outside Arab lands, especially in the Turco-Persian world. In such geographical spheres, however, artists and devotees also have belonged to the Sunni faith community. Not infrequently, Sunni patrons and consumers have requested or purchased devotional imagery of Muhammad precisely to strengthen his prophetic legacy via the power of the visual mode. As a result, the sectarian divide—and, along with it, an ostensible Shi'i proclivity for images—can only go so far in explaining a much more complex, multifaceted landscape of religious belief, cultural practices, and visual products when it comes to depicting the Prophet of Islam.

Grappling with such issues over the past century, scholars working in the fields of Islamic studies and art history have tackled Islam's supposed image problem—or, as some have termed it, its tendency toward iconoclasm and the "prohibition of images" (Bilderverbot). Fruitful discussions have emerged, although some academic analyses unfortunately have been inflected by an undergirding presumption that Islamic cultures either cautiously avoid images or actively seek to destroy them. This emphasis on Islamic aniconism or iconoclasm in turn has influenced terminology, methodology, and modes of argumentation. Just as critically, it also tends to cherry-pick data and skew outcomes. To give one particularly egregious example, in 1988 scholar Terry Allen argued that religious and narrative figural imagery does not exist in Islam. In order to prove his point, he explored images solely present on secular, portable objects that do not illustrate a text. He thus concluded that Islamic art is an art without narrative, and that it gives preeminence to emblemized cycles, inscriptions,

geometry, and the arabesque. In his estimation, then, Islamic art does not have the "intellectual power and scope of antique art." In order to reach this rather sanctimonious finding, Allen used a methodology that purposefully omits a discussion of Turco-Persian illustrated manuscripts and Islamic devotional arts. This glaring omission reveals the extent to which historical data can be selectively marshaled or ignored in order to promote the (foregone) conclusion that Islamic figural art comprises solely a nonreligious, nonnarrative tradition. It also showcases a long-standing disinterest in Muslim devotional imagery, a field of creative expression that only recently has drawn the attention of scholars of Islamic art.

Other scholars have made more judicious use of the scientific method, pursuing a deductive rather than inductive approach to extant pictorial material. Contra Terry Allen, Oleg Grabar sought to explore a "Muslim ethos" toward images, arguing that the perceived divide is not religious/secular but public/private. Grabar noted that, despite a number of image-averse statements in the Qur'an and Hadith, there do not exist any internal edicts prohibiting or rejecting figural representations in Islamic traditions (unlike Catholicism, Islam has had no centralized authority, and therefore legal opinions are neither universal nor enforceable). At most, Grabar posited, one may detect a "prevailing mood" or an "expression of taste" within the visual arts. While at times this mood or taste may shy away from the representational mode, at others aesthetic pleasure—not to mention devotional impulse—trumps philosophical and theological anxieties about figural likenesses. Grabar concluded that many pictorial representations, including those of the Prophet Muhammad, have been made since 1300 CE, and he challenged his readers by posing a most productive question: "Under these circumstances, is it really correct to talk of an Islamic iconoclasm or even an avoidance of representations of living things?"

Grabar's query calls attention to our shortcomings, blind spots, and presuppositions in exploring Islam's rich, varied, and at times contradictory relationship to figuration and the representational arts. To no small degree, our epistemological expectations



about Islamic art have proven to be barriers in and of themselves. Such obstacles nonetheless have been transcended in more recent years by scholars who have turned their attention to the depictive arts, especially portraiture. Among them, Priscilla Soucek has explored the intersections among figural representation, the science of physiognomy, and Neoplatonic texts exploring an individual's inner reality and beauty. For his part, David Roxburgh has highlighted the divergent concepts of the portrait in Islamic lands; at times, such works function as the impressions of a presence, and at others they cycle back into abstraction. Still other scholars, including Michael Barry, have tackled medieval portraiture through a Sufi lens, treating it as a rhetorical riddle and visual enigma. Two recent book-length studies also have provided important insights into Islamic religious thought and practice, visual perception, and image making: namely, Jamal Elias's *Aisle's Cushion* (2012) and Houari Touati's edited volume of essays that explore human figuration and portraiture in Islamic art. Last but not least, a number of future studies—among them Finbarr Barry Flood's forthcoming book and a volume of essays on figural representation—promise to break new ground as well.

Building on recent scholarship, this study of textual and visual images of the Prophet in Islamic traditions aims to define and explore Islamic religious figural art—a topic that remains to be given the attention it deserves. It draws on literature in Islamic studies and the history of art, among a number of cognate fields in the humanities. While it explores the various strategies that Muslim painters and artists eventually developed in order to depict Muhammad in nonfigural ways, it does not explain such abstracting tendencies simply as the outcome of Islam's so-called image problem or the result of a clearly articulated, timeless ban on representing the Prophet.

When it has come to representing the Prophet of Islam, anxiety and prohibition have not constituted the driving force behind Muslim artists' production and creativity. To narrowly focus on the question of Islamic aniconism or iconoclasm therefore detracts from the critical task of asking what impelled artists

to depict Muhammad, which iconographic devices they adopted and why, and how Muslim viewers and devotees have responded to and used such images within their daily lives.

It is these key questions that propel this book as it sets out to understand an array of expressive traditions that, taken as a whole, comprise a small sliver of the rich and varied cultural and artistic heritage of Islamic civilization. In the end, this study aims to demonstrate the ways in which images of the Prophet function as heuristic by which to better gauge Muslim life, thought, and practice from the medieval period to today. Over the centuries, Muhammad has been imagined and depicted as sacred king, epic hero, visionary mystic, point of sectarian contestation, devotional object, protective and talismanic force, and even collectible item. These many manifestations of the prophetic corpus and spirit pay tribute to the remarkably flexible ways in which Muhammad has been seen as a praiseworthy model in the eyes of his followers, whose desires and needs have fluctuated with the flow of time. <>

*Qur'anic Studies Today* edited by Angelika Neuwirth and Michael A. Sells [Routledge studies in the Qur'an, Routledge, 9781138181953]

*Qur'ānic Studies Today* brings together specialists in the field of Islamic studies to provide a range of essays that reflect the depth and breadth of scholarship on the Qur'ān.

Combining theoretical and methodological clarity with close readings of qur'ānic texts, these contributions provide close analysis of specific passages, themes, and issues within the Qur'ān, even as they attend to the disciplinary challenges within the field of qur'ānic studies today. Chapters are arranged into three parts, treating specific figures appearing in the Qur'ān, analysing particular suras, and finally reflecting on the Qur'ān and its "others." They explore the internal dimensions and interior chronology of the Qur'ān as text, its possible conversations with biblical and non-biblical traditions in Late Antiquity, and its role as scripture in modern exegesis and recitation. Together, they are indispensable for students and

scholars who seek an understanding of the Qur'ān founded on the most recent scholarly achievements.

Offering both a reflection of and a reflection on the discipline of qur'ānic studies, the strong, scholarly examinations of the Qur'ān in this volume provide a valuable contribution to Islamic and qur'ānic studies.

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Excerpt: This is a volume intended to be both a reflection of and a reflection on the discipline of qur'ānic studies. Contributions provide close analysis of specific passages, themes, and issues within the Qur'ān even as they attend to the disciplinary challenges, promises, or contentions with the field of qur'ānic studies today.

The field of qur'ānic studies has developed significantly over the past two decades. Suffice it to note at this point a few milestones in the area of collaborate endeavors and scholarly infrastructure: the establishment of the bilingual Journal of Qur'anic Studies (JQS)/Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Qur'āniya in 1999; the completion of the five-volume Encyclopedia of the Qur'an (EQ) in 2006; the establishment of the Corpus Coranicum project in 2007; the burgeoning of panels devoted to qur'ānic studies at the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature over the past decade; the founding of the International Qur'anic Studies Association in 2012; the appearance of the collaboratively produced two-thousand-page Study Qur'an in 2015; and development of web-based Qur'ān programs with hypertext interfaces for recitation, grammatical analysis, tajwid indications, transliterations, and concordances, along with a growing web-accessible corpus of classical and modern Arabic commentaries.

The idea for this volume stems from a Fall 2012 conference, "[Qur'ānic Studies Today](#)," that was organized by Angelika Neuwirth and Michael Sells at the University of Chicago.<sup>1</sup> Several essays in the volume are by conference participants, and all address the issues that were of core concern at the conference. Our intention in organizing the conference and in editing this volume has been to reflect the depth and breadth of scholarship on the Qur'ān. Our introductory essay outlines our shared perspectives on the critical interpretive issues with which contemporary scholarship is engaged. Angelika Neuwirth has composed the larger part of the introduction. Michael Sells has written the section of the introduction titled "Aurality and Interdiscursivity." Although our positions are engaged and in some sense programmatic; we did

not expect the participants in the conference, and we do not expect the contributors to this volume, to agree with our priorities or perspectives.

### Philology Contested

There are few universally accepted premises for the scholarly reading of the Qur'ān in Western scholarship; however, one of these is the assumption that the Qur'ān entertains a close relation to the Bible. The authority enjoyed by the Bible in gut ānic debates — reflecting its authority among educated individuals of the Qur' ān's Late Antique milieu, Jews and Christians, and arguably also syncretists — can hardly be overestimated. In view of this status, it is not out of place, therefore, to refer to the Bible with the honorific introduced by Northrup Frye, who titled it "The Great Code."<sup>1</sup> This label is not only apt for lending expression to the elevated status that the Bible has attracted in the entire realm of Near Eastern cultures, where it was present as a subtext of innumerable liturgical and literary texts and moreover of oral debates; it also highlights the holistic aspect of its reception. Frye's observation that "what matters is that 'the Bible' has traditionally been read as a unity, and has influenced Western imagination as a unity" can easily be translated into the Near Eastern context, where it is shared by the Late Antique educated elite, among them members of the nascent qur' ānic community. This community, from a certain time onward, was aware of the existence of different parts of the Bible that are attributed as scriptures to the Jews and Christians, respectively. These parts in their entirety, however, are regarded as emanations of "the Book" as a whole, al-kitāb, which is understood as a transcendent scripture from which pericopes are subsequently sent down to the various prophets. One of these dispatches — according to the early community's view, which is reflected in the text — gradually materialized into a new scripture with the Qur'ān.

How, then, does the Qur'ān compare to the Bible? Looking at its reception, Frye's appraisal of the Bible's presence as a subtext of much of European culture would mutatis mutandis easily apply to the Qur'ān as well. The Qur'ān is omnipresent in the literature, even the architecture, beaux arts, and

music of wide ranges of the Islam-imprinted world, whose "Great Code" it constitutes. It is, however, hard to ignore that very few Western scholars have viewed the Qur'ān as a text holistically and that the focus is rather on small units of the text in isolation. Nor there much interest in the event of the Qur'ān, in its emergence from an Arabian milieu of Late Antiquity, among scholars outside the disciplines of archaeology and ancient history. The question of whether the Qur'ān constitutes a Fortschreibung, a "continuation" of the Bible, adding to it new dimensions of meaning, or a mere imitation, a theologically diffuse recycling of biblical tradition, is still controversial. This volume contains a number of essays that directly or indirectly have a bearing on that controversy.<sup>1</sup> Because the controversy is staged in the arena of philology, a brief reflection on the task of our discipline, qur'anic philology, should precede the individual essays in our volume.

Drawing on Sheldon Pollock's now classical assessment of the current situation of philology and his compelling initiative to rethink the discipline, three principal questions arise. Firstly, is it sufficient to focus on the Qur'an exclusively in the shape established by the redactors, only contextualized with earlier traditions, as an endeavor to trace its historically founded "true meaning"? Second, is it methodologically sound to completely detach the text from the responses of its recipients, those contemporary with the text's publication and those that accumulated later to constitute the vast exegetical library of Islam? And third, can we afford to completely "erase our scholarly selves from the philological act" and thus escape the impact of the intellectual challenges that we are exposed to in our own cultural milieu?

Related problems have been debated since the onset of philological activity. Sheldon Pollock himself has recovered a significant precedent:

In 1872 a now-obscure pamphlet was published by a young — and, for non-classicists, now equally obscure — philologist. The philologist was Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff,<sup>8</sup> and the pamphlet was *Zukunftsphilologie!* (Future Philology!), an attack on Friedrich Nietzsche's just-published 'The Birth of Tragedy.' The dispute between the two

authors was ... about the method and meaning of classical studies. For Wilamowitz, true knowledge of any social or cultural phenomenon of the past could only be acquired by examining every feature of its historical context, and by doing so completely abstracting it from present-day perspectives. For Nietzsche, the approach of the newly professionalized discipline of philology had completely deadened antiquity and perverted the true aim of its study.... Viewed through a wider lens, this was a struggle between historicists and humanists, Wissenschaft and Bildung, scholarship and life, of a sort not unique to European modernity.

Indeed, a similar debate soon arose in another philological discipline — Jewish studies. One of the most brilliant scholars in the field (indeed the founder of modern Jewish studies), Gershom Scholem, launched an attack against the scholars of the German Jewish reform movement of the "Wissenschaft des Judentums" who had introduced historical-critical scholarship into the field. Scholem — viewing their activities through a Nietzschean lens — flung against them his famously devastating verdict accusing them of being the gravediggers of Judaism." Critical historical scholarship, in Nietzsche's and Scholem's view, threatened to exert a lethal effect as it would turn a living textual tradition into a sterile object of analysis. Taking this critique seriously, is historical critical scholarship then a problematic, even outdated approach?

The "historical-critical approach" stands for a complex canon of methodological steps. Although this approach in biblical studies — not least because of its disinterest in the final shape of the text and indeed its tendency toward deconstruction — has long been viewed critically and has been challenged by a variety of new methods, it is hard to renounce it altogether. As a matter of fact, historical-critical qur'ānic scholarship shares an indispensable objective with biblical historical scholarship: the recontextualization of texts with the documents of their local and temporal milieu. It is this cultural background that alone can make the innovative contribution of the qur'ānic discourse to the debates of its time recognizable. Underlying this approach is the principle that texts, first and

foremost, need to be read as witnesses of the cultural dynamics of their time rather than serving as identity documents of the cultures to which they themselves contributed. This fruitful and necessary aspect of the historical-critical approach is at the center of several of the studies presented here.

This important principle was introduced into qur'ānic studies by the scholars of the Wissenschaft des Judentums, the same group that was so harshly criticized by Scholem. It was Abraham Geiger's work from 1833 — "Was hat Muhammad aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen" in particular — which set the course for a new reading of the Qur'ān. This group of scholars, working until the exclusion of Jewish scholarship in German universities from 1933, was to lay the basis of the historical study of the Qur'ān. They succeeded in locating the emergence of the Qur'ān, which previously had been considered as an exotic, or at least a local Arabian, and theologically deficient text, into a milieu shaped by complex Jewish, Christian, and pagan traditions: an "epistemic space" that we would today term "Late Antiquity," thus putting the Qur'an on a level equal with other religious writings. This achievement can hardly be overrated. The contextualization of the Qur'an with the texts of its milieu has recently enjoyed a comeback not only in Europe but also in much of current North American scholarship." Yet, we have to be aware that the historical-critical approach, the consideration of the text as such, cannot provide more than a part of the entire task. Rather, it ought to be considered as a propaedeutic step that needs to be complemented by additional methods — literary criticism first and foremost.

That there is a need to reconnect the text to its recipients — Sheldon Pollock's second demand — is obvious. The Qur'ān, severed from its traditional context, would be a truncated text. The Qur'ān has generated a vast library of heterogeneous textual genres that are pertinent and often indispensable for its understanding; primarily the *sīra*, hadith literature at large, and more specifically the comprehensive commentaries. It is easily forgotten that the philological tools Western scholarship disposes of have been developed in Islamic tradition, which from the earliest times onward (the

eighth century CE/second century AH) was concerned with disciplines such as lexicography, grammar, and orthography. Other branches, such as the *sīra*, have provided Western scholarship with the most plausible historical framework for the Qur'ānic Event itself in both traditional and modern critical inquiry. Moreover, to understand the epistemic and theological dimension of the Qur'ān as the "Great Code" of Islamic culture, studying the commentaries and traditions produced by it is essential.

Reception history starts, however, much earlier.. It is intrinsic in the genesis of the text itself. This is made evident through the so-called canonical approach developed by Brevard S. Childs and modified by Christoph Dohmen and Manfred Deming,<sup>19</sup> who opened it up to diachronic investigations. They propose to understand the genesis of a canon as a process of growth. "Canon," in this context, no longer covers the officially codified final form of a text but rather refers to the binding covenantal character inherent in the texts, affirmed by the continuous references of later-emerging text units to an earlier text nucleus. Translated into the qur'ānic context, this would mean that there are recurrent instances of intratextuality within the text. Based on multiple criteria, it appears possible to identify a qur'ānic text nucleus around which the canonical process may have unfolded in the monotheistic, short suras that focus on the simple discourse of human gratefulness and ungratefulness and divine reward and punishment. These texts are continuously referred to and commented on in the longer and more complex suras that mirror new and more sophisticated discourses. In this way, the ensuing discourse remodels the simple form of divine-human interaction in the light of the experience of the biblical prophets and the elect people, the Israelites. This discourse gives way again, after the hijra, to a new discourse in which biblical scripture was contested between the community and the living heirs of the biblical tradition, particularly the Jews of Medina. The canonical process, therefore, does not manifest itself only in the development of new discourses that emerge from each other or unfold around each other. They are not exclusively textual phenomena,

but socially conditioned ones, because they are personalized in an exegetical community that performs canonizing tasks.

Viewed from a social perspective, the text's referring back to earlier communications indicates its embeddedness in a live debate between the proclaimer and his listeners. The observation that the nascent community had a role to play in the qur'anic communication process has of course not gone unnoticed in the early Islamic tradition. As early as the eighth century CE/ second century AH, Muslim scholars were arguing that certain passages had been revealed on the occasion of certain events in the life of the prophet ("occasions for revelation" or *asbāb al-nuzūl*). Such revelations were therefore explained with regard to their being embedded in a concrete historical and social situation. The critical examination of these numerous, if also frequently conflicting, Islamic traditions was initially at the heart of the Western attempt to establish the internal chronology of the Qur'an. This was an effort first undertaken by Gustav Weil (1808-1889) and again by Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930).<sup>20</sup> Whereas both were in agreement on the general principle, however, they reached slightly different conclusions. Today this kind of reference has been discarded in much of historical critical scholarship, which regards the Islamic testimonies codified a century or more after the events as historically unreliable.

This verdict is, of course, debatable. Aziz al-Azmeh has justly insisted that a disqualification of historical sources for the sole reason that they are not contemporary with the events they describe is futile. It is of course true that much of Islamic tradition, including the *asbāb* narratives, reflects a fundamentally new hermeneutic vis-à-vis the Qur'ān. It is no longer the struggle over the contested truth — carried out against syncretists, Jews, or Christians — but the construction of the memory of the formative events of the past that occupies the center of interest. It should, however, be stressed that to investigate the reception of the qur'ānic message during the prophet's ministry, the only textual source that we can rely on immediately is the qur'ānic text itself, which is at the same time the earliest discursive text put to writing in Arabic

language. To re-establish the historical scenario of the qur'ānic emergence, this text needs to be investigated as to the traces of interlocutors involved in its debates. Such a procedure is, of course, alien to historical students who critique sīra texts for not being illuminating enough to glean immediate knowledge about the historical facts. Qur'ānic texts are equally non-informative when screened for positive historical knowledge. Yet they do reveal important information about the context of the text's addressees and thus about the social and ideological milieu of the Qur'ānic Event. Most importantly, however, once read with the tools of literary scholarship, they grant insight into the community's gradual attainment of a religious identity of its own. Sound historical study has to apply interdisciplinary tools, among which literary criticism should be regarded as the most important for the study of the Qur'ān. Not only has the sīra yet to be read with literary criteria in mind, but the Qur'ān, to begin with, needs to be reread as a literary text. The two approaches — historical and literary — have until now been pursued almost completely separately from one another.

#### Literary Scholarship

For the important step of reconnecting textual and contextual studies to take place, literary criticism is needed. It is the formal shape of the text that provides the clue to its literary genre and, therefore, its social purpose and ultimately the expectations of its recipients. In view of the Qur'ān's dialectical structure, "drama" has been proposed as a proper generic attribution, a plurivocal text where the individual scenes and acts build upon each other, the later ones being in dialogue with the earlier ones. This is in tune with the qur'ānic textual format where the debate between the proclaimer and his listeners — the first recipients — frequently entails the reinterpretation of earlier communicated messages in the light of newly acquired insights.

Although this model of understanding the Qur'ān is not the only possible way, it will be presented here in some detail. The Qur'ān, read as the transcript of a prophetic proclamation embedded in communal debates, reflects a historically significant

development, that is, the gradual emergence of a community with a religious identity of its own, the nascent Islamic umma. To reconstruct the subsequent steps of the qur'ānic argument that led up to the eventual construction of the community's identity, we need to rely on the sura as an innovative literary genre intended as the qur'ānic medium to convey a particular new message.

The suras correspond to the scenes of the drama, each marking a distinctive progress in the argument. It comes as no surprise, then, that already the earliest manuscripts dating from the second half of the seventh century CE/first century AH present a text arrangement with distinctly separate suras. Many of these suras are the outcome of a revision process that occurred during the communication of the text. It is only in their final forms that they express the consensus of the community — achieved in the course of their repeated recitation during the prophet's ministry.

That this consensus was attained through a continuous communal rethinking is evident from the so-called later additions made to many of the earlier suras to update and align them with successively acquired new theological insights of the community. Such revisions of earlier texts, which have been acknowledged as such in learned Islamic tradition as well, deserve, as Nicolai Sinai has stressed, to be contextualized with the related phenomenon of the Targum in Jewish tradition. The Targumim are interpretative translations of biblical pericopes that were undertaken to make the "antique" Bible readings delivered in the synagogue service relevant to communities who were acculturated at a later stage of development in Late Antiquity. In the qur'ānic case, "Targumization" was not a later intervention but occurred during the proclamation process itself. Textual additions, then, are a sign of intra-textual dynamics. The freedom to practice this kind of updating was insured by the particular mode of the communication that occurred not "as a single, complete pronouncement" (jumlatan wahidah), but in stages, a little at a time. The Qur'ān is primarily an oral scripture, the charter of a prophetic communication open to continuous communal rethinking.

### Aurality and Interdiscursivity

Qur'ānic orality is multidimensional. The Qur'ān presents itself as direct speech to and through the qur'ānic prophet to the prophet's contemporaries and a wider audience that is un-delimited temporally and spatially.

Beyond the Qur'ān's self-presentation as direct speech made up of a series of diachronically separate addresses to the prophet, some of which evoke, resituate, quote, or echo earlier ones as well as biblical and non-biblical discourses that most likely were circulating in Arabic, other aspects of qur'ānic orality and aurality need also to be mentioned. In regard to orality, it is widely recognized that the Qur'ān contains features similar to those identified as formulaic elements within oral-performative traditions. Historically, reciters played a central role in the Qur'ān's transmission and dissemination. To the present day, orality remains a central feature in its role within the religious and wider cultural and civilizational communities that have formed themselves around it. It is recited constantly by innumerable individuals of all ages and skill levels and, with the developments in audio technology — from radio to audiocassettes to the Internet — the oral text has become an even more pervasive part of everyday life. It is now possible to access a given passage in recitation, in dozens of recitations, in various styles, by master reciters with the same ease that one can open the printed text to particular page. Associated with but not confined to these dimensions of orality are the aural characteristics of the Qur'ān, characteristics that have been explored in recent years by Adunīs, Navid Kerman, Thomas Hoffman, and Michael Sells. Through its intensive employment of rhyme, assonance, consonance, paronomasia, and various modalities of resonance or echo, qur'ānic discourse forms an internal sound chamber, with dense patterns of resonances within each passage, defined as a prophetic or literary unit, or both, and across differing passages within the Qur'an. The malleability of the Qur'ān in terms of cadence, metricality, verse length, and rhyme heightens its aural character. In contrast to classical Arabic

poetry, with its intricate meters, only one of which is to be employed within a single poem, and its use of monorhyme, the more malleable qur'ānic cadence, rhyme, and verse length resist the naturalization of poetic acoustics and by doing so keeps them in a state of heightened drama. Those same features reinforce the internal diachrony of the Qur'ān, implied or actual, that is a central concern of many of the essays in this volume.

In view of the preponderantly oral and aural nature of qur'ānic discourse, it is useful to adjust the foundational terminology of two of the more productive literary-critical tendencies of recent years: close reading and intertextuality. Methods of close reading have brought into focus the intricate workings within literary texts. The abstention from assumptions concerning authorial intent, the replacement of the authority of the author with a scrutiny of the implied author and implied audience, and the bracketing, within the lens of the close reading itself, of extra-textual biography have led to major contributions in our understanding of address, narration, time-space, character, narrational and story duration, point of view, and authorial, narrative, poetic, and audience personas. It is important to note in this regard that methods that employ bracketing need not and arguably should not ignore extra-textual information any more than a photographer or scientist should ignore the reality of what appears outside the focal frame. In recent years, such close readings have been associated primarily with novels and short fiction that are self-referentially written and directed toward an audience of readers. As productive as these recent literary-critical tendencies have been, words such as "the text" and "the reader" bear within them certain semantic fields and literal meanings that inevitably influence the analysis. In his essay in this volume, Michael Sells argues that qur'ānic studies can be most enriched by such literary-critical perspectives after the oral and aural nature of the Qur'ān is acknowledged from the ground up, meaning, in terms of basic terminology, that "close reading" be replaced with "close hearing" and "the reader" with "the audient."

The concept of intertextuality, like the methods of close reading with which it has been associated, has been at the heart of recent literary-critical endeavors, despite the well-known contentions over the definition of the term itself. Mary Orr's work has discussed intertextuality with attention to the critical categories of quotation, allusion, emulation or imitation, and misprision. The suppleness and open-ended nature of the concept intertextuality has brought critical attention to literary features and relationships that were not easily locatable through traditional categories. One area of at least partial consensus is that intertextuality indicates a significant relationship between one text (written or oral) and an earlier one. It is the responsibility of the critic of course to establish the nature and the significance of the relation so identified. Here again, the full resources of a literary-critical tendency will be open most productively to qur'ānic studies once the essential terminological adjustment is made: rather than textuality (inter-, intra-, or trans-), we might better speak of discursivity. The Qur'ān, viewed as a whole, is marked by interdiscursive relationships: allusions to, debates with, reappropriations, recastings, or strategical misprisions of earlier, non-qur'ānic discourses. It is permeated as well by transdiscursive elements: self-quotations, partial quotations, allusions, recastings, partial echoes, inverse echoes, and ironic echoes. Yet the Qur'ān comprises multiple separate discourses, each of which is saturated intra-discursively with its internal resonances and interdiscursively with the discourses that proceeded or followed it. A close hearing may be reticent in making immediate stipulations regarding the chronology of suras or the prophetic, as opposed to literary unity of suras, but it will be rigorously attentive to implied prophetic diachrony and the question of whether a given prophetic unit may be contained within or itself contain a given sura.

#### The Qur'an and Late Antiquity

As a fair number of the articles collected here proceed from the premise that the Qur'ān can be classified as a phenomenon of Late Antiquity, a few words about Late Antiquity are merited. Late Antiquity is often understood as a historical epoch determined by particular political turning points,

although the delimitations of that epoch are controversial among historians. Peter Brown, whose seminal work brought Late Antiquity to the attention of scholars across the borders of disciplines, has proposed the period of 200-750 CE, again orienting himself with respect to political developments. Although Brown's end date of 750 in principle would allow one to consider the Qur'ān as a Late Antique text and invite a study of its role within that era, Brown does not discuss the position of the Qur'ān within Late Antiquity at all. His late dating of the end of the epoch is justified by his concession that while the Umayyads continued to uphold earlier established hierarchical structures, they did not figure as active players in Late Antiquity but as tolerant contemporaries of the late antique Christians. To quote Brown, "In this sub-Christian guise the Arabs had found a place in the sun." The Qur'ān, in Brown's view, is a foreign import into the otherwise culturally empty Hijaz: "It was a stroke of genius on the part of Muhammad to turn this essentially foreign message into a principle on which the conflict-ridden society of the Hijaz could reorganize itself." Although James Montgomery has eloquently protested against the image of the "empty Hijaz," the essentialist gaze on the Qur'ān and on Islam as such — as an intrusion into its late antique Eastern Mediterranean milieu rather than the document of a debate that mirrors universal discourses of the time — has remained prevalent among historians of Late Antiquity. These historians understand Late Antiquity as a period strongly determined by Christian culture, showing far less interest in the striking phenomenon of the transgression of confessional borders. Scholars of Judaism such as Daniel Boyarin and Peter Schaefer, however, have clearly demonstrated that it was the constant exchange of exegetical ideas that propelled the emergence of a Jewish as well as of a Christian identity. The process we observe in the Qur'ān — continuous debate — points in the same direction. Why ignore these textual symptoms of an origin of a shared epistemic space with other religious cultures? We should not read "Late Antiquity" in the sense of a politically determined epoch but rather as an epistemic space, a "Denkraum," where particular textual practices are employed by diverse communities. These practices



are partially techniques of debate and rhetorical devices and partly ideologically new rereadings of earlier traditions that are transferred from particularistic texts into universal ones or from tribally oriented texts into appeals to the pious individual.

It is in this cultural milieu that we must locate the scenario of the proclaimer's communication to his listeners. What do we know about the first recipients and their education? It is hard to aptly describe the first listeners who were not yet Muslims; their Muslim identity only emerged in the course of their "qur'ānic education," listening to and debating the prophetic proclamation. Throughout this process they are best described as individuals familiar with plural Late Antique traditions, locally Arab, but first and foremost biblical. Our claim of an epistemic space shared by Jews and Christians, within which the new community originated, can be corroborated through reference to more recent biblical scholarship that has highlighted an essential transformation of the Bible in Late Antiquity. James Kugel has alerted us to a popularization undergone by the Bible during the centuries before the Qur'ān:

Examined through the lens of wisdom writings, the original meaning and even the original genres of Israel's ancient texts were ... reconfigured by a whole new way of reading — it was this way of reading that Jews and Christians canonized as their Bible. Along with it came the great flood of interpretive motifs created by the ancient interpreters.... One would not be wrong to think of this transformation as ... a kind of massive act of rewriting.

Kugel could have added that "this way of reading" of biblical tradition was also what the nascent Islamic community adopted and developed. But the Qur'ān — as is the case in most Late Antiquity scholarship — is still excluded from his scope. Through the recent work of Sidney Griffith, Kugel's observations have been updated. Griffith widens the horizons of the impact of the "transformed Bible" to include the Qur'ān, which in his work figures among the manifestations of what he calls the "interpreted Bible," or the recollections of biblical narratives interpreted and expanded through homiletic reworkings. Griffith's article in this

volume exemplifies this new reading of the Qur'ān in the light of the "interpreted Bible." The concept of the "interpreted Bible" is immensely useful to evade the often impossible decision as to the intertextual relation of a given qur'ānic text and the predecessor tradition. We have to assume that there was a plethora of Bible-related traditions, many emerging from new readings of the Bible, others from ancient Oriental lore beside the Bible, and others again from Hellenic thinking imposed on biblical materials. Scholars in Jewish studies such as Haim Schwarzbaum and others have introduced the useful collective designation "Aggadah" for these traditions, assuming a somewhat wider range of common religious lore than Griffith's "interpreted Bible" would suggest. Once we reckon with the presence of sections of this immense corpus of orally transmitted religious lore in the milieu of the Qur'ān's emergence, the Qur'ān becomes recognizable not as a text dependent on and thus secondary to the lore of earlier religious confessions but as another interlocutor in the ongoing debate, which crystallizes in a steadily growing shared treasury of traditions, many of which had been circulated of old. The Qur'an, then, does not appear as a "re-user" of earlier materials but rather as a "producer" in its own right: the Qur'an enters and continues the universal process of cultural translation ongoing in Late Antiquity. Not unlike the rabbinic and ecclesiastic debates of the time, the Qur'ān enters the scene as an active player, as a creative participant in the process of rereading "antique" traditions — such as the Bible, ancient Arabic poetry, and Hellenic philosophy — with new perspectives.

#### A Word on Organization

We have divided this volume into three parts: Part 1 features essays treating specific figures as they appear throughout the Qur'ān. It includes Devin Stewart's analysis of the qur'ānic Shu'ayb narratives, which follows on his critical overview of the method of John Wansbrough and Wansbrough's discussion of the Shu'ayb passages; Nora Schmid's diachronic analysis of qur'ānic references or allusions to the wife of Lot; and Hannelies Koloska's diachronic analysis of the Jonah narratives.

Part 2 features essays that focus on the analysis of particular suras: Walid Saleh's reading of Sūras 10-15 as reflecting a moment of crisis in the career of the prophet; Michael Sells' analysis of the early Mūsā story in Sura 20 (TāHā), verses 1-79; Angelika Neuwirth's reading of both the early and later Mūsā narratives in TāHā; Sidney Griffith's essay, which focuses upon Sura 26 (ash-Shu'arā'); and Lauren Osborne's essay, which treats Sura 25 (al-Furqān) first as a literary text with its own thematic emphasis upon issues of sound and recitation and then from the standpoint of musicology and performance study through an analysis of its performance by Mishari Rashid Alafasy.

Part 3 features essays that reflect on the Qur'an and its "others." It includes Ghassan el Masri's analysis of qur'ānic evocation of deserted cities in relationship to the theme of abandoned places within the classical Arabic nasīb; Holger Zellentin's study of "Judaean-Christian legal culture, as solidly (yet never fully) reconstructable with the help of the Didascalia, the Clementine Homilies, and the Qur'ān itself"; and Mun'im Sirry's analysis of qur'ānic polemics regarding religious others along with positions taken in regard to such polemics by modernist commentators.

We would emphasize that such an organization is merely meant as an initial organizing structure. The multidimensional conversations among the essays in this volume form a conversation through and across the three parts of the volume. <>

['Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī between Spiritual Authority and Political Power: A Persian Lord and Intellectual in the Heart of the Ilkhanate With a Critical Edition and Translation of al-Wārid al-šārid al-ṭārid šubhat al-mārid and a Critical Edition of its Persian Version Zayn al-mu'taqad li-zayn al-mu'taqid](#) by Giovanni Maria Martini [Islamicate Intellectual History, Brill, 9789004352889]

In ['Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī between Spiritual Authority and Political Power: A Persian Lord and Intellectual in the Heart of the Ilkhanate](#), Giovanni Maria Martini investigates the personality of a major figure in the socio-political and cultural

landscape of Mongol Iran. In pursuing this objective, the author follows parallel paths: Chapter 1 provides the most updated reconstruction of Simnānī's (d. 736/1336) biography, which, thanks to its unique features, emerges as a cross-section of Iranian society and as a microhistory of the complex relationships between a Sufi master, Persian elites and Mongol rulers during the Ilkhanid period; Chapter 2 contains a study on the phenomenon of Arabic-Persian diglossia in Simnānī's written work, arguing for its socio-religious function; in Chapters 3 to 6 the critical editions of two important, interrelated treatises by Simnānī are presented; finally, Chapter 7 offers the first full-length annotated translation of a long work by Simnānī ever to appear in a Western language.

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Excerpt: 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī (659–736/1261–1336) was beyond a shadow of a doubt one of the most prominent Sufis of his time and, more generally, in the whole history of Sufism. One could easily reach this conclusion by examining the vast amount of literary works produced by this prolific writer, discovering their originality and the influence of his ideas on later authors and whole schools, or even more simply, by ascertaining the great number of contemporary and later sources, historical or otherwise, which apprise us of his biographical milestones and which, without exception, depict him as a leading figure of Taṣawwuf. A number of the greatest scholars in the field of Islamic religious thought and Islamic spiritual movements – among whom the names Henry Corbin, Marijan Molé and Hermann Landolt stand out – devoted many pages to the author, underlining and exalting his unique doctrinal elaboration, and inaugurating a fortunate era of study on the subject which led to the publication of a significant number of Simnānī's original treatises and which might be considered to have culminated in 1995 with the appearance of the monograph of Jamal J. Elias entitled *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī*.

However, the works of the aforementioned scholars have somehow not been sufficient to establish Simnānī in his rightful place. Simnānī's name and his literary work, albeit wide, elaborate and influential, are rarely mentioned in essays on Sufism, and he remains almost completely unknown outside the inner circle of experts on the subject.

The reasons for the oblivion in which Simnānī remained for so long before being rediscovered thanks to the efforts of the aforesaid Orientalists, as well as the causes of the author's falling into oblivion again after the publication of Elias' monograph, can ultimately be explained by the specific nature of his work and the themes on which it focuses, along with the historical events in which

the order that claims him as one of its most prominent sheikhs, i.e. the Kubrawiyya, was involved.

### Simnānī and the Kubrawiyya

Simnānī was one of the prominent exponents of this spiritual movement which takes its name from its eponymous founder Naḡm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, who was born in Khwārazm in 540 (1145) and died there in 618 (1221) at the hands of the Mongols. Kubrā, in turn, gained his spiritual filiation from the Suhrawardiyya through the mediation of his master 'Ammār al-Bidlīsī (d. between 590–604/1194–1207).

The Kubrawiyya started out as a Sunni order. Nevertheless, there was always a marked openness to the intellectual exchange between its adherents and the Shi'i environment, a trait which became evident in Simnānī's thoughts too, and which, after his death, would lead to unexpected developments.

Prompted in all probability by the will to consolidate the Islamic community in the face of the success of new religions introduced by the Mongol invaders, and yet adhering to mainstream Sunnism, Simnānī attempted to present the Sufi point of view as the one able to reconcile the two souls of Islam. To do this he started from the concept that the majority of the Sufi initiatic lines went back to 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, whom the Shi'is – i.e. the partisans of 'Alī – recognize as the only legitimate successor to Muḥammad after his death, and affirmed that the love for 'Alī and the acknowledgment of his irreplaceable role were an integral part of Sunni Islam and especially of Sufism.

It is from this perspective that some of the specific features of Simnānī's thought should be read. For example, the work entitled *Manāẓir al-maḥāḍir li-l-nāẓir al-ḥāḍir*, which is entirely devoted to the exaltation of the figure of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, made wide recourse to excerpts from the *Nahḡ al-balāḡa*, a text that according to the Shi'i tradition embodies the genuine sayings of the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the *Manāẓir* were written to exalt 'Alī, it does not reveal – as Molé highlights – any specific

Shi'i traits, but rather is largely conceived as a polemic against that group.

The fascinating phenomenon whereby in many places of his literary work Simnānī uses Shi'i terminology to indicate Sunni concepts should also be read bearing this perspective in mind, for example, when he uses the word *a'imma* to refer to the four first (in Sunni terminology "rightly guided") caliphs. By so doing he intellectually accomplishes the preservation of the Shi'i technical language whilst using it to describe Sunni and Sufi concepts, replacing the specific Shi'i doctrines.

Emblematic in this sense is the statement of Simnānī according to which the twelfth Shi'i imām, Muḥammad b. al-Hasan al-ʿAskarī, did actually disappear, but did not remain in Occultation (*ḡayba*) in corpore for centuries to come back at the End of Time as the Twelver Shi'i doctrine affirms. Simnānī states that this is because at that precise moment he would have reached the degree of *quṭb* inside the esoteric hierarchy (a juncture which, according to Simnānī, would imply hiding from the eyes of the world) and died a natural death instead nineteen years later.

The preceding lines of thought, in addition to outlining a peculiar trait of the thoughts of the author, serve to introduce the question of the later changes that Kubrawī groups and the later Kubrawiyya order would assume some time after his death. Citing the words Molé wrote at the end of a thorough examination of the position Simnānī adopted towards the Shi'a:

quelqu'admirable ait pu être l'équilibre de la solution imaginée par Simnānī, quelqu'attachant son souci de préserver l'unité islamique tout en intégrant l'apport positif des courants hétérodoxes, et notamment des shiites, elle n'a pas résisté au temps. Quelques générations plus tard elle est abandonnée et l'ordre se tourne décidément vers le shiisme.

[however admirable it may have been the equilibrium of the solution imagined by Simnani, while attaching its concern to preserve the Islamic unity while integrating the positive contribution of the heterodox currents, and in particular the Shiites, it did

not resist the time. A few generations later it is abandoned and the order turns decidedly towards Shiism.]

While subsequent scholars, notably Devin DeWeese and others, have criticized and refined some of Molé's conclusions for this period, the fact remains that ultimately the Sunni lines of the Kubrawiyya dissolved in the 16th century (with the exception of the Chinese branches), merging with the Naqṣbandiyya via masters who were simultaneously spiritually associated with several initiatic brotherhoods. The affiliation to the Kubrawī Order continued to be transmitted "in name" only, whereas the Shi'i derivations of the confraternity survived, changing in name as well as in spirit and giving life to two new orders: the Nūrbahāʿiyya and the Dahabiyya. Together with the rise of the Safavid dynasty in Iran, this sequence of historical vicissitudes appears to have contributed to the absence of followers who could receive the heritage of Simnānī and contributed to the sidelining, if not oblivion, of this towering figure of the Islamic intellectual milieu. The regular Sunni filiation of the order – the only one which may have been able to take on the mantle of Simnānī and continue his teachings directly – eventually lost its traction. Conversely, about two centuries after his death new Shi'i streams flourished from the bosom of the Kubrawiyya-Rukniyya (from Rukn al-Dīn, the honorific of Simnānī). These new Shi'i groups either did not recognize themselves in his doctrinal elaborations, or perhaps saw in them potential danger, since within their multiple aspects they appeared to bear some of the most acute and deep criticisms of Shi'i concepts. It was a criticism that was less an outright condemnation of Shi'i Islam (which would be, despite everything, a recognition of the latter as an autonomous entity) than it was an attempt to reabsorb it into Sunni Islam, therefore leading to its literal "dissolution."

Further to this devolution of the Kubrawī Sunni filiation, evidence suggests that the more or less strict adhesion to the doctrine of the greatest Sufi of all time, i.e. Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), or rather the drawing of inspiration from and the free re-elaboration of ideas formalized by him, established itself strongly in all circles of Taṣawwuf,

both Sunni and Shi'i, including the Kubrawiyya, while in contrast, Simnānī seems to have expressed reservations about some of the ideas of said author. This may be a further reason why Simnānī and his writings were eventually sidelined.

### The Criticism of Ibn 'Arabī

As already touched upon, one of the significant features of Simnānī's thought which did not aid his fortune, was the criticisms that the author, in many passages of his work, expressed of some points of the complex doctrine developed by Ibn 'Arabī, the doctor maximus (al-Sheikh al-Akbar) of Islamic esotericism, who was part of the generation immediately preceding himself. The nature of this polemic has been examined at various times by Hermann Landolt, even though it is not easy to understand to what extent this was a matter of out-and-out contrast on doctrinal issues – and therefore a really insoluble conflict – or instead if it had more to do with the terminology used and the different ways of presenting fundamental concepts which would have been shared by both thinkers.

Simnānī was one of the first who dared express discordant opinions in respect to Ibn 'Arabī from a position within the same Sufi environment. Moreover, it has now almost been ascertained that the theses advanced by him were embraced in some of the Central Asian Sufi milieu, and even more so in the Indian one, where they were influential – even though indirectly – in the formation of the doctrine which some three centuries later found its expression in the thought of Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1033/1624) and the concept of waḥdat al-ṣūhūd, a term that gives the impression of being a counterweight to the Akbarian concept of waḥdat al-wuḡūd. It is not my intention to enter into the subject of this polemic here, which a more profound study will find in all probability to have been largely a divergence in regard to terminology and therefore less essential than supposed. What I would suggest is that both in the past, within Muslim circles, and in modern times, mostly, but not exclusively, in Western academia, this juxtaposition of two different views has been detrimental to the study of the actual matter at hand: rather than stimulate a debate and focus

attention on an original and at times audacious author, it has in fact discouraged the study of him because, as often happens in other areas too, sometimes the authority of iconic personalities seems to impose itself almost as a dogmatic truth and therefore makes a critical analysis of their stances arduous. It seems to me that this is what happened in the case of the figure of Ibn 'Arabī, who, having been rightly recognized as the brightest star in the intellectual firmament of Sufism, appears to have generated a kind of overwhelming awe even within the field of Islamic Studies, where it seems that the only criticisms “admitted” for him, and therefore analyzed, are those which come from the field of legalistic Islam that are (to put it simply) those raised against him by Ibn Taymiyya and his epigones and which, moving from points of view far from those in which mystical thought is located, and therefore considered to be “external” to that environment, are less problematic than those aroused by the opinions of Sufi authors like 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ġīlī (d. ca. 827/1424), Sirhindī or indeed, Simnānī.

So Simnānī emerges as a “thorny figure” and a cantankerous personality and, above all, to be apparently inconsistent, as clearly evidenced in his biography, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 1. Irascible, stubborn and in perennial disagreement with the Ilkhanid political authorities, he was a prolific writer both in Arabic and Persian, the founder of several ḥānaqāhs, the instructor of numerous disciples and a strenuous champion of the ṣarī'a to the point of appearing, at times, a dangerous fanatic, attempting to kill a travelling companion by the sword because of his antinomian ideas while, at the same time, he was able to elaborate a structured conception of the spiritual and psychophysical states of the initiate and to write one of the most original and articulated esoteric commentaries on the Koran.

He was polemical against everybody depending on the events: Sunni and Shi'i Muslims, philosophers, other Sufis, Buddhists, and politicians; nevertheless, he was able to synthesize apparently incompatible points of view, as can be grasped from his interpretation of the Shi'i terminology, from the themes investigated in some of his treatises or, even

better, from the intricate relationship he entertained with the Buddhist hierarchies of the Ilkhanate. An example of the latter is an incident when Simnānī encouraged one of his disciples to follow the spiritual direction of a bahāī (a Buddhist monk), thereby allowing him to transcend the spiritual degree in which he was stranded, while at the same time he depicts the dialectical competition in which he personally disputed with another Buddhist monk and in which he energetically defended Islam, decisively refuting the opinions of the rival.

After having clarified – at least in essence – some of the reasons why a giant of Sufism such as Simnānī may have been overshadowed, which are, briefly, the subsequent destiny of the then only nascent Kubrawiyya order that later claimed him as part of its lineage in name, though not in spirit, and his hard and polyhedral character, the reflections of which are transparent in his literary productions as well as in the criticisms to some of Ibn ‘Arabī’s formulations, I will move on to examine how much of Simnānī’s work has been published in the original languages or in translation, which scholarship has examined him in his own right and as the primary object of investigation, and which of his works, on the contrary, remain to date almost completely unexplored.

### The Current State of Research

Simnānī was not discovered by modern scholars until relatively late. The first edition of excerpts of the works of Simnānī, from his Koran commentary and from the Čihil mağlis of Iqbāl Siğistānī, appeared in 1929 in the famous *Recueil de Textes inédites concernant l’histoire de la mystique en pays d’Islam* of Louis Massignon. The first modern essay on the author appeared in 1954 in the form of an article written in Persian by Sa‘īd Nafīsī, and this was followed a year later by the first monograph published by Sayyid Muẓaffar Šadr entitled *Šarḥ-i aḥwāl wa afkār wa ātār-i ‘arīf-i rabbānī Abū al-Makārim Rukn al-Dīn šayḥ ‘Alā’ al-Dawla Simnānī*.

In 1960, an entry devoted to Simnānī written by Fritz Meier appeared in the *Encyclopaedia of*

Islam. In the following year, the previously quoted article by Marijan Molé entitled “*Les Kubrawiyya entre sunnisme et shiisme aux huitième et neuvième siècles de l’Hégire*” was published, in which long passages from some of the principal treatises of Simnānī were translated for the first time into a Western language, and in which some important aspects of his personality were examined in detail. Five years later, in 1966, Nazif Şahinoğlu’s biography of the author appeared as part of his dissertation.

Further important research on the mystical and religious thought of Simnānī was carried out by Henry Corbin<sup>3</sup> who focussed above all on the innovative contributions to the doctrine of the subtle centres (laṭā‘if) which Simnānī related to the concept of the “seven prophets of the self being” and to the esoteric hermeneutic of the Koran. The work of the great French orientalist was followed in turn by that of Hermann Landolt who, on the other hand, focussed on the relationship between the author and his master al-Isfarāyīnī, based on the primary sources represented by their “correspondence” and, in parallel, on the delicate question of Simnānī’s interpretation of the doctrine of waḥdat al-wuğūd, which was in turn studied with reference to perhaps the most famous high-pitched epistolary exchange of the whole history of Sufism, i.e. that between Simnānī and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāšānī (d. between 730–6/1329–35), the renowned disciple of Ibn ‘Arabī.

A short biography of the author is present in the analytical study of the Čihil mağlis carried out by Hartwig Cordt, while other bibliographical information about Simnānī is found in the essay of ‘Abd al-Rafī’ Ḥaqīqat entitled *Ḥumḥāna-yi waḥdat*, as well as in another encyclopedic entry rich in references written by Josef van Ess for the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

In 1995 Jamal J. Elias’s fundamental monographic essay on Simnānī, the only one hitherto written in a Western language, was published, the already mentioned *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ‘Alā’ ad-dawla as-Simnānī*. In his study Elias presents the most exhaustive outline on the

author and his work, including a full detailed biography, a summary of the salient traits of Simnānī's thought and, in particular, a wide bibliographical section which, even though necessarily incomplete in some points, nevertheless has the merit to having gathered references to almost all the works of the great Iranian Sufi, a large part of which remains unedited today.

However, paradoxically, Elias's monograph, instead of inspiring further studies on Simnānī, produced the opposite effect, which may have been due to the misconception that nothing interesting remained to be said about this author.

Consequently, from 1995 to 2013 no further works in Western academia were devoted to this great mystic, although he had attracted the interest of prominent scholars in the past. This trend was broken only very recently by the contribution of Devin DeWeese, which appeared in early 2014 under the title "‘Alā’ al-Dawla Simnānī's Religious Encounters at the Mongol Court near Tabriz."

It is only in Iran that further, sporadic contributions on the topic have been published, which nevertheless seem in general to have been based on the previous studies and seem to lack originality. Among the recent Iranian publications on Simnānī one should cite a study by Kāẓim Muḥammadī entitled *Ala'uddowla Semnani. Life, Ideas and Way of the 13th Century Gnostic Philosopher and Vizier of the Mongol Arghun Shah*; a special issue of the review *Farhang-i qawmis* which comprises seventeen articles by different authors centred on the analysis of single aspects of the thought and works of Simnānī; and lastly, the book by Muḥammad Riḍā Ğadīdī, which appeared in 2010 under the title *Bar-rasī-yi aḥwāl wa ātār-i ‘arabī-yi šayḥ ‘Alā’ al-Dawla Simnānī*.

Apart from this, it should be emphasized that the study of Simnānī, and both that of his own time and of the history of Sufism, suffers from the paucity of edited, translated and critically analyzed treatises of this author. The fundamental texts of Simnānī are specifically two, i.e. his theological-doctrinal manifesto entitled *al-‘Urwa li-ahl al-ḥalwa wa al-ḡalwa*, which was published by Hirawī in 1983, but

which nevertheless has never been the object of a systematic study, and his Koranic commentary the introduction to which, due to its undeniable value, was edited by Paul Nwyia and has been the object of study and appraisal by Corbin, while the complete text was published only recently in Beirut under the title *‘Ayn al-ḥayāt* (one of the many variants of the title by which it is known) and which, despite its exceptional features within the panorama of the esoteric commentaries of the Koran, remains to be studied accurately.

As for the so-called "minor works" too, the situation is not any better. A significant part of these have been published in two different editions. One, including both Arabic and Persian treatises, was carried out by Wheeler Thackston and bears the title of *Opera minora*, while the other by Hirawī contains a selection of Simnānī's Persian works (some of which are already present in Thackston's edition) and is entitled *Muṣannafāt-i fārsī*. Some texts have been published separately, but many others, among which are several very voluminous ones, remain unedited to this day.

Lastly, the translations of the works of Simnānī are very rare, and the few that exist concern short letters. In chronological order of appearance these are Molé's translation of the treatise entitled *Manāẓir al-maḥāḍir li-l-nāẓir al-ḥāḍir*; the translation by Hermann Landolt of the epistolary exchange between Simnānī and Kāšānī on *waḥdat al-wuḡūd*; the translation, also by Landolt, of two brief epistles as part of his article entitled "Deux opuscules de Semnānī sur le moi théophanique"; the translation of the *Risāla-yi nūriyya* published by Elias; and lastly, and more recently, Stéphane Ruspoli's French translation of two more very brief epistles.

### Organization and Objectives of this Book

In this monograph, apart from the desire to be able to fill part of the enormous gap in the study of Simnānī and his legacy to posterity, I hope to achieve the following six aims:

1. A reconstruction of the biography of the author, based on the re-examination of the original sources. This should not be



understood just as the account of the life of a single character within the complex socio-politic and historical scenario of his time but, much more importantly, as a unique, bright window overlooking the Ilkhanid World.

‘Alā’ al-Dawla al-Simnānī (659–736/1261–1336) was born under Hūlāgū (d. 663/1265) and died under Abū Sa‘īd (r. 717–36/1317–45), that is to say that he lived through the entire Mongol domination parabola over the eastern part of Dar al-Islam which produced the dynastic state known as the Ilkhanate. At the same time, he belonged to one of the noblest and richest families of the Persian aristocracy involved in the political administration of the Mongol state, as well as being one of the leading Sufi authorities of his time. A prolific author, original thinker in mystical, theological and legal matters, and founder of villages and ḥānaqāhs, Simnānī was also at times a person under police surveillance by order of the Ilkhans, while at others, their diplomatic emissary during political and military crises. Finally, his socio-political importance is demonstrated by the richness of biographical references to him, which are found in a wide range of coeval and posterior sources, historical and non-historical.

This extremely rare combination of relevance and originality for the socio-political and intellectual landscape of the Ilkhanate, along with the richness and diversity of the biographical and autobiographical information available about him – which is almost unique for the period – makes Simnānī the ideal case study to grasp the unique atmosphere of one of the most delicate and controversial moments of Islamic History (Chapter 1).

2. A critical edition of al-Wārid al-šārid al-ṭārid šubhat al-mārid (“The Inspiration Refuting the Rebel’s Sophistry”), an Arabic treatise of Simnānī chosen from the unedited works on the basis of two

different reflections: first of all, for the undeniable interest in the contents, as was identified by Elias who placed this text among the eleven most representative works of the author; and secondly, because during my research another work by Simnānī emerged, this unedited too, entitled Zayn al-mu‘taqad li-zayn al-mu‘taqid (“The beauty of the doctrine for the adornment of the believer”) and written in Persian. This proved to be a translation of al-Wārid, or at least an original rewriting by the hand of the author in Persian, and prompted the idea that a comparative evaluation of the two texts would shed interesting light on the alternate use of the two languages by Simnānī (Chapters 3 and 4).

3. A critical edition of the Zayn al-mu‘taqad li-zayn al-mu‘taqid (Chapters 5 and 6).
4. A comparative analysis which, moving from the relationship between the two treatises, subsequently extends to all the written literary production of Simnānī, attempting to identify some recurring elements in the style and linguistic choice of the author, based on a logic concerning the contents and addressees of the different treatises, and finally, the purposes for which these texts were primarily written (Chapter 2).
5. A translation of al-Wārid al-šārid al-ṭārid šubhat al-mārid, which is one of the few available translations of a work by Simnānī into English but which, above all, represents the broader translation of Simnānī into a Western language (Chapter 7).
6. A supplement to the catalogue of the written works of the author which updates the information included in the previously cited book by Professor Jamal J. Elias entitled *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ‘Alā’ ad-dawla as-Simnānī* (Appendix). <>

[Inspired by Bakhtin: Dialogic Methods in the Humanities](#) edited by Matthias Preise [Studies in

Comparative Literature and Intellectual History,  
Academic Studies Press, 9781618117380]

In seven essays, this book offers a tour de force through those seven disciplines in the humanities that lately underwent a fundamental transformation. In order to apply "exact" scientific methods, these disciplines turned away from their very subjects—the understanding of the relationship or a dialogue that underlies the phenomena they are supposed to investigate. The revisionist approach in this book, based on Mikhail Bakhtin's work, traces the search for common and specific grounds of the humanities, beginning with psychologism through hermeneutics and semiotics up to the present state of self-annihilation. As an alternative, the book seeks to define humanities as the examination of relationships, which offers an array of refreshing perspectives on each field discussed.

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Excerpt: Many scholars around the world are inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas. For them, his using of the term "dialogue" is one of the key concepts in the humanities. Despite the abundance of interpretations of Bakhtin's teachings, two fundamental questions regarding his "dialogism" still seem to be unanswered: first—do the objects of other humanities have dialogical qualities similar

to those literature has; second—how can we define a dialogic method of research in the humanities in general, what would be the specific qualities of such a method? In this volume, seven scholars—from different countries, rooted in different cultures, working in different fields of the humanities—propose answers to the following questions: What in my field of study can be considered a dialogic approach and why is a dialogic approach essential in my field in order to disclose the specific qualities of the material to be analyzed? From these two fundamental questions, the specific questions in the respective fields of study arise: How dialogic is the intercultural encounter in contemporary cinema? What is dialogic design? What are the presuppositions of a successful therapeutic dialogue? On what terms can literary history be called dialogic? How dialogic is postmodern authorship? How dialogic are Plato's philosophical dialogues? What distinguishes a dialogical sociology?

### The Humanities as a Relational Science

From a disciplinary point of view, the above questions seem to be rather disparate. It is therefore necessary to explain how they are bound together to a common, truly Bakhtinian approach in the humanities. As different as the problems are that we encounter in our fields of study, there is one central aspect we all have in mind. Mainstream research and practice in the humanities tend to treat their phenomena as "objects" with "properties." This, we are convinced, is not the proper and necessary approach to what we encounter in our disciplines because what the humanities are mainly and commonly concerned with are phenomena of relationship. Such phenomena require specific—namely, dialogic—approaches.

All contributions in this volume are inspired by the idea that a dialogic approach in their field is necessary, even inevitable. Therefore, they appeal for substantial change in the methods of their field. They argue that recent methods of research in the humanities are widely unsuitable for the phenomena they examine. How can this be, despite all erudition? Against the background of a highly "speculative" thinking in the humanities up to the

nineteenth century, in the twentieth century the humanities very much endeavored to become more "scientific." This was, of course, most respectable, but in consequence has guided research further and further away from what could be called a specifically humanitarian approach, designed for the specific dialogical nature of the phenomena to be examined. The humanities, despite having produced more "exact" results than ever, became more and more unspecific in their fields. We are convinced that the scientification of the humanities at the cost of the specificity of their research may result, paradoxically, in the loss of their scientific basis.

Therefore, a dialogical method in the humanities is not yet an "alternative" approach. It is, rather, a guideline for finding the most appropriate access to what the phenomena of the humanities in fact are: relationships. Sociology should investigate social relationships, not countable mental properties of individuals. Philosophy (again) should investigate the relationship of the human mind with the world, not the properties of language. Literary history should investigate the relationship to the past, and neither what "objectively" happened nor what we construct to be our history. Theory of design should investigate how design is guided by our encounter with the material world and not by the practical function of a tool. Theology should be concerned with our relationship to God, not with rules fixed in a codex. Psychology should not only understand psyche as a living network of relationships, but should also understand the relationship of the therapist to his or her patient as a bi-personal field. Literature, last but not least, consists of relationships that are neither "objective" nor "subjective," but rather establish cultural "neurons" that form not only a cobweb in which we entangle ourselves (Max Weber, Clifford Geertz) but one that opens a wide, even endless semantic space for us to move. This space doesn't bind us, it sets us free. There are special techniques necessary to move within this field and to sketch the streamlines of it.

It is, however, noteworthy that our attempts to propagate and legitimate dialogic approaches in our fields expose certain significant differences. This can be seen especially in Boháček's

philosophical account of Plato's dialogues, and in Kaczmarczyk's using them to expose an existential concept of dialogue. Boháček examines Plato's philosophical dialogues for their inherent dialogic quality, while Kaczmarczyk emphasizes that, in some of them, the existential attitude of the participants is necessary to form a "dialogical" dialogue. These approaches are not just "different," they also expose the two opposite sides of the same problem: for Boháček, the "internal" necessity of the communication to have a dialogic structure, and for Kaczmarczyk, the "external" necessity of the participants to have an existential attitude, which alone opens them to real dialogue. Thus, they are both true, just as both sides of a relationship are equally true. Here, we have a living example of how the dialogue between two disciplines can and should be dialogic.

There is, however, one problem shared by all disciplines in the humanities, in case they, as they ought to, investigate relationships. Relationships, in contrast to objects, are invisible. Rigid scholars conclude that, precisely for this reason, they simply do not exist. There is no such thing as a love relationship—just hormonal processes in the brain; there is no social relationship—just needs to be satisfied; there is no relationship to the past—only traces and objects left over for examination; there is no relationship within art—just material form and content to take notice of; there is no relationship to the world to be understood by philosophy—only understandings materialized in language; no relationship to the Divine—only religious needs. Of course, we can ignore non-object phenomena, but there is at least one field of relationship that hardly can be ignored, and that is language. Ferdinand de Saussure proved that language consists not of objects but of relationships, which are labelled by the term "sign." "Sign" is the expression of a relationship. Most illustrative here is the case of phonology. Before de Saussure, linguists believed that language consisted of sounds. After de Saussure it became clear that it consists of differences between sounds; that is, it consists of relationships. A phoneme is not an object, but a relationship. You cannot investigate the functioning of language without these differences, which cannot

be heard directly but have to be reconstructed by juxtaposition.

The analysis of language as a relationship is called semiotics. It is a long way, however, from semiotics to an understanding of all phenomena of the humanities being dialogic. After the "semiotic turn" in the 1960s and 1970s all fields in the humanities were subordinated to language. Everything was language. This is typical with the humanities and their "turns." Given the "relational" character of one humanitarian discipline, scholars conclude that all cognate disciplines are derivations of the one in which this character was encountered. In fact, there is no leading discipline in the humanities. Philosophy is not dialogic "because it consists of language," but it is dialogic in the same regard that language is. It has its own specific dialogic character which has to be explained within philosophy. As a result, we do not harken "back to semiotics." Even scholars within semiotics themselves have not fully understood the relational character of the sign. They never performed the mental leap from description to interpretation, because interpretation seemed arbitrary to them. Here, the hard labor of convincing them is necessary. And this labor can be provided by literary scholarship because literary scholarship successfully developed strategies of plausibility within a field of concurring interpretations. Of course, even philology has recently tended toward "scientification." Digital humanities, cultural transfer research, neuronal reception research, and the revival of the sociology of literature dominate the scene. However, literary analysis has developed the tools to illuminate semantic spaces provided by the "neurons" of literary texts. Therefore, it could serve as a pioneer for an alliance between scholars equally frustrated by mainstream "exact" research in the humanities. It is this mainstream that also tends to repel students at universities. Students expect, for example, genuine philosophical understanding, but teachers convince them that "truth is what is the case." At German universities an average of ninety percent of philosophy students drop out before the bachelor of arts exam. Mainstream philosophers would argue that students expect from philosophy mere "metaphysical speculation" and are not ready to accept that philosophy requires logics, logics,

and logics. Relationships, however, are no less logical than objects, but the logics of relation are different from the logics of property.

The primary aim of the contributions in this volume is to restore for the humanities the goal of dialogic understanding, which requires interpretation. All contributors formulate the dialogic character of the phenomena they investigate or of the method they develop. They are convinced that such an approach is able to give a fresh outlook on their field of study. At the same time, by sharing a dialogic method, we get the chance to unite the humanities in a common scientific effort. This provides the humanities with new epistemological power—one that is highly needed, and not only for the humanities as a field of study. The humanities are not, in fact, a luxury with which we indulge ourselves once we have fulfilled our basic needs. The disciplines contributing to this volume—and the humanitarian disciplines not represented here—are able to solve real problems, that is, problems of relationship. Such problems are at least as important as problems we have with objects. And more than a few of the problems we believe to have with objects we might turn out to have with relationships.

In what follows, I will trace earlier efforts to find the uniting principle of the various disciplines within the humanities. Further, I will try to explain what kind of radical switch in our brain is necessary to investigate relationships instead of objects. Again and again, we are tempted to go back into the object mode, and then our insight into the phenomena of the humanities is instantly blinded. It is especially hard to adopt the idea that relationships are prior to objects, but some thinkers before us understood this well: above all, Immanuel Kant, the true pioneer of "relational" understanding.

### Dilthey's Search for a Common Ground in All Fields in the Humanities

Together with Wilhelm Windelband, Wilhelm Dilthey was the first thinker who made an effort to define the common research principle in the humanities after they had split into a plethora of disciplines. He saw the problem of legitimation which the humanities were facing after the end of

idealistic thought. The humanities were accused of having no object, and not undeservedly. For idealistic thought, it had been no problem to reflect on the world without having a real object because this thought was sure to be meta-physic, that is, pre-empiric, investigating processes that were prior to all possible objects. But since then, the winds of science have changed dramatically, and science without an object is no longer taken seriously. "Scientific" science had to have objects. Therefore, the solution Dilthey aimed at was to demonstrate that the humanities also have objects.

But, like many of his contemporary philosophers at the end of the nineteenth century, he was convinced that the key to having an object would be in psychology, since what all fields in the humanities seemed to have in common was a sort of psychological substrate, obviously reliant on acts of thinking. This substrate could be investigated, and there would be the necessary object, and the desired recognition by non-humanitarian sciences. This is why Dilthey gave the 1894 treatise in which he performed his ultimate effort to find the common ground for all fields in the humanities the title *Ideas On a Describing and Parsing Psychology*.

Windelband, in exactly that same year, defined the humanities as "ideographic," that is, as dealing with concrete single phenomena, while the natural sciences were "nomothetic" as they generate general laws by reductive abstraction. Windelband's prototype for ideographic thought was historiography. Was this already the answer to Dilthey's problem? It was not, because ideography indeed has an object, but all it can do with it is to register it. Like historicism, the mainstream school of historiography at the end of the nineteenth century, it has no tool to interconnect data in order to transform historical knowledge into an understanding that could rival the interconnectedness between natural phenomena reconstructed by natural science. Therefore, for Dilthey historicist historiography could only be a prolegomena to the humanities; it has an approach, but not a method. This is why Dilthey, in addition to Windelband, reached out for psychology.

Dilthey knew it was a difficult task to ground the humanities in psychology without losing their

specific strengths, which are logics and rationality. This is why he begins his argument, surprisingly, with the obviously outdated "rational psychology," developed 200 years earlier by Christian Wolff. Hastily, he adds "well, Kant has proved its impossibility," but then why mention it right in the beginning? Because what Dilthey needs is a combination of Wolff's strict rationality and the post-idealistic "real" substrate to be analyzed. This is obviously forcing square pegs into round holes. But Dilthey was persistent. He writes that, at least after Kant, it was still possible to derive general laws. And according to Kant, besides outer experiences, we have also "inner experiences." Aren't these experiences psychic after all? Shouldn't we be able to parse them? And arrive through them at the structural interrelation between all fields in the humanities? But these rhetorical questions are, unfortunately, mere declarations of intent with no indication on how this should be done in a scientific practice. And this is not by chance. Psychology cannot be, as Edmund Husserl argued, the basis of the humanities. In his *Logical Investigations* (1900) Husserl demonstrates that if mathematical numbers were based on the mental praxis of counting, that is, on psychology, mathematics as a whole would be ridiculously dependent on states of mind, on feelings and likes. It would become "impure" and would cease to be mathematics at all. It must have been God who created at least the integers. But in a way Husserl was an unfortunate seeker like Dilthey. Leszek Kolakowski in his book *Husserl and the Search for Certitude* portrays Husserl's desperate attempts to overcome the "crisis of European thought" (this being the title of Husserl's last monograph) by giving knowledge a new solid ground to stand on. With his "stern science," he would not fall into the trap of psychology like Dilthey. Phenomenology at its best has been giving descriptions of what is going on in relationships. But the reason why Kolakowski states Husserl's attempt was a failure is that it remains unclear on what epistemological grounds phenomenological argument would be based on. Husserl himself would have argued that phenomenology is only a method, not a theory, and therefore carries its epistemological grounds within itself. But nevertheless, a theory is needed, because the humanities, like the natural sciences, have to

answer the question of what kind of general "properties" qualify a phenomenon to be a subject to their method.

Another trap—that only at first glance is more convincing than grounding everything in psychology—is grounding everything in language. The argument here is similar. Because all knowledge in the humanities is formulated in language, just examine the language and you gain the common ground of all humanitarian argument. But language is, like the psyche, impure, bearing the traits of all our prejudices and opinions. And this impurity cannot be distilled out of it, not even by inventing a "concept language" (Frege). In philosophy of language, there can be noticed a strategy similar to Dilthey's psychologism (not as obvious, however, but still): the attempt to have some "empirical" material—words, in this case—that would allow us to "observe" instead of merely imagining or implying "principles" that we never can prove, while still "rescuing," at the same time, all the purity and objectivity of Christian Wolff's rationalism. No matter how successful it was, the philosophy of language as founded by Gottlob Frege could not be and did not become the common solid ground of the humanities. But of course language—to be precise, the sign in Saussurean understanding—is a phenomenon of relationship; in other words, it is a dialogic phenomenon. Language, like the psyche, is not the material ground and empirical basis for the humanities. They are both, rather, part of the problem: how can I properly understand psyche and language? By which specific and yet universal properties are psychology and linguistics part of the humanities?

As it should now be clear, it is a seductive shortcut to declare one group of phenomena in the humanities to be the basis for the rest of them. Therefore, the common basis of the humanities can neither be psychology, nor logics, nor even mathematics. These phenomena are not above the rest of science; they would not solve the problem, because they are part of it. They are part of the problem, because they themselves are relationships. It is impossible to explain one relationship with the example of another one, because the problem would just shift to the next

discipline, remaining the same unanswered question. The humanities are full of those shifts, such as "the psyche is social," "cognition is language," or even "literature is what readers make of it," "history is what historians make of it." If you want to investigate the psyche, history, cognition, literature proper, you have to deal with the relationship every of them entails. And if you deal with the material substrate of a humanitarian discipline, like measuring readers' brain zone activities, you gain exact but trivial and unspecific knowledge such as "pornography stimulates sexual brain zones:

But let's return now to Dilthey. Again and again he produced statements such as "the goal of the study of psychological phenomena is their interrelation" or "inner life is unity." However, he did not reach out farther than stating that "connection is primarily given" and "structural connection is experienced." It is frustrating to read this—you want to shake him, asking: yes, of course, you're right, but please explain how it is experienced and what methodology is used to study it? But Dilthey at least saw the problem and made a real effort not only to formulate it but also to solve it. In his numerous unfinished manuscripts he went on fighting for a solution till his death—in vain. So he left this duty to posterity—either give to the humanities a solid ground of knowledge equal to the knowledge gained by the natural sciences, or to shut down the whole business. His last word in this case was that the natural sciences "explain" while the humanities "understand." However nebulous this may be, it paved the way for a method of understanding that had been previously applied to the study of the Holy Bible by Schleiermacher. This method is called hermeneutics. Is hermeneutics, then, an answer to Dilthey's question? We will see.

### Hermeneutics

In one respect hermeneutics is the answer, as it indeed has an object. One could even say that it has the object, that is to say, that it gets ever closer to the one and only object it is heading for. The classical hermeneutic circle is not, of course, a perfect circle but a tool of approximation. And not by chance the theologian Schleiermacher, who invented hermeneutics, had only one object—for the investigation of the Bible there was by

definition only one object, and that was God. But is God really an object for the interpreter of the Bible? For Schleiermacher and his protestant theologian colleagues, God was the absolute truth and the Holy Bible was the exclusive access to this truth. But if someone else whom I encounter or try to encounter is the absolute truth, then in fact not He is my object, but rather I am His object. An object is an object, because I assign my truth to it, and not the other way round. This is the definition of an object. Natural science has objects, because natural science is orientated towards assigning truth to phenomena. We will come back to this when we address the question of what constitutes a relationship as compared to an object, and what kind of relationship natural science entails. So far we can only ask if hermeneutics could be the one common method of all fields in the humanities.

It cannot be it for several reasons. First of all, Dilthey's problem was to demonstrate the interrelation or the common ground of humanities of various fields. Hermeneutics, as a method, does not connect different humanities. Of course, hermeneutics has been developed not only in theology, but in literary scholarship, in philosophy, and even in history. But it does not create any connection between these fields, because the method does not imply any analogy between what is reachable by the method. Literature is neither comparable to God nor to the historic event. They are completely different types of subjects. But, nevertheless, all kinds of hermeneutics in fact have something very specific in common, but not being "the" method of all fields in the humanities. Rather, they form one specific type within the typology of scientific methods within the humanities.

What all hermeneutics has in common has been formulated in the most extensive description and justification of hermeneutics, ventured by Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer's hermeneutics is indebted to the classical understanding of a text as an aspiring ideal (model). A "truth" is concealed in the text that has to be achieved. According to Truth and Method, interpreting a philosophical or literary text, the reader has no freedom whatsoever to stand in a historical distance to it. The "sense" of the text comes to its "perfection" only through the "application," which for Gadamer means that the

reader annihilates all distance to the text and places him- or herself at the position of its addressee. However, a historical research, as Gadamer himself concedes, would never agree with such a method, because for history the "critical distance" to the researched object is constitutive. Therefore, for Gadamer, an understanding or agreement between hermeneuticians and historians is impossible. This is why Jean Grondin, in his highly sympathetic "Einführung in die philosophische Hermeneutik" (1991), frankly acknowledges that Gadamer never answered the question as to what role historical critique plays within the framework of hermeneutics. In consequence, if hermeneutics is irreconcilable with historical research, it cannot be the universal method of the humanities we are searching for. But again, as hermeneutics is, of course, a form of relationship, it will find its place within the variety of research attitudes in the humanities. It will turn out that hermeneutics is a mode of understanding, which is particularly different from (historical) criticism. Criticism is another "type" of research stance within the humanities, rather than hermeneutics, and only within the framework of a principle that includes both of them will the reason for their respective incompatibility become comprehensible.

Therefore, hermeneutics is not sufficiently universal to be the common method of all fields in the humanities. Moreover, it doesn't give us any clues regarding the connectedness between all possible objects of the method, as it is just a style of proceeding in the effort to understand one object and not a theory. Again we arrive at the point of asking why, after all, we need theory in the humanities. The question is the same one that could be to Husserl, since hermeneutics also has to answer the question: what kind of general "properties" qualify a phenomenon to be a subject of its method?

### Ernst Cassirer

Although he saw the necessity of a new foundation for the humanities after the fall of idealism, the German philosopher Ernst Cassirer rejected Dilthey's juxtaposition of explaining and understanding sciences. He rejected his psychologism as well. For Cassirer, the common

ground for all fields in the humanities, and even not only for the humanities, but for all science, is not psychology but mathematics. He understands mathematics as the science of pure relation, which abstracts from all properties of substances. So what science does is not investigating substances, but relations, which universally can be expressed by the formula  $y = f(x)$ . From this point of view, in his book *Substance and Function*, and *Einstein's Theory of Relativity*, he criticizes Aristotle for grounding his system of categories on substances with their properties. Although in Aristotle's table of categories the category "relation" does appear, Cassirer states that it does not play any constructive role in his philosophy. Therefore, he calls Aristotle a "substantialist." According to Cassirer, with modernity, the natural sciences freed themselves from Aristotle's substantialism and were mathematized, while within the humanities no one noticed that they were still in the "substantialist" mode.

What Cassirer mentions here is important for my argument, since I stated that the humanities should be the dialogic study of relationships, while the natural sciences rather deal with objects. Is this proposition obsolete with Cassirer's statement? What kind of use does Cassirer make of the concept of "relation" both within and outside of the humanities? Is "relationship" the same in the natural sciences and in the humanities? Are we in the paradoxical situation that those who deal with objects (in natural science) switched to the relational understanding of the world, while those who should deal with relationships (the humanities) are still obliged to objects? First of all, I, of course, agree with Cassirer that a mathematical function is the expression of a relationship. But is it as universal as Cassirer states? Maybe it is not the only one, not even in mathematics. I am not a mathematician, but what I can say is that a function is a specific relation; that is, not all relations are functions. Set theory, for example, goes on well without any notion of function, but it nevertheless comprises a specific form of relationship. Therefore, I would not rule out the possibility that in mathematics it should be possible to discern different forms of relation. But this will be a task for mathematicians, not for me.

Nevertheless, a function is a relation, and as such for our purposes Cassirer is an ally. The thingness of things for him is not a "given," but some kind of crossing in the network of relations. Science analyzes or synthesizes the general rules of connection within this network. But the result of our binding loose ends is nevertheless an object, or, with other words, the thingness of a thing. If we confront this result with Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Cassirer seems to continue not Aristotle's substantialism, perhaps, but the object-orientation of classical metaphysics that was inaugurated by Aristotle. This is exactly what Heidegger criticizes in *Being and Time*. So, Cassirer and Heidegger might have had a lot more to quarrel about than just freedom, which was the topic of their famous 1929 dispute in Davos. Cassirer is a classical representative of a philosophy of (natural) science. In this respect he is truly an orthodox Neo-Kantian. And, therefore, his understanding of relationship is limited. His catalogue of forms of access to the world—myth, religion, science, language—is connected by the idea that all these accesses are "symbolic forms." What does this mean? According to Cassirer, we "arrange" our sensual data to make them concise, but we have to "stabilize" them through representation.

Representation is what creates "symbolic forms" like myth or language. Therefore, language or myths are "expressions" of relationships. So far so good. But precisely this description of how we establish relationships with the world makes obvious that Cassirer is still in the mode of objects and not in the dialogic mode of relationships. In fact, the "arrangement" of sensual data as well as the stabilization of this arrangement is an example par excellence for establishing an object, not a relationship. The object is "represented" in the symbolic form.

Our mind uses this "trick" to let certain sensual data stand out from a "context." The result is an object. This is, of course, a departure from substantialism, but it is the "nominalist" departure which suppresses the thing in itself, that is, the partner out there of the dialogue between, for example, man and nature.



Furthermore, Cassirer's symbolic forms are not interrelated. Every category exists independently, which gives no way to a division which constitutes principal variants of relationship, like function, identity, and membership in a set in mathematics. Even if we concede that myth is not a set of stories but a structure, it would be still impossible to understand the relationship between different symbolic forms. According to Cassirer you can say "myth is a language," because both are symbolic forms. But why then discern them? What is specifically different in myth from what is in language? Why do we have myth when we already have language? What in our sensual data determines us to express them as language or to express them as myth? Another example: what is the dividing line between religion and myth? Which logical operation transforms myth into language, or religion into science? All this is simply impossible. And for a set of dialogic relationships, it should be possible.

What really links together all fields in the humanities is that they all examine phenomena of relationship. Phenomena of relationship are subject to different questions and analytical methods than objects. In order to examine relationships, we have to switch into a different mode of cognition. Relationships are not empirically given but rely on our readiness to relate. The acknowledgement of relationship is impossible without interpretation. Interpretation is the readiness to relate. If I abstain from interpretation, I refuse relationship. The approach to relationships can be labelled by different terms. Bakhtin calls it dialogic, but this term is rather emphatic than analytic. To call it the specifically aesthetic approach to reality is correct insofar as art in fact is a phenomenon of relationship. However, this attribute will be widely misunderstood as disinterested pleasure, coined by Kant's aesthetics. Husserl's terms "phenomenological reduction" or "epoché" are based on the most adequate description of what really happens in mind when you switch to the "relationship" or "semantic" mode, but the terms are limited to the sphere of epistemology and will be understood only by specialists. The term "metaattitude" or "meta-approach" is popular among Bakhtinists,<sup>16</sup> but it suggests that the relationship view stands

above the object view. In practice, however, both views are on equal rights. Every relationship can be reframed as an object and vice versa. With such a reframing, we change into an alternative paradigm. The paradigm for objects is the struggle for survival of the human species, the paradigm of environment control and the life and death struggle described by Darwin. With Darwin, what is not object for me makes me its object. Creating objects is our tool to survive by control and therefore there is no reason to discredit it. Man, however, is also able to adopt an alternative attitude, and this attitude is no less essential for us. This attitude, which Bakhtin calls "dialogic," makes it possible to understand ourselves as an integrative part of our surrounding. The relationship aspect of our attitude toward the world is particularly necessary for our mental health. Most of our mental reality consists of relationships.

A science of relationships deals with phenomena which are subject to principles fundamentally different from the principles which guide objects. Therefore, it also requires different methods. Psychology, for example, should be a classical science of relationship dealing with the relationships between human beings. But even psychology is practiced in two variants. Experimental psychology is an object orientated science that cannot and will not talk about relationships because relationships cannot be verified according to the plausibility criteria accepted by object sciences...

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A shift to relationships might be identified with Rorty's turn from analytical philosophy to pragmatism. There is, however, a fundamental difference. It is absolutely reasonable to discharge, like Rorty, mind and language as solid bases for truth. Rorty's alternative, however, leaves no room for truth at all. His truth can be reduced to the broadest possible circle of people committed to an opinion (see also Richard Rorty, [Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature](#) [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979], 176). The truth we propose in this volume is not social in Rorty's pragmatic understanding but takes relation as the primary, irreducible source of truth. Relation is not social, it creates the social. Therefore empiric social reality,

primary to Rorty, is secondary to us. Another coincidence with our shift from objects to relationships could be seen in Habermas' theory of communicative action (Jürgen Habermas, [Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns](#) [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981]. Translated by Thomas McCarthy as [Theory of Communicative Action](#) [Boston: Beacon Press, 1984-1987]). In contrast to the "in-between" designed by Habermas, our "relationship" is not a pragmatic, but a semantic parameter. It is not communication, but pure relation. You can watch people communicating, but you will not see the relation between them. The advantage of our over Habermas' point of view is in the impossibility of what Habermas fears most: pretense, feint, utilizing. The relationship itself cannot be but true, despite all pragmatic art of disguise. On the other hand, it requires interpretation. This does not make void its truth because truth, being a relational phenomenon, can only be achieved by interpretation. "Having" rational truth is a misinterpretation of the access to this kind of truth. For Habermas, truth is a result not of interpretation, but of negotiation. That is the difference between his and our attempt to overcome the absolutism of truth.

in the mode of relationship. Therefore, its plausibility criteria are substantially different from those used by experimental psychology (and therefore are disputed by the latter). I would like to generalize this situation: the humanities exist in two variants—as object-related and as relationship-orientated scholarship. Not in every discipline, however, has scientific practice formed such a clear-cut alternative as in psychology. Psychology, therefore, can be called a model case of double vision within the humanities.

In the dialogic mode, the humanities are the sciences that deal with relationships. Relationships are, as I have stated above, invisible. Therefore, dialogic humanities need interpretation. But before we learn about how different disciplines in the humanities make use of this tool, we must admit that relationships need a specific access to be realized at all. If you do not use this access, you will inevitably end up with objects. This is the main problem if you want to convince someone about the existence of a relationship. He or she could answer:

"all I see are objects. And anything besides objects is just a figment." However, we can turn this argument upside down. So, with the same right we can argue that the only thing which really exists are relationships, and objects are mere figments put up by stubborn substantialists. But this will not help us to convince our interlocutors. Perhaps a striking example will help. Everyone knows what a marriage is. A marriage is a relationship by definition. So how can you understand a marriage in a marital conflict, for example? For instance, let's imagine that I visit my sister and she has a marital conflict with her husband. I feel obliged to help because she is my sister. She then tells me what the whole conflict is about, and that her husband is a villain, and that she feels so demeaned by him. What she tells me is convincing, and furthermore she is my sister. Therefore I go to my brother-in-law and tell him that he should stop demeaning my sister and start to behave like a loving husband. He might then tell me, "man to man," what the whole conflict is about, that his wife—that is, my sister—is behaving completely irrationally, and he has been stringing together arguments in an attempt to reason with her but she does not even want to hear them. By the way of presenting his arguments to me, he convinces me that he is right, and then asks me to go to my sister and tell her his truth about the conflict. But if I did, the whole game would start again from square one.

What I received from each of them in this little scene were their respective truths about the relationship, but certainly not the truth of the relationship proper. Through his truth and through hers, there is apparently no access to the truth of the relationship. I will have to free myself from both truths, from both positions, in order to get a chance to get hold of the truth of the relationship. This is a well-known procedure in psychology and sociology. In psychology and sociology, to get hold of the truth of the relationship is known as reaching the meta-position, or the position of the supervisor. Supervision is a regular procedure where relationships are the essence of the business—as in schools, kindergartens, or think tanks. But there is one big theoretical problem with the position of the supervisor or the meta-position. To get there, you have to be out of the situation, you must not be

part of the situation you supervise. Otherwise you would lack objectivity, and you would not gain the truth of the relationship. This third position, position C, would be the "neutral" position, established by some logicians in addition to the classical logical positions of "true" and "false." But in the second half of the twentieth century, philosophy and cultural theory have demonstrated that such a position is impossible. All we have are positions and viewpoints, and you cannot escape from them. This is what contemporary theory seems to have learned from Heidegger's criticism of Husserl's attempts to find the zero-starting point of sincerity. According to Heidegger, we are always and unescapable already in, that is, in the world. For modern theory this means, that no "objective" criticism is possible and every criticism is "engaged." For example, there is no meta-position in gender questions, because everyone who wants to understand the relationship between men and women is either a man or a woman. Therefore he or she will not be able to argue from a "neutral" position. He is a part of the male discourse and she is a part of the female discourse. All they can do is advocate for their rights. This is why contemporary feminist gender discourse is, must be, and wants to be biased. Another example is the post-colonial discourse. You are either a colonialist or you are a colonized. And whatever you say about the relationships between formerly colonizing and formerly colonized cultures, you are a party in the relationship. There is no way to escape the situation, because right from your birth you belong to one side or the other. Try to venture innocently that you endeavor is "objective" because you are, for example, a professor of cultural studies, and you will do so in vain. You are a European professor of cultural studies or you are an Asian or African one. The furthest contemporary theory can go in the direction of a meta-position is to engage in an infinite process of escape, known by Derrida as "différance" and by Camus as "The Myth of Sisyphus."

However, if we look at Heidegger's argument in a "relational" mode, the lesson he gives us is a bit different. Sure, "being already in" is irreducible. But being already in for us clearly means that relationships are prior to any attempt to get hold

of them. You cannot construct, as Descartes and Husserl attempted, a "worldless" subject that begins to establish a relationship to the world, since it is the relationship that makes the subject as well as the world. The priority of relationship is the simple truth of being already in—and this is the gist of Heidegger's objection to Husserl.

In psychology, it is similar. If you go to a psychoanalyst seeking help for problems you have in relationship to your social surrounding, as soon as you start your conversation with him or her, naturally you establish a relationship with him or her as well. The analyst becomes part of your social surrounding. And with this he or she is in the situation from which you want to find a way out. Psychoanalysis, however, has developed a method to escape the trap of patients' transference on their analysts. What the analyst is supposed to do is to analyze his or her own countertransference, that is, his or her own projection onto the patient. The prerequisite to make an analysis of countertransference is that the analyst himself in anticipation went through psychoanalysis. This does not make you judge objectively in the strict sense. But, with the help of going through psychoanalysis yourself, you learn about your own insights and blindness, your own truths and untruths. You become ambivalent, and this is natural. Everyone has blindness and sight, everybody's position is true and untrue. And because I recognize my own ambivalence, I am able to acknowledge the ambivalence of others, too. As you see, we don't deal anymore with the position A, the wife, the position B, the husband, and above them the position C, the supervisor. Now, we have not three, but four "positions"—the truth and the untruth of A, and the truth and the untruth of B. You are part of the relationship, inevitably, but, nevertheless, you are able to "understand" it once you have access to all four positions.

This basic structure of developing a meta within and not above a dialogue resembles Lacan's quadrilateral psychological structure mentioned in the chapter "Voices in Image." Not by chance Xiaojing Wang uses Lacan exactly for the same purpose. She demonstrates the possibility of understanding within a so-called "Oriental" dialogue and not above it, of an understanding

which avoids the impossible effort to escape the basic colonial relation. Lacan's quadrilateral structure consists of the big Other, which generates the subject, which generates the little other, which generates the ideal image of the ego. The truth of the other can be called the big Other, it is the primary source of imagining and the ultimate goal of analysis. It generates the truth of the I, which is the secondary source of imagining and the secondary goal of analysis. The little other marks the untruth of the other being the specular image of the subject, while the ego marks the untruth of the I because it comes out of the little other.

Psychoanalysts need a trick to reach this quadrilateral level of ambivalence, because it is very hard to get rid of your own truth and the other's untruth. The trick is to concentrate on the form of the patient's pronouncements and not on the content. Freud describes this trick in *Ratschläge für die psychotherapeutische Behandlung*. The attention to form instead of to content is well known also in literary analysis. The goal is the same—to get rid of the object level in order to reach the relationship level, which in literature means to get rid of the pragmatic level of a text in order to reach the semantic level of it. On the pragmatic level you deal with objects, on the semantic level you deal with relationships, because the semantic level provides you with ambivalences.

In a way, the chapter of this book titled "Attachment Patterns in the Bi-personal Field" can be considered as a supplement to Freud's "advice for therapeutic treatment." Reinhold Plassmann extends the analysis of countertransference, which lays the ground to the double truth and untruth square, with the description of the proper process of interaction in the therapeutic dialogue. In other words, Freud sets the individual presuppositions on both sides for a successful therapeutic dialogue, while Plassmann concentrates on the qualities of the process itself which unfolds between the patient and the therapist under these prerequisites. This is why the efforts collected in this volume cannot be called Freudian: Freud still aims at the individual with its mental disorder, while we consequently start from the relation.

Since chapter 7, which deals with psychoanalytic therapy, explicitly refers to Bakhtin, we should briefly comment on Valentin Voloshinov's book [Frejdizm](#), which allegedly has been written by Bakhtin and contains some harsh criticism of the psychoanalytic method. Concerning the authorship, there can be observed a throughout fundamental difference of point of view between Bakhtin and Voloshinov. Even if Bakhtin wrote the Voloshinov books, he provided them with a completely different epistemological position. Bakhtin's own argument is consistently phenomenological, while Voloshinov's argument is based on sociology. Voloshinov argues against "idealism," while Bakhtin's analytical point of view with good reason can be called idealistic. Concerning Voloshinov's criticism itself, firstly, we observe the long-outdated argument that Freud subdues man's mental identity to physical drive. Secondly, Voloshinov argues that the unconscious is empirically inaccessible. His alternative is to investigate social reality.

This argument, however age-old it may be, gives us the opportunity to once more underscore the specifics of our approach in this volume. For us, neither psyche nor social "reality" is real. What is real is the encounter, the dialogue, the conflict. This is what first of all produces psyche and the social world. In order to understand a relationship, you should get rid of the positions which form the relationship. In most cases, these positions are called the subject and the object. Therefore, whoever in relation to relationships would use the word "subject" or "object" or "subjective" or "objective," is already out of the game. From these notions, there is no way towards the relational truth of a relationship, regardless of whether you are in philosophy, sociology, history or any other field in the humanities. In my literature classes, these words are strictly forbidden. This "relational" understanding is precisely how we think Freud should be understood: psyche is the product of conflictual relations. This makes Voloshinov's criticism of Freud obsolete.

Of course, it is hard to relinquish attempting to understand a relationship from its participants. It is also hard to imagine, as illustrated by a quote from John Stuart Mill. In his "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy," he states: "Can a

relation be thought without thinking the related objects between which it exists? Assuredly, no: [...] when we think a relation, we must think it as existing between some particular objects which we think along with it." Maybe it is worth having a deeper look into Sir William's writings. However, his adherence to a "relational" understanding cannot be by chance, for he was the most prominent popularizer of Kant's philosophy in Britain, and Kant was the most eager advocate of a "relational" view of reality in the history of philosophy. So, Sir William Hamilton must have understood something very fundamental in Kant's work, but John Stuart Mill apparently could not appreciate this.

We should not criticize him for that, for within the framework of thinking there is room either for objects, or for relationships. Mill opted for objects.

A similar case is Ludwig Wittgenstein's early treatise [Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus](#) (1921). According to Wittgenstein, an atomic fact (Sachverhalt) is a combination of objects. Here, as in Mill's philosophy, objects are prior to relations, which, in Wittgenstein's terminology, are called atomic facts. Not by chance, however, in the following paragraphs of his book Wittgenstein has nothing to tell about objects, he exclusively talks about atomic facts. Wittgenstein does not venture to put relations prior to objects, but implicitly he can be understood in this way. All we have are combinations, expressed as atomic facts. An object is the sum of combinations in which it exists.

In order to understand relationships, you have to adjust yourself to the point of view that a relationship is prior to its participants. To be exact, a relationship, which can also be called a "situation," produces its participants. For example, a murder produces two participants: an offender and a victim. Before the crime, they did not exist. The "offender" was not yet an offender, the "victim" was no victim. Both were installed only by the situation of the murder. This is how you should try to understand how logics could start up from a situation and not from its participants. Mother and child are produced by the situation (relationship) of motherhood. This is shown by a deep examination of the semantics of words. Sigmund Freud through

his psychoanalysis gave an important impulse to the change of angle from objects to relationships. This is why he also saw the development of language from a new point of view. In his essay "The Thread Spool Game," he asserts that a little child would never come to the idea<sup>24</sup> to identify an "object" in its surroundings in order to label it with its first word, "mama." This would be an intellectual operation on a level of abstraction, which obviously is out of reach with the age of one. Instead, what the child experiences, is a situation—the situation of care and love, and this situation is being named by the child: "mama." Therefore, words right from the beginning of our life do not design objects, but express situations.

And it is highly questionable, if this would change with the further acquisition of language. Thus, we use the term "semantics" in a specific way. Like phonemes, semantics designate what comes into being only through relationship. We take this "relational" view of cultural phenomena radically seriously.

Meaning is not a "quality" of a word but the full dimension of relationship which underlies it.

Language is, no doubt, a relationship. So far, it is sufficient to mention that Ferdinand de Saussure laid the foundation to modern linguistics with the rejection of Young grammarian theory. The Young grammarians believed in an "objective" linguistics, while de Saussure stated that a sign is the expression of a relationship and therefore neither subjective nor objective. "Parasème" (the mental aspect of the sign) and "aposème" (the phonic aspect of the sign) are not two "entities" (A and B) to be synthesized by speech. These aspects are outcomes of the linguistic activity itself and do not exist without it. This statement began the "semiotic turn," which was, among others, a turn from the futile attempt to designate linguistics as a natural science to assigning it to be a role model within the humanities. In consequence, phonology discovered that even the sound aspect of language is not of a "material" but of purely a relational character. The region of relationships reaches out farther than you might have expected. But this volume has not the task to resume the findings of the "semiotic turn", which are well documented. Instead, it shall, among

others, demonstrate that even semiotics—though also claimed to be the universal meta-science of all fields in the humanities—is not in a position to rule over the other sciences of relationships. First, because none of the sciences of relationships is in an absolute meta-position in relation to the others. They are all interrelated with each other, and their relations do not form hierarchies, but analogies or equivalences. The world of different forms of relationships is guided by the principle of resemblance. Unfortunately, this status entraps us to construct virtual hierarchies between them—for example, as we have seen, in psychologism or in the philosophy of language. On the basis of their universal resemblance, any interrelation between different fields of relationship can be reframed as a hierarchy between them, if only you change into the hierarchical (subject-object) mode of argument. This happens quite often and in every case it looks rather convincing, because many people cannot imagine relationships other than hierarchies. Not only psychology, philosophy of language and semiotics claimed to be the "leading" disciplines in the humanities, but also history, sociology, cultural studies, not to mention philosophy (much, much earlier, however).

The second reason why semiotics is not the answer to the question for a general principle of the humanities is, that it hasn't developed neither an understanding of time, and therefore cannot be accepted by the historical disciplines, nor an understanding of the other, which is the reason for their rejection by sociology and psychology.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, semiotics were not able to develop a full understanding of relationships, because usually it is based on a triadic model ("icon, index, symbol" or "term, proposition, argument" or "signifier, signified, denoted"). However, a fully "relational" view of language implies at least two dimensions of relation and therefore at least four statuses. As in Boolean algebra, and as in the example mentioned above, in relationships minimally given are four statuses: the truth of both, the untruth of both, untruth on one side combined with truth on the other side, and vice versa.

A way towards a fully developed four-dimension understanding of the sign was put forth by Roman Jakobson. In order to understand his effort, we

should realize more consequently the dimensions of the sign as generators of connections on different levels. Under these auspices, the signifier connects sounds, the signified connects concepts, the denoted connects notions of reality, and the aesthetic dimension of the sign, which Jakobson added without making clear its position with respect to the other three, connects the sign with other signs, producing the semantic field. As we see, semiotics is dealing with relationships, and by this it qualifies for being part of the humanities, but not for being the leading discipline of them all.

Dialogicity, thus, is the one common quality of phenomena expressing relationships. Therefore, a dialogical approach should be the universal tool of understanding them. To examine phenomena of relationship is the long-sought common quality of the various disciplines within humanities. However, this quality, and with it the very nature of such phenomena, dissolves when we, conditioned by natural sciences, redefine relationships as objects. For this reason, all disciplines in the humanities are called to develop dialogical approaches, which are the most adequate to the phenomena they examine—be it psychic, social, cultural, epistemological or historical. With the presented volume, we try to give an impetus to such approaches. Some of the contributors of this volume formed the panel "Dialogical Humanities" at the fifteenth International Bakhtin conference held in Stockholm in July 2014. <>

[Art as Dialogue: Essays in Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience](#) by Goutam Biswas [Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, D. K. Printworld Ltd. 9788124600436]

It focuses on a totally new methodology for understanding the concept of aesthetic experience, a dialogue between the subject and the object I and THOU.

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Foreword — Kapila Vatsyayan

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Excerpt: The phenomenology of aesthetic experience marks a significant direction of thinking in the history of modern philosophy. The writings of Moritz Geiger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Raymond Polin, Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others have contributed immensely towards phenomenological formulations of issues and insights relating to art and aesthetics. Sedulous research in this area has produced seminal works like that of Roman Ingarden and Mikel Dufrenne. The realisation that a philosophy of art without an account and analysis of aesthetic experience is inadequate and lifeless is because of this trend of thought and research. Doubts concerning the general philosophical assumption that an object without an actual or possible reference to experience is abstract, and experience without any content is empty seem to make no sense and are philosophically unproductive. Phenomenologically speaking, experience consists in the directedness of consciousness upon some object, be it an object of cognition, emotion or imagination. The expression of any experience is dependent upon the way consciousness is related to the object. A scientific formula or theory is an expression of some experience of an object or phenomenon. The universe of discourse that is shaped by this scientific method stands apart from the universe of discourse that is formulated by artistic experience and expression. Philosophy not only synthesises different types of experience according to the different ways consciousness is related to its object — and thereby envisages a general theory of experience at various levels — but it also explores into the uniqueness of each type and imbibes insights from it. Keeping the latter task of philosophy in mind, art experience is visualized as an important area of study for the philosopher.

Today, the triad of consciousness, aesthetic object and art expression, therefore, determines the scope of a philosophy of art. Art experience is definitely

the primal source of this philosophy, since it is an exudation of consciousness from the cloister of its privacy to the world. This is why embalming works of art in archives has little to contribute to any philosophy of art. Heidegger admitted that all works of art do have a "thingly character" and they are "shipped like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest". But, he said, "shippers or chairwomen in museums may operate with such conceptions of the work of art. We, however, have to take works as they are encountered by those who experience and enjoy them".<sup>2</sup> Sartre would perhaps agree that works of art in archives or museums are beings-in-themselves, unencountered, and susceptible to oblivion. This is the reason for which he held that a work of art is 'unreal' as compared to an object or being-in-itself which is 'real'. "There is no realisation of the imaginary, nor can we speak of its objectification. Each stroke of the brush was not made for itself nor even for the constructing of coherent real whole (in the sense in which it can be said that a certain lever in a machine was conceived in the interest of the whole and not for itself). It was given together with an unreal synthetic whole and the aim of the artist was to construct a whole of real colours which enable this unreal to manifest itself." But a work of art as something unreal paradoxically becomes very real for human consciousness as it promises an escape from superfluity and contingency of our day-to-day empirical world. Perhaps Sartre's commitment to a dualistic ontology of being-for-itself (Pour-soi, human subjectivity) and being-in-itself (En Soi, object) did not permit him to ascribe any reality to art objects. But his contention implies that they enjoy a privileged status, a sort of reality with a difference.

Taking the clue from Sartrean ontology of being-for-itself and being-in-itself Dufrenne assigns a quasi-subjectivity to aesthetic object with a revelation of 'to-itself' in it. He says: "The aesthetic object bears its meaning within itself and is a world unto itself. We can understand this kind of object only by remaining close to it and constantly coming back to it. Because it illuminates itself in this way, it is like a for-itself. Or rather it is like a for-itself of the in-itself, that is, a taking up of the in-itself into the for-itself. The aesthetic object is luminous



through its very opacity — not by receiving an alien light by which a world is outlined, but by making its own light spring from itself in the act of expression. Thus we shall call the aesthetic object a 'quasi-subject'."

The conception of an aesthetic object as a 'quasi-subject' leads to the problem regarding the ontological status of art objects. While art objects act and exist as beings-for-themselves, contribute to and enrich the human experiential perspective in a way so that they can be differentiated from their mere physical factual being (as human subjects are distinguished from their dead bodies) they at the same time retain their identity as separate from artists, beholders and critics, i.e., from human subjects. This problem seems to be unresolvable and the unique mode of existence of art objects appears inexplicable. But it is so only in the context of an

ontological bifurcation of aesthetic experience into the subject of such experience and its object. Concepts of dialogue and communion may be invoked in this case to suggest an alternative ontology. In dialogue the 'space' between the experiencing being and that which is experienced becomes ontologically significant. I should like to suggest that art experience is basically a dialogue between the creator, the beholder and the critic on the one hand, and the art object on the other. The understanding of an art object is possible within this experiential context which is constituted by the relational sphere or the 'space' between I (the artist, beholder, critic) and thou (the art object). The primary task of the phenomenology of aesthetic experience could then be one of showing the way to a transcendence of the disjunction of subjectivity and objectivity in art, and of explicating the nature of dialogue and communion not only as a means of this transcendence but also as an end, i.e., the consummation of art experience. This work is an attempt to perform this task.

The practice of dialogue can be comprehended in two different ways, viz. as dialogue in language, and as dialogue preceding and overpassing language. With the former the scope of interpretation and understanding of a phenomenon of art is limited because interpretative activity, in

this case, cannot break through the conceptual barrier of language as a mediating factor in recreating and re-enacting the artist's experience or articulating one's own aesthetic experience. By 'language' I understand any kind of symbol or sign which is an exteriorization of a form of relationship between man and reality. But when language becomes a definite social institution with conceptual, semantic, and syntactic constraints involved in it, it can hardly be generous to art activities wherein a suspension of the commoner's mode of cognizing the reality and silence play a major role. One can say that the language of art is an obvious deviation from empirical, ordinary language but not by fully relinquishing the garb of ordinary language. The language of art carries a deeper and newer meaning than that is traceable in language which is more an instrument and less an expression of being. In dialogue, being is, in Buber's language, 'relation's own being' and the meaning of dialogic communication or expression can be gathered from this relational sphere of I-Thou. Aesthetic meaning and communication which, according to the contention of this book, is dialogic by nature springs from this experiential realm. Silence or suspension of verbalism is its initial insignia. Following S. N. Ganguly we can say, 'Silence', in this context, is to be taken in the Indian sense of Sāntam which signifies "very many things like quiet, peace, silence, restful etc.". The practice of dialogue in and through language alone renders the mediation of language a prerequisite and it lays aside its pre-linguistic and trans-linguistic dimensions. It falls into a contradiction by mixing language in its non-dialogical and instrumentalistic sense with dialogue. Language, in a dialogical framework, cannot be separated from the being of dialogue. A dialogic communication is different from normal communication which, as S.C. Malik points out, "takes place in a conditioned form of knowledge".

Dialogue preceding and overpassing language starts from experience, proceeds through language, and reaches beyond language. This is a broader notion of dialogue encompassing pre-linguistic, linguistic and trans-linguistic frame-work of the relation between man and art. 'Dialogue' in this second sense is inclusive of the first sense. The



distinction between the two senses of the concept of dialogue corresponds to the distinction between Gadamar's concept of dialogue as a fusion of two horizons through the mediation of language on the one hand, and the concept of dialogue as explicated by Martin Buber. I have subscribed to Buber's views on dialogue as more fundamental, more open, and pervading diverse spheres of human encounter. Michael Polanyi's concept of I-Thou relationship too yields a concept of dialogue in its non-linguistic and tacit dimension. In this work I have tried to propound the view that art experience is dialogic in all its pre-linguistic, linguistic and trans-linguistic aspects. In arguing for this view I have drawn support from many sources and various thinkers who are perceptive of this problem. The problem and method of understanding aesthetic experience as it is outlined here has been stretched further in evoking a standpoint in order to re-understand some of the contemporary Indian philosophers' approach to art. I found the ideas of Rabindranath Tagore and Radhakrishnan most suited to the frame-work of phenomenology of dialogue.

This book does not propose any definite and closed 'theory of art; it discusses the relationship between man and art, and various issues concerning aesthetic experience. In the course of discussion a complementary relation between philosophy of art and philosophical anthropology has been worked out. The complementarity is natural as it is man himself who becomes dialogic in his aesthetic experience and art as such becomes a dialogue for him. The concept of art as dialogue goes alongside the concept of man as being in dialogue or I-Thou relationship rather than in I-It relationship. The co-presence of philosophy of art and philosophical anthropology has been highlighted in contemporary Indian philosophical perspective too. It has been discussed in the essays on Tagore and Radhakrishnan. Art is, indeed, a fundamental concern for man in his search for newer images in it. The readers of this book will decide how much of that concern has been reflected and found a voice herein.

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Dr. Goutam Biswas's monograph is a companion volume to the earlier one entitled *Inter-Cultural Dialogue and the Human Image* based on the four lectures delivered and the discussion-seminar co-ordinated by Prof. Maurice Friedman focusing on Dialogue; the 'I-Thou' and the 'I-It' relationship. Time and again, Prof. Friedman draws attention to art and dialogue, and the relationship between the artist, the critic and the beholder on the one hand, and the art object, on the other. Dr. Goutam Biswas picks up the threads of this discussion and devotes a full volume to Art as Dialogue. These essays, although written independently as part of a Fellowship at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, have a very close and intrinsic relationship with the nature of discourse which took place during Prof. Friedman's visit to the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Therefore, it was only logical to include this monograph in the publication programme of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, since it is both relevant in its programme on cross-cultural studies as also in the *Kalāsamālocana* series where critical writings on the Arts is the focus of attention.

'Aesthetics' and artistic experience as a subject of enquiry has a long history, both in the East and the West. In India the discussion on the nature of the aesthetic experience from the point of view of the creator as also the receiver and relationships so established can be traced back to Bhārata and the *Nāṭyasāstra*. The discourse has its inception in many ideas expounded in earlier literature but especially the Upanisads and the Aranyakas. From the sixth century onwards there was vibrant and complex debate on subject, object, name and form (*nāma* and *rūpa*). Also, the nature of the 'artistic creation' was minutely analysed. Many interpreters applied the basic tenets of the *darsanas* (philosophic schools) to comprehend the nature of experience, cognition, the art object, the resonance and the response in the spectator or the hearer. The exploration was on the totality of the relational dialogue between and amongst the creator, the created object and the beholder. However, all this emerged from a unified vision, a holistic perspective which saw all phenomenon as fundamentally inter-connected and inter-webbed.

While differentiation was recognised, dichotomy was eschewed.

Against the background of a highly sophisticated tradition of dialogue in India, it is interesting and rewarding to find a different but equally relevant perspective on the subject in Dr. Goutam Biswas's volume. His concern is not to identify the commonalities or to emphasize the universals underlying different art forms. He also does not critically examine different theories of aesthetics and art experience. Instead, his concern centres around Martin Buber's concept of Art as Dialogue. As I have observed in the Foreword to the volume *Inter-Cultural Dialogue and the Human Image* the concern with Art as Dialogue was part of the larger and more fundamental exploration of the 'I-It' and 'I-Thou' dialogue. Moreover, both Martin Buber's reflection and now Dr. Goutam Biswas's work have to be juxtaposed against the immediately preceding positivistic discourse and notions of both 'objectivity' and the role of intellect and reason. The need to recognise relational values and even relational reality arose because of the unbridgeable chasm which has been created by the total dissociation of man from nature, of thing from person, of the inanimate from the animate and of the body from soul. The intrinsic relationship of the senses, emotion, intellect and consciousness was replaced by a paradigm of dualities and binary opposites. Resultantly in the realm of art, a-causal experience, process of artistic expression, the artistic product and communication were no longer seen within a continuum, or in dialogue. There was fragmentation. Art was not related to life and functionality. The artist became autonomous, and art a product. But art emerges from a unified state of experience where dualities and specificities are dissolved and transformed into a new whole. Understandably there were major attempts to re-establish these relationships and re-evoke wholeness. 'Dialogue and the Dialogical' was and is one such approach amongst others to refocus on the importance of process, of the in-between and the relational. The emphasis is on the 'I-Thou' rather than the 'I-It'. Such an approach echoes many concepts in Indian theories of art. As is well-known, according to some Indian theories the artistic experience arises in the consciousness of the 'artist'

and is given form through artistic expression, that blossoms in the heart of the spectator.

Dr. Goutam Biswas takes us through an engaging journey on the nature of the discourse in the West, especially in modern philosophy — Sartre, Heidegger, Roman Ingarden and Mikel Dufrene — always keeping Martin Buber's work as the centrepiece. He also takes into account the work of scientist-philosophers like Maurice Merleau Ponty. He continues by exploring Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of Art from a dialogical point of view especially his views on Personal Man and Artistic Truth. The journey concludes by examining Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's phenomenology of Art and his notions on what constitutes artistic knowledge.

The guiding principles of the explorations of this universe of dialogue and the in-between is the dynamics of dialogue between the artistic experience and expression in language; and, dialogue preceding and surpassing language. However, dialogue cannot be restricted to language and is, without doubt, more encompassing. Biswas endeavours to comprehend art experience as dialogic in the sense of the pre-linguistic, linguistic and trans-linguistic aspects. Pertinently no closed theory of art is being propounded. Only the ideas of modern philosophers as also of Tagore and Radhakrishnan are being examined within the framework of phenomenology of dialogue. The five essays on the phenomenology of the aesthetic from diverse but interconnected points of view, provide very refreshing insights into the nature of the modern discourse on these perennial concerns. They also re-illuminate the discussions on the distinctions between the factual and the real, the specific and the universal, the speculative and scientific theories of truth; these facilitate re-thinking on the notion of intuition, intellect and knowledge. The two essays on Rabindranath Tagore and Radhakrishnan clearly demonstrate another way of viewing notions of truth and beauty, and of recognising intuition also as a significant category of knowledge.

A reading of these essays will, it is hoped, prepare our readers to receive yet another volume on the

subject from the pen of A.K. Coomaraswamy's Transformation of Nature into Art. A.K. Coomaraswamy too examines these categories but from a very different standpoint and a different language of discourse. The perusal of a revised edition of the 'Transformation of Nature into Art' (under publication by IGNCA) will enable our readers to see the convergences between the modern dialogical frame-work and the reflections on the subject by the exponents of traditional theories of Art in Asia, particularly India and China as also those of one stream of European thought. A discerning reader will easily observe that there have been and are perennial concerns in many streams of thought. In India, reflections on the nature of the artistic act reached an unparalleled degree of sophistication at its stage of 'experience', prelinguistic unformed (arūpa), the process of manifestation in artistic form or forms (rūpa and pratirūpa) and the evocation of an experience through the very specificity of the form (rūpa), which transcends form (parārūpa). The theories of Chuang Hao of the Tang period in China, those of Zeami in Japan are close parallels and are echoed in the Christian scholastic tradition, particularly those of Meister Eckhart, St. Augustine and St. Aquinas. Since all art tends towards creating a perfect dialogue between the mind of the artist, the formal language of art and the resonance in the spectator, it has been compared to a mystical experience of perfect concord and thus comprehended as the work of God in the Islamic and Christian traditions. The master Chiah Tzu Yuan had exclaimed "when a painting has reached divinity (shên) there is the end of the matter". St. Thomas believed "it is of the essence of art to bring back into order the multiplicity of Nature and it is on this sense that it prepares all creatures to return to God". The language of discourse of these traditional masters may at first sight appear different and remote from that of the disciplines of modern philosophy, phenomenology or even semiotics yet in essence, it is an endeavour to reestablish the whole and to re-open the dialogue of 'relational thinking' beyond the 'I-It', to the 'I-Thou'. <>

[Martin Buber: His Intellectual and Scholarly Legacy](#)  
edited by Sam Berrin Shonkoff [Brill,  
9789004377035]

[Martin Buber: His Intellectual and Scholarly Legacy](#) is a collection of contemporary reflections on one of the most pivotal figures of modern Jewish thought. Born in Austria and reared in Galicia, Buber (1878-1965) became a spiritual representative of Judaism in German culture before emigrating to Jerusalem on the brink of the Shoah. His prolific writings on matters spanning the Hebrew Bible and New Testament to Hasidism and Zionism inspired diverse audiences throughout the world. In this volume, Sam Berrin Shonkoff has curated an illuminating array of essays on Buber's thought by leading intellectuals from five different countries. Their treatments of Buber's dialogues with Christianity, politics, philosophy, and Judaism exhibit Buber's ramified legacy and will surely stimulate fruitful discussion in our own time.

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Excerpt: The essays in this volume are drawn from waves of reflection on Martin Buber that swelled in 2015, the year marking one half-century since his death. One of the most towering figures in modern Jewish thought, Buber's religious, philosophical, and political writings on topics ranging from the Hebrew Bible and Christianity to Hasidism, Zionism, and Existentialism attracted remarkably diverse audiences throughout the world. To this day, Buber means many different things to many different people, and the book before you is designed to exhibit the ramified nature of this legacy.

The first four essays pertain to Buber's dialogues with Christianity. Elliot Wolfson (University of California, Santa Barbara) employs Buber's notion of "theomania" to offer a penetrating analysis of Buber's thought with special attention to the influence of Meister Eckhart on him. Wolfson meditates particularly on how both thinkers navigated the philosophical-cum-theological conundrum of representing a divinity that exceeds

all representation, highlighting paradoxical relations between presence and absence, image and invisibility, faith and atheism. As a philosopher with expertise in the history of religions, Wolfson engages carefully with Buber's discussions of Kabbalah and Hasidism, identifying what is most subversive in his representations of these manifestations of the Jewish mystical tradition, while also drawing parallels between Buber's distinctive views and much overlooked positions in both Eckhart and the history of Jewish mysticism. Shaul Magid (Indiana University) then identifies striking affinities between Buber's depictions of Jesus and the Ba'al Shem Tov, suggesting that Buber cast the founder of Hasidism as one who sought to revive and revolutionize the primordial religiosity of Jesus that had been eclipsed by what Buber saw as Pauline and Rabbinic deviations from biblical faith. For Magid, Buber's Hasidism presents a "meaningful convergence" between Judaism and Christianity that gestures beyond the very category of "religion." Shifting to the Christian reception of Buber across the Atlantic, W. Clark Gilpin (University of Chicago Divinity School) reflects both personally and historically on why, exactly, American Christian theologians embraced Buber's writings so ardently in the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, Gilpin recalls that in his own Protestant seminary training between 1967–1970, Buber was one of the only theologians whom virtually all of his peers read outside of course assignments. In the post-war era, Gilpin suggests, when modernity's grand promises of moral progress and social justice were cast into doubt, Buber offered a religiously grounded concept of self that was neither solitary withdrawal from society nor passive acquiescence to prevailing social systems—a middle way that H. Richard Niebuhr termed "companionable being." Finally, Christoph Schmidt (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) offers an incisive analysis of Buber's portrayal of Christian versus Jewish faith. Buber differentiated famously between what he saw as the original faith of Jesus the person and the later Pauline faith in Jesus Christ—and while Buber identified the former with dialogical Hebrew trust (emunah), he identified the latter with doctrinal Greek-Christian belief (pistis). Schmidt contends, however, that this distinction amounts to no less than Buber's own "diagnosis" of modernity, as the

dichotomy corresponds to opposed visions of political life and the place of religion therein. For Buber, whereas Paul's type of faith buttressed contemporary political theologies directed toward the sovereign power of the state, Jesus's faithfulness gestured toward an anarchist theopolitics in service of genuine community. Schmidt situates Buber's views in their turbulent intellectual historical context, drawing conclusions about Buber's relation to Christianity that are at once illuminating and provocative.

The next four essays in the volume deal with Buber's political thought. Samuel Brody (University of Kansas) evaluates the reception—or lack thereof—of Buber's political works, and interrogates the common claim that Buber was a naïve or utopian thinker. Brody contends that this conventional dismissal derives, in part, from the widespread but mistaken assumption that Buber's political stances were essentially extensions of his philosophy of dialogue. Moreover, through examinations of particular critiques of Buber during his lifetime, as well as close readings of Buber's political and biblical writings, Brody demonstrates that what may appear to be signs of Buber's "softness" may actually be precisely some of the most radical and revolutionary aspects of his thought. Subsequently, Judith Butler (University of California, Berkeley) investigates Buber's visions of binationalism in Israel/Palestine, which have been utterly eclipsed in recent decades of Zionist discourse. The notion of binationalism is, of course, relevant today regarding proposals for "one-state" versus "two-state" solutions. However, with reference to Edward Said, Butler contends that there can be no legitimate or genuinely productive conceptualization of binationalism within the context of settler colonialism. As politically dovish and ethically attuned as Buber may have been compared to mainstream Zionists of his day, Butler concludes, he remained insufficiently sensitive to this reality. With characteristic acuity and vision, Butler exemplifies here what it means to both think with and think beyond Buber. Michael Löwy (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris) then examines in detail what Buber himself identified as the "utopian" element of his thought, namely, his socialism. Through insightful explications of three

key documents in Buber's corpus, Löwy demonstrates what is most innovative, distinctive, and, at times, problematic in Buber's socialism. Finally, Paul Mendes-Flohr (University of Chicago Divinity School) reflects on Buber's lifelong courage to be an outsider in the name of what Foucault, following the Greeks, called *parrhesia*, speaking truth at any cost. Above all, Mendes-Flohr suggests, this courage was evident in Buber's modes of engagement with Zionism and the incipient State of Israel. From his early involvement with Zionist politics in Europe until his death in Jerusalem in 1965, Buber's concern for the moral integrity of the movement—particularly with respect to the Arab population in Palestine—led him to take stands that were unpopular, to say the least, among most Zionists. Amidst ongoing inquiries into why Buber was not accepted by the vast majority of Israeli Jews, Mendes-Flohr proposes to shift the focus of the question: "Why did they not accept Buber?"

The third section of essays in this book considers Buber's dialogues with philosophy and philosophers. Sarah Scott (Manhattan College) challenges the notion that Buber's well-known shift from mysticism to dialogue was one from aesthetics to ethics. Rather, she claims that Buber's vision of dialogical encounter involves simply a different type of aesthetics, one that Kant called "taste," and which, for Buber, requires the subject to be maximally perceptive and present before the dynamic particularities of a given situation. Thus, whereas some of Buber's critics have insisted that even his later philosophy remains "aesthetic" and thus insubstantial from an ethical standpoint, Scott suggests that moral response may demand, in fact, an appropriate aesthetic orientation. Martina Urban's contribution then takes us even further into Buber's aesthetics and ethics, and beyond. Through examining his distinctive approach to one of the most pressing philosophical problems of his generation, namely the foundations and functions of "world images" (*Weltbilder*), Urban sheds light on the very core of Buber's philosophical anthropology. Buber was wary of any system or society that absolutized fixed images, but he also appreciated the hermeneutical function and existential value of images. Urban demonstrates with great acumen how he navigated this tension,

how he urged for a dialogical alertness to the fundamental “insecurity” of existence whereby people strive continually to realize utopian or religious world images within the protean realness of space and time. Urban also shows how Buber illustrated this approach to the problem of *Weltbilder* through reference to what he regarded as the prophetic and theopolitical sensibilities of the Hebrew Bible. Philipp von Wussow (Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main) then offers a detailed exposition of the relationship between Buber and the highly influential German-Jewish political philosopher Leo Strauss. Although their personal relations were distant and often indirect, Strauss and Buber were keenly aware of one another, and von Wussow outlines ways in which they may have impacted each other’s trajectories. He does not seek to adjudicate on the various disagreements between them but rather to elucidate those clashes in their biographical contexts. Von Wussow’s intriguing analysis focuses primarily on Strauss’s opinions of Buber, reminding us how profoundly the latter’s legacy has been shaped by his admirers and critics alike. Finally, Hans Joas (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin) probes the extent to which Buber was actually a foundational figure in the dialogical turn in philosophy and social theory. In fact, Joas points out, only a small minority of social theorists would identify Buber as such. However, Joas indicates that Buber contributed immensely to the development of dialogical thought insofar as he grounded this discourse in religious experience, which not only infused the discussion with an element that Joas deems crucial, but also served to introduce the dynamics of “mundane intersubjectivity” to a far broader audience.

The final four essays in the volume explore Buber’s dialogues with Jewish sources. First, Michael Fishbane (University of Chicago Divinity School) shares a rich meditation on how Buber’s intensive readings of the Hebrew Bible both inspired and illustrated central elements of his oeuvre. A masterful exegete in his own right, Fishbane identifies key *Leitwörter* or “theme-words” throughout Buber’s biblical corpus and offers thereby a manifestly “Buberian” reading of Buber’s writings. Above all, Fishbane reveals how study and

action, hermeneutics and life, were utterly inseparable for Buber. This becomes especially clear through treatments of Buber’s biblical teachings in the 1930s and early-1940s as acts of spiritual resistance amidst the deafening dehumanization of National Socialism. Next, Jonathan Cohen (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) reflects on ways that Buber impacted his own development as a professor and philosopher of education. In particular, Cohen turns to Buber’s Biblical writings as a resource for grasping the role of the teacher in mediating canonical Jewish sources for students. Cohen writes here in an exceptionally personal voice, interweaving thoughts about his own evolving understanding of Buber with anecdotes about his own learning experiences with students while teaching on Buber. As readers, then, we encounter a living example of a contemporary educator whose pedagogy bears deep traces of Buber’s influence. The last two essays of the volume then turn to Buber’s engagement with Hasidic sources. Fumio Ono (Doshisha University, Kyoto) focuses on Buber’s much overlooked novel *Gog and Magog*, which documents a major dispute between Hasidic leaders and communities over matters of messianism surrounding the Napoleonic wars. Ono offers enlightening literary and philosophical analyses of this work, shedding light on the genre of “chronicle” that Buber attributes to the project, as well as Buber’s complex conception of history that animates the narrative. Moreover, Ono clarifies the shape of the “tragedy” in Buber’s presentation of this episode in Hasidism, drawing our attention to a potent dialectic that Buber located at the heart of religious reality. Finally, Sam Berrin Shonkoff (Oberlin College) investigates the theological dimension of Buber’s phenomenology of dialogue. Although Buber denied consistently that he was a “theologian,” insofar as he repudiated all abstract statements about God, he affirmed nonetheless that concrete events of dialogical encounter in the world manifest or “express,” as it were, theological meaning—even if that meaning remains irreducible to doctrinal content. Shonkoff introduces a concept of “embodied theology” to elucidate this aspect of Buber’s religious thought, and he illustrates it through recourse to Buber’s philosophical writings and essays on Hasidism, and—most significantly—

through hermeneutical analyses of Buber's Hasidic tales. <>

[Religion and the Arts: History and Method](#) by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona [Religion and the Arts, Brill, 9789004361515]

In [Religion and the Arts: History and Method](#), Diane Apostolos-Cappadona presents an overview of the 19th century origins of this discrete field of study and its methodological journey to the present-day through issues of repatriation, museum exhibitions, and globalization. Apostolos-Cappadona suggests that the fluidity and flexibility of the study of religion and the arts has expanded like an umbrella since the 1970s - and the understanding that art was simply a visual exegesis of texts - to now support the study of material, popular, and visual culture, as well as gender. She also delivers a careful analysis of the evolution of thought from traditional iconographies to the transformations once scholars were influenced by response theory and challenged by globalization and technology. *Religion and the Arts: History and Method* offers an indispensable introduction to the questions and perspectives essential to the study of this field.

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3. A Preliminary History of the Field
4. The Umbrella Expands
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7. List of Works

Excerpt: This present volume inaugurates the new series Brill Research Perspectives in Religion and the Arts. As intimidating as it is to be Editor-in-Chief of such a series, it is singularly daunting to author the inaugural volume. However, this present essay is merely that 'an essay' and as such it is a test case for one perspective on this announced topic. I see both this volume and this series not as definitive and authoritative bars by which to measure the work of scholars in the field but as points of departure for the continuing active life of scholarship for those intrigued and challenged by religion and the arts.

Of course, when I agreed to write this essay I had expected that I could easily proscribe borders and

boundaries, and find despite my earlier efforts in entries for *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, second edition, and *The Dictionary of Art* to identify and clarify the history and methodologies of this ever-expanding field of study and found it even then to be an almost impossible task. Readers of those earlier essays will find both continuation and expansion of my earlier attempts at defining and classifying religion and art.

Yet this remains a topic that is like Pandora's box. It is alluring and appears to be safely contained within a carefully defined vessel. However, when I began this present essay just as when Pandora opened that pithos so many centuries ago, a multitude of demons and spirits sprang forth and I realized I was just as lost as that infamous first human female created by the Greek gods. Of course, today many readers may at first identify Pandora as a free-streaming music website.

Nonetheless, do remember that even in Hesiod's expanded version of the story of Pandora after everything evil and mischievous sprang from her pithos that at the very bottom one attribute of humanity remained that was Hope. So, it is my hope that both this present volume and the other initial volumes in this series will expand our topical borders and boundaries as we raise both traditional questions such as the relationship between Christianity and art, religion and dance, religion and music, as well as more cutting-edge topics such as Outsider art, repatriation, and embodiment.

As this is the appropriate confessional moment for this new venture, readers need to recognize that each of the volumes in this Brill Research Perspectives in Religion and the Arts is tempered by the perspective and interests of each individual author. In my own case, of course, the limitations are obviously that my scholarship is predominantly within the borders of Christianity from Eastern Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism and the Protestant traditions with occasional forays into Buddhist, Hinduism, and Islamic cultural studies; and a preference for the realm of the visual. However, I have tried here to compensate for my limitations by providing readers with an extensive and hopefully wide ranging bibliographic section that provides

venues to begin or continue explorations in this multidisciplinary and fluid field of study.

In keeping with the essay format of the Brill Research Perspectives, references are kept to a minimum, while the extensive bibliography included here is an anomaly to this series but is evidence of both the past and present diversity of approaches, methods, and topics that are part and parcel of this dynamic field of study. Additionally, at the end of this volume, there is a listing of the over 80 works of art including films and television programs mentioned throughout this essay.

No work such as this, whether an essay or a multi-volume publication, is the work of a singular individual. To live and work in the academic world is to live in a community of supportive colleagues. Therefore, I want to acknowledge the constant assistance of the library and reference staffs at the Lauinger and Woodstock Jesuit Libraries at Georgetown University. I am grateful to the reviewers of my manuscript as well as to my ever-vigilant editorial board, especially Nicole Zhange and S. Brent Rodriguez Plate, for their advice as I completed this essay. However just as the perspective of the history and method of religion and the arts is my own, so are any lacunae or errors. The professional editorial staff at Brill—Laura Morris, Acquisitions Editor for Religious Studies, and Tessa Schild, Editor for Religious Studies—provided support and advice tempered with patience as we traversed the journey through my personal *annum horribilis* to bring this initial volume to fruition. When I wrote the entry on Art and Religion' for the second edition of the Encyclopedia of Religion, I suggested that the field of religious studies generally as well as the study of religion and the arts in particular was in a time of transition and transformation. To paraphrase the French adage, in many ways much has changed while much has remained the same. Nonetheless, the flexibility intrinsic to the study of religion and the arts continues to form new identities and within those new topics, themes, and categories, new methodologies have emerged while extant methods have been transfigured. Innovation and adaptability are two of the major characteristic of the study of religion and the arts, especially since the late 20th century.

Since the late 1950s once religion and art became an identifiable topic and eventually a discrete field in the study of religion, the search for a specialized and uniform methodology began. This search bore no fruit and remains fruitless today because of the multiplicity of approaches and academic training of those individuals identifying themselves as scholars of religion and art. As with all interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary fields of study, religion and the arts requires training in both the history, vocabulary, and methods of several traditional academic fields including archaeology, art history, fine arts, church history, dance history, film studies, gender studies, history of religion, comparative religion, liturgy, performance arts, ritual studies, or theology.

Clearly dependent in time and space on the object of study ranging from an individual work of art or architecture to a visual vocabulary of signs and symbols to a scriptural narrative or doctrinal tenet, the modes of approach and tools of analysis are individualized or perhaps better said favored by each scholar. Predicated then as much on individual interests as on academic training, the topic/theme of investigation sets the tone for the investigative modality and concurrently the identifier as 'Art and Religion' or 'Religion and Art' or even more specifically 'Medieval Christianity and Art,' 'Zen Buddhist Calligraphy,' 'Judaism and Ceremonial Arts,' or 'Hindu Dance Rituals.'

As new books travel across my desk and the invitations to review either manuscripts or books fly across my e-mail, I realize how much the interdisciplinary study of Religion and the arts has transformed in the last several decades. When titles like Alena Alexandrova's *Breaking Resemblance: The Role of Religious Motif in Contemporary Art*, Mark C. Taylor's *Refiguring the Spiritual: Beuys, Barney, Turrell, Goldsworthy and Aaron Rosen's Art + Religion in the 21st Century* share the space on my 'to be read/reviewed' space on my desk with perhaps the more traditional topics and titles like Cordula Grewe's study of the otherwise little-known Nazarene movement *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism*, Crispin Paine's *Religious Objects in Museums: Private Lives and Public Duties*, Bissera V. Pentchva's analysis of reception and visualization



The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual and the Senses in Byzantium, and The Blake Book Rosemary Crumlin's history of the award and its influence on religious art in Australia, I see how the field has expanded, morphed, and been transformed simply in the last decade.

Simultaneously new academic annuals such as Biblical Reception and new academic journals such as Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief and Frank Burch Brown's edited and comprehensive volume The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts have expanded our awareness of the rapid and continually expanding borders of this field of study. Clearly the result of the scholarly efforts of academicians, museum professionals, and critics, this attention to the inter-relationships between religion and the arts has several critical roots that were sown during the late 1960 'revolutions of the marginalized's and since the 1970s within the academic and curatorial worlds. For example, the transformative work of art historians like David Freedberg who pioneered response theory by turning our attention to the reception of religious art by believers and non-believers alike in The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response, and James Elkins who interconnected optics, human emotions, and religious meaning in art in Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings continues to be evident among scholars of religion and the arts. Further, Byzantinist and former museum director Gary Vikan continues to examine the relationship between traditional art historical and religious concepts with popular culture in both his From the Holy Land to Graceland: Sacred People, Places and Things in Our Lives and Sacred and Stolen: Confessions of a Museum Director, while S. Brent Plate examines the aesthetic and religious significance of the everyday in A History of Religion in 5 1/2 Objects: Bringing the Spiritual to Its Senses. The titles of these volumes tell you everything you need to know about the diversification and re-visioning of the field of religion and the arts. <>

[The Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture](#) edited by Moritz Neumüller [Routledge Art History and Visual Studies Companions, Routledge, 9781138667396]

[The Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture](#) is a seminal reference source for the ever-changing field of photography.

Comprising an impressive range of essays and interviews by experts and scholars from across the globe, this book examines the medium's history, its central issues and emerging trends, and its much-discussed future. The collected essays and interviews explore the current debates surrounding the photograph as object, art, document, propaganda, truth, selling tool, and universal language; the perception of photography archives as burdens, rather than treasures; the continual technological development reshaping the field; photography as a tool of representation and control, and more.

One of the most comprehensive volumes of its kind, this companion is essential reading for photographers and historians alike.

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### Excerpt: Unencompassable Photography by James Elkins

Photography is in astonishing flux. This winter, I have two engagements with photography: to read this book and contribute whatever I can by way of a Foreword; and to take photographs of the holiday season, using two cameras. The first is a roll-over scanner, the SVP PS4100, which I pull over any surface to get a high-resolution scan. I plan on using that to take "pictures" of things like people's shirts, carpets, wallpaper, and china plates: it's a kind of photography without lenses, and without people—a postmodern way of avoiding having too many relatives in my holiday pictures. The second camera is a Yashica Mat 124G medium-format TLR, which uses old-fashioned 120 format film. I have replaced the focus screen with a brighter one, an operation involving nearly microscopic screws and minuscule metal springs. The focus screens of those old film cameras are magical: they have an intimate, grainy look and a shallow depth of field; and on my camera, the image is reversed right to left. It's an entirely different world from the brilliant sharp digital screens most photographers now see.

This is by way of saying photography is multiple. It isn't a medium, like oil paint, and it isn't just a social practice, a curatorial problem (as in the excellent contributions by Erik Kessels and Alessandra Mauro), a market phenomenon, or a technology. Even in material culture studies, thing theory, and actor-network theory, photography is an enigma. Alison Nordstrom puts that well when she says "part of the way we have lived with photographs is as things we kiss, things we burn in protest, things we rip up in anger, things we write on, things we fold in half so that they fit into an envelope, things we put in albums, or in frames on a gallery wall."

Photography's unmanageable diversity is very well reflected in this [Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture](#). This is a wonderful

book, with a really surprising diversity of contents. There's an essay by Roger Ballen, meditating on his desperate images, and later there's a sober report about MOOCs at MoMA. There's an essay on "kick-off images" (photos that get threads and viral streams started), and an unsettling chapter on the current state of image copyright (it turns out forgers can invoke copyright to avoid having their work analyzed). There's a wonderful chart of the cameras journalists brought to different wars, and, in another chapter, an overview of Chinese landscape photography, a subject linked to the complex field of Chinese landscape painting, which stretches from the tenth century to the present. It seems there's no limit to what counts as scholarship on photography, and that's as it should be.

Given this multiplicity it makes sense that the theory of photography is in spectacular disarray. I became aware of this when I edited the book *Photography Theory*. I expected arguments about Peirce's index, and I got some; but many of the book's forty-odd contributors didn't have a position on photography's realism, and—what surprised me even more—they didn't have a reason for not having a position. It's not surprising that photography doesn't depend on a single theory, whether it's Peirce, Flusser, Bourdieu, or Barthes, but it is surprising that many people don't have any particular theory, and don't mind that they don't. In this book, too, theory comes and goes. Sometimes it's front and center, and other times it's as if photography needs no special conceptualization. Bernd Stiegler's opening essay takes theory seriously, but he also theorizes theory's dispersal (into a "pragmatic-praxeological orientation"), which may be itself more articulate than many practitioners and scholars require.

Along with the historian Erna Fiorentini, I've been writing a big textbook on the visual world. Our chapter on photography gave us special trouble, because it seems to us people not only think about photography, but think by means of photography. When we talked about focusing on problems, making sharp analysis, contrasting one thing against another, and framing our topics, we were talking in the languages of photography. This is a variant on an old claim made by Joel Snyder, that vision is something we picture, and the ways we

picture the world are informed by photography. These sorts of Klein-bottle conundrums aren't solvable: they can only be acknowledged and articulated as well as possible.

Out of this nearly unlimited field I'll just remark on three issues, which submerge and resurface throughout this book. The three have to do with overlaps and new configurations of three fields: art history, visual culture, and art theory.

### Photographs and Language

Several theorists haunt this text, especially Mitchell, Tagg, and Burgin. In different ways they have insisted on the constructed nature of photographs, on their entanglement in and dependence on language. Several essays show how unsettled people are about that legacy. Indeed, as Peter Smith says, "We may ... wish to step back from a position of doubt," and "accept that photographs have a certain resistance ... to theoretical translation and ... structures of meaning," including language. That possibility has long been open in image theory, most notably in the German tradition. A photograph, as an exemplary visual object, might not sit easily with the discourse that purports to present and support it, and that gives rise to what Jean-Luc Nancy nicely calls "a distinct oscillation": a relation that isn't captured by formulas like "imagetext" or "picture theory," but resonates with concerns voiced by Gumbrecht, Moxey, Boehm, and others. There isn't a simple answer here: in the book *On Pictures, And the Words That Fail Them*, I wrestled with the hope that images might be visible off to one side of language. Eventually I decided it was more challenging to try to understand how these battles work themselves out in academic discourse (as in the book *What is An Image?*).

One of the highlights of this book for me is the interview with Federica Chiocchetti about words and images. A longstanding fear and mistrust of images persists among writers; Chiocchetti notes Henry James's mistrust of illustrations, which he felt despite the hundred-year tradition of illustrating novels, which has been documented by Paul Edwards's *Soleil noir*. And now, despite scholars such as Jan Baetens (who is also a poet), and despite the overwhelming academic approval of Sebald's

project, contemporary novelists either avoid images or use them tentatively (Jonathan Safran Foer, Jesse Ball, and Ben Lerner are among many examples). An enormous amount of work needs to be done by curators, historians, and theorists to elucidate the possibilities of writing that accompanies images. Writing with Images, my own ongoing project, is a start; I think it's important to look precisely and slowly at individual artworks and books. Another option is to create new forms: Maria Fusco did that with the *Happy Hypocrite*, and Tan Lin with his re-launch of *Seven Controlled Vocabularies*. Research into the relation of photographs and words has to include academic writing—most importantly, all of art history and visual culture studies, as in this book.

### Politics

John Mraz's interesting study of the political commitment of photographers of the Mexican Revolution suggests the work that still needs to be done about unacknowledged political affiliation among contemporary photojournalists. Lars Blunck's essay on "staged" photography draws on Rudolf Arnheim's distinctions between authenticity, correctness, and truth, which is a promising way forward beyond the impoverished discourse of the NPPA Code of Ethics. People who police honesty in photojournalism pay fastidious attention to staging and manipulation, but have nothing to say about the staged nature of photography itself.

On December 13, 2016, for example, the New York Times published a color photograph on its front page, showing a room in the Democratic National Committee headquarters. Later the paper had to apologize because the photographer admitted to removing a picture frame from a wall, because, he said, it produced glare. An article in *Petapixel*, December 15, reprinted the photojournalist's Code of Ethics, and noted that the photographer was correct to apologize. But the Code of Ethics does not capture the political commitment of such a photograph—its dour, grim lighting and largely empty space, connoting gloom over the recent Presidential election. It may be anodyne examples like this, in which there is none of the trauma Rita Leistner and Susan Sontag describe in the case of war photojournalism, that

best show how the current conversation on objectivity and truth in photography remains ethically inadequate.

### Visual Culture and Art History

Visual studies' interests, such as politics and the expanded field of photography outside of fine art, are sometimes combined with residual art historical and fine art values, such as the question of how "difficult" it is to take a "good or great" photograph (as Michelle Bogre says). One possible subject for photographic education—the subject of the penultimate section of this book—could therefore be the difference between the leveled playing field of visual studies, and art history's ongoing interest in fine art, media, and historical narratives.

Art history has also long been concerned with its narratives: the Gombrichian Story of Art, and, in modernism, the notion that one master narrative leads from Manet or Cézanne through to postmodernism. Gael Newton wrestles with a version of this when she asks about the assumption that there is only one world history of photography, that "nothing originates outside of Euramerica." She associates that unitary narrative with photographic technology, which developed in a few places and was disseminated throughout the world. That is a temptation in photography studies, but a deeper reason for the assumption is the art historical insistence on a single narrative; and conversely, it hasn't been so much a "visual culture or regionalist approach" that has counteracted the single narrative, but a series of art historical studies beginning in the 1990s. A visual culture approach to this issue would be to bypass it entirely. The more that scholars become interested in the differences between national histories of photography, the more they enter into a field whose terms are provided by art historical discussions. Essays like Irina Chmyreva's "Perestroika Photography" or Susumu Shimonishi's are examples of contributions that would fit well with art historical concerns. The interview with Chris Jordan and Swaantje Güntzel on eco-activism is more a matter of visual culture: it's about politics and practice, rather than historical reception.

Visual culture's strength has been the social, experiential, gendered, and political life of ordinary images, like the family photo albums or wedding photos in Mette Sandbye's excellent contribution, Wolfgang Ullrich's essay on contemporary trends in copyright in images, Alexander Rotter's firsthand report of the auction scene, Lisa Richman's study of the reception of Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*, or Erika Goyarrola's informative history and analysis of the photo booth.

This isn't to say there is some special value in keeping visual studies, art theory, and art history in distinct parts of the academy: it's to say that without a literature meditating on the intellectual genealogies of those fields, studies of photography can end up as mixtures of partly incompatible values and interpretive strategies, such as the embrace of popular media alongside an investment in fine art, or a curiosity about art theory alongside an interest in pragmatics.

Photography just gets more interesting each year: less coherently framed, more historically and materially diverse, more entangled in politics, social life, democracy, epistemology, artificial intelligence, surveillance, ethics, the market, and our everyday sense of ourselves. It is already complex well beyond what any individual observer can encompass: surely an optimal condition for a thriving intellectual field.

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—Why not skip introductions? Especially when it comes to compendiums, exhibition catalogues and other anthologies of seemingly unrelated texts, it might appear more practical and fun to flip through the book, back to front, have a glimpse at the index and then just start with any text of the collection. The shorter ones with promising titles and lots of illustrations are seen as accessible starting points. The next step would be to read the more complicated contributions (recognizable not only by their length, but also by long titles and lack of illustrations). It is only after being immersed in the book for a while that we might consider going back to the beginning, to have a look at the preface and introduction — which makes sense in a way, because the texts were actually written in that

order. In case you have arrived at this place in this fashion, please allow me to welcome you and to put into context what you have read so far, before you continue on with your journey.

If you are a more methodical reader and have started the book from page one, you will now find what you were probably looking for: A short background information to what to expect in the following four-hundred odd pages, written by more than forty authors with diverse backgrounds from around the globe: scholars, artists, educators, curators, activists, publishers; people who work in the advertising industry and for photo agencies, auction houses, and archives; museum professionals and independent writers, collectors, bloggers and computer scientists. It really is a quite colorful crowd of individuals who have followed my invitation to contribute to this compendium, with the aim of defining the current state of theory and research in field, but also to create a foundation for future scholarship and study. The introductory texts to each of the seven chapters of the book will follow the convention of briefly presenting the authors and the focus of their work. They also feature a sentence or two about why they have been chosen, including, where applicable, an anecdote of how we got to know each other, or why I appreciate their work. This might be a rather unusual and overtly personal gesture, especially in the realms of Academia. However, I believe that this glimpse into the editor's kitchen will be in the interest of the methodical clarity and transparency Of the work, as it helps to understand the motivations behind the selection of authors and themes. Furthermore, these elucidations will allow a better understanding of the essays, case studies, and, especially, the interviews, as they contain allusions to personal relationships and ties within the photographic community. It should also be mentioned that the personal links to some of the authors helped to convince them to spend their valuable time on writing or adapting a piece for this book, as many of them are not full-time researchers and had no motivation to contribute, other than to share their knowledge, and I highly appreciate their generosity.

I also want to thank those colleagues who had to decline my invitation, for various reasons (mostly

lack of time, which seems to be the plague of the twenty-first century), but were kind enough to put me in touch with other professionals in the field, to cover a certain research question. One of them was Liz Wells, whose *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (2015) was also one of my main inspirations when conceiving this book, together with Elkins' *What Photography Is* (2011), and Mirzoeff's *How to See the World* (2015), to name but a few.

Mostly, I would like to thank the photographers and artists who have released their images so we can use them to illustrate the articles, particularly Chris Jordan, for letting us use a detail of his famous *Gyre* (2009) as the cover image of the book. It was thanks to Olivia Estalayo (who coordinated the image rights for this book) that we managed to convince them to help us make this publication visually more attractive.

Even if these images have not been expressly created for this book — while the articles and interviews have — the fact that we may use them for a scholarly publication, not a fancy art catalog, is a treasured privilege that has become less common nowadays (see Chapter 5.4). I will use the chapter introductions to speak about these images and their authors briefly, where applicable and/or necessary.

The overall aim of this Companion is to provide a comprehensive survey of photography and visual culture, which addresses the main research questions in the field, such as truth value, materiality, gender, image rights, the art market and many others, but also to map out the emerging critical terrain around post photography, tactile photography, social photography (a confusing term to describe image-making for the social media). Besides introducing the fundamental topics and ideas, this collection of essays, case studies, and interviews also represents the diversity of the research field and the complexity that arises when placing photography in the visual studies context.

In other words, what this book intends to be is a seminal entry point for students and professionals in the field of photography, both theoreticians and practicing artists. Photography, as of today, finds itself in a constant dialogue with a globalized

society that feeds on visual input. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that people have become more visually literate — at least, not as much as could have been expected from a society where everybody has become a producer and consumer of vast numbers of images.

Cultural Studies has shown us ways to analyze the photographic medium in the framework of Visual Culture: Photography as Art, as memory, as a proof of things that have been, the photograph as an object, but also as pure information, data to be mined and collected and (re)searched and stored by machines, by an Apparatus, in Vilém Flusser's sense of the word. A tool of repression and control, a useful device in the fields of the news, the fashion and advertisement industry, tourism, but also in medicine, psychology, and in the realms of political and ecological activism. The open boundaries of the photographic medium make it unique, powerful and vulnerable. Cameras and mobile phones produce still and moving images alike; they can scan objects to be 3D-printed as photosculptures; they can be used in installations, projections and performances; and they appear in publications of all kinds, including websites and blogs, newspapers and magazines, pamphlets and posters, books and Apps.

If photography is treated as a material form of (and for) cultural expression, further problems arise: How should photographs be collected, conserved, showcased, marketed, described, valued, and spoken about? Traditional views are contrasted with the new reality of an oversaturated global market, as the current situation of change has produced phenomena such as astronomic auction prices on the one side, and near-to-free stock photography on the other; a declining publishing industry, parallel to a boom of fanzines and self-published books; the digitalization of archives, in order to get rid of the physical materials, while preserving and indexing the content; and many other paradoxical developments.

To summarize, the book you hold in your hand gives an overview on the traditional way of looking at a photograph, in times of accelerated image consumerism; in a world where peripheries have

become centers; access to visual information is seen as more important than property; copyleft meets copyright; the truth value of an image has become negotiable or even superfluous. It also sketches out current and future discussions and technological developments that promise to reshape the field of practice and investigation.

In this sense, the Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture gives an overview of the history and future of the medium, the field of debate of photography as art, document, propaganda (including self-propagation in the form of selfies), a pure selling device, or a new universal language, with all its strengths and weaknesses.

### Images, Photographs and Visual Culture

This publication is laid out in seven chapters, each of which may be read separately, although there is a certain hierarchical, or rather narrative structure. Naturally, there are points of connections between the contributions, and overlapping themes. The first chapter is maybe the most dense and hardest to digest. In exchange, the reader will be rewarded with a complete and often surprising spectrum of the main research questions in contemporary photographic theory.

Bernd Stiegler's claim that the praxeological turn might open up "a different history of photography" and, indeed, a "Copernican Revolution of photography theory," shows the profound changes we are seeing in our field. It is—together with Parr and Badger's "revisionist" history of photography through the photobook (Chapter 6.2), Gael Newton's view from the periphery (Chapter 2.1) and Friedrich Tietjen's essay on post-post-photography (Chapter 7.5)—a true challenge for how we traditionally have told (ourselves) the story of the photographic medium. The translation of this particular piece gave us many headaches (my special thanks go to Claudi Nir for helping me in this monumental task), and some of the sentences and terminological intricacies might still reflect their origin in a German research context, which will make it a somewhat challenging text for American and British readers. However, I believe that the originality of the piece sets the right tone for the book, even if—as James Elkins has stated in his

brilliant foreword—it may be "more articulate than many practitioners and scholars require."

Another key contribution to this book is Alison Nordström's elaborate analysis of the photograph as an object. I had heard her lecture on this issue more than ten years ago, at a conference in Birmingham, UK, organized by the great and much missed Rhonda Wilson. A woman with many obligations, Alison told me early in our discussions that she would not be able to write an essay, and that I should look for someone else to step in. But how could I accept that? Alison had been involved in the thought process for this publication from the very beginning, and had even helped with a preliminary list of possible contributors, some of whom have made it into the final selection of authors. Furthermore, one could hardly imagine anybody with more insight into the question of materiality of the photographic medium than she has. After many years at the George Eastman House, she is now an independent curator, and thus sees the museum from a privileged point of view that had to be included. Thus, I gambled everything on one card and asked her if we could do an interview instead of an essay, to address the questions of photographic materiality in the framework of recent technological, social and institutional changes. Alison has been rigorous in the editing process, to ensure that all the arguments are well presented and clear, and that the resulting interview captures both the dynamism and the passion that this subject engenders.

For similar reasons, Charlotte Cotton also elected the interview format. What interested me as a starting point was the motivation behind, and conceptual context of her two seminal books *Photography as Contemporary Art* and *Photography is Magic*. I have known Charlotte since the early 2000s and have followed her work closely, including many of the exhibitions she has curated around the globe. However, I had never had the privilege of having a longer conversation with the author of the two publications that nearly all my students cite in their artist statements and final theses. I was impressed by her precise verbal expression during our Skype conversation, and even more so when I listened to the recording afterwards and realized that Charlotte's

impeccable clarity allowed a direct transcription to the written page, with hardly any editing necessary. Perhaps the most surprising argument Charlotte makes is that 9/11 effected a more seminal change in the creative industries, particularly the editorial, publishing, advertising and commercial sectors of photography, than the establishment of digital technologies or the economic crash.

One of the big achievements of visual studies is the inclusion of questions of gender and identity into the discourse of art history, and it was clear that this had to be reflected in the choice of authors and subjects of this book. David Martin, whom I met at the 2016 conference of the Society for Photographic Education (SPE), seemed to be the perfect choice. He proposed to take on the task of (re)defining the Male Gaze together with Suzanne Szucs and James W. Koschoreck. The only problem was that they produced an article that was double the size of what I had asked for. So we agreed to make two pieces out of it, and the best place to break the chapter would be immediately after the discussion of Robert Mapplethorpe's work. I am deeply grateful for their brilliant double-contribution that explores the complexities of the gaze through photography and visual culture.

If the gaze is directed at the reflecting display of a camera phone, we are confronted with a visual form of expression that has become a decisive cultural phenomenon in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the selfie. When looking for somebody to reflect on this subject, however, I saw that many authors demonized the selfie as a narcissistic and void gesture, a caricature of the traditional self-portrait, and a pitiful side-product of the democratization of photography. While I do share the opinion that for a serious student or practitioner of photography, it is important to be able to make self-portraits that go beyond the duck-face gesture, and I feel deeply disturbed when I see them taken at inappropriate places or situations such as Holocaust memorials (if you do not believe it, google Shahak Shapira's *Yolocaust* project, or the photobook hashtag by Marta Mantyka), I wanted to include a study on the phenomenon that goes beyond the common selfie-shaming discourse. Thus, I was relieved when I



found out that Alise Tifentale—whom I had met years ago at the Kaunas photography festival, when she was still editor of the formidable Foto Kvartals magazine—had participated in a research project called Selfiecity, together with a team led by Lev Manovich at the City University of New York. Her essay reminds us that funeral selfies and other faux pas "do not necessarily represent the whole genre—rather they are outstanding exceptions," and presents a case study that shows us that there are significant differences among the selfies posted from different cities, suggesting preferred styles and aesthetics.

At the same SPE conference where I met David Martin, I also heard Lisa Richman's talk on the other Migrant Mother, a Mexican woman with her child photographed by Dorothea Lange, one year before her world-famous image of a Californian pea picker. Despite the similarity between these images in aesthetics, emotion, subject, perspective, and pose, the Mexican Migrant Mother has remained for the most part one of thousands of unseen images within the FSA archive. Richman claims that the radical difference in their circulation begs the question, why the 1936 Migrant Mother became the icon while the 1935 Migrant Mother remained unknown. Further complicating the reception of this New Deal Madonna, is the fact that the human subject, Florence Thompson, is actually of Cherokee descent. However, the absence of any racial marker within the caption (and later the title) made it possible for the national US audience to identify her as European American, and see in her what they wanted to see: American strength in the face of adversity.

The last contribution in this chapter is also based on the comparison of image-pairs. It starts with a personal memory of the author, which leads us to the core subject of the article, an analysis of Stefan Koppelkamm's documentation of buildings and streets in Görlitz and other places in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). He first photographed them in 1990, just after the fall of the wall, and visited the very same places again, ten years later. Always taken with the same lens, the same focal lengths and from the same position, Koppelkamm's archive of before and after pictures, according to the author, Ines Weizman,

allows us to practice Walter Benjamin's "telescoping of the past through the present," a stereoscopic reading in the course of which the past can be experienced and remembered thanks to the montage of fragments of history. The issues at stake have been further developed by Ines and Eyal Weizman, in their book *Before and After*, which shows image-comparisons as a means of analysis and surveillance.

I would like to thank Stefan Koppelkamm for allowing us to showcase his Görlitz series, and Alise Tifentale for the illustrations to her study. The other two photographs in this chapter are by Dorothea Lange; one has become an icon, the Other is practically unknown, even though they show nearly the same content and were taken only one year apart. These images are freely available for download on the website of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, as are many other works from the FSA/OWI Collection. I chose to show the standard, retouched version of the Migrant Mother, but want to mention that in the original version a thumb can be seen in the right foreground of the image. Lange had it retouched, for aesthetic reasons, something that annoyed Roy Stryker, the director of the FSA's photographic unit, who insisted on the objective documentary character of the project. In this context, it is recommended to also study the contact sheet, showing the mother and children in the tent, taken at different ranges and angles, in order to understand the making of one of the most important photographic icons of the twentieth century.

### Territories

The invention of photography in the first half of the nineteenth century was not only a combined (and in some cases, parallel) effort of various researchers in different countries, but also a technological strategy to satisfy previously foreseen social needs, or, as Geoffrey Batchen has put it, a widespread social imperative. It has been argued that most of the necessary elements of technological knowledge were in place well before 1839: pinhole images seem to have been used by artists for thousands of years, and the camera obscura became widely popular in Europe in the Renaissance; finally, light-

sensitive chemicals such as silver nitrate were in use from at least the thirteenth century. Thus, the significant question is not so much who invented photography but rather why it became an active field of research at that particular point of time. It is hardly surprising that photography became an essential tool for scientific rationalism—a mechanical and apparently neutral representational device, used as a yardstick and as an instrument for validating theories on the performance of nature and for naturalist studies on human beings, in such an "obscure time" as the nineteenth century, as Alejandro Castellote has put it. He links this need to quantify, visualize and prove—by means of photographic techniques—with the rise of Positivism, "which affirmed modern European individuals as the prototype of an optimum model for mankind". A positivism of rationality that had been won through argument, technology, and power.

Colonialism, war and photography have a shared history. First, because the camera can be used as a weapon—Susan Sontag reminds us that the language of military maneuver and hunting such as "load," "aim," "shoot," and "snapshot" is central to photographic practices; and that the camera can be pointed at the other, or rather "the Other" (Sontag 1979). Second, because photography objectivizes its subjects. In the form of images, the subjects can be compared, possessed, and categorized.

In the early days of the medium, reactions to the man with the camera were often • skeptical and even negative, sometimes as an intuitive rejection, others on a pseudoscientific basis: Just remember the (possibly true) stories of Native Americans who refused to have their pictures taken because it would take away their spirit; or Balzac's obscure Theory of Specters, which said that all physical bodies are made up of an infinite number of layers, like skins laid one on top of the other, and every time someone had his or her photograph taken, one of these "spectral layers" would be transferred to the photograph, until nothing was left of it (Krauss 1978). In both cases, the refutation is based on the fear of being personally (in a bodily and/or spiritual way) affected by the image-making process. In a way, they anticipated

the symbolic relation between photography and death laid down by Roland Barthes in his *Camera Lucida*.

Accordingly, it has become increasingly important to remember who is looking and where they are looking from (not only what they are looking at). Contemporary studies take this into account, and it is in this chapter that post-colonial practices are especially well represented.

"Other World Histories of Photography" by Gael Newton is a great example of a text that goes beyond the historiography recorded from what she calls a Euramerican point of view. While the role of London, Paris, Berlin and New York in the invention and industrialization of the medium is unquestioned, photography spread rapidly over the globe, far from the geopolitical, economic and cultural axis of the major metropolises of Europe and America. Newton, a former Senior Curator of Photography at the National Gallery of Australia, focuses on the history of photography across the Asia-Pacific region; however, her conclusions seem applicable to many regions. While the different levels of scholarship regarding Asia-Pacific photography by foreign or local scholars makes comparative studies difficult, she still succeeds in giving an overview of the field that should attract serious study, in order to transform Western perceptions of artists who had been previously dismissed as inferior copyists of Western models.

Newton's opening statement and focus on the Asia-Pacific region is followed by three studies and an interview that treat concrete subjects in other latitudes: Latin America, the former USSR, and China. We will start the journey just south of the US border—a highly controversial demarcation line these days. Originally from the field of film-theory and media studies, John Mraz moved to Mexico more than 30 years ago, and is now considered a preeminent expert on the history of Mexican photography, and Latin American visual culture in general. When I found out—thanks to Rita Leistner—that Mraz was to come to Barcelona in 2016 as a visiting professor, we set up an initial meeting that soon led to a number of pleasant conversations on the subjects of photography, politics, the art world and academia. In one of

these talks, I dared to ask him to contribute to this book and he gladly agreed, proposing a chapter on the photographic representation of the Mexican Revolution. Only a few weeks later, the piece—a brilliant summary of his writing on that subject—was ready, and he even personally took care of the image rights!

If working with John was a stroll in the park, the interview with Timothy Prus and Marcelo Brodsky was more akin to tightrope walking without a net. I had unwittingly mixed an explosive cocktail by pairing these two authors. When we had a Skype conversation, we immediately drifted off the subject (the use of photographic archives for making art) in a way that made it necessary to relocate the piece into this chapter. Second, the ostensibly vast differences between their characters—an Englishman with an anarchistic world-view who has built up an archive and publishing house like none other, versus an Argentinian photographer who had made the leap into the art world and is now an activist for visual literacy—led to controversy and heated discussions. And yet, the result of this exchange was an astonishing bridging of separate worlds, that only people with a wide intellectual horizon and a free spirit can achieve: from Korea to Colombia, from the 1968 movement to social media, from Europe to Latin America, from physical to digital archives, from art to activism, and back again. To be honest, I was left open-mouthed during most of the conversation and some of the details in the sharp debate only became clear to me when I was transcribing them.

The next contribution is more structured and classifiable. It tells the story of Perestroika Photography, in the form of a historic analysis, from the mid-1980s to the 2000s. Irina Chmyreva is one of the major experts on the history of Russian photography, which is why she was invited, together with Evgeny Berezner, to curate the main program of Houston FotoFest 2012 on the subject. I have worked with Irina for many years, in different projects and constellations, such as the steering committee of the History of European Photography project, and the European Master of Contemporary Photography at IED Madrid (a program that I direct, and in which she teaches a workshop each

year). Her encyclopedic knowledge and elegant writing have generated an easily digestible, and yet comprehensive summary of photographic movements in the vanishing USSR.

The last contribution in the Territories chapter is on the fascinating, and highly contemporary, subject of Chinese Landscape Photography. The author, Yining He, works as a curator and she was introduced to me by Beate Cegielska, who is herself a remarkable curator and generous networker. Yining is a graduate of the London College of Communication with a MA in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography and a regular contributor to many art and photography publications. Among many other things, Yining initiated the Go East Project, which aims at introducing contemporary Chinese photography to the West. She is uniquely able to explain the different methods of artistic practice that Chinese and Western artists use to represent the landscape in a straightforward way—take, for example, the importance of linear perspective in traditional Western landscapes, which has no equivalent in the representation of Chinese landscapes. Moreover, she uses her transcultural thinking to describe the situation of a country that is "in full swing," but also lives with the collapse of faith, disorder of value systems, conflicts of interests, polarization of wealth, social apathy, rash impatience and so on. Accordingly, she states, "in terms of bizarreness and absurdity, there is no other country with which one could compare today's China to." Within this logic, it makes sense that Chinese photographers apply Western paradigms to create images of alienation from their own culture, turbo-capitalism and hyper-modernization in their country.

Of course, it is not easy to understand the value-systems of foreign countries and their translations into a visual language. What seems accessible at first glance becomes utterly complicated once we approach it closer, as it's impossible to judge beyond our own aesthetic tradition. The intention of this chapter is not to explain the world through photography, nor to foster a multi-cultural understanding of photography around the world. Rather, in this time of political protectionism, nationalism and segregation, I try to provide small loopholes in the walls that separate us from other

(photographic) cultures. Hopefully, we will be able to tear down more walls than the politicians promise to build, and not only in a metaphorical sense.

Finally, I am very thankful to the authors of this chapter who have directly managed the image rights, in order to provide us with truly stunning pictures from the second decade of the twentieth century in Mexico; the 1980s and 1990s in Russia, including works by Olga Chernysheva, Alexey Goga, Sergey Vasiliev, Valery Shchekoldin, and Boris Mikhailov; and contemporary China, featuring images by artists such as Zhang Jin, Sui Taca, and Chen Xiaoyi.

### Useful Photography

When anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss put together his collection of fieldwork photographs from the Amazon region, many years after they were taken, he was left with the impression of a void, a lack of something the lens is inherently unable to capture. Craig Campbell interprets this as a "binding condition" of photography itself: For him, photographs, no matter how real or convincingly true they might seem, "always fail". In fact, Lévi-Strauss found the smell of his old journals more apt to trigger his (affective) memory, and to bring him back to the savannas and forests of Central Brazil, inseparably bound with other smells — human, animal or vegetable — as well as sounds and colors. For as faint as it now is, this odor — which for me is a perfume — is the thing itself, still a real part of what I have experienced.

Lévi-Strauss's surprise when confronted with the failure of photographs to have a mnemonic effect (while other sensory inputs make him remember himself as a witness, as co-present with the artifact itself at a given time and place) can be easily replicated by looking at family albums: "What? Did I seriously have that haircut?"; "Who is the man beside aunt Mary?"; "Where was this taken?", etc.

Many of the key arguments for the usefulness of photography have been dismantled by post-modern thinking; for instance, the idea of photography as a truthful, objective and disinterested medium. The advent of digital image manipulation has accelerated this process

immensely, as it seems easier to understand the manipulative power of

Photoshop than other tricks the camera can play on us. The fundamental factor is, of course, the context in which an image is viewed. The history of misidentifications in photo lineups and police portraiture is a good example for this argumentation.

Of course, retouching and cropping has always been an integral part of image production. It also appears, in the form of cutting and tearing, in the realm of family albums. I remember that my grandmother had to make use of her scissors to remove children who made indecent faces or gestures on the family photographs, which of course made it all the more interesting to do them. Choosing the right photographs, while throwing away those "gone wrong" is another editing effect, which can be incredibly useful, in the creation of our family-image, and our (public) self-image.

Finally, photography can be used to change the world. Despite all warnings that a photograph is not a transcendental index of truth, but a subjective interpretation of it, we still want to believe that what we see in an image is true, and thus can be moved, made conscious and even called for action. A well-known example is the *Napalm Girl*, the picture by Associated Press photographer Nick Ut, showing a badly burned young girl running naked amid other fleeing villagers. Once the image made it to the newsroom, John Morris had to convince his fellow New York Times editors to consider the photo for publication because of the nudity issue, but eventually they approved a cropped version. When he saw the image on the front page of the New York Times on June 11, 1972, President Nixon apparently wondered, "if that was fixed"—by which he meant "manipulated" (World Press Photo, 2017). Other interesting details: The photographer, born as Huỳnh Công Út in Vietnam, began to take photographs for the Associated Press when he was 16, just after his older brother, another AP photographer, was killed. After snapping the photograph, Ut took the girl—called Phan Thi Kim Phuc—to a hospital in Saigon, where she had numerous surgical procedures including skin grafts, before she was able to return home. Phuc was

removed from her university as a young adult studying medicine and used as a propaganda symbol by the communist government of Vietnam. Later, she was granted permission to continue her studies in Cuba, where she met her future fiancé, another Vietnamese student. On the way to their honeymoon in Moscow, they left the plane during a refueling stop in Gander, Newfoundland, and asked for political asylum in Canada, where they now live. But it's not over yet: On September 9, 2016, Norway's largest newspaper published an open letter to Mark Zuckerberg after Facebook censored this photograph, which was on their Facebook page, and half of the ministers in the Norwegian government shared the photo on their own Facebook pages. Several of these posts, including the Prime Minister's, were deleted by Facebook. Nudity was again the problem—although this time it was algorithms that decided not to publish the photograph. As a reaction to the letter, Facebook reconsidered its decision and republished the posts later that day, recognizing "the history and global importance of this image in documenting a particular moment in time".

The story of this image has it all: The personal involvement of the photographer, and his Vietnamese nationality, remind us of Sophie Riestelhuber's claim that photographers should rather work in places they know and have control of, instead of going to far-away destinations to cover conflicts they don't understand. The manipulation and making of an icon (which could be compared to the making of the very different, but also iconic image of the Migrant Mother, see Chapter 1.7), its role in the Anti-War movement, the continuing problem with nudity, but not with violence, in the media, and finally, the story of the photographic subject herself, who is now an UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. The close connection of war, images and lies is reconfirmed by another fact: After one of Phuc's speeches, Rev. John Plummer, a Vietnam veteran who claimed he took part in coordinating the air strike with the South Vietnamese Air Force, met with Phuc briefly and she publicly forgave him, but later Plummer admitted he had lied, saying he was "caught up in the emotion at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the day Phuc spoke" (11thcavnam.com, 1998).

Maybe he was, but the real motives seem to have been the urge to be forgiven, the longing to be part of a story, and the identification with a visual representation of what cannot be expressed in words. The contributing authors to this chapter talk about these issues at stake, and many more, from war photography to activism, via advertising, family albums, architectural photography and the history of the photo booth.

The first contribution is a highly didactic yet still personal text on the relationship between photography and armed conflicts. I first met Rita Leistner at the Portfolio Reviews of the Toronto Photography Festival and was fascinated by her Palladium Prints, made from iPhone images while she was embedded in the Afghanistan War. Later she sent me her book *Looking for Marshall McLuhan in Afghanistan*—her own way of processing the current "technological turn in history," with the help of McLuhan's theories—which contained interesting references to drones and surveillance imagery. Thus, she was the logical choice when I was looking for somebody to write on War Photography, because she has not only thought about the theme, but had also been present in active war zones.

Useful Photography, the title of the chapter, is originally the name of a magazine focusing on overlooked images taken for practical purposes, co-edited by the Dutch multi-talent Erik Kessels, a publisher, artist, provocateur and co-founder of the advertisement company KesselsKramer. In the following interview, which took place in fall 2016 in Barcelona, Olivia Estalayo asked him about recent developments in commercial photography, agencies, and the ethics of the advertising business. As is well known, Kessels is a keen collector of vernacular photography and the curator of the widely acclaimed exhibition *Album Beauty*, so it is no surprise that Mette Sandbye mentions his work in her article on the Family Album. Sandbye has researched and published extensively on these themes, and thus was the obvious choice to write on this "understudied part of visual culture." She also excels at linking "traditional analogue family photographs," which were taken for a future audience, with the new form of recording our world, that is, digital photographs taken by mobile phones, to be seen immediately by a wide and

distant audience. While many of the aspects and functions of this kind of photography remain the same, the practice has changed radically: Less family and more friends, more everyday experience and daily life occurrences, more selfies, pets, and food. In other words: the everyday life made public. This anticipation of the public dimension of a private issue, love (in the best case), and the founding of a new family, is also the core of Wedding Photography, which is the subject of Sandbye's case study.

Architecture photography, which also falls into this category of useful, or applied photography, has attracted less critical attention than "the history of popular photography" (Wells, 2015: 7), maybe because it not only has to "sell" (or at least show off) the building and its architect, but also has a more conceptual edge to it: It converts a three-dimensional structure into a flat, publishable form that highlights the main achievements of the building and its creator. In his enlightening essay, Rolf Sachsse reminds us that architecture was the first playground of photography, and highlights the medium's role in the rise of Modern Architecture. Sachsse is certainly one of the most prominent authors in his field: an architect, photographer and scholar, his many writings cover practically all possible aspects of the relation between the two disciplines, and their fusion into architectural photography. Recommended by PhotoResearcher editor Uwe Schögl, I had asked Rolf the favor of curating a small exhibition on architectural photobooks for the first edition of Aarhus Photobook Week in 2014, and he kindly agreed. Therefore, I hesitated a bit before asking him for a favor again, this time to contribute a piece of writing to this book. I truly thought he would say No, and yet: Not only did he accept but he delivered a solid and didactic essay, and a perfect entry point for anybody interested in the subject.

Compared to heavyweight Sachsse, Erika Goyarrola is still at the beginning of her academic career. She recently finished her PhD in humanities from Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona with a thesis on Self-referentiality in Contemporary Photography, highlighting the work of Francesca Woodman, Antoine d'Agata and Alberto Garcia-Alix. It is fair to say though that her articles and

essays for journals and magazines have attracted much attention, as has her curatorial work, especially the exhibition cycle 1+1=12. Encuentros de Fotografía Contemporánea at Institut Français Madrid in 2014. To counterbalance the focus on the globalized barrage of images taken by mobile phones, it seemed necessary to take a closer look at the history of the traditional self-representation machine, the photo booth. Since its invention, nearly a hundred years ago, it has been a fundamental instrument for autobiographical purposes and has become part of one of the major strands of photography in the second half of the twentieth century. Or as Goyarrola puts it, "the photo booth brought a new style, and thus a new viewpoint of photography in particular and visual arts in general."

The last part of this chapter is dedicated to photography as a way to encourage critical thinking about the world we live in. And—even if a handful of politicians and scientists still want to convince us of the opposite—our world's major problem today is neither terrorism nor migration, but global warming, plastic waste and pollution of our vital resources, water, air and soil. I met Chris Jordan at the Spanish festival PHotoEspana in 2005, and was so fascinated by his series on consumerism and waste that I invited him to participate in the festival the following year, with the large-format images from Katarina's Wake. Since then, his work has become referenced and widely exhibited all around the globe. It was only shortly before I contacted him again to contribute to this book that I learned about Swaantje Güntzel's work, via an introduction by a common friend. While treating the same issues (plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean), their way of working, and the end products, could not be more different. I could not help asking her right away if she would be willing to participate in a conversation with Chris and myself on the subject of photographic eco-activism, and we set up a Skype meeting. In the resulting interview, I limited myself to throwing in a few keywords, to break the ice, and then let the conversation flow. It is interesting to see that on both sides of the Atlantic, artistic work with an environmentally concerned focus is still having trouble being taken seriously by the art world, and

not being put in the drawer of "activism," a term that according to Jordan, "is deeply infused with hypocritical judgment and telling people how they are supposed to behave." Güntzel adds that a main problem for her is that collectors don't trust her market value (as she is not in the high-end segment of the art market yet), but just look at the work in terms of "Would I want to have this in my living room?", and then decide that they don't.

The difficult equilibrium between delivering a message and making the work sellable (as art, as news, as a commercial product ...) has been an intrinsic problem of the photographic medium from the moment of its inception. However, as photography is much more than art, different to text, film, or music, and due to its ever-changing role in society, as well as its implied truth-value, this situation is unlikely to change any time soon.

Due to the near limitless applications of the medium of photography, clearly this chapter cannot explain the usefulness of photographic images in an exhaustive way. Medical, technical, and didactic images have not been taken into account, nor have fashion and editorial photography. We have tried, however, to analyze some of the aspects and functions of the photographic image in a way that can be applied to others. Mette Sandbye, Rolf Sachsse and Erika Goyarrola have helped to provide the useful images for their articles, which come from historic and contemporary artists, such as Edouard Denis Baldus, Heinrich Heidersberger, Ahmet Ertug, H.G. Esch, Hansjörg Buchmeier, Brenda Moreno and Juan de la Cruz Megías. A special thank you goes to Alasdair and Kirsty Foster for sending us their personal wedding photograph from the 1970s (unfortunately, they have forgotten the name of the photographer). Rita Leistner, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, Kael Alford, Thorne Anderson, Chris Jordan and Swaantje Güntzel have allowed us to use their own works, some photographed by collaborators, and the illustrations for the interview with Erik Kessels come mostly from the KesselsKramer website, except for the installation shot from his 24-hour photo installation at the CCCB, which is courtesy of Marc Neumüller Esparbé.

## Redefining the Photographic Medium

Since the invention of the photographic medium, the relationship between photography and art has been problematic in many ways, and it continues to be. Although the distinctions between such categories have become increasingly blurred in recent years, it would be more precise to speak of a cross-fertilizing relation than a competing one. The most vital difference is that "Art" is no longer defined by its materials, appearance or content; instead it is defined by the context. Some contemporary photography suits the artistic context very well. In many cases it is created exclusively within this context, and engages directly with it. Other contexts, as mentioned in Chapter 3, include advertising, medicine, journalism, political activism, the family album, scientific investigation, as much as the representation of architecture, portraits, weddings, and so on. As all of these other contexts illustrate, photography is an incredibly versatile medium that cannot be confined exclusively to the artistic context. Or, as Aaron Schuman has put it: "Yes, photography can be 'Art', but it is also much more than 'Art.'" Of course, the reverse is also true: in countless ways, art stretches far beyond the limits of photography, and serves many roles that photography never will (Schuman, 2010). For him, the most interesting development occurring today is that photography has reached a level of maturity whereby it is no longer simply a medium that exists within or is applied to other contexts, but has begun to establish a context of its own: "'Photography' (with a capital P)." Today, the medium seems to have gained enough confidence, prominence, momentum and status—and has gathered enough of a cohesive community around itself—that it no longer needs to hang onto the coat-tails of "Art" in order to be recognized or respected; instead, it's beginning to redefine itself, exist and flourish as "Photography" (Schuman, 2010).

It is within this context that I have invited a number of scholars and practitioners to explore the borders of the medium, such as moving versus still images, documentary versus staged photography, the single image and the series, as well as sculptural and tactile dimensions, research-driven methodology and psychological borderlines.

Most of these aspects are as old as the medium itself but have undergone considerable variations with the arrival of the digital age. The convergence of media has a great impact on the differentiation of static and moving images. For a photograph not only reflects a decision on the part of the photographer, his sense that a certain moment in time—let's call it a decisive moment—is worthy of being recorded; the true strength of a photograph resides in the time it contains. This freezing of time—Bazin speaks of a mummification of the moment in photography—is of course related to Barthes' *punctum*. What happens in film is a mummification of events as they take place, since the time span of events here corresponds directly to that of reproduction. In the case of the electronic visual media, TV and video, viewers can synchronously witness this mummification on the screen. This simultaneity of recording and reproduction, the visual feedbacks and interferences it creates, were central to the earliest experiments with the medium of video, first and foremost in the work of Nam June Paik. Digitalization has now rendered photography equally capable of producing absolutely instant images. Moreover, multiple image formats are commingled in the recording device itself: digital cameras have long learnt to record video as well (some of them even producing ready-for-YouTube files), and video cameras store photographs. Mobile phones do both, producing imagery they forward directly to other terminals or to the Internet. That is not to say, of course, that forms mixing still and moving images are something new. They are present, too, in the medium of film itself, which, in contrast with video, consists of individual images, or frames. But digitalization engenders a new relationship with technology: photographers and media artists are no longer tinkers; they no longer need to (nor in fact can) fully understand the technology they are employing. The computer is a black box that we do not have to open; we merely need to know how to use it. Learning consists in locating and filtering information, not in making knowledge our own (as will be argued in the next chapter, also). What counts is access to the necessary know-how, not a firm grasp of it. This adaptation to fast-paced technology has profoundly shaped the new generation of artists

who have never known the pre-digital world, and cannot imagine creating without menu-driven image editing, and the "Undo" function".

Depending on the desired end result, they blow up their pictures into large-format works, project or stick them on the wall, publish them on their own blog, or convert them, at a click of the mouse, into a photography book. They record their videos now in cinema-quality HD, with their mobile phones. Their fame and influence depends in a large part on how networked they are within their "community" and on how the latter evaluates their work.

In his essay, Stephen Chalmers talks about his photographic projects and the research-based methods he shares with other photographers such as Joel Sternfeld, Taryn Simon, and Chloe Dewe Mathews. I met Stephen at the Pingyao Festival in China some years ago, where he had curated an exhibition that included Chris Jordan's work. Soon, I also learned about Stephen's own practice, and his teaching. When he decided to publish his long-term project *Unmarked*, he asked me for some advice in the editing and design process, and the result was a small but very interesting book. The work is based on long trips by car back and forth across the country, that Stephen had made for different reasons and several life changes. During these trips, he had passed numerous roadside memorials with weathered stuffed animals, bits of lace or flowers tied to the post of a road sign, denoting that "something bad happened at these locations at some point in the past." In all of his projects, Chalmers draws on the limitations of the media of photography to represent these events, to prove anything, to document or reveal the hidden yet charged histories of places.

Alexander Streitberger's article reflects on images that are neither photography nor film: As "images generated by images" (and not taken from reality) they are photofilmic images situated on the threshold between stillness and movement: freeze frames, flip books, chronophotography, photodynamism, slide shows and immersive 313 experiences are some of the examples he analyzes. Many of these techniques allow the film to reveal its basic principle as a moving image composed of photographic stills, a kind of self-



reflexivity of the medium. Digital technology has unleashed a revival of serial and sequential editing of photographs to time-lapse videos and enabled new effects and experiences in the no-man's-land between the still and the moving image. I was first introduced to Alexander Streitberger by our common friend Lars Blunck, the author of the next article in this collection, and we have since organized many seminars and workshops for the students of both our universities, in Leuven and Madrid. Together with Hilde Van Gelder, Streitberger directs the Lieven Gevaert Research Centre for Photography, Art and Visual Culture which has become a true research hub for the medium in the last years. They are also the co-editors of the Lieven Gevaert Series, a major series of substantial and innovative books on photography launched in 2004.

Lars Blunck was my fellow intern at the Museum of Modern Art in the late 1990s, but we lost contact for several years, until his book *Die fotografische Wirklichkeit* (The Photographic Reality) fell into my hands, and I contacted him via the publisher. He has also been one of the docents for the European Master of Contemporary Photography in Madrid, and recently invited me to hold a workshop for his students at the Nurnberg Academy of Fine Arts. Beside his expertise on Duchamp's optical devices and readymades, Blunck has published extensively on the connection between truth and fiction in photography. His article focuses on staged photography, an umbrella term that gathers concepts as disparate as Arranged, Constructed, Creative, Directorial, Fabricated, Manipulated or Tableau Photography, and how it relates to traditional photographic requirements such as correctness, authenticity, and truth. From suspended World Press Photo winner Giovanni Troilo to Hippolyte Bayard, via Robert Capa and Ralph Bartholomew Jr., Blunck shows us the role of narration and fiction in supposedly "unstaged" photographs.

The territory shared by text and image is the playground of Federica Chiocchetti's conversation with Nina Strand. Chiocchetti, whom I met at a colloquium at the Birmingham Library, organized by Pete James and Nicola Shipley, has a background in comparative literature, and

developed her interest in photography through literature. Overwhelmed by photography theory, she felt the need for a more playful and experimental way to engage with her research and set up the photo-literary platform Photocaptionist to promote the "concubinage" between photography and literature, images and words. Her conversation with Nina Strand, the co-editor of the Scandinavian magazine *Objektiv*, touches not only on image—text and photo—text intersections after the pictorial turn, but also on very contemporary matters, such as filter bubbles in the social networks, "the irritating intrusion of algorithms," and the current political turmoil in the US, which, according to Strand, could easily be described as "a triumph of pure image over other kinds of information."

My own contribution on "Tactile Photography" is co-authored with Andreas Reichinger, a computer graphics and computer vision researcher at VRVis, the Viennese Zentrum für Virtual Reality and Visualisierung Forschungs GmbH. We first introduced the concept of tactile photography at a conference on Materiality and Immateriality in Photography in Vienna in 2012, the proceedings of which were published in the magazine *PhotoResearcher*. Since then, we have continued our research into 3D-Printing in the field of cultural heritage, and presented it at international conferences, in publications, and at curatorial meetings. This proposal begins with a short introduction on the rise of multisensorial art practices and projects in the field of tactile interpretation. Thereafter, we focus on our main field of research, the use of stereoscopy to create 3D-printed reliefs: its premises, technical description, its cultural and artistic impact, and finally, its potentials in the field of education, of inclusivity and in exhibition design.

Roger Ballen is one of the few collaborators in this publication I have never met personally. A huge fan of his work, I have seen many exhibitions, books and videos made by and with him, and finally got to know him via email and phone, to coordinate his participation in the Daegu Photo Biennial in Korea, which I co-curated in 2014. I vividly remember framing and hanging some of the images that now illustrate his text, together with the chief curator of

the Biennial, Alejandro Castellote. To create the composition that was to be hung on the wall, we put all the pictures on the floor, then one of us stood on a ladder, and instructed the other to move the frames from left to right and back again, until we had a convincing result that we could hand over to the mounting team. Roger Ballen's photographs include drawings, calligraphies, masks and many mythological allusions that call on "ancient shamanistic visions, sacred symbols inherited and embedded through time," as he put it himself. I am very thankful that he has contributed his text and all the images in a timely manner and without asking any second questions. Other photographers who have supplied their works for this chapter are Stephen Chalmers (for his own text, Chapter 4.1), Noah Kalina and Jutta Strohmaier for Chapter 4.2, and Francesca Catastini for the conversation between Chiochetti and Strand (Chapter 4.4). The illustrations for the Tactile Photography piece have been provided by Andreas Reichinger, our collaborator Florian Riest, and myself. Finally, I want to thank Cynthia Young for her help in our being able to publish the famous photograph of the Falling Soldier by Robert Capa from Life magazine (July 12, 1937, p. 19), courtesy of the International Center of Photography, in New York.

### Rights and Markets for Photography

The desire to possess a thing in order to enjoy the exclusive pleasure of having it is probably as old as mankind itself. A desire, which, of course, also applies to art objects under the term "collecting". The most significant changes to the art market arise in the second half of the nineteenth century, when artists began to work as free entrepreneurs. The upswing of the modern art market after the Second World War, especially from the 1960s onwards, is rooted in the developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but is essentially characterized by two new components. In addition to the greater liquidity of modern capital, it is the new way of looking at the work of art as a fungible and profitable investment which made the boom of the art market possible in the 1980s. While the motif of prestige and the motif of decoration—for the spontaneous art lover as well as the systematic collector—continues to exist in the area of private art buying, a number of specific

goals, such as corporate image, customer care or employee motivation, have become motivations for the establishment of Corporate Collecting. There have been efforts to "measure" the performance of art as investment, and comparative studies between the art and stock market since the 1970s, yet it has only been in recent years that Art Market Studies have become an important part of cultural studies.

The market for image rights, that is, not the object itself but the right to use it, has a history of its own, and is currently facing a critical moment. Traditional picture agencies and collectives, which take care of the commercialization of their members' images, are disappearing or being bought by bigger players on the market. Authored and commissioned images are being substituted by cheap stock photography (and now also video) available online.

Collaborative efforts in the world of photography seem to respond to times of change. Magnum Photos, the classic example of a photographic co-operative, was founded in 1947. The artist-run agency Ostkreuz was formed in East Berlin just one year after the fall of the Wall; around the same time the collective Tendence Floue was founded through "a generous and ecstatically wild friendship". The main purpose of these agencies and co-operatives was, and to a certain extent still is, to protect its members' (copy-)rights and to promote them in the publishing market, which is now in decline. While many prestigious agencies have closed, we are seeing a true renaissance of Photography Collectives. The vast majority of these collectives have popped up in the last 15 years, such as Supay Fotos, NOPHOTO or Sputnik Photos. Some festivals and centers have already responded to this new trend by inviting collectives to meet, debate and show their work. For example, E.CO 2010, organized by Claudi Carreras, invited 20 photographic collectives from Europe and Latin America to Spain. The rise of the P2P philosophy field of art and image rights alike corresponds to emerging possibilities around collaboration, sharing and exchange. Collective models of production, consumption, and ownership have grown in our networked societies, which allow user-generated content, crowd-funding and collaborative

consumption. These changes have begun with the rise of the Internet, survived the dot-com crisis and keep spreading, regardless of economic development. On the other hand, the global financial crisis has certainly accelerated the renaissance of traditional practices such as lending and bartering, since complex trading instruments have fallen into disrepute. Platforms based on participatory and commons-oriented paradigms seem to invade more and more social, economic and cultural fields.

This chapter consists of three interviews and one essay around contemporary issues in the commercialization of images, collecting photography, and reproduction rights. The first interview features art market expert Alexander Rotter, former director of the contemporary art department of Sotheby's New York, and now in a similar position at Christie's. I met Alex when we both studied Art History in Vienna, many years ago. As he is not a person who gives interviews on a regular basis, and only agreed to have the conversation for our old friendship's sake, I am deeply grateful for his trust, and his frankness when speaking about the open secrets of the business. Another thank you goes to Katelend Rosaen who has helped with the transcription and editing of this interview

Simone Klein, who I met in Berlin some 15 years ago, also worked in the auction business before joining the prestigious agency Magnum to take care of the Print Sales. She is thus able to speak about the market for photography from many angles—a market that is divided into three sectors: nineteenth-century photography, classic vintage photographs, and contemporary photography. She explains that limited editions are something that came up in the 1970s/1980s due to a growing market for photography, as it was necessary to make people understand that what they buy is limited and rare. As Simone explains, the practice of limiting editions of photographs, albeit typical for technologically reproducible works of art, is borrowed from printmaking, and a purely commercial practice, which "has been applied onto photography to make it fit for the market".

With Pavel V. Khoroshilov and his daughter Anastasia we look at the other side of the coin, the collector's point of view. I met them via Irina Chmyreva and we decided to have a conversation that would orbit around the motivations of a collector of photography, taking into account the special circumstances of the Russian art market and Pavel's personal history. As in the case of the two other interviews in this chapter, it was a rare opportunity to find out more about the operating mode of the art market, which can now be shared with a wider public.

The last text in this chapter is by Wolfgang Ullrich, a cultural scientist and freelance author from Germany whose work I have followed for many years. When I asked him to contribute to this compendium, he proposed to write on reproduction rights of photographic images for scientific texts. This is clearly an issue that moves him personally, as it becomes more and more difficult to illustrate scholarly essays and books, due to restrictions from certain artists, their galleries or their heirs. Interestingly enough, permission to publish an image is also often refused in order to prevent the artist in question from appearing in connection with certain other artists. In particular, foundations devoted to the works of a deceased artist impose strict conditions as to the context in which a work may or may not be reproduced. By determining the context in which reproductions appear, these right holders understand the reception of art as something that can be influenced by them, as "Copyright becomes a postproduction tool".

### Dissemination and Education

The following chapter is dedicated to the distribution of photography through the classic channels—that is, exhibitions, books, and magazines, as well as teaching. Needless to say, these days they are complemented (and partly substituted) by the Internet, in the form of electronic books, websites and online learning platforms. As social media and the future of photography will be analyzed in depth in the next chapter, the essays in this part of the book will concentrate on the history of exhibitions, the revised history of the photobook, a case study on a Japanese photography magazine, one on a Spanish publishing project, and a

historical perspective on photography education, before looking at the future of photography education, through Visual Literacy programs and MOOCs.

Alessandra Mauro's book *Photoshow* provided us with a long-awaited history of the photographic exhibition. It provides the answers to questions such as "When was the first photography exhibition held?", which actually cannot be answered in a simple way, as several events qualify in different ways. More importantly, though, Mauro analyzes the *raison d'être* of the photographic exhibition, as a montage of attractions, a term she borrows from Sergei Eisenstein. While the first presentations of the medium in libraries, auctions and showrooms, later at industrial fairs and World exhibitions, and then in salon-style shows at Camera Clubs lacked a "curatorial" approach, the exhibitions at Alfred Stieglitz's Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, active from 1905 until 1917, opened a new era for photographic exhibitions. Other selected milestones in this history are Edward Steichen's monumental *Family of Man* (1955), the project here is new York (2011), *The European Dream* by Alessandro Penso (an itinerant exhibition about migration that was set up in the inside of a truck, which drove from Greece to Brussels in 2013), or the installation *Wall on Wall* by Kai Wiedenhöfer (2014). In comparison to traditional museum exhibitions of painting, sculpture, drawings, and other original art works, a typical photo show at a festival or art space is made up mainly of "exhibition prints." These prints can be adapted to the space in terms of size, paper quality, and mounting, and therefore can be quite unique pieces. However, it has become common for them to be destroyed after deinstallation of the show.

It has also become common practice to show photographic books mounted on tables or in glass cases, along with the prints on the wall, or even to concentrate an event on the book form alone. This is the case with the photobook festivals that have popped up around the globe in the last few years, from Melbourne to Moscow, from Kassel to Istanbul. These festivals, together with the fairs and book markets (such as the UNSEEN photobook market, Cosmos, and Offprint), are vibrant and lively

meeting points for the photobook community, and showcases for the latest publications.

In addition, there is a growing interest in reinterpreting the history of photography through the role of publications and printed photographs. A particularly influential reinterpretation, which has been crucial for the renaissance of the medium and the formation of a true Photobook Phenomenon, has been put forward by the photographer and collector Martin Parr and the critic Gerry Badger, published in three volumes. We can speak of a neophyte field of what is currently designated as "photobook" studies at least since Horacio Fernández's exhibition *Fotografía pública: Photography in Print 1919-1939*, in the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid in 1998. At a time when photography was struggling to prove its status as Art and to enter the museum in the form of ever-larger prints in massive frames, here was a show of loose pamphlets, well-thumbed magazines and yellowed photography books: a true "paradigm change" that placed special emphasis on the "specific intrinsic value of photobooks according to primarily aesthetic criteria". Jose Luis Neves' forthcoming dissertation will be the first research project to question and re-evaluate the hegemony of the terminological, historical and ontological proposals developed by the general historicization process of the "photographic book" initiated in the early 2000s. Neves highlights the most significant historiographical and critical studies dedicated to the study of photographic publications in book form, while highlighting their contribution towards the construction of the identity of that book production.

The interview with Martin Parr and Gerry Badger took place in Arles, France, in 2016, during the *Rencontres* festival, and in the framework of working together on the exhibition *Photobook Phenomenon*, which opened its doors in Barcelona, in March 2017. This exhibition, according to one reviewer, "invites the audience to interact with its displays through digital technology," and "doesn't glorify print or imply that it's of higher moral standing than the web, but rather it reveals the curatorial value of the photobook as distinct but just as worthy of discussion as exhibition design" (Morley 2017). When Parr and Badger speak of a

"revisionist" history of photography through the photobook, they follow up on Horacio Fernández's argument that photobooks have been responsible for a good part of shifts of style and content matter in the history of photography, especially between the 1950s and 1970s, the "golden age" of the photobook. It seems reasonable to state that photographic books have significantly aided the acceptance of photography as an art form and the establishment of many photographic careers (Fernández 2017). But can we really speak of "two histories of photography," as Fernández claims, one composed of a "canon of masterworks" and the other "in the form of books with nearly unlimited (re-)editions, which can be found in libraries, rather than museums"? The major concern of scholars such as Neves seems not so much whether we can write this alternative history of photography, but who is writing it, and how.

Photobooks also have a shared history with magazines. In Japan, for example, photobooks were often assembled from bodies of work that had first appeared in magazines. Actually, from the 1950s to the 1990s this practice was an outstanding characteristic of Japanese photo publishing. A prominent example is Shomei Tomatsu's *Nippon*, released in 1967, which brought Tomatsu's main serialisations from the end of 1950s to the mid-1960s together in book form. Each of these series is an independent body of work and, at the time of their original publication, there was no plan to compile them into one volume. It was not until years later that they were organized into a single book with a very broad theme (Kaneko 2017). Susumu Shimonishi presents a Case Study on Shoji Yamagishi, the legendary editor of the Japanese photography magazine *Camera Mainichi*, and co-curator of the exhibit *New Japanese Photography*, held at MoMA in 1974, with the participation of 15 Japanese photographers such as Eiko Hosoe, Masahisa Fukase, and Daido Moriyama. Shimonishi's article gives an insight into the role of photography magazines in post-war Japan, with the tragic anecdote of Robert Capa's visit to Japan, shortly before he died. When I first met Susumu, he did not speak a word of English, and our conversations could only take place with the help of a translator,

and a lot of imagination. Now he is not only a fluent speaker of English, but also a recognized scholar and an admired artist. His research of Yamagishi's archives is exemplary for a new interest of scholars around the world in the history of the printed image.

Today, more photobooks than ever before are produced, read, traded, and collected. Independent publishing and self-publishing of books—as well as fanzines—has become a phenomenon that has had a considerable impact on contemporary culture (Neves 2015). There is an evident return to the printed page and the tangible object, even though we are at the height of the digital era—or at least at the beginning. Today, many of the sales happen over the Internet; marketing campaigns are done through social networks; and financing often uses crowd-funding. Consequently, bookstores that specialized in the medium, such as Kowasa in Barcelona and Schaden in Cologne, had to close their doors, while more and more online distributors are popping up. The strongest markets are still the US, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, France and the UK; however, in recent years Spain has become one of the key players, at least in terms of production. Jesús Micó's Kursala Edition is an important part of that success story. In 2012, we were invited together to talk at the PhotobookWeekend in Bristol, and I asked him for the transcription of his lecture, to make it accessible to a wider audience. Apart from being a curator, Jesús is also a teacher of photography, which builds the bridge to the last three contributions to this chapter.

Joan Fontcuberta once told me in an interview that for him, formal education has always suffered from logocentrism, maybe due to historical reasons. He claimed that "today, the politicians who run the administration of education should realize that more and more of our experience of the world is visual and consequently there should be an emphasis on the education of visual content". Today, basic photographic techniques can be easily learned from tutorials on the Internet, some workshops and practice. What students of photography still need are people who support them and give them input, advice, and courage—in fact, this is maybe the single most important thing a

teacher can do. Of course, it makes a difference if we speak of photography as practice or as part of the curriculum of humanities, art history and visual studies.

Peter Smith's and Michelle Bogre's pieces are complementary. When I asked Michelle to contribute to this book, she proposed that Pete should write on the historic context and she would draft a more manifesto-like text, making the case for Visual Literacy as a means of making people fit for understanding our world of images. Smith states that traditional schism between theory and practice is now quite rare in universities where photography education "is characterized by responsiveness in ambitious practice to critical theorization." He highlights major changes in the intellectual scope of photography education at university level from the late 1970s to the present day and underlines how key debates in the humanities and social sciences entered the field of study. Finally, he acknowledges the alignment of identity politics with postmodernist photography, and recognizes the role of New Photography Theory.

Michelle Bogre's text, on the other hand, deals with the idea that photographic education is in crisis, and discusses the challenges it faces. She starts by stating that photography education has been questioned and criticized almost as long as it has been a field of study, and that, if there is a problem in photo education, it is self-inflicted: "We cannot agree on the definition of photography, so we can't decide what we are teaching." Her main conclusion, similar to Fontcuberta's, is that Photography is the language of the twenty-first century, as we "now punctuate our texts with images, not grammatical marks." For Bogre, understanding how to read a photograph is the new literacy, and only visually literate photography students will be adaptable to whatever technological or communication changes the future holds.

One of the major changes in education is the use of Massive Open Online Courses(MOOCs). While distance learning goes back to the nineteenth century (in fact, nearly the same year that photography was "invented"), large-scale interactive participation and open access through

the Web or other network technologies, are rather recent developments. The last piece in this chapter is Sara Bodinson and Sarah Meister's description of MoMA's learning program *Seeing through Photographs*, which was produced for the Coursera platform and uses works from the Museum Collection as a point of departure to encourage participants to look critically at photographs through the some of the diverse ideas, approaches, and technologies that inform their making. I know both authors from when I was working at MoMA in the late 1990s, and they were kind enough to accept my invitation to contribute with this case study that gives an insight into new learning strategies in a museum context.

Finally, I am grateful to the ICP for the permission to print Robert Capa's little known *A Cook and a Woman in Atami*, as well as to Tres Tipos Gráficos for their images from the *Kursala Edition*, and Sara Bodinson for the screenshots of the videos from MoMA's *Seeing through Photographs* program.

## Outlook

In Summer 2011, the visitors of the *Rencontres d'Arles Photography Festival*, in Arles, France, had a lot to discuss. Clément Chéroux, Joan Fontcuberta, Erik Kessels, Martin Parr, and Joachim Schmid presented a ground-breaking exhibition called *From Here On*, with a Joint Manifesto that began:

NOW, WE'RE A SPECIES OF EDITORS. WE ALL RECYCLE, CLIP AND CUT, REMIX AND UPLOAD. WE CAN MAKE IMAGES DO ANYTHING. ALL WE NEED IS AN EYE, A BRAIN, A CAMERA, A PHONE, A LAPTOP, A SCANNER, A POINT OF VIEW. (Gergel 2012 [capitalized in the original])

The exhibit included the work of 36 international artists whose work consists mainly of appropriated popular imagery from the Internet, using vernacular sources from social media, search engines, archives, surveillance technologies, Google Street View, cameras operated by animals, webcams, and hacked laptop cameras. I gave these latter categories the name *Unmanned Photography* (Neumüller 2013).

We have become accustomed to the camera eyes in the sky, above all, in the shape of spy satellites rotating around our planet in their thousands since

the 1960s. Long before that, however, the pioneers of rocket photography, like Amédée Denisse, Alfred Nobel and an engineer from Dresden called Alfred Maul, recognized the potential of the photographs taken "from a great height." The rocket device with built-in plate cameras and parachute could provide images from a height of up to 600 meters. Another curiosity dating from that era is pigeon photography, developed by the apothecary and amateur photographer Julius Neubronner, and making it possible to take up to twelve photographs per flight. What is more, the winged photographers were quiet and inconspicuous, and thus perfect spies, especially in war-time.

Other kinds of animals were also used for image-making—be that hunting dogs with special camera jackets, or house cats, like Nancy Bean, whose works were on show in *From Here On*. The transfer of the photographic act from man to animal goes hand in hand (or rather, paw in paw) with a high degree of authenticity, for action taken by an animal, crude, accidental and clumsy, does not falsify anything. When it comes to the issue of the documentary value of the photograph, therefore, unmanned photography is a special case, and a very multifarious one at that.

Eliminating humans from the image-making process is done not necessarily for their protection, but rather for the sake of efficiency. The physical need to sleep, eat and excrete waste, and also the fact of aging on long flights into space, are annoying obstacles to the success of a mission. The very act of photographing functions better without people: today's fully automatic cameras can produce perfect images, if only they are allowed to. To produce really bad, or unusual, photographs, you would really have to pit your wits against the machine.

For his No.4 Vienna MMIX, during the Vienna Opera Ball, Jules Spinatsch used a programmed camera system to capture a certain area in columns from left to right, following a precise grid over the entire duration of the event. The single images are then assembled in chronological order into one large panorama. The resulting images are a contradicting liaison of control and failure. Two

competing agendas—the schedule of the event versus the programming of the camera—construct a new narrative and trigger speculation about time, image and the real, as the image plane is split into unintended time fragments. Just as in Jorge Luis Borges' story of the cartographers, this machine-managed and objectified reality is so close to reality that it becomes useless. The best example for this might be Heisenbergs Offside, which was created during the World Championship Qualification game of Switzerland against France. Spinatsch produced 3003 still shots from an interactive network camera over the course of the whole game, but not a single one shows the ball.

Light-field cameras promise the next technological revolution in the field of photography. They allow changing the focal distance and depth of field after a photo is taken. This is possible because they record the direction that the light rays are traveling in space, in addition to light intensity. The idea to take "integral photographs" is more than a hundred years old, but it has only been in the last few years that we have seen the first working prototypes and some commercial products. This way, any part of the image, be it in the foreground or at the back, can be made sharp in the post-production process, without having to take a binding decision in the "decisive moment" of taking the picture.

The advance of surveillance technology for domestic use is a growing source of worry for the secret service people, particularly in those countries that use drones extensively, that is to say, Great Britain, the United States and Israel. But even if they were to succeed in banning mini- or micro-drones in the air, the next threats are lurking on the high seas (mini-submarines), on land (telepresence robots) and above all in space (swarm-financed microsatellites). The opening up of space for the average consumer could soon become a security risk; after all, official satellite images are still subject to strict censorship. NATO military bases are pixelated (as artfully shown in Mishka Henner's *Dutch Landscapes* book), and when Google Earth was first up and running, the White House was blurred (today it is shown in supposedly "outdated images"). Organizations like the American National Reconnaissance Office (motto: Vigilance from

Above) will certainly not be short of work in the years to come.

Another strategy is the infiltration of the private sphere with cameras, like *Delivery for Mr. Assange: A Live Mail Art Piece*, by the media group Bitnik, who—modeled on Tim Knowles' *Spy Box*—sent a cyclopic package to the WikiLeaks founder. Surprisingly, it was actually delivered to the addressee, who recognized it as a transmission medium with artistic intent, and even used it performatively. One cannot help but think of media artists like Rafael Lozano-Hemmer or Ricardo Iglesias, who have been working for years with electronically controlled and partially autonomous surveillance devices. But surely the most perfidious form of photographic intrusion was found by Kurt Caviezel: for his *The Users* project, he hacked his way into the webcams of harmless Internauts so as to make portraits of them.

In most cases, these images are fished from the infinite stream of data, are particles in a constant process of photographing by millions of camera eyes. In this machine-managed and objectified reality there are rarely any breaches or disruptions that might grant us some surprising moments. It is this apparent contradiction that makes unmanned photography so interesting for the theorists of post-photography. For highlights such as the 2013 Chelyabinsk meteor photographs taken by Russian dashboard cameras cannot conceal the fact that surveillance camera images are usually dreadfully boring.

The first essay of this chapter is by Annekathrin Kohout and describes a now-common phenomenon on the Internet, a kind of ludic visual conversation triggered by what she calls Kick-off Images and then echoed back from all ends of the Network. In her witty and yet serious analysis, #foodporn meets Foucault, and Marshall McLuhan stares at a pierced pair of lemons. For her, a kick-off image is a picture that acts as an initiation for new variants or reblogs, similar to how jokes are told and retold in real life. A surprising/absurd constellation of motives in the image, and the environment of social media form the breeding ground for this phenomenon. The images must be removed from their original contexts, and freed from the

authorship, so they can be shared, adapted and re-contextualized without inhibitions.

Robert Cook's essay is just as analytical and clever, but written from a personal point of view and with his tongue in his cheek. I asked Robert to reflect on the disappearance of the decisive moment, and gave him full freedom to develop a style that he has described as "lyrical, explorative and personally-conceptual" in one of our email conversations. This free-style way of writing may feel a bit strange in this rather scholarly context, yet it enables him to make brilliant points about our changing relation to cameras, as fetishized tools and amplifiers of self-representation on the social networks.

The last Case Study in the book is on a prominent online platform for photography, *LensCulture*, in the form of an interview with its founder Jim Casper. I have known Jim for many years and respect his great work for the photographic community, but also wanted to raise some critical questions about its commercial exploitation. The result is an honest and passionate conversation with somebody who believes in what

he is doing, and who wants to be part of the future of the medium: "I'm eagerly looking forward to whole new ways of using photography—maybe it will be like a new form of literature or global activism or immersive cinema or jazz."

Joan Fontcuberta has been mentioned and quoted several times already, and for many reasons. An educator, critic, curator, and conceptual artist using photography, he has shaped the understanding of the medium in many forms. His widely acclaimed book *Pandora's Camera* consists of various essays on the state of the art, and the future of photography. *Homo Photographicus*, the small piece we publish here, had first appeared in the *Matador* magazine, vol. 5, in December of 2016, and is a compressed form of his thinking about a future where hyper-visibility becomes consolidated, and where post-photography prepares us for a world of mental pictures, ubiquitous images with neither body nor support.

While the term post-photography is becoming widely used in the photographic community, some



scholars have come up with another terminology: post-post-photography. According to Friedrich Tietjen, co-organizer of the annual After Post-Photography conferences, the basic questions of post-post-photographic research orbit around three aspects concerning the history, the definition and the pragmatics of photography. In other words, it comes back to the truth of photographic images (indexicality), ontological questions of the medium (what is a photograph?), and finally, how it can or should be used (praxeology).

After all, it seems that we finish where we started. Photography is still haunted by the same ghosts as at the moment of its inception, networked hyper-ghosts caught in small black coffin-shaped boxes we hold in our hands, with shiny mirror-like displays that remind us of the first daguerreotypes. The homo photographicus still lives in Plato's cave, even if he is now connected with other cavemen all around the globe. He has constructed camera-eyes to explore the outside world and send back images which can only be read after machine decodification, but what interests him—and her—most, is still how they are seen by their cavemen-friends. While photography is no more an index of truth, the images themselves now do leave traces. They are filtered, screened and interpreted by the same entities that have put the cavemen in chains, in order to prevent them from finding out the truth. In fact, it seems that we are further away from ever leaving our caves than ever before. <>

[The Man in the Glass House: Philip Johnson, Architect of the Modern Century](#) by Mark Lamster [Little, Brown and Company, 9780316126434]

A "smoothly written and fair-minded" (Wall Street Journal) biography of architect Philip Johnson--a finalist for the National Book Critic's Circle Award

When Philip Johnson died in 2005 at the age of 98, he was still one of the most recognizable--and influential--figures on the American cultural landscape. The first recipient of the Pritzker Prize and MoMA's founding architectural curator, Johnson made his mark as one of America's leading architects with his famous Glass House in New Caanan, CT, and his controversial AT&T Building in NYC, among many others in nearly every city in the country--but his most natural role was as a

consummate power broker and shaper of public opinion.

Johnson introduced European modernism--the sleek, glass-and-steel architecture that now dominates our cities--to America, and mentored generations of architects, designers, and artists to follow. He defined the era of "starchitecture" with its flamboyant buildings and celebrity designers who esteemed aesthetics and style above all other concerns. But Johnson was also a man of deep paradoxes: he was a Nazi sympathizer, a designer of synagogues, an enfant terrible into his old age, a populist, and a snob. His clients ranged from the Rockefellers to televangelists to Donald Trump.

Award-winning architectural critic and biographer Mark Lamster's [The Man in the Glass House: Philip Johnson, Architect of the Modern Century](#) lifts the veil on Johnson's controversial and endlessly contradictory life to tell the story of a charming yet deeply flawed man. A rollercoaster tale of the perils of wealth, privilege, and ambition, this book probes the dynamics of American culture that made him so powerful, and tells the story of the built environment in modern America.

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Excerpt: "You cannot not know history."

Philip Johnson issued that famous maxim in 1959, and though he was talking about architectural tradition, he could just as well have been speaking about his own rich life, which was then barely past its halfway point. That life began in 1906 and ended in 2005, and he spent just about all of the ninety-eight years in between stirring up trouble.

There is hardly a city in America that is not graced—or fouled—by a building with Johnson's name on it, and often more than one. He craved attention, and made himself into a genuine celebrity. He was the architect of the imagination, a familiar face in his owl-frame glasses, a debonair, self-deprecating wit with a quip for every occasion.

His story, however, is much more than one of a charismatic man and his uneven architecture. Johnson lived the American century, and his story mirrored the nation's epic trajectory in that time. It opened with the highest aspirations and ambitions, embracing the possibilities of a modern world, yet concluded by abetting the accumulation of vast power and influence by a select few. His story, like the American story, was one of darkness as much as light; a story of inequity and bigotry, of the perils of cynicism, of human weakness and venality, of rampant corporatism, of the collapse of wealth and authority into the hands of a plutocratic class. Philip Johnson began his career proselytizing the public in the name of modern design. He finished it building for Donald Trump.

We cannot not know Philip Johnson's history because it is our history—like it or not. His dozens of works range in quality from the nadir of grim opportunism to the apex of civic and architectural achievement, but either way they shape our skylines, our streetscapes, and our daily lives.

Johnson's buildings are ubiquitous, but his influence far exceeds their mere presence. He was a shaper not just of individual structures or even of cities, but of American culture. When his interest first turned to architecture as a young man in the 1920s, modernism was an esoteric movement confined mostly to industry, social progressivism, and the occasional luxury residence. By the time of his death, the modern, with its sharp forms and sharp materials, was the defining language of the

American city, the vernacular of business, and the default aesthetic of the avant-garde and the cultural aristocracy. He was not fully responsible for that shift, but he played an instrumental part in it.

His career began not as an architect but as a curator and a critic. Johnson was the founding director of the architecture department of the Museum of Modern Art, and one of its most important patrons. His gifts of painting and sculpture—works by Jasper Johns, Paul Klee, Roy Lichtenstein, Mark Rothko, Oskar Schlemmer, Andy Warhol—define that institution and its narrative of twentieth-century art.

But it was in architecture and design that Johnson exerted greatest influence. His landmark exhibitions established the way design is presented and understood; that both everyday objects and grand works of architecture are worthy of veneration. More critically, he used his platform at the museum to promote a controversial vision of what modern architecture could and should be—a modernity that was about form and style rather than the values that good design could promote: affordable, healthy, and environmentally sensitive building and planning that edified the private and public realms. When he tired of modernism he ushered in its rejoinder, postmodernism, and when he saw that as a dead end he reframed the field once again.

Johnson craved the attention that came with these reversals. He had a Barnumesque gift for publicity, and as with Barnum the principal beneficiary of his mythmaking was himself. Johnson, more than anyone, was responsible for the celebrity-driven practice—"starchitecture"—that came to dominate the profession at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. Through it all, he was a kingmaker, promoting the architects he favored and casting those he disdained into the wilderness.

He was controversial because he was happy to reverse himself, to lean in to his own hypocrisy, to occupy multiple positions even if they were diametrically opposed. Johnson was a historicist who championed the new, an elitist who was a populist, a genius without originality, a gossip who

was an intellectual, an opportunist who was a utopian, a man of endless generosity who could be casually, crushingly cruel. For nearly a century, he had inhabited all of these oppositions, and countless others, concentrating in himself all of the contradictions and paradoxes of America and the century in which he lived. Not coincidentally, he was among the most loved and loathed figures in American culture. Many, somehow, loved and loathed him at once. Such was his strange charisma.

Johnson played to the image that he made of himself, especially in his later years: an avuncular, self-deprecating figure in a well-tailored suit. It was a long-practiced act that shielded him from criticism, suggesting that he was a harmless old wit, blameless for past transgressions. There were many of those, and not just sins of architecture. What he wished most to expunge from memory were his prodigal years in the 1930s when he launched himself as a virulently anti-Semitic fascist political leader, a would-be American Hitler, and an American agent of Nazi Germany.

He did what he could to redeem himself for those sins. He had always had Jewish friends, and they remained true to him. He promoted Jewish architects, built a synagogue without fee, and designed a nuclear reactor for the Israeli state. Did he expiate himself? The very question suggests Johnson's greatest gift, his unmatched capacity to occupy two poles at once.

Johnson's contradictions were embodied in the estate he built for himself in the verdant Connecticut suburb of New Canaan, and above all in the Glass House that was its centerpiece. It will always be the work that defines him: a simple rectangular box enclosed by glass, a modernist's platonic ideal of a home.

It was a tourist attraction and pilgrimage site for architects from the moment he moved into it, in 1949. Public curiosity became such a problem in its first year that he posted a sign along the road warding off intruders:

THIS HOUSE IS NOW OCCUPIED  
PLEASE RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF THE  
OWNER

But in smaller type, that same sign promised hours when the house would be open for all to come and look. Was not the building of a glass house the ultimate demand for attention, to be seen? Indeed, his generosity in welcoming those many visitors was almost as legendary as the house itself. He loved to show it off, to give tours of its precisely landscaped compound, which he had embellished over the years with a series of buildings and follies, creating a private universe of his own, a pristine space removed from the cares and worries of the world. That had always been his dream, from long before he became an architect. "If I had all the money in the world I would just build continuously, and keep on experimenting," he wrote to his mother in 1930, more than a decade before he made architecture his profession.

The house, like the life he performed from it, was a work of provocation. He was a gay man with a fascist history living in a glass house, and he liked nothing better than to throw stones. He got away with it, usually. He liked to have other stone throwers he could play with, influential figures he could challenge and be challenged by intellectually. On any given day a visitor to the Glass House might encounter John Cage or Jackie O, Andy Warhol or Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns or Robert Hughes, Frank Gehry or Isaiah Berlin. It was a place where one could speak seriously, where members of the intelligentsia mingled and mixed in sybaritic ease. As the legendary Yale architectural historian Vincent Scully put it, the house became "the most sustained cultural salon that the United States has ever seen."

Did Johnson actually live in the Glass House? People always asked. It was hard to believe he could, because it seemed more like an architectural manifesto than a place you could rightly call home. But he did live in it, at least in the early years. Even on those winter evenings when its thin glass walls made it almost insufferably cold; even on those summer afternoons when the sun's rays beat into it, trapping the heat indoors. Whatever one thought of him or his experiment in modern living, he had the audacity and fortitude to remain committed to it and until the very end.

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In the winter of 2017 news of a developer's proposed alteration to Manhattan's 550 Madison Avenue circulated through the architectural press. In chirpy, promotional language a press release described changes that would include stripping the lower portion of the building's granite facade and demolishing its opulent, marble-floored lobby. Outrage rapidly mounted among architects and preservationists, and a campaign to halt those alterations and grant the building landmark status gained momentum. It was already too late for the interior. Before those efforts could wind their way through the city bureaucracy, the lobby was gutted—a bitter blow against one of the city's most significant, if notorious, buildings. Although its address, 550 Madison Avenue, might not be familiar, its granite profile and skyline-marking Chippendale cap surely are. Most people know it by its original name: the AT&T Tower.

There was a time not that long ago when no one would have complained. For much of its life, and even when it was still on a drafting board, the AT&T Tower was the most reviled work of architecture in America, the poster child of postmodernism, that most gleefully despised of architectural movements. The building was vilified, the movement was vilified, and so was its architect: Philip Cortelyou Johnson.

But time has a way of shifting perspectives, and in the intervening years the AT&T Building has become a genuine icon. Not necessarily beloved, but appreciated as historically significant and worthy of preservation. In the 1960s and 1970s, Johnson rallied in the streets to save Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal; now, more than a decade after his death, crowds gathered on Madison Avenue with signs reading SAVE, AT&T and HANDS OFF MY JOHNSON.

This unlikely turn of events, the shift from one pole to its opposite without any explicit rejection of that previous position, suited Johnson's nature and career. He was a man of contradictions, and that included his advocacy of preservation, which came to a halt when his own interests were involved. If expanding the Museum of Modern Art meant knocking down two beaux arts townhouses, fine. His vision for Ellis Island would have turned its iconic

main building into a ruin. And then there was Third City, his plan to raze a square mile of historic Harlem and replace it with a walled city of his own design.

Johnson's contradictory nature was more than intellectual gamesmanship. Duality was his essential makeup, the product of the psychological condition—a form of bipolar disorder—that had afflicted him since he was young. For much of his life there were two Philip Johnsons, one manic and animated by possibility, the other profoundly damaged, lost, diffident and insecure. Being gay in a time when homosexuality was unacceptable, and certainly unacceptable to his father, only exacerbated the problem. There had to be multiple Johnsons, one intimate and disguised, the other a public performance.

Johnson was magnanimous—with his art, with his money, with his time—but also casually cruel and deceitful. He held grudges, sometimes for no reason other than pettiness, jealousy, or ambition. That he was a serial hit-and-run driver in his youth reveals an essential cowardice and an appalling lack of interest in the welfare of others. Of all his repellent traits, the most damning was his willingness to use people and then dispose of them when they were no longer of consequence to him. He did so throughout his life, in both his personal and professional worlds. Jan Ruhtenberg, Jimmie Daniels, Landis Gores, Jon Stroup, Robert Melik Finkle, Rosamond Bernier, John Burgee—those names are only a few on a long, dark list.

Well into middle age, he was a virulent anti-Semite and racist advocate of eugenics. For decades he sought to bury his sordid fascist behavior during the thirties and forties. He was never publicly confronted with the full evidence of his complicity—that he was more than a Nazi sympathizer, but an unpaid agent of the Nazi state. In his defense he could boast of his deep and lasting Jewish friendships, Lincoln Kirstein and Eddie Warburg chief among them; his advocacy for any number of Jewish architects, from Louis Kahn to Frank Gehry; his synagogue building; his support for Israel. Shimon Peres, the Nobel Peace Prize winner who negotiated Israel's relationship with postwar Germany, considered Johnson a close friend.

His actions and relationships were tainted by his cynicism and by his opportunism, but they were also in many ways genuine—another Johnson paradox. Is it possible to forgive him? Perhaps it is more useful to ask what prompted him to such drastic and misguided ideas and behavior. He inherited the prejudices of his father, and of middle-American white privilege, but he pushed those beliefs to obscene extremes. That was surely part of his goal, an Oedipal rejection of his father, an immature desire for attention and power masking his own insecurities. He acted as if the rules that applied to others did not apply to him, that he was above the common man even as he made populism his cause.

As an architect, a theorist, and a critic, he was notoriously unfaithful. Because he was restless and his mind was nimble, he could not resist the narcotic draw of the new, and the opportunities for self-aggrandizement the new presented. And so he dispensed with one idol for another, one way of thinking for another, tacking with the zeal of an America's Cup champion. In the world of architecture, a profession of idealists and romantics who would impose their visions on the world, his inconstancy was perceived as a grave moral flaw.

The story of Johnson's power and influence began at the Museum of Modern Art with the landmark Modern Architecture: International Exhibition of 1932. That show nearly didn't happen; that it did was a testament to the enlightened patronage of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Alfred Barr, and to Johnson's own energy and intelligence. It introduced European modernism to the American public, presenting work by Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and others who had developed a new architecture that responded to the materials, technologies, and conditions of contemporary life. But Johnson's vision of this new architecture was deracinated. He presented modernism as a style, a new aesthetic, rather than a progressive way of thinking about the built environment. At the height of the Depression, Johnson only reluctantly addressed architecture's obligations to relieve a mass housing crisis and to build a more equitable society. There was nobody more critical of Johnson's worldview than Frank Lloyd Wright, who castigated Johnson for his "propagandistic" formal agenda even as he benefited from it. Johnson

loved that controversy. He was not afraid of intellectual pugilism; it showed him that he was on the right path.

From the success of that show, the museum's department of architecture was born. Johnson immediately expanded its purview with another exhibition of lasting influence. After proving that architecture was a museum-worthy subject, he did the same for design. The Machine Art show of 1934 was groundbreaking in suggesting that there was artistry in everyday objects, from a ball bearing to a microscope, and in how those objects were displayed—on pedestals, as if they were religious relics to be venerated. He pioneered a vision of design as a consumable product, a marketable quality to be exploited in a commercial age.

As important as what he favored was what he did not: architecture for families, architecture and the environment, regional and vernacular architecture, mass housing. Social responsibility was boring, and for Philip Johnson to be boring was an unforgivable crime.

Johnson's identity was inextricably entwined with the museum. Although he did not design its main building—that happened during his prodigal fascist years—he became the house architect in the 1940s and remained so until the museum rejected him in the 1970s, the biggest blow of his career. But in that long period he contributed two handsome modern wings (one remains) and what is indisputably the museum's architectural masterpiece, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. The collection within the museum's walls is also unthinkable without Johnson's contributions. What would the place be without Lichtenstein's dotted girl with a beach ball, or Warhol's shimmering gold reproduction of Marilyn Monroe, or the encaustic flag of Jasper Johns? These works define the museum.

He shaped that collection just as he shaped the world of architecture. He began as a "propagandist" for modernism, and his campaign was a success. The Miesian glass box became the de facto paradigm for the skyscraper, a model that was easily and inexpensively reproduced by an America increasingly dominated by

corporations. With Mies, Johnson designed the ne plus ultra of these towers, the Seagram Building, and he followed it with several others—IDS, Pennzoil Place—of great delicacy and urbanity. His domestic work of the 1940s and 1950s, when he was building refined homes for the wealthy—not least himself—may be his most consistent period of excellence. If these works were not entirely original, they were gracious, attuned to their moment and to the mores of his clients, and impeccably made.

When Johnson tired of modernism, when he felt he needed to forge a new identity in opposition, he experimented with historical elements and precedents. There was something unsettling in his Ballet School formalism, for it not only rejected what he had so recently promoted but was unmistakably fascistic in its insistence on classical order and authority. With his history, that connotation was especially disturbing. When Robert Venturi pushed that direction in ways even he had not imagined, and then provided a theoretical foundation for it, Johnson was supportive, though it didn't stop him from experimenting with other idioms—notably Louis Kahn's monumentality—as he sought an architectural language for himself. But it was postmodernism that proved the best vehicle for shaking up the profession, and for making himself into a genuine American celebrity.

Postmodernism was a lot like Johnson himself: controversial, deplored as amoral, and ubiquitous. In the late 1970s and 1980s postmodern towers sprouted in cities across the country, many of them designed by Johnson, who had established the paradigm with the AT&T Tower in New York. If that was Exhibit A of corporate postmodernism, Exhibit B was Michael Graves's Portland Building, and Johnson had made that possible, too. But porno's lifespan was blessedly short, and when it was no longer the outrageous new kid on the block, Johnson pivoted again. Deconstructivism would be the new architectural style of the day, and if it lacked intellectual coherence as a movement it didn't matter. What did matter to Johnson was staying relevant and retaining his position as a tastemaker and a kingmaker.

His career mirrored American life of the postwar years, marked by increasing corporatization and the concentration of power and wealth among a privileged few. By the time of his death, celebrity had become the chief form of public currency. It was no accident that Donald Trump was the most prominent patron of his later years. Both craved attention, and they knew that their collaboration would generate it in boldface type.

Johnson himself became something of a human Rorschach test; the animus directed at him could reveal as much about those critics as it did about him. By birth he had been granted every conceivable privilege. When he squandered his advantages, he was given chance after chance to redeem himself, and despite his missteps he accrued more power and more privilege. For those who had not been so entitled—which is to say, just about everyone else—the idea that such profligacy could be rewarded was hard to swallow. This was compounded by the feeling that he had wasted his gifts and failed to achieve what he could and should have. This made him an especially ripe target, a figure onto whom all flaws and inadequacies might be projected.

The legacy he did leave extends beyond his architecture into art, design, and urban affairs, but his buildings remain his most visibly enduring markers. These works are so disparate in style and quality that it can be hard to believe they were generated under the direction of the same individual. The architect of aesthetically modest modern residences of the mid-century became the designer of aesthetically bombastic postmodern towers as that same century came to a close. In between there were moments of enduring civility and dignity offset by works that were overblown, nihilistic, and crass.

Yet there is a through line that holds all of this work together, a theme that recurs continually in Johnson's vast oeuvre. When he spoke on the nature of architecture, he returned again and again to the theme of procession, to the idea that architecture should be experienced through the unfolding of movement and time, a lesson he ascribed to his first visit to the Acropolis in Athens.

But Philip Johnson's work was rarely defined by procession. If there was any single hallmark to his designs, any defining characteristic, it was the void. His buildings resolve themselves in grand empty spaces, in open rooms, courts, and atriums. These are spaces one comprehends not through time and movement, but by standing still and gazing out, by stasis. The Glass House, the building that was his most intimate and personal architectural statement, is in essence an empty container, a simple open room.

Johnson imagined these voids as spaces of social interaction, and at their best they could achieve great energy and civility. Between the sculpture garden at the Museum of Modern Art and the promenade at the State Theater, he was responsible for two of New York's greatest rooms.

Even the Glass House was a salon of intellectual and physical exchange.

But when emptied of human presence, stripped down to its bones, Johnson's architecture feels barren and inert and lonely, despite its refinement and extravagance.

That was Johnson in architecture and in life: an exquisite, fragile, and empty vessel, always in search of a charge. <>

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