SENSORY STUDIES

Michael Bull and
Jon P. Mitchell

Ritual, Performance and the Senses

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Introduction

Michael Bull and Jon P. Mitchell

An Experiment in Anthropological Theory

This book explores the potential of combining cognitive/neuroanthropology, performance studies, and the anthropology of the senses to develop a new understanding of religious transmission.

Since its earliest treatment, religious transmission has been linked to ritual practice. For Emile Durkheim, religion consists of mental representations—ideas, beliefs, values—that are collective in their origin and reproduction. The primary context of their reproduction is ritual, which generates the conditions for their transmission by exciting feelings of collective effervescence in those present:

> Religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities; the rites are a manner of acting which take rise in the midst of the assembled groups and which are destined to excite, maintain or recreate certain mental states in these groups. (Durkheim 1966: 22)

Durkheim's exploration established an early link between representations—the cognitive foundations of religion—and forms of embodied experience and emotion. Using a slightly different language, Victor Turner, who consolidated the anthropological study of ritual in the 1960s–70s, also explored this relationship. For him, *communitas*, not collective effervescence—a generalized sense of communion or comradeship characteristic of the liminal phase of ritual—provides the context in which ritual participants are particularly receptive to the messages inherent in ritual symbolism (Turner 1969). For Clifford Geertz (1966), rituals are a form of text which can be read. They are a way of "saying something of something" through objects and actions as well as words, and the feelings or "ethos" that rituals generate make the conceptions of a given culture's religion more compelling. In both Durkheim's and Geertz's treatment, the experiential elements of ritual remain largely inchoate, as a context for or epiphenomenon of the "real" business of representation or semiotics. Turner's approach is not so essentialist.[1] More recently, this bias towards the representational, semiotic or "logo-centric" theorization of ritual has

come under fire from a number of angles. Scholars have focused on ritual as misrepresentation (Bell 1992, Bloch 1974, Lukes 1975), or as inherently meaningless (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, Staal 1979), focusing our attention on ritual as performative action (Mitchell 2006; Stewart and Strathern 2014) or ritual "in its own right" (Handelman and Lindqvist 2005; Grimes 1996, 2000). These approaches figure the experiential or embodied and performative as central elements within ritual itself, rather than mere contexts which aid the transmission of semantic knowledge.

Harvey Whitehouse has developed this approach from the perspective of cognition. Whitehouse's initial focus is initiation, and particularly the elaborate and often brutal initiation rituals found in Papua New Guinea—what he describes as "rites of terror" (Whitehouse 1996). His argument is simple. Why, if symbols and meanings are so effective, must initiands be actually hurt, scared, traumatized during initiation? His answer lies in the theory of "flash-bulb memory" (Brown and Kulick 1982)—the "vivid recollection … of inspirational, calamitous, or otherwise emotionally arousing events" (Whitehouse 1996: 710). Such experience-memories become "sedimented in the body," to use Connerton's (1989) suggestive terminology, and, unlike other forms of memory, appear to get stronger, rather than weaker, over time. The rites of terror, he suggests, are set up to provoke such memories, affecting an experiential transformation that in turn produces solidarity among those who have undergone the rituals. Rather than enhancing or enabling the message of ritual, these experiential or embodied processes *are* the message. From this, Whitehouse developed a theory of religious transmission based around what he calls "modes of religiosity" (Whitehouse 2008). He identifies two principal modes through which religion is transmitted: doctrinal and imagistic. Whilst the doctrinal mode is semantic, transmitting religious knowledge as narrative or religious teaching, the imagistic mode is experiential, as with the Papuan initiation. What is more, he suggests, the imagistic mode appears to be more effective, guaranteeing a high degree of commitment and integration with only sporadic ritual performance.

In reality, much ritual combines elements of both modes of transmission, but Whitehouse's thinking importantly draws our attention towards the body, where other cognitive anthropologists have tended to dwell on mental processes. The cognitivist agenda rests on three related theories, which come together to help explain religion: an extended theory of mind, attribution of agency, and the "tweaking" or extension of "normal" ontology (Lehmann 2005: 5). Theory of mind is a necessary part of human sociality. In our everyday lives, we presume that other people have thoughts, emotions, motivations that in some ways resemble our own, and which guide their behavior, yet we have no evidence of this—it remains a theory. In the context of religion, this theory becomes extended in two related ways. First, by linking events and thoughts, positing the former as action brought about by the agency inherent in the latter—a function of the human "action representation system" (McCauley and Lawson 2002: 156).

In witchcraft, for example, unfortunate events—illness, accident—become linked back to actions by others which in turn link back to the thoughts that are assumed to have guided them (Lehmann 2005: 5). Anxiety about the effects of wayward thought derives from a generalized anxiety brought about by our inability ever to really know what another is thinking. Second, by attributing agency, and by extension, mind, to non-human entities, Tremlin (2006) highlights the evolutionary importance of our being able to distinguish objects in the environment from agents, which may pose a threat (Stewart and Strathern 2014: 108). In religious contexts, the human "agency detection device" becomes hypersensitive, attributing agency to objects, or explaining events in terms of agents that we cannot see—spirits, ancestors, supernatural beings (Tremlin 2006: 79). Such beings gain cognitive purchase through the ways in which they "tweak" or violate our intuitive expectations about the world—walking through walls, existing in two places at once, or being everywhere and somewhere. Here we find persuasive and pervasive, even universal, religious representations, that endure across time not despite being cognitively "erroneous," but because of it (Boyer 2000: 199–201).

Whilst the universalism and naturalism—a theme discussed in greater length by both Mitchell and Howes in this volume—of the cognitive account are often regarded as problematic by socio-cultural anthropologists (Bloch 2012), it is the mentalism that concerns us here. Cognitive studies of religion have concerned themselves with explaining how people can think religious thoughts. If, however, as Whitehouse suggests, an important, perhaps even privileged, mode of religious transmission lies not in mental representations but embodied processes, we need to turn to theoretical frameworks that centralize the body. For this reason, we attempt here to bring together the cognitive with insights from performance studies and sensory studies.

Performance is rooted in the body—as its minimum requirement—yet the relationship between body and performance is not so straightforward as we might imagine (Mitchell 2006). As with the study of ritual, the study of the body shifts between representational/symbolic accounts—the body as socio-cultural object (Blacking 1977; Douglas 1970)—and those which focus on bodily process, technique and action (Csordas 1990; Lock 1993; Mauss 1973)—the body as subject. Combining anthropological theories of ritual and insights from theater studies, performance studies recast this tension as one between performance as repetition or re-enactment and performance as creativity or originality—performance *of* something that predates the performative event, in which the body represents or re-enacts a given script, or performance as an entity or phenomenon in and of itself. Emphasizing the latter, performance studies dwell on the emergent, mirroring and influencing approaches to ritual "in its own right," and indeed itself being habitually described as an "emergent" field of study (Schechner 1985, 2002). Performance studies focus not only on performers

themselves, but also attempt to understand the performances they generate, casting a wide analytical net that incorporates virtually all forms of human action—theatrical events and manifestations, rituals, protests, riots, and so on. This focus on the non-theatrical, and on body-as-performative, give it important potential for our understanding of religious transmission and ritual. It is for this reason that we sought to bring it together with cognitive approaches to ritual.

The performing body is also the sensing body. The primary characteristic of Whitehouse's "imagistic mode" is its sensoriality—ritual operates at a high level of sensory stimulation, even synesthesia (Kaur 2005: 105–7). If this is so, it suggests that we might also turn to sensory studies, or the anthropology of the senses, to help us understand religious ritual. The anthropology of the senses has emphasized social, cultural, and historical variation in the ways in which the senses are classified, valued and lived (Classen 1993, 1997; Howes 1991, 2003; Pink and Howes 2010). Whilst this might be seen to temper the universalistic claims of more cognitively oriented approaches, the emphasis within sensory anthropology on the study of "ways of sensing" (Howes and Classen 2014) can also help us to understand the particularities of the experiential—not only *that* it is felt, but more specifically *how*.

These three approaches, then—cognitive, performative, sensory—inform the contributions to this volume. The individual contributions bring together the approaches in different ways, at times explicitly and at others implicitly. The goal is to explore the potential of combining them, not offer a single programmatic statement about how they *should* be combined.

From Ontology to Space and Back Again—via Neuroscience

Whilst for cognitive anthropologists religious representations represent a deviation from, or tweaking of, established and universal ontology—the basic, common-sense understanding of the world—socio-cultural anthropologists have struggled with understanding those representations as themselves ontological claims. Mitchell, in the first chapter, addresses these issues, as raised by the recent so-called "ontological turn" in socio-cultural anthropology (Carrithers et al. 2010; Geismar 2011; Pedersen 2012).

Since the late nineteenth century, anthropologists have struggled to understand the "strange beliefs" of other peoples. Indeed, the paradigm of "belief" became the established mode of both describing and explaining religious representations. Belief is both the content of religion—people hold beliefs—and their orientation towards it—they believe in it. The tricky thing about designating "belief" as the principal characteristic of religion

is that it presupposes non-belief (Pouillon 1982, Ruel 1982). If one is to "believe" something, then there must be a possibility of not believing it. "Believing in" something also holds the implication that the thing believed in—the belief—is not really real. "Belief" in this rendering is opposed to "knowledge." Moreover, the "belief" of others stands in opposition—sometimes explicit, more often implicit—to the methodological atheism of the anthropological "self" (Blanes 2006; Stewart et al. 2001). As a number of commentators have pointed out, this is not how many people in much of the world experience their religion (Evans-Pritchard 1956; Mitchell and Mitchell 2008; Needham 1972; Tooker 1992). Religious ideas, or indeed any other ideas, are not things which you "believe in" or not; they are knowledge—or even further, they simply *are*.

This vision of beliefs as ontologies has informed the work of scholars trying to construct an anthropology that takes seriously other people's religious ideas without either explaining them away as an epiphenomenon of another process, or exoticizing them. The move is analogous to the shift in ritual analysis towards examining ritual, or performance, as a thing in itself to be treated "in its own right."

The second and third chapters of the volume are informed by the newly emergent—or in Robert Turner's eyes, re-emergent—field of neuroanthropology. Perhaps more than any scholars working in the field, Daniel Lende and Greg Downey—who provides our third chapter—have pioneered neuroanthropology, conceived as an integrative pursuit combining insights from neuroscience and ethnography (Lende and Downey 2012). Whilst ethnography provides insight into how people live in and experience the world, neuroscience examines the biology of this engagement, "getting at what happens inside the person" (ibid.: 3). In their view, neither the ethnographic nor the neurological "trumps" the other in providing explanation for human action—socio-cultural processes shape a dynamic and plastic brain, whilst the brain then shapes the character of social practice. The focus on a dynamic and emergent brain counters some of the rigidities of cognitive science, particularly where it posited "hard-wired" brain architecture shaped entirely by evolutionary processes[2] (ibid.: 29).

If this is so, then not only does ritual shape the brain, as Robert Turner suggests in the second chapter, but these shaped brains then feed back into our understandings of ourselves and our environments. Neuroanthropology can thus provide a new perspective on the role of ritual in religious transmission, giving neurological substance to Whitehouse's argument concerning the role of the experiential in ritual. Ritual shapes the brain by providing experiences rather than transmitting messages.

The fourth, fifth and seventh chapters, in various ways, address issues of space and place. Trevor Marchand, Richard Schechner, and Zoila Mendoza look at different pilgrimages—to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, to the Ramlila festival at Ramnagar, India, and to the mountain shrine of the Lord of the Shiny Snow in Andean Peru, respectively.

For Thomas Nagel, orientation to place is a prerequisite for analytical objectivity. To be objective—by which he meant the cleansing of any subjective, qualitative inference—you would have to imagine the view as placeless; as situated nowhere. Nagel was merely pointing out the age-old problem of universal truth claims embodied in the countless epistemologies of Western philosophy from Plato to Chomsky. Within this framework, the universal nature of space and time has been considered an instrumental foundation to all experience within which any particularity of place and culture would necessarily be subordinate to the universal. Universalisms have taken many forms, from the mathematical work of Russell and Whitehead to the general laws of linguistics articulated in the work of de Saussure and Chomsky. In the world of universals, local knowledge, local customs, local places are mere variants of a universal. The recognition that place, in its cultural specificity, is of singular importance has been more the domain of social scientists—who by necessity study specific practices in specific places: "every location in experienced space has its significance for human beings" (Bollnow 2011: 19). Yet, the very relationship of place to space is famously reversed in the philosophical work of Heidegger when he states that "place has been split into spaces," thereby signifying the singular importance of place. Within this valorization of place, space was also no longer limited to physical space; the work of Bachelard and others gave increasing prominence to a whole variety of spaces: mythical space, divine space, and cognitive space (Casey 1998).

In the present volume, several authors understand ritual through a multi-sensory engagement with the specificities of place. Marchand's chapter explores the conflict between expectations about sacred places entertained by pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the present reality of the place. The place is both a place of veneration and a tourist spectacle. The physicality of the place jars with the intention of Western Christian pilgrims, for many of whom, silence and space are essential pre-requisites to a successful pilgrimage. Whilst the quest for successful veneration is thwarted by the place itself, paradoxically pilgrims themselves partake of this contradictory space through the use of a range of technologies from camcorders to cell-phones in order to relive the experience later—a postponed veneration in the comfort of their own homes as they watch their home videos or look at their photographs.

In contrast to this, Schechner's analysis of the pilgrimage of Ramnagar is situated in the wide-open spaces of Ramlila. These spaces/places are remade/imagined—turned into a mythical informed recreation of the past—to disrupt the universal time-continuum embodied in philosophical notions of uniform time, much in the same way as Freud's analysis of the unconscious disrupts individual experiences of time. Equally, Mendoza points to the sequential nature of ritual in Andean religion. She charts the movement of pilgrims in the Lord of the Shiny Snow pilgrimage, in which 40,000–50,000 pilgrims march for three days and nights up to the 16,000-foot-high sanctuary.

Mendoza stresses the multisensory nature of movement to the sanctuary, stressing the audio-visual and kinesthetic nature of the experience. By way of contrast, she describes how the experience of pilgrimage was transformed when a group travelled by truck to the sanctuary rather than by foot. The truck journey diminished the sense of community and the pilgrims' relation to the space and time of the procession, demonstrating that the procession and its sensory engagement with the environment was an integral part of the ritual. This contrasts with Marchand's pilgrims, who arrived in Jerusalem by plane and whose focus was upon the site of the Holy Sepulcher rather than embodying a more connected spatial environment of the ritual as described by Mendoza and Schechner. Marchand's pilgrims seem to inhabit a world more akin to a "global village," a world of "non-places," a secularized landscape (Nancy 1991) within which they attempt—through the very technologies that appear to deny specificity—their very own re-enacted sacred ritualized space.

Chapters 6 and 8, by Phillip Zarrilli and David Howes, centralize senses in performance and in analysis, respectively. They return us, then, to the body, perception, and the experiential nature of ritual in and for itself. For Zarrillli, this immediacy or immanence of ritual-in-performance is inherent in his performance practice, which focuses attention on the senses at the expense of the self. Howes calls for the theorization of an "extended sensorium" to complement the cognitive neuroscience conception of "extended cognition" or "extended mind" (Clark and Chalmers 1998). Like Zarrilli's performance practice, the theory of the extended sensorium envisages no necessary hierarchy between "inside" and "outside" the brain, suggesting that cognition and mind are distributed or extended outwards into the world. Cognition is accomplished in relation to—or perhaps more fundamentally *by*—technologies in our environment—simple or complex; "old" or "new" technologies. By this reckoning, cognitive processes and, suggests Howes, sensory processes take place at the intersection of brain, body, and world.

As with the spatial worlds of pilgrimage, the worlds of extended cognition and the extended sensorium are encultured worlds. This returns us not only to Mendoza's suggestion that to understand the senses in ritual we must first understand the culturally particular sensorium, but also to that of the neuroanthropological project, uniting neuroscience and ethnography. Finally, it returns us to the question of ontology, and how we understand the lifeworlds and "beliefs" of ritual participants.

Chapter Summaries

Mitchell's chapter opens the volume by critically analyzing the anthropology of divine intervention, focusing upon the contemporary experience

of divine intervention in Malta as embodied in the bloodied statue of Our Lady of Borg-in-Nadur and the visions of Angelik Caruana—whose visions have been taken up and amplified through a barrage of mass media coverage from blogs and television to YouTube videos. Mitchell engages with those anthropologists who argue that "apparently irrational beliefs" should be understood at face value (referred to as "the ontological turn"). He argues that the "ontological" turn has been too quick to reject the previous dichotomy of rationalism/relativism embodied in anthropological analysis of ritual experience, and proposes an alternative turn: namely, a focus upon the mimetic performance embodied in ritual. In doing so, Mitchell focuses upon the generative moment of ritual rather than simply its representational quality. He thus taps into an alternative vein of anthropological explanation that spans the analysis of rituals embodied in Cargo Cults and other colonial experiences, whereby the ritual itself can be understood as a form of creative appropriation.

Robert Turner argues that ritual is not only a result of cognitive or neurological activity—we think, we act—but that the reverse is also true. The performance of ritual itself, he suggests, alters the brain, generating distinct neural pathways and associations that generate intersubjectivity through the production of collective representations that are literally embodied in "enduring material changes in the structure and connectivity of brain tissue." The vision of neural plasticity made possible by the development of MRI technology challenges earlier, more architectonic, understandings of the brain, but also of human cognition. Cognitive process, by this reckoning, is not so much "hard-wired" as continuously wired and rewired according to context, experience, and emotion. This in turn enables us to see how ritual not only alters the world "outside" the body, but also, reciprocally, "inside."

Greg Downey explores the significance of repetition in our understanding of ritual. Whilst ritual can be used to describe elaborate events or particular episodes, it also operates in a more mundane, everyday, and routinized modality. Focusing on prayer, Downey explores the significance of such routinization, suggesting that its comforting effects—the chapter is underpinned by a discussion of his elderly grandmother's increasing preoccupation with prayer as she drew towards the end of her life—can be traced to a form of neurological self-fashioning, or self-management. Prayer is a social cognitive technique for emotional reassurance, mobilized in times of crisis or catastrophe, to remodel self and emotion through neurological remodeling.

Marchand's chapter discusses the problematic nature of pilgrims' relation to place as they visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Marchand discusses the oppressive and conflicting sensory nature of the experience as pilgrims squeeze into the cramped and overcrowded Holy Sepulcher: unable to orientate themselves to the "exceptionality" they expected, they are only able to "connect" to their experience later through the use of photographs, memorabilia, and the like. Marchand questions our

dynamic relation to space, pointing out the problematic nature of enacting ritual in a contemporary mediated world inhabited by mobile phones and tour guides.

Schechner's chapter burrows deeply into the phenomenology of the month-long pilgrimage of Ramlila at Ramnagar, in India. Rather than the alienated spaces of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as analyzed by Marchand, Schechner describes the mythic transformation of the everyday spaces of Ramnagar, as the pilgrimage moves through and around the province, temporarily transforming the nature and meaning of these spaces through the daily ritual performances of the *Ramcharitmanas*. Unlike Marchand's pilgrims equipped with the technological paraphernalia of the Western tourist, Schechner's more hedonistic pilgrims put away their cell-phones in order to party in the open spaces of the transformed countryside.

Phillip Zarrilli reflects on 30 years of practice as actor, actor-trainer, director, and martial artist to offer an account of the techniques of pre-performance training he has developed, inspired by meditation, *taiqiquan*, and the south Indian practice of *kalarippayattu*. His practice focuses on a dialectical play of "inner" and "outer" awareness designed to generate a state of heightened sensory awareness in which the self is occluded or "drops out" (Austin 1998: 296). This state of "selflessness" attunes the performer to the bodily potential of performance *qua* performance. To use the imagery from *kalarippayattu*, they become "all eyes," reflexively aware of the performative potentialities inherent in their bodies. The chapter therefore centralizes the awareness of sensoriality within performance as a whole.

Zoila Mendoza argues that in order to understand ritual we need first to understand indigenous sensoria. In her case, focusing on the Andean pilgrimage of the *Señor de Qoyllorit'i*, or Lord of the Shiny Snow, both demonstrates and requires an understanding of the distinctive Andean sensorium. She argues that across the Andes, the visual, the auditory, and the kinesthetic are combined synesthetically, with kinesthesia taking a particular, mediating role. *Señor de Qoyllorit'i* is a two-day walking pilgrimage to a mountain shrine that is the site of an encounter between a shepherd boy and Jesus. The pilgrimage, and the commemoration of this encounter, is mediated by dance, which brings together vision, sound, and movement. Mendoza suggests that whilst this is uniquely important for our understanding of Andean pilgrimage, it might also be expanded out more universally, to provide a model of analysis for ritual elsewhere.

Finally, David Howes develops his concept of "extended sensorium," using examples from four different ritual contexts: Ilahita Arapesh initiation, Byzantine icon veneration, Quaker quietism, and Pentecostal ecstasy. He argues that perception—and through that both the senses and cognition—should not be understood as the sole product of the perceiving self or of the world outside the self, but of the relationship between the two. Moreover, he suggests that we should understand perception as an active process in which the senses extend out of the body to meet the world, as it were,

rather than passively receiving data from it. Howes does this to challenge the mechanistic biases of experimental psychology, and to "resocialize" perception, the senses, cognition, and ritual.

Concluding Comments

Howes returns us, critically, to the work of Harvey Whitehouse, one of the starting-points of this Introduction. What he objects to is Whitehouse's tendency, shared with other cognitive anthropologists of religion, to link—some would say, reduce—religious phenomena (ritual) back to mechanisms, modules, modes of memory that have an evolutionary basis. For Howes, this smuggles back the mentalism of the cognitive account into what should be a body-focused theory of ritual. It also draws us away from a focus on system or context, which have been hallmarks of socio-cultural anthropology. Put another way, it proposes an anthropology that seeks a form of explanation for ritual phenomena, rather than an understanding of them. To this extent it mirrors an earlier tension, between Structuralism and Geertzian interpretivism (Geertz 1973).

That this volume should be replete with such tensions should not be a surprise, as it goes to the heart of anthropological understandings of a key anthropological concept: ritual. As for resolving these tensions, the author of each chapter navigates their own route, and we prefer not to offer a definitive answer or conclusion to the volume as a whole. As an experiment in anthropological theory, it might be judged not according to the definitive answers it provides, but rather by the questions asked and avenues opened by combining cognitive, performative, and sensory studies of ritual.

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1

Ontology, Mimesis, and Divine Intervention: Understanding Catholic Visionaries

Jon P. Mitchell

This chapter focuses on an example of divine intervention from contemporary Malta. In January 2006, Angelik Caruana, a care worker from the coastal town of Birzebuggia, noticed that the statue his wife had recently bought, of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, had begun to weep tears of blood. Subsequent to this, Angelik began to see visions of the Virgin Mary, and receive messages. She asked him to establish a shrine on the prehistoric hill-temple site of Borg-in-Nadur, outside Birzebuggia. Here, weekly prayer meetings are held, at which Angelik receives messages and visions in front of assembled crowds of up to several hundred people. As well as these weekly encounters with Our Lady, Angelik also experiences the presence of his guardian angel, fights against demons and the devil, and feels the pain of Christ's passion. The phenomenon is highly mass-mediated. Film of his weekly revelations are promptly published on YouTube and the blog site http://ladyborginnadur.blogspot.co.uk/. Angelik is regularly covered in the Maltese national press, and no fewer than three editions of the popular current affairs television programme *Xarabank* have been dedicated to his statue, his visions and the messages.

Divine Intervention

Anthropologists have struggled to account for phenomena such as this—of divine intervention. A recent special issue of the journal *History and Anthropology* attempted to develop a framework for the anthropology of divine intervention, principally in Christian Europe and its bordering areas. "[V]isions and public apparitions of divine figures, in particular of the Virgin Mary or some saints" (Valtchinova 2009: 204), argue the issue editors, pose particular problems for anthropologists charged with "taking seriously the religious experience of others" (ibid.: 203, citing Cannell 2006:

3). The solution, for them, lies in locating such experiences within the time-honored historiographic dialectic of structure and event. On the one hand, divine interventions are events that emanate from deep cultural structures within which divine agents exist. On the other hand, those structures are the means by which strange, uncanny or unusual events can be interpreted as divine. Mediating between structure and event is the social actor, for whom divine intervention is a symbolic means of asserting power or authority.

Divine intervention presents a classic example of the type of phenomenon that has driven the development of a key strand in anthropological theory since the late nineteenth century—that of "apparently irrational beliefs" (Good 1994; Holbraad 2012; Sperber 1985). There have been different versions of the apparently irrational belief: from things that occupy two different categories (twins as birds, gifts as spirits, animals as ancestors, etc.) to enduring credulity in the face of apparent contradiction (not fearing the kin of a witch when you know that witchcraft is hereditary, maintaining faith in an oracle when its divinatory powers falter) to belief in things that plain don't exist (dragons with golden hearts, fire engines that suck up human blood, or demons, devils and water spirits).[1]

There have broadly been two approaches to the analysis of apparently irrational beliefs—forms of rationalism and forms of relativism. This is not the place to re-rehearse the extensive arguments and debates over rationality and relativism in anthropology and philosophy (Hollis and Lukes 1982; Wilson 1970). Instead, I intend to use these debates as they have been developed by anthropologists invoking an "ontological turn" in anthropology to explore the potential for an anthropology that combines cognitive, sensory, and performative approaches.[2]

The Angelik case has provoked lively debate in Malta. Skeptics tend to take a rationalist approach, proceeding from the assumption that Angelik's experiences are not authentic, and seeking explanation in delusion, mental illness, or worse—charlatanry. Curiously, relativist approaches to such phenomena also proceed from the starting-point of assuming inauthenticity. As with interpretations of other examples of divine intervention (Bax 1995; Christian 1989, 1992, 1996; Zimdars-Swartz 1991; Kaufman 2005), Angelik's revelations might be seen as symbolic of deeper social tensions or anxieties—about the morally erosive influence of European secularism, or the impact of increased African migration to Malta: both themes that recur in Angelik's testimony. Both rationalist and relativist approaches, then, tend to "explain away" apparently irrational beliefs as things other than they really are: delusion or symbolic representation.

Anthropologists of the ontological turn, however, suggest that rather than representing something else, we should take such apparently irrational beliefs at face value, taking them seriously as products of particular ontologies; ontologies whose obscurity confirms their alterity, but ontologies nonetheless. By this reckoning, those who believe in, or experience, apparently irrational phenomena or divine intervention are neither credulous

irrationalists nor creative symbolists nor psychiatrically compromised, but are right. The task of anthropologists is not to "interpret" such beliefs or representations, but to think our way into a position from which we can acknowledge they are right, using this confrontation with radical alterity to reconfigure anthropological theorization.

For the ontological turn, both rationalist and relativist accounts encompass a naturalism in the final instance. Nature as a fixed reality underpins both the universality of rationalism and the plurality of relativism. The same might be said of cognitive anthropology (a form of rationalism) and the anthropology of the senses (a form of relativism). Cognitive anthropology seeks explanation in terms of cognitive representations (of nature) that are rooted in processes that are evolutionarily beneficial. In the analysis of apparently irrational beliefs—or indeed divine intervention—one of the key tasks of cognitive anthropology has been to demonstrate why representations that appear on the face of it to be irrational or ill-adapted to the main job of knowledge—representing nature as it is—nevertheless endure. This is usually because they either correspond to, or "tweak" in significant ways, forms of cognition that are either necessary or beneficial in evolutionary terms (see Boyer 2008; Cohen 2008; McCauley 2011; Sperber 1996). The anthropology of the senses has focused on cultural and historical variations in the way the senses are classified and conceived—and with that the way nature is perceived and represented (Classen 1993, 1997; Howes 1991, 2003; Howes and Pink 2010). Apparently irrational beliefs, or perceptions of divine intervention, can be explained by understanding the particularities of different cultural classifications of the senses, which govern the range of possible attributions of sensory data. This explains, for example, how for the Kaluli in Papua New Guinea, birdsong is the voices of ancestors (Feld 1982) and how in Malta a moment of queasy claustrophobia might be seen as the presence of Christ (Mitchell 1997).

The radical move of the ontological turn is to abandon this reliance on a single nature underpinning human cognition and sensoriality, and propose instead a world of "multiple natures," each equally "true" and each distinguished by its radical alterity from the others. With this move, the ontological turn effectively outlaws from anthropological theory any reliance on a concept of representation—be that the mental representation of cognitive anthropology or the cultural representation of the anthropology of the senses.

I argue in this chapter that this takes the ontological turn an unnecessary step too far. The rationalism of cognitive anthropology and the relativism of the anthropology of the senses, I argue, might usefully—and less drastically—be mediated—or mitigated—by a focus on mimesis, and particularly mimetic performance. Mimesis has a central position in the arts more generally, and the performative arts in particular (Woodruff 2008). Accounts of mimesis trace it back to Aristotle and Plato, for whom art was seen as a representation of nature (Auerbach 2003 [1946]; Potolsky 2006).

More recent theorizations, however, emphasize the creativity of the mimetic process—the extent to which rather than simply reproducing something other than itself—copying—mimesis produces new entities. In performance, this is critical to understanding the "feedback loop" between mimetic (re) presentations of the world (performances) and the reality or nature they represent. Performance has the capacity to create presence (Schieffelin 1998), to transform subject, object, space, time, and society (Bloch 1992; Kelly and Kaplan 1990; Mitchell 2006, 2009)—in short, it is generative, rather than merely representational.

Ontology

Perhaps the most articulate statement of the ontological turn comes in Martin Holbraad's *Truth in Motion* (2012). Developing what he calls a "recursive" anthropology of Cuban divination, he narrates the history of the discipline as revolving around shifting attitudes to the relationship between nature and culture. Evolutionism, which figured nature as a cause of cultural difference, gave way to what he calls "diffusionism," which uncoupled nature from culture, to historicize and relativize difference. Thus were born social and cultural anthropology, which treated their principal objects—society and culture—as "sui generis fields to be understood in terms of their own" (ibid.: 23). Ironically, though, the theoretical move which enabled anthropologists to address cultural difference was a commitment to an unvariant nature underpinning the different interpretations—or representations—made by different societies and cultures. The point about people in different societies and cultures was that they saw things differently from us. In order for this to be the case, the "things" that they saw must be demonstrably the same (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007: 11–12):

> Meaning … arises from human beings' ability to represent the world by bringing to bear upon it sets of arbitrarily defined (and hence conventional) symbols. Thus cultural conventions order the world by deploying symbolic structures that organize it into distinct categories by means of their otherwise arbitrary relationships to "signs." (Holbraad 2012: 39)

Note that a singular world is represented by multiple symbols and conventions. The relativization of conventions or "truths" was made possible by treating the world as a singular natural reality that is represented by different groups in different ways. Particularization presupposed universalization, and ultimately figured culturalism as itself a form of naturalism: culture in the end is confirmed only in its relationship to nature.

The realization of this contradiction ushered in a third phase in the development of anthropological theory—constructivism, in which

both society/culture *and* nature were to be relativized. In this framework, society/culture varies according to the different ways in which it represents nature, just as it did for the diffusionists, the difference being that nature in turn now also varies according to how it is represented by those different societies/cultures. Culture is natural, and nature is cultural. The circularity of the argument is clear. Holbraad also points to a central tautology in the constructivist account, namely, that debunking or collapsing the nature–culture dichotomy is dependent on our first establishing that dichotomy as a central truth:

> It is only by relying on the distinction between nature and culture—precisely the form of "classifying the world" we are supposed not to project onto others—that we are able (indeed bound) to repudiate the "ethnocentrism" of the distinction itself. (ibid.: 34)

The most consistent critique of constructivism's "culturalism" comes from cognitive anthropology, which effectively mirrors the constructivist aversion to nature with its own aversion to culture, and a resounding "naturalism." Also rejecting the nature–culture dichotomy, constructivists figure nature, not culture, as the encompassing "prior truth":

> Yes, human beings have a peculiarly sophisticated capacity to represent the world around them, including the capacity to represent other representations … But this capacity is itself natural, not just in the formal sense admitted by earlier generations of anthropologists … but rather in a fully substantive and scientifically tractable way: cultural representations are a function of human mental capacities, and these … are just the result of natural processes (neuronal and so on) that take place in the human brain. So to treat cultural representations as a domain unto itself and then worry whether or not nature as it is in itself can be accessed through them is unduly to mystify matters, since cultural representations are themselves as natural as trees. (ibid.: 31)

What the naturalism of this cognitive anthropology and the culturalism of constructivism share—and for what Holbraad takes them principally to task—is their commitment to the notion of representation. On the constructivist hand, a theory that sees culture in its various relative forms as characterized by its propensity to represent the world to different populations in different ways. On the cognitivist hand, a theory that sees the work of cognition generating mental representations—again symbolic forms which represent external forms to social populations, but are materialized in the mind/brain. This is a more resounding naturalism than the naturalism inherent in culturalism, and even more problematic for the new ontographers.

Rejecting both forms of naturalism, the ontological turn turns on a simultaneous rejection of both forms of representation, and with it a

rejection of epistemological relativism—indeed of the very notion of epistemology itself. Rather, it favours a form of ontological relativism which replaces the multiplicity of cultural "worldviews" with a more substantive multiplicity of actual "worlds." This might be elaborated using Holbraad's central ethnographic example, drawn from his research among Cuban Ifá diviners, or *babalawos*, of a material substance, powder, that is simultaneously power—*aché* (Holbraad 2007). He likens this curious phenomenon of a thing that is also a concept to the classic anthropological conundrum *mana*: the excessive Oceanian concept of life-force that appeared to earlier ethnographers to be simultaneously everywhere and somewhere. This ability to refer both directly to specific things and more obliquely to nebulous ideas created problems for anthropologists eager to understand, interpret, translate *mana*. Their response was effectively to blame *mana* itself, argues Holbraad, and the people whose world it animated, treating it as a riddle to be solved using existing anthropological tools. Eager not to reproduce this in approaching *aché,* the problem is turned back on anthropology itself:

> The ontological turn in anthropological analysis … turns on the humble—though on this view logically obvious—admission that our concepts (*not* our "representations") must, by definition, be inadequate to translate *different* ones. This, it is suggested, is the only way to take difference—*alterity*—seriously as the starting point for anthropological analysis. One must accept that when someone tells us … that powder is power, the anthropological problem cannot be that of accounting for why he might think that about powder (explaining, interpreting, placing this statement into context), but rather that if that really is the case, then we just do not know what powder he is talking about … The world in which powder is power is not an uncharted (and preposterous!) region of our own … It is a different world. (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007: 12)

There are not, then, a multiplicity of worldviews, but a multiplicity of worlds. Through this, Holbraad develops what he calls a "recursive" anthropology that trumps both the constructivist and naturalist arguments. Rather than abstaining from truth-judgments, as does constructivism, recursive anthropology inverts them, seeing *others'* worlds as true, not "our" interpretations of them. Where naturalism privileges the truth-claims of "science," recursive anthropology seeks to "affirm the indigenous perspective *as against* that of the anthropologist" (Holbraad 2012: 47—my emphasis). If "we" cannot understand "them," then "we" must find new ways of thinking.

Mimesis

This rather radical conclusion—should one say "solution"?—has not gone without criticism (Killick 2014). Its invocation of radical alterity appears to advocate a form of deep relativism that leads some to question whether the new ontology is not in fact just another word for older versions of "culture" (Carrithers et al. 2010; Palecek and Risjord 2012). Indeed, taken to its logical conclusion, the new ontology generates a paradox in which the rejection of representation renders problematic the very project in which it is engaged. If, as Holbraad argues, "alterity is indeed that which cannot be represented" (2012: 247), how can anthropology's ambition ever be more than noting the existence of the apparently irrational? His answer points to the synthetic, or inventive, nature of anthropological description. Drawing on Wagner's (1981) identification of parallelisms between Daribi cultural invention and the invention of culture within anthropological discourse, Holbraad suggests a similar parallelism between divination and ethnography as disciplines engaged in "infinition": "acts of definition (rather than representation) that effectively transform the world upon which they purport to comment" (2012: xxiii). Rather than describing or explaining an extant world, divination—and ethnography—bring a new world into being, through acts of inventive definition.[3]

In that it presents a case of the apparently irrational, and therefore what Holbraad would define as *alterity*, Angelik's case delivers examples which parallel *aché* and divination. Like *aché*, Angelik's statue might be seen to present a category conundrum, in that it is simultaneously inanimate and animated; a thing and an agent that like *mana* is simultaneously transcendent and immanent (see Mitchell 2002). Like divination, Angelik's visions "infine" spiritual entities—not only the Virgin Mary but also Angelik's guardian angel, demons, and the devil himself. An ontographic response would be to make a parallel, or recursive, infinition that accounts for these two *alter* phenomena—statues that cry blood and visions/messages from the Virgin Mary—in our own terms. Infinition short-cuts the reliance on the notion of representation, which is problematized in ontography because it establishes a distance between itself and the world, as signifier of a signified that is perpetually deferred. Infinition is characterized by an unfolding immanence of concepts-in-the-making.

This focus on process does, like Wagner's argument that precedes it, help us to overcome some of the conceptual rigidities inherent in earlier accounts of "cultural" alterity, but, it seems to me, does not take us quite as far as it promises. The problem is the assumption that the processes of infinition are primarily conceptual, rather than perceptual—products of cognitive activity rather than the immediacy of human experience. Infinition is a philosopher's mode of "thinking through" that assumes that others also engage primarily in "thinking through" the problems of the cosmos. The

ontological turn's philosophical solution to the problem of alterity, then, generates its own distancing from experience. In its place, I propose a more phenomenological solution, rooted in an understanding of perceptual immanence rather than conceptual transcendence; of embodied process rather than philosophical exercise. This move allows us to bring a notion of representation back into the frame—albeit as a generative, mimetic process rather than a semiotic one. It also allows us to take account of recent developments in cognitive neuroscience, as described by both Turner and Downey (this volume), which focus on the embodied nature of the religious life.

Mimesis, I argue, connotes representational immanence, rather than deferral. This immanence is inherent in both mimetic artefacts—such as icons and statues of saints—and in, and through, performance. Moreover, both can be understood as generative rather than simply representational or imitative phenomena, and as such they bridge the gap between signifier and signified to which Holbraad objects. They are not so much copies of nature as themselves part of nature (or supernature) and therefore entities in and of themselves—with their own ontological status.

Mimesis has a particular valence within contemporary socio-cultural anthropology, most notably through its association with Michael Taussig's work on colonial and post-colonial mimesis. For Taussig, mimesis is conceived as a "space between" sameness and otherness; identity and alterity (1993: 78). His focus is contexts in which colonized societies appear to imitate the colonizer, taking on cultural forms or producing imitative representations of their former rulers. He argues that we misunderstand this process if we see it as straightforwardly imitative. Rather, it constitutes a form of creative appropriation in which the power of the colonizer is usurped as the colonized make it their own (see also Stoller 1995). This notion of mimesis as an active process has its roots in Plato, for whom "imitation is an art of *making*" (Burnyeat 1999: 299—emphasis in original): "Mimesis is the production of visual and auditory likenesses which give us that sense of actual presence" (266).

Mimesis as imitative generative appropriation—of making it your own—is also central to Bourdieu's account of the bodily processes inherent in the reproduction or transmission of *habitus*:

> [T]he process of acquisition—a practical *mimesis* (or mimeticism) which implies an overall relation of identification and has nothing in common with an *imitation* … and the process of reproduction—a practical reactivation which is opposed to both memory and knowledge—tend to take place below the level of consciousness, expression and the reflexive distance which these presuppose. The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. (Bourdieu 1990: 72)

The importance of mimesis, rather than representation, is that it allows us to understand representation as itself ontological. Or, put another way, it enables us to understand social process without assuming a deferral—of its representing something other than itself. Mimesis generates versions that are entities in their own right, and can be treated as such.

This is equally true of theories of mimesis that locate it within cognitive representations as within socio-cultural representations. If mimesis is itself part, rather than deferral, of nature, then we may with all good conscience return to such "naturalistic" theories of mimesis. Recent developments in neuroscience have begun to inform the understanding of representation, mimesis, and, ultimately, sociality across the cognitive, human, and social sciences. Webb (1995) points towards the evolutionary significance of mimesis, building from Rene Girard's notion of mimetic desire, and using Merlin Donald's *Origins of the Modern Mind* to emphasize the place of mimesis in human cognition and evolution. Webb argues, following Donald, that the critical moment in the development of human cognition was mimetic. Before *Homo sapiens* developed language, argues Donald, its predecessor, *erectus*, managed a cognitive transition between primate cognition based on episodic memory, that allowed it to remember experiences in sequence but with little patterning or abstraction, and mimetic cognition. The move to mimesis was significant in that it permitted purposive, intentional, and representational acts; non-linguistic, even pre-linguistic, communication (Donald 1991: 168). Mimesis incorporates a variety of bodily actions and modalities, but differs from straightforward imitation and mimicry in its creativity. Mimesis generates "novel, expressive acts" involving the "*invention* of intentional representations" (ibid.: 169, emphasis in original) which permit the organization and transmission of complex social skills such as hunting and tool-making: "Once hominids could self-generate a variety of representations, they possessed the essential cognitive support system for a larger, more complex society" (ibid.: 175).

The cognitive basis of mimetic action was an improved conscious motor control brought about by an extended representation of self and body in space—or an extended conscious proprioception—that in turn allowed a conscious modeling of the self in action, permitting the rehearsal and refinement of movement (ibid.: 190). This ability to envision our bodies in motion is what Donald calls the "kinematic imagination" (Donald 2001: 271). The "mimetic controller," the cognitive module that permits mimesis, works by parsing event sequences from episodic memory into structured models for meaningful action:

> [M]ime, play, games, skilled rehearsal, nonlinguistic gesticulation, toolmaking, other creative instrumental skills, many nonsymbolic expressive devices used in social control, and reproductive memory in general are all by-products of the mimetic system, as it continuously models the episodic world. In effect, this means that the mimetic mind

> models, in action, the outputs of the episodic mind. The mimetic system is thus a seminal hominid cognitive innovation, a mode of cognition that remains dissociable from language even in modern humans, and is the logical basis of the first truly human culture. (ibid.: 193)

More recently, Jenson and Iacoboni (2011) have attempted to trace the significance of contemporary neuroscience—and particularly the discovery of the "mirror neuron"—for our understanding of mimesis, which they see as central not only to human culture in a broad sense, but more specifically to the development of the representational arts, and particularly literature. Mirror neurons were first identified in the late 1980s, when Italian researchers observed that among lab primates the same neurons fired when observing others accomplishing a task—including lab staff—as when they themselves accomplished it. Subsequent research identified a similar process among humans, albeit as part of a much more complex neural network (Carr et al. 2003; Iacoboni 2009; Jenson and Iacoboni 2011).

So, looking at somebody—or something—doing something, generates an observable neural process consistent with our having done the thing ourselves; or experienced having done it. The same can be said, indeed perhaps more strongly, for *imitating*. Richard Schechner (1988) has explored the implications of Paul Ekman's work on the psychology of emotion for understanding performance from the perspective of performers. Ekman's principal argument concerns the relationship between emotion and facial expression. He argues that there is a limited repertoire of "target emotions" available to humans, which are linked to a universally-recognized and universally-utilized repertoire of facial expressions. However, contrary to what one might expect—and contrary to a representational theory of bodily performance—facial expressions appear not merely to reflect emotions but to generate them (Ekman 1984). The same conclusion was drawn by Laird (1982, 1989).

Ekman demonstrated it by monitoring the emotion-specific activity of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) in two groups of trained actors. The first were asked to evoke memories using the Stanislavski-Strasberg "method" of tapping into "emotion memories" from their biographical past. The second were asked to very precisely perform the expressions associated with emotions, by obeying a set of physical instructions muscle by muscle, and unaware of which—or indeed whether—emotions were intended to be represented. What he discovered was that in the second group, the ANS response was much more marked, suggesting that rather than simply representing emotion, its performance actually generated it. Schechner draws parallels between Ekman's method and the stagecraft of the Kathakali tradition of dance-theatre in south India, where novices are trained in the production of facial expressions which will generate the on-stage emotions necessary for successful performance (Schechner 1988: 255–7). The Kathakali practices and Ekman's experiments demonstrate

that performance is not merely representational, but generative, and in this sense mimetic.

Statues

Statues in the Catholic world have long been more than mere representations of holy personages. As Orsi has argued, Catholic material culture consists of "media of presence" (2005: 49), which not so much signify as bring into presence the characters they depict. Since antiquity, Catholicism has been preoccupied with the issue of presence: the presence of the sacred or holy in the here-and-now (Brown 1981; Kaufman 2005; Orsi 2005; Primiano 1999). From the third and fourth centuries of the Common Era, pilgrimage centers developed around living saints, often hermit "holy men," and at the sites of the tombs of Christian martyrs (Brown 1981, Frank 2000). Such sites were places where the religious could experience the power—or *potentia*—of the saints through a spiritual engagement with their presence—or *praesentia* (Brown 1981: 88). *Praesentia* was not limited to the pilgrimage site. Saints could also be present in the smallest relic of their lives (Geary 1986), or in their images and statues.

The precise nature of the *praesentia* inherent in depictions of the saints was a matter for theological debate. As Elsner argues, the discourse on iconoclasm in Byzantine Christianity revolved around the assumption of "real presence as contained in the image" of a saint (2012: 369). Through this discourse, a series of Church councils during the eighth century established an unprecedented philosophy or theology of images and icons that continued until the Reformation. At issue was the relationship between image and prototype in holy iconography—the relationship between signifier and signified—and precisely how the holy image generated *praesentia*. The councils clarified the distinction between worship of an image and veneration; a distinction that consolidated the position of images and statues within Catholic ritual practice, whilst at the same time answering iconoclasts' fears that images encouraged idolatry: images should be venerated (*duleia*) whilst worship (*latreia*) is reserved for the worship of God (ibid.: 282). This distinction was lost on the theologians of the Reformation, for whom a focus on the purity of the word supplanted the "incarnational logic" (Gaudio 2002: 73) of Catholicism. For the early reformers, the materiality of the Church confirmed it as idolatrous. It "used idols in the most concrete sense. Like some vast Augean stable, the medieval Church was ankle-deep in the 'filth' of images" (Eire 1986: 54). The centrality of images, icons, relics, and other material culture within Catholicism was reaffirmed by the counter-reformers of the Catholic Renewal at the Council of Trent (1545–63) and afterwards. Baroque, the house style of the Renewal, reinforced this queasy maximalism and reconfirmed the position of sacred art within Catholicism.

The Council of Trent called upon sacred art to stimulate emotion and "persuade the viewer as to the immanence of the sacred in everyday lives … At root, the Baroque is an art of transcendence: a type of poetic creation in which perception is linked to belief" (Mulcahy 2011: 133–4). This is not quite the literal presence of Byzantine iconophile accounts of sacred art, but an emotion–belief–presence nexus that nevertheless ensures a principle established at the Second Council of Nicaea (ibid.: 787) and repeated at both Trent and the Second Vatican Council (1962–5)—that "the honor rendered to an image passes to its prototype and whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it" (Catholic Church 1993: art. 2132).

If this is so, then statues and images transcend simple definitions of representation, drawing together image and prototype—signifier and signified—in mimetic presence. As "media of presence" they "serve as points of encounter … between humans and sacred figures" (Orsi 2005: 49). As points of encounter, they are relational, but they are also generative of that relationality. They do more than carry meaning: they create relationships.

Statues in Malta—as elsewhere in the Catholic world—create relationships through manifestations of power—*potentia*—that are invisible or visible (Mitchell 2009). Particular statues are said to have miraculous powers of healing or intercession—for example, the "Miraculous Crucifix" that is housed in the church of Our Lady of Jesus in Valletta, and is once a year dabbed with pieces of gauze that are then circulated to the sick. Angelik's statue drew the attention of his wife, Catherine, who on January 17, 2006 had been painting their kitchen and popped to a local shop for materials. The statue caught her eye, and although it was rather expensive at €38, she was compelled to buy it. At the time, Angelik himself had been visiting the shrine of Our Lady of the Grotto (*Il-Madonna tal-Ghar*) at the Dominican convent in the town of Rabat. This houses a bust of Our Lady which wept blood in 1999. It was six days after Catherine had bought the statue that their eldest son noticed what he thought was red paint near its eyes. The dried liquid turned out not to be paint, but blood, which the statue continued to weep in the days that followed. Angelik was subsequently told by Our Lady that the phenomena taking place in his house were a continuation of those in the Grotto in Rabat (http://ladysapparitions.weebly.com/the-statue-of-the-immaculate-conception.html).

This event established a series of relationships: between Angelik's statue and the statue in the Grotto—a relationship of imitative resemblance, or mimesis; and between the statue and Angelik himself. This latter relationship was consolidated on April 21, 2006, when Angelik had his first apparition of Our Lady. Whilst showing visitors a photograph of the statue—which by this time had been taken to the Curia for investigation—he suddenly fell to the ground and lost consciousness of his surroundings. A bright light appeared, in the middle of which was a woman, who pleaded

with him to "pray the Rosary, and get others to say the Rosary" (http://ladyborginnadur.blogspot.co.uk/p/borg-in-nadur-borg-refers-to-group-of.html). The visions were rooted in a further relationship between Angelik and the visionaries of Medjugorje—the town in Bosnia and Herzegovina where visions of Our Lady have been reported since 1981. Angelik is a member of the prayer group *Mir* (the Croatian for "peace"), which was established following a pilgrimage to Medjugorje in September 2005. After his first vision at home, the *Mir* meetings became the site for subsequent visions. The main emphasis at *Mir* meetings is conversion—a strong theme of the Medjugorje Virgin's messages, and of those received by Angelik:

> *Jiena s-Sultana tal-Paci u tal-Familja! Konverzjoni! Konverzjoni fil-familji!* [I am the Queen of Peace and the Family! Conversion! Conversion within families!] (second message, received on May 11, 2006, prior to a *Mir* meeting)

Zimdars-Swartz links visions in the Irish village of Melleray in 1985 to a recent pilgrimage to Medjugorje undertaken by a local group (1991: 16–19). The same link might be made between Angelik's visions and the *Mir* pilgrimage. Both establish a relationship between the new visions and the more famous Medjugorje visions. Moreover, Angelik's visions, which were brought about by the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, also consequently established a relationship with arguably the best known visions, at Lourdes in 1858. These visions, to the young Bernadette Soubirous, consolidated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, established as infallible dogma by Pope Pius IX in his *Ineffabilis Deus* of 1854.

Each of these relationships—between Angelik's statue and Our Lady of the Grotto; between Angelik's visions and those at Medjugorje and Lourdes—involves some form of mimetic process. Newer versions conform to established prototypes of statues' appearances and behaviors, the content and a context of visions, and the depictions of Our Lady. In this sense, Angelik's statue *qua* statue is unremarkable—a standard, mass-produced depiction of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception standing in light blue robes and white head-scarf, with her arms out to her sides and palms outstretched in a posture of welcome. It is a canonical pose derived from classical art and the Baroque of the Catholic Renewal—or Counter-Reformation. Angelik's description of the Lady he sees during visions is similarly canonical: white veil, light blue sash, holding her hands out, and with a face so beautiful "one could not possibly draw [it]" (http://ladysapparitions.weebly.com/description-of-the-lady.html).

This chain of relationships resembles Sperber's (1996) epidemiological vision of culture as made up of chains of representation that link public and private/mental representations. However, the unrepresentability of Our Lady's face in Angelik's vision throws into relief the discussion concerning

representation and the relationship between image and prototype. On the one hand, the vision repeats—and so imitates—established representations of Our Lady. On the other hand, it itself defies representation, and so is confirmed as not "merely" an imitation but an instantiation of the original, or prototype. The non-representability of holy prototypes is a common theme in Maltese understandings of mimetic artefacts. For example, the most important Maltese crucifix, the life-sized, seventeenth-century "Miraculous Crucifix" in Valletta, is miraculous on two counts: it performs miracles but was also created by a miracle. Having finished all but the head of the statue, its sculptor, a Sicilian Franciscan lay brother, fell into a trance. When he woke, the elaborate head had been completed—the work of angels. Such narratives confirm Catholic artifacts as "media of presence"—doing more than simply carrying meaning, they generate points of encounter and relationship between person and holy presence. As such, they are mimetic, derived from a generative process that is not merely imitative or representational, but constitutive.

The Maltese Catholic lifeworld is constituted through people's encounters and interactions with such media of presence, which are ubiquitous. If Baroque was the house style of the Catholic Counter-Reformation/Renewal, it has remained so in contemporary Malta. Densely urbanized—some would say overdeveloped—Malta's main urban centers developed around its harbors from the sixteenth century onwards. Early urban planning required that street corners were decorated with statues, ensuring that the saints that occupied the abundant churches are also in the streets. The churches themselves contain statues, paintings, relics. Households contain prints of paintings, smaller statues, tableaux, illustrated prayer cards. Workplaces have small shrines oriented around statuettes or prints. People themselves wear necklaces or rings with depictions of the saints. Until recently, when the national bus service was taken over by a multinational company, even buses had small shrines with statues in them.

Learning to negotiate this world of presences is learning the *habitus* of Maltese Catholicism. It operates in some ways like Bourdieu's vision of the Kabyle House (1990: 271–83)—a model of the cosmos that is also a practical tool through which people learn how to live within the cosmos:

> All the actions performed in a space constructed in this way are immediately qualified symbolically and function as so many structural exercises through which is built up practical mastery of the fundamental schemes. (Bourdieu 1972: 91)

Building on this, we might say of the Maltese context that all actions performed in encounter with its material culture are immediately qualified experientially as so many structural exercises, through which is built up a mastery of mimetic performance. The presence of the holy—*praesentia*—is consolidated through people's engagements with these media of presence,

which themselves exert themselves upon the person. Statues and other artifacts are the objects of prayer, requests for intercession, genuflection. They are also persons with whom people engage in conversation, maintain eye contact with, and avoid turning their backs upon, as they would a living human person. They are perceived as subjects rather than objects, persons rather than things. As persons, we might argue that they too trigger the mirroring process that is central to the mimesis. If watching a person act generates a neurological mirroring, then the same might be true of looking at—and engaging with—a statue or other image that is itself considered to be a person. This might help us to understand how presence and power—*praesentia* and *potentia*—are brought together in Catholic material culture, and the depth of empathy that Maltese Catholics have for holy figures. It also marks a starting-point for our understanding of Angelik, his visions and experiences.

Angelik

Angelik was born and raised in the town of Zejtun, which is close to the dockyards area of Malta, and has a reputation for being "rough" and violent,[4] gained in part through memories of political violence in the 1980s, but also from the town's reputation for particularly strong rivalry—*pika*—between the supporters of different bands that play at the parish feast—or *festa*. *Festa* is a key moment in people's encounter with saints. Each parish has at least one saint to which an annual *festa* is dedicated, which both celebrates and—through parading the saint's statue round the streets—performs the saint's patronage over the parish. Tucked away in the church for the rest of the year, the *festa* sees the statue taken out—of its niche and of the church—so that it provides a more total, and three-dimensional, encounter. During the *festa*, children are encouraged to imitate the postures of the patron, as embodied in its statue. It is the focus of adoration and adulation, and during the procession is carried around at shoulder-height, made to sway through the streets as though walking, and look around the territory over which it presides.

Like most Maltese children, Angelik had this informal practical religious learning supplemented by catechism lessons and Holy Communion coaching from the Maltese lay doctrinal organization, MUSEUM. Here, as well as learning doctrine, children learn the appropriate modes of bodily engagement when approaching, preparing for, and ingesting the consecrated host—the central artefact of Catholic material culture. This involves cultivating a respectful demeanor of veneration and modesty, approaching communion with eyes lowered in humility, bowing at the knees in genuflection—a performance of deference that, as with Ekman's actors, generates a disposition of deference, or further, actually constitutes

deference itself, and through that constitutes the object of deference as subject: a presence with power. As Hérault argues, when learning Holy Communion, "[t]he children are not merely allocated a particular role but have imposed on them, through correct bodily postures, the expression of an appropriate internal attitude" (1999: 7). Through this and other modes of practical mimesis—in church, at home, and in other places where God lurks—Maltese children develop the performative bodily repertoires necessary to comport themselves through the Catholic lifeworld, but also to constitute that lifeworld.

Angelik didn't merely incorporate these repertoires, through the mimetic process of looking and doing; encountering the holy in the material environment. He himself became a performative exemplar, shifting from learner to tutor, apprentice to master (or sorcerer), as he himself joined the MUSEUM order to become a teacher. This shift, though, is more than a demonstration of expertise. It marks the start of a different and more intensive performative relationship to presence. Being a MUSEUM teacher—or *Tal-Muzew*, as it is phrased in Maltese—has connotations of pious simplicity consistent with vocation. Full members take a vow of celibacy, and pray daily from a prayer book written by its founder, St. Gorg Preca. Preca was canonized in 2007, 100 years after he established MUSEUM, and is Malta's first and—so far—only saint. He was a radical thinker, dedicated to improving the secular and spiritual conditions of the Maltese working classes, and particularly those working in the country's southern dockyards (Baldacchino 2011). Committed to education, he was also a visionary, having in 1910 met a young boy in the dockyard town of Marsa, whom he subsequently realized was Jesus, appearing in order to encourage his project of expanding Catholic education. As a visionary, he provides Angelik with a model of male encounter. Visions, and particularly visions of Our Lady, tend to be associated with younger women—peasant women of the type epitomized by Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes. As a man from Zejtun, close to the dockyards and with a similar reputation, Angelik was very much part of Preca's target ministry.

Angelik subsequently left MUSEUM, marrying his wife Catherine and moving to Birzebuggia, where they began to raise their four children and, it seems, fell on harder times.[5] Meanwhile, they also became involved in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, via a local Cappuchin monk, Father Hayden Williams. As a form of Catholic Pentecostalism (Csordas 1997; Theuma 2002), Catholic Charismatic Renewal emphasizes direct, unmediated encounter with the Holy Spirit, spiritual healing, glossolalia, and other forms of experiential practice. It tends to be associated with forms of apocalyptic or messianic thinking which figures the present as the "End Times," prior to a second coming (Apolito 2005), and figures the current spiritual challenge as a visceral battle against the forces of evil as literally embodied by the Devil and his many avatars. A key technology within this battle is prayer, which is seen to have a direct impact on the

balance of power between good and evil. The movement is structured around a network of relatively small-scale prayer groups who gather to pray, in particular, for conversion—of both non-Catholics and Catholics alike, who are called to move towards this stronger, more fundamental form of Catholicism.

In 2005, Father Williams was asked by the prayer group that Angelik and Catherine were a part of to organize the Medjugorje pilgrimage. As a movement that emphasizes the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is less skeptical of vision phenomena than perhaps other parts of the Catholic Church. Following the pilgrimage, the *Mir* group was established in January 2006, Catherine bought the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, and Angelik's visions began. His first vision called upon him to "pray the Rosary, and get others to say the Rosary" (http://ladyborginnadur.blogspot.co.uk/p/borg-in-nadur-borg-refers-to-group-of.html). For the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Rosary has a particular role in altering the balance of good and evil in the cosmos. It is itself a "medium of presence" (Mitchell 2009: 212). As Downey (this volume) argues, repetitive prayer, such as reciting the Rosary, manipulates our perception of the external environment.

After this first event, Angelik had frequent visions, both at home and during the meetings of *Mir*. From *Mir* was formed *Theotokos*, the cenacle of 12—including Angelik and his wife—who meet regularly to contemplate Our Lady's messages to Angelik, and occupy center stage in the rituals centered around Angelik. In November 2006, Angelik was asked by Our Lady to the prehistoric temple site of Borg-in-Nadur, outside Birzebuggia, where she would appear to him and deliver an important message. The message was that this would be the site where she would appear to him and deliver messages; and where Maltese should gather to hear the messages, pray, and promote conversion in the spirit. To the chagrin of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, a cross was erected on the site, which now dominates the hill, transforming it into a place of pilgrimage. A rock from the hill was taken to the next *Mir* meeting, to encourage the pilgrimage, and by May 2007, Our Lady had announced she would appear regularly every Wednesday evening to deliver a new message.

The weekly event begins at around 6 p.m., when people begin to gather on the hill to recite the Rosary. Sitting on rocks, benches, or portable chairs, they spread out on a flat area below the site's main hillock, upon which a large cross and altar have been erected. At around 7 p.m., Angelik arrives, with the other members of the cenacle, and Father Hayden. They swiftly walk up the stone path and onto the hill, where they gather in a circle to join in and lead the Rosary. After several decades of the Rosary, the prayer is stopped as Angelik walks swiftly to the top of the hill, to stand in front of the cross. He is followed by the priest, who holds a Dictaphone to his mouth, and from the vantage point of those looking on, appears to be talking into it. Angelik then looks up towards the sky, and turns round

to face the onlookers, holding his arms outstretched in the shape of the crucifix or diagonally downwards with open palms—the classic posture of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. He then collapses onto a folding chair and the Rosary is resumed. The message is transcribed and read out, with an interpretation from the priest, before the crowds disperse and the event is over.

Over the months and years, these events have become more and more routinized. The messages have become progressively longer and more convoluted. Our Lady has demanded more and more iterations of the Rosary, and offered up her own prayer to supplement the regular devotion. By the end of 2007, the Wednesday gatherings were attracting up to 500 participants, who congregated up to an hour before the advertised arrival time of Angelik and his cenacle to recite the Rosary. His regular arrival and performance of ecstasy on the hill, and the recording, relaying, and interpretation of Our Lady's message were punctuated periodically by more spectacular manifestations. He has been thrown to the ground under attack by demons and the Devil, and has produced large thorns from inside his mouth. Hosts have appeared in his hands and on his tongue, Rosary beads have emerged from nowhere, and pearls have materialized. He has also experienced phenomena away from Borg-in-Nadur and the weekly pilgrimage. Early on, he was asked by Our Lady to bear the pain of Christ during the crucifixion. Again, this was routinized: every Friday, Angelik feels the pain of the five wounds on his body, sometimes also feeling the crown of thorns and scourging on his back. Marks of the stigmata have appeared on his hands. Initially he wished to keep these episodes secret, but was told by Our Lady that he should tell people, to encourage conversion. An episode of the *Xarabank* television show depicted him lying on his bed, arms stretched out in a crucifix pose, and shaking with the pain of the Passion.

The critical move in Angelik's performance, which marks it off against more "normal" performance, is that he not only acts *in relation to* holy presence—through the postural repertoires of deferential genuflection towards Catholic material culture—but himself takes on their very postures. In doing so, he takes the mimetic mirroring process a step further, which is not merely empathetic, but appropriative. As with the images and statues they emulate, these performative acts do more than represent—they constitute. Angelik does not enact the pain of the Passion, satanic attack, and so on, so much as embody them, making them his own, mimetically. Through taking on the postures of Our Lady and the crucified Christ, he experiences their presence within and through him. His performance, then, crosses a boundary, from accommodation to appropriation, which a number of Maltese informants found problematic—even blasphemous. Yet accusations of blasphemy acknowledge the power of the performance in the first place, just as iconoclasm acknowledges the power of the icon.

Conclusion

My argument is that Angelik's visions and experiences can be understood through exploring his performance. As Schieffelin argues, performances "whether ritual or dramatic, create and make present realities vivid enough to beguile, amuse or terrify. And through these presences, they alter moods, social relations, bodily dispositions and states of mind" (1998: 194). My concern is to understand not merely that this happens, but *how*: what are the processes that lead to visionary experiences of holy presence? I argue that mimesis is central: as a fundamental feature of human encounter with the world, that is also fundamentally generative. Through engagement with their environment—including the social environment of persons—people constitute their lifeworld—including their cosmos. This is accomplished through practical, bodily encounter.

As an embodied process, rooted in practice and performance, the notion of mimesis offers an alternative solution to the problem of representation. The problem is outlined by Holbraad and others of the ontological turn, who question the deferral inherent in theories that depend on a concept of representation. Such theories ultimately fail to "take seriously" others' apparently irrational beliefs, because they locate explanation somewhere other than within the beliefs themselves. The solution of the ontological turn is to infine new worlds in which the contradictions of the apparently irrational are no longer contradictory. Understanding is sought through a recursive procedure that seeks to recast anthropological concepts in line with indigenous ones. This approach presumes that the processes inherent in belief are primarily conceptual, and that ethnography—or ontography—is akin to philosophy in its search for new definition, or inventive definition. As Hildi Mitchell and I have argued elsewhere (Mitchell and Mitchell 2008), a focus on the categories or doctrines of religion—their sense of truth—has skewed the debates about belief, such that the practices and experiences that make up religiosity are occluded by the search for conceptual integrity. A focus on performance takes us away from the search for a categorical logic, or "truth," and towards an understanding of the experiential, or existential, grounds of religiosity. As Bourdieu has argued, "practice has a logic which is not that of the logician" (1990: 86).

Raphael's famous fresco of Plato and Aristotle sees them walking, enrobed, discussing the problems of philosophy—the route to truth. Their gestures embody the difference between their two approaches. Whilst Plato points to the sky, indicating his commitment to the transcendent idealism of the Forms, Aristotle gestures towards the earth, indicating his commitment to empiricism—an assumption that perception, rather than conception, governs knowledge. Not that I am positioning myself as Aristotle, to Holbraad's Plato—far from it!—but the distinction is useful for distinguishing approaches to a "post-representational" anthropology. On the

one hand is an ontographic solution that seeks truth in ever-more cerebral infinition; on the other, is a mimetic solution that seeks understanding in the body, and, through that, in processes of cognition, performance, and the senses.

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2

Ritual Action Shapes Our Brains: An Essay in Neuroanthropology

Robert Turner

> If myth can to some degree be considered a highly coloured map of brain neuroanatomy, ritual may perhaps be thought of, however crudely, as given its momentum by brain physiology. (V. W. Turner 1985)

Introduction

It is hard to imagine a religion which does not deploy, in some form or another, relatively well-defined rituals, the main topic of this chapter. While rituals frequently occur outside contexts that in Western cultures we would label as "religious," they are pervasive in religious activities everywhere, and clearly have an important, perhaps even a fundamental, role in the performance and transmission of religions.

Many would agree that ritual, almost by definition, is not obviously practical or instrumental. Aztec human sacrifice, for instance, may appear to be the complete opposite. I will argue that ritual action may have, instead, the function of physically changing the brains of the participants, or maintaining such changes that have already taken place. It can transform the world inside, but not necessarily outside. Because such changes are in themselves covert (although they may result in an altered repertoire for observable action), the effectiveness of ritual can easily be overlooked, and it can be dismissed, scornfully, as "meaningless" by those who have not fully entered into the experiences it offers. But now, by means of magnetic resonance imaging, we can follow non-invasively the changes in activity, wiring, and shape that take place within our skulls. What was covert is now accessible to quantitative observation. The transformations wrought by ritual experience may be measurable. This interplay between experience-based personal accounts of social action, on which social anthropology is based, and the empirical quantification of material changes within our

skulls provided by neuroimaging techniques is the starting-point for the renovated discipline of "Neuroanthropology" (Dominguez Duque et al. 2009a, 2009b).

In order to give concreteness to my argument, I will start with a commonsense definition of "ritual." I will then summarize current neuroscientific findings regarding human brain development, which throw light on the respective shaping roles of inheritance and experience. Human experience arrives in many forms. I will attempt a classification relevant to ritual actions and brain systems that handle such inputs and outputs. Dipping a toe into deep waters, I will comment on the effect of ritual experience on the "self–other" distinction, in the context of the recent discovery of "mirror" neurons that become more active whether one performs a movement oneself or sees another person performing the same action. This will lead to a discussion of symbols, which obtain deeper and more durable brain representation, as compared with mere signs. The power of ritual symbols has been convincingly explained by Victor Turner, among others. His "bipolar" conceptualization of ritual symbols, which integrate compellingly both cognitive and physiological domains of experience, fits well with William James's account of the neuropsychology of emotion, especially as elaborated recently by Antonio Damasio. This view suggests mechanisms that connect powerful or often repeated experiences with material changes in our brain structures and organization, enabling preferred repertoires of action.

It is interesting to explore how this concept relates to the study of performance. This was discussed many years ago by Turner in relation to dramatic performance in his influential work *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982). The dramatic tradition in many cultures, which often overlaps with religious performance, might be seen as a distillation by talented individuals of types and categories of ritual action which "work," in the sense that their observable effects are repeatable and reliable. I will return to this theme in my concluding remarks.

The Meaning of "Ritual"

What the term "ritual" means, with its multiple connotations, depends greatly on its community of users, on whether they are psychiatrists, ethnographers, theologians, liturgists, neurologists, or simply committed atheists. The questions it inspires can be approached by hermeneutic interpretation, evolutionary explanation, and neuropsychological experimentation. But one does not need to be a registered expert to agree that ritual, however defined, is found everywhere, and is normally intensely social. It usually entails the successful deployment of ritual symbols, in narrative structures akin to dramas, stories, and music. Rituals structure our cognitive systems,

and help to form and consolidate collective representations which become taken for granted, whether or not they are classified in Western societies as religious in character. Rituals are learned.

The essential features of ritual, as I believe the term is commonly used, are as follows.

a) **Specification**. Ritual actions and their symbolism are not arbitrarily chosen by the performers, they are not dictated by logic or necessity, and they are, at least in part, prescribed and imposed upon the performers by some external source.
b) **Occasion**. A ritual may be performed at regular intervals or on specific occasions. It may be held at the discretion of individuals or communities, by a single individual, by a group, or by the entire community. It may take place in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it, and it can be performed either in public, in private, or before specific people.
c) **Participants**. A ritual may involve the entire social group, or be restricted to a certain subset of the community, and it may enable or underscore the passage of particular individuals between religious roles or social states.
d) **Explicit or implicit purposes**. The purposes of rituals are varied. They can be performed in compliance with religious obligations or ideals, to satisfy expressed or tacit spiritual or emotional desires of the practitioners, to strengthen social bonds, to demonstrate respect or submission, to manifest one's affiliation, to obtain social acceptance or approval for some event, or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself. Traditions vary within and across cultures regarding the extent of explanation and justification, as pointed out by Malinowski, among others.

Why does ritual persist? Because it is useful. Among the other benefits just described, ritual allows us to automate many social routines. Imagine having to reinvent social procedures on every occasion. Ritual provides us with a stock of formulas for action and expression, vessels that can be filled with affective contents of feeling and love. The formation of new institutions requires the invention of new rituals, which are most likely to work if based on recognizable antecedents. In 2008, I had the unique experience of devising an opening ceremony for my new laboratory in Leipzig. Naturally I sought German cultural precedents, and managed to employ a virtuoso brass quintet of the Gewandhaus Orchestra to provide the entertainment between the speeches.

Brain Development: Roles of Genes and Experience

With a few minutes of MRI scanning, a three-dimensional picture of a living human brain can be easily obtained, without any known harm to the person being scanned. These data can then be processed into a 3D image which can be viewed on a computer screen.

When the brains of identical twins are viewed in this way, obvious differences are always visible, even for the completely untutored eye. Their brains are far more different in appearance than the faces in front of them. Careful quantitative analysis shows that identical twins indeed have much more similar brain shapes than those of fraternal twins, but the point is clear—brains are very plastic. Living brain tissue has the consistency of soft blancmange. Soft and malleable, a brain's primary function is to adapt to its owner's body and to its owner's stream of experiences, so that in turn the entire person, guided by its brain, can best deal with what comes next. It is the task of every neuron to prepare for its own future, and in doing so it provides the person with memories and prospective memories, most of which never rise to the level of consciousness.

However, every part of a brain has its defined repertoire of capabilities—to respond to inputs, and to change its wiring. Much of this repertoire is under genetic control. At the broadest level, all normal humans have the same general features in their brains—brain stem, cerebellum, mid-brain, cerebral hemispheres, and frontal, temporal, parietal, and occipital lobes. The long-distance wiring, extended neural processes called axons comprising most of the brain's white matter, also follows standard patterns: the corpus callosum connecting the two hemispheres, the optic radiation connecting the lateral geniculate nucleus of the thalamus to the primary visual cortex, the corticospinal tract that connects primary motor cortex with the spinal cord and thence to the muscles themselves. Within the mid-brain, we all have caudate nuclei, putamens, pallidums, red nuclei, subthalamic nuclei, substantia nigras, and so on. But the details vary, and the details matter.

An elegant study (Lenroot and Giedd 2008) performed by an MRI-based laboratory in the National Institute of Mental Health compared brain morphology of cohorts of identical and fraternal twins at three different ages. Their methodology allowed them to map a "heritability index" across their subjects' brains, which quantified how much a given area was under genetic control and how much a result of personal experience. Brain development clearly depends on continuing complex interactions of genetic make-up and personal experience. Earlier twin studies in adults found that many aspects of brain anatomy are highly heritable. The ongoing child and adolescent twin study described by Lenroot and Giedd indicates that this heritability varies across different brain areas, and changes with age, region

by region. Areas associated with more complex reasoning abilities were found to become increasingly heritable as the person grows older.

It is not the purpose of the present chapter to discuss the fascinating implications of this work, except to point out that the convergence to an inherited brain conformation in later life seems paradoxical. Given the just-mentioned enormous plasticity of a brain, one would be forgiven for thinking that under the impact of personal experience a developing brain would diverge more and more over time from a genetically-defined trajectory.

It is important to describe briefly the mechanisms by which our brain tissue adapts to the needs of the organism (i.e. us). The key concept was introduced by Donald Hebb in 1949:

> The general idea is an old one, that any two cells or systems of cells (neurons) that are repeatedly active at the same time will tend to become "associated," so that activity in one facilitates activity in the other.
>
> When one cell repeatedly assists in firing another, the axon of the first cell develops synaptic knobs (or enlarges them if they already exist) in contact with the soma of the second cell. (Hebb 1949: 70, 63)

Hebb's Law can be paraphrased by the statement "Neurons that fire together, wire together." It has become increasingly clear that such changes in the connections between our neurons, which can take place over time scales from seconds to years, are the primary physical mechanisms for the mental capabilities that we call learning and memory.

Other generally slower brain changes, both maturational and degenerative, also occur. During childhood and adolescence the axonal fibres connecting neurons via the brain's white matter become sequentially wrapped in their insulating layers of myelin, speeding up communication and economizing on energy. This process brings brain regions into play, turn by turn, the toolkit becoming complete once our prefrontal lobes are fully myelinated in our mid-twenties. The increased output of sex-dependent hormones during adolescence has differential maturational effects on many brain areas. While this area of neuroscience research is still itself in its adolescence, it is clear that testosterone fosters assertiveness and oestrogen facilitates a range of nurturing predispositions. As our brains age, neurons slowly die off, accelerated by alcohol abuse, the "thousand natural shocks," and dementias such as Alzheimer's disease. Our capacity to learn changes through life.

However, the storage of every experience in the form of memory in our brains would be neither efficient nor indeed feasible. We remember an experience, whether consciously or unconsciously, as a result of editing operations, driven by specific brain areas, which embody the concepts we call attention, emotion, desire, and motivation. Cognitive neuroscientists use

the term "reward" to refer to the "positive value an individual ascribes to an object, behavioral act or an internal physical state" to quote Wikipedia. "Natural rewards include those that are necessary for the survival of species, such as eating, drinking, sex, and fighting." Fear also drives memory.

Crudely speaking, memories can be durably engraved into our brains either by sufficiently intense unique experiences, or by frequent repetition (or both). Memory has been classified by cognitive scientists into two basic types: procedural memory (know-how) and declarative memory (facts, including past events). Studies of brain damage, notably in the famous patient HM, both of whose hippocampi were surgically removed in order to reduce seizures, have demonstrated the robustness of this dichotomy, technically described as a "dissociation." HM lived in an eternal present, unable to encode any new memories or to predict future events, but he was still able to use the skills his brain had learned prior to surgery (such as the use of language). The hippocampus was thus shown to play a vital role in the formation ("encoding") and retrieval of declarative memories.

A highly-cited example of this is the work of Eleanor Maguire et al. (2000), who studied the morphology of the hippocampus in London taxi drivers, comparing their MRI scans with those of control subjects. For certification, London cabbies must commit to memory a detailed map of London and preferred routes, a body of information termed "The Knowledge," and then pass an examination. This is an arduous and time-consuming task. Maguire found that taxi drivers possessing The Knowledge consistently had a larger posterior hippocampus than control subjects.

This result has been followed up by many other studies (for a review, see Draganski and May 2008) which show that our brains can accrue additional grey matter in appropriate locations within days of continuous training. Depending on what is remembered, the hippocampus may or may not play a crucial role. Procedural memories laid down by repetition typically do not involve hippocampal mediation. Much of the brain's remodeling may occur during sleep, which we experience in forms (REM, etc.) which appear to be specific to consolidation of the different types of memory (Stickgold and Walker 2007).

"Episodic" memories of events are typically the result of single experiences. In such contexts, the integrative activity of the hippocampus, believed to associate disparate sense experiences into a gestalt "event," appears to depend on the modulatory influence of its close neighbor in the medial temporal lobe, the amygdala. This organ of evaluation, richly connected with much of the rest of the brain, is particularly concerned with aversion, or fear. Our amygdalae increase their activity when we see a fearful face or hear a fearful voice (Dolan et al. 2001), and even when we see a stranger staring at us. Like the hippocampus, the amygdala is found in all mammalian brains, and plays an obvious role in the organism's survival.

To summarise, learning a skill by repetition is now known materially to change our brains (Turner 2002). Episodic learning has the same result.

However, learning requires motivation and hence desire, which entails emotional involvement, interoception of autonomic responses, and the prospect of reward. We shall return to this point shortly.

Qualities of Experience: Music and Ritual

Experience arrives in many forms. In most human societies, historically, most experience is social experience. A solitary life is exceptional, and unless deliberately sought after for whatever reason, it is regarded as unfortunate. The opposite extreme is harmony. The word is apposite, because the paradigm of interpersonal harmony is the joint performance of music. Such action is characteristically regarded as rewarding in itself, provided that the level of difficulty is such that the performers are in a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Typically this comes about when the performers already have a good idea what they will be producing, before they start—whether because the tune or score is memorized, or because they have the score in front of them, or because they are accomplished improvisers and have in their heads a repertoire of effective riffs.

I want to argue that music can thus be regarded as ritualized language. In this sense, the term encompasses prayers that are collectively spoken and even dancing together. All of these shared activities involve mutual action, which is now known to involve extensive brain areas loosely classified as the "mirror system."

Mirror neurons were discovered in the premotor cortex of monkey brain by Rizzolatti and colleagues (1996). Such neurons are similarly active when the monkey performs a physical action or merely views another monkey performing the same action. Many researchers (e.g. Gobbini et al. 2007; Grèzes et al. 2003) have shown that human brains also have many areas that respond similarly to our own and each other's actions, provided that they have a similar meaning. Brass and Heyes (2005) argue that mirror neuron systems allow, but do not ensure, intra-species imitation. Imitation obviously relies on an automatic activation of motor representations by observation of movement, but any form of culture must be based not only on imitation but also meaningful innovation.

Chapin et al. (2010) used functional MRI to study a group of volunteers listening to skilled musical performance, and found very similar functional changes in each of their brains, depending mainly on the degree of musical training of the volunteers. This provides evidence that empathy plays a significant role in musical appreciation.

Such human social interactions, insofar as they instantiate identical brain activity, dissolve the boundaries between self and other. They promote "I–Thou" relationships, in place of the more formal "I–You," or even "I–It" relationships that normally exist between strangers (Buber 2000).

They facilitate the collective experience of communitas, as defined by Victor Turner (1969) and elaborated in Turner (2012). It is worth pointing out that the shared experience that fosters such a state is not necessarily an enjoyable one—being trapped by a blizzard together in a tent in the Himalayas, or even collectively awaiting adult circumcision, can have an identical result. Anyone who has experienced an *Aufguss* in a German sauna, naked with complete strangers, will recognize the extraordinarily leveling and bonding effect of collective voluntary pain.

This returns us to the topic of ritual. Here the typical routinization of actions, including speech, music, and the use of standardized objects, facilitates, in my view, the reduction of interpersonal boundaries. This may have a profound and lasting effect on the brains of the participants. An important component of this operation is the deployment of ritual symbols. In my analysis of the effectiveness of ritual symbols, as mentioned earlier, I draw on the work of Turner, but also on that of William James and the most recent ideas of Antonio Damasio (2010).

Symbols

Symbolic objects are typically "special" versions or arrangements of everyday objects. They are often associated with well-known stories and moral precepts, and used in a defined processual sequence. When the normal purpose of such objects is everyday (e.g. eating bread), their symbolic use is marked by prescribed, formalized actions, so that the movements and gestures involved also become symbolic. Objects become symbolic when they are used in a stereotypical way on specific occasions, enabling participants to recognize their particular role, whether or not they have an explicit declarative knowledge of the purpose of each action.

Ritual symbolism subsumes a large part of symbolic action, since much human action is ritualized. A now commonly accepted account of ritual symbolism attributes its effectiveness in transforming the participant's mental state to the skillful selection of symbolic objects (and sequences of action using such objects) that associate in a uniquely natural way the physical characteristics of such objects and the cognitive meanings that are attributed to them. V. W. Turner (1967), following Sapir, has characterized the two "poles" of a ritual symbol by the terms "normative" and "orectic," denoting respectively the semantic and the appetitive meanings of the symbol. The normative or cognitive pole refers to what the symbol "means." This usually refers to some item of faith or moral precept. The orectic pole, by contrast, relates to the experiential aspects of the symbol, whether visual, tactile, olfactory or auditory, or powerful combinations of these.

Current neuropsychological research is exploring a parallel dichotomy postulated in the central nervous system, between autonomic neural

processing and the activity of the conscious or reasoning brain. It is becoming clear that particular brain components perform the task of representing the connections embodied by ritual symbols and symbolic actions. Their effect, by repetition, on the cortical areas to which they project is to adapt them specifically for socially productive operations. The link between these neural systems can be problematic, in that inputs from the "autonomic brain" to the conscious brain can easily be misinterpreted or ignored, and the conscious brain often lacks strategies for controlling autonomic brain activity. The orectic aspects evoke autonomic bodily responses, which are pre-semantic and often even unconscious. However, they may well translate into specific emotions.

Our Brains as Ontological Libraries

Within a given culture, ritual symbols give unique ontological status to what is symbolized:

> The fund of ritual possibilities in any culture is limited. For instance, an illness can be handled by prayer to the ancestors, confession to a witch, a big or little sacrifice. But once the rite has been selected and applied, a crystallizing of experience takes place—just as in learning there is a corresponding clarifying and fixing which follows a physical, external representation of what is being learned. Thus a reality is established out of the flux of possible forms. (Douglas 1982)

Ritual structures our cognitive systems, forming collective representations (Turner and Whitehead 2008). Following Durkheim, I define collective representations as crucial components of human life that have meaningful existence only because we give explicit or tacit assent that they should exist. This includes rituals, customs, money, language, games, laws, power structures, artistic genres, and calendrical and clock time. Collective representations are not generally found in other animal species. They take the form of shared procedural and semantic memories, and they must be learned to enable effective social interaction and provide our identities as social persons. They must be consistent with the constraints of individual psychology and brain function, but they are highly variable across cultures, and clearly possess a certain autonomy.

How are collective representations installed and organized within the human brain? Processes of education, social conditioning, and maturation map them onto biologically predetermined cortical areas. It should be emphasized that such areas are predetermined only by their axonal connectivity. For example, the area associated with the identification of visual forms, the fusiform gyrus, is firmly connected to the primary visual cortex.

The "belt area" regions sensitive to auditory structure (as in music or speech) take direct input from the primary auditory cortex. The previously mentioned amygdala, which performs evaluations of perceptual inputs, has massive connections with the hippocampus, early sensory areas, and the autonomic nervous system, and projects to many "associative" areas. Repeated stereotypical experience or intense unique experiences lead to Hebbian learning in neurons and in neural circuits in all relevant brain areas.

Cultures act to provide repeated experiences or single experiences that are so salient that one-shot learning takes place. This often takes the form of conscious training and imitation. The framework for such formative experiences is usually provided by ritual. For instance, rites of passage (van Gennep 1909; V. Turner 1969) transform social persons through processes of separation, seclusion, initiation, and reintegration. But the common factor in common between such ritual experiences, when they are effective, is emotion.

Emotion is a concept dating back within Western cultural tradition to the ancient Greeks. Whether the widely-accepted distinction between emotion and reason is cross-culturally generalizable, and therefore fit to be a neuroscientific variable, should be the topic of intensive ethnopsychological research. The brilliant neuropsychologist Antonio Damasio has challenged this distinction in his books *Descartes' Error* (1994) and *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999). Within neuropsychology, following Charles Darwin (1872) and Paul Ekman (1972), many researchers have naively assumed that a basic set of six putatively cross-culturally universal emotions that can be distinguished by facial expression in all primate species can account for all the other emotions described by novelists and playwrights. But social emotions, which may not have stereotypical facial expressions that give them away, are complex and numerous, and attempts to reduce them to combinations of the six "basic" emotions have been ineffective and pointless (see Uchida and Kitayama 2009), as Ekman himself happily concedes.

However, to the extent that we can agree that "emotion" is a valid category, it clearly has an important role in directing attention and in laying down durable memories, especially as they are materially condensed and indexed in the form of ritual symbols. As collective representations, symbols rich with associations are themselves represented in our brains. These strongly bias our own perceptions and cognitive processes (Nisbett and Miyamoto 2005; Goh and Park 2009), shaping in turn our environment and thus each other's perceptual, emotional, social, and practical experience.

Thus ritual symbolism provides sensory experience that powerfully links autonomic activity with conscious thought, in a highly structured way relevant to important societal concerns. It induces physical responses that are experienced as complex emotions, which render particularly salient and memorable the conscious reflections or teachings made at the time that

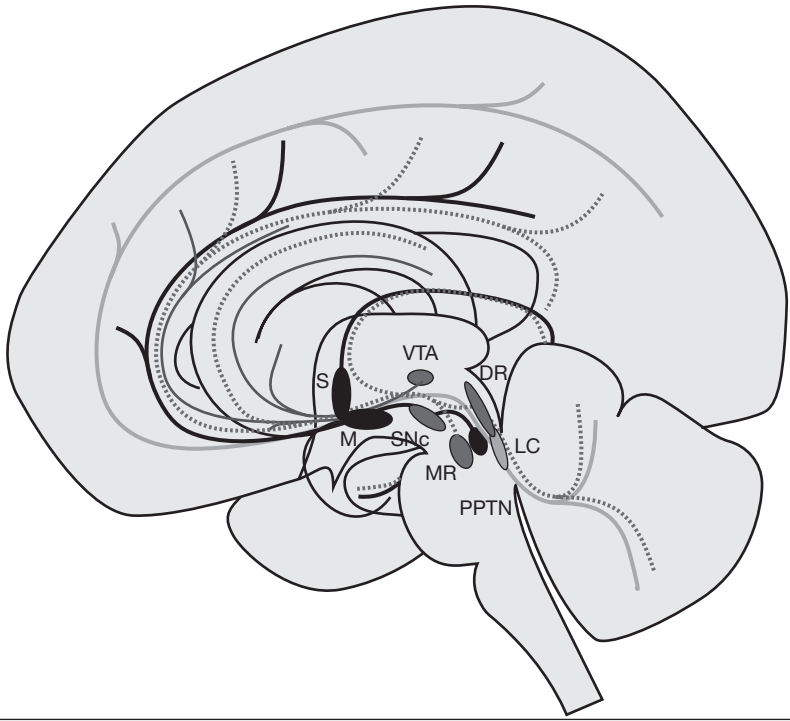
the ritual symbols are brought into play. The collective representations comprising a particular culture become embedded as neural representations in the brains of the participants. As such, they are embodied in enduring material changes in the structure and connectivity of brain tissue.

These statements require further support and explanation. First, it needs to be recognized that the restructuring of brain circuitry that constitutes learning requires motivation, and hence desire. At the neural level, learning involves all four modulatory neurotransmitters: dopamine, serotonin, noradrenaline, and acetylcholine. An intriguing set of hypotheses originating with Kenji Doya (2002) suggests that dopamine represents the global learning signal for prediction of rewards and reinforcement of actions. Serotonin controls the balance between short-term and long-term prediction of reward. Noradrenaline controls the balance between wide exploration and focused execution. Lastly, acetylcholine controls the balance between memory storage and renewal. The sources of these neurotransmitters are clustered deep in the mid-brain and brain stem (see Figure 2.1, which also lists the brain areas mainly targeted by each of them).

The outcome of reward signalling in our brains is what we may call "happiness." According to the James–Lange theory (James 1884), we read our emotions in our autonomic state. The James–Lange theory of emotion generates a number of predictions. First, emotive stimuli generate bodily response automatically, even without awareness. Second, different emotions are associated with different bodily responses. Third, sensitivity to internal bodily changes is important in determining the intensity of, and individual differences in, emotional experience.

But how do our brains accomplish this? A convincing account of how our autonomic nervous systems communicate with our brains is found in papers by Hugo Critchley (2005) and his team (Harrison et al. 2010). To summarize his description (Figure 2.2), specific brain components interpret interoceptive signals as follows. Homoeostatic autonomic control is supported by a functional organization of sympathetic and parasympathetic nuclei within the deep brain areas of hypothalamus, pons, and medulla. The sympathetic nuclei in the hypothalamus interact with homeostatic (for example thermoregulatory) centers. Dorsal pons nuclei are close to the ascending neuromodulator pathways (dopamine, 5HT, acetylcholine, and noradrenaline) that are implicated in cortical arousal and motivational signalling, and are consequently also modulated in their activity.

Afferent thin fibres traveling in Lamina 1 of the spinal cord and the vagus nerve convey interoceptive and motivationally salient information to the brain. In primates, a pontine relay is bypassed via an evolutionarily specialized thalamocortical pathway to interoceptive cortices that terminates in right anterior insula (which projects further into orbitofrontal cortex). There is an accessory branch to anterior cingulate cortex. This specialized route is highlighted using a thicker line.



Neuromodulator	Origin of projection	Major target area
Dopamine (DA)	Substantia nigra, pars compacta (SNc) ventral tegmental area (VTA)	Dorsal striatum Ventral stratum Frontal cortex
Serotonin (5-HT)	Dorsal raphe nucleus (DR) Median raphe nucleus (MR)	Cortex, striatum Cerebellum Hippocampus
Noradrenaline (NA) (norepinephrine, NE)	Locus coeruleus (LC)	Cortex, hippocampus cerebellum
Acetylcholine (ACh)	Meynert nucleus (M) Medial septum (S) Pedunculopontine tegmental Nucleus (PPTN)	Cortex, amygdala hippocampus SNc, thalamus superior colliculus

Fig. 2.1 *The cerebral origins and projections of the four major modulatory neurotransmitters. NTS, nucleus of solitary tract; A1, catecholaminergic cell group of ventrolateral medulla; PB, parabrachial nucleus. Thalamic nuclei: MD, mediodorsal; VMb, basal ventromedial; VMpo, parvocellular ventroposterormedial; ACC, anterior cingulate cortex; PAG, periaqueductal gray; RVLM, ventrolateral medulla; VMM, ventromedial medulla; ANS, peripheral autonomic nervous system. Reproduced from K. Doya 2002, with permission.*

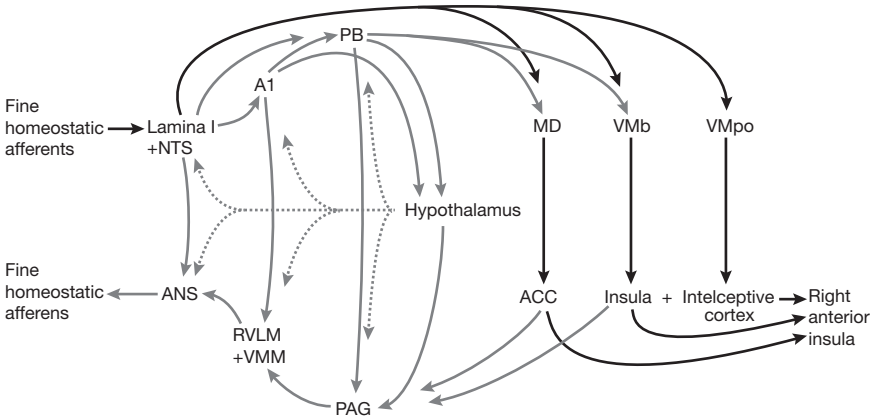


Fig. 2.2 *Schematic representation of neuroanatomical pathways in interoception and afferent visceral control. Reproduced from Critchley 2005, with permission*

Conclusions: The Power of Ritual Symbols

Ritual action is essential to human social existence, by enabling us to learn shared ways of living with each other. Ritual requires the use of symbols, rich in cognitive and affective meaning. Effective ritual symbols bind together sensory, appetitive, pre-semantic experience with rational, normative cognition. Even if our cognitive interpretation of ritual symbols is limited, our bodily autonomic systems are activated when they are deployed. Such signals are presented to our conscious awareness in the anterior insula. Moral precepts and culturally significant stories thereby become emotionally charged, concretely and affectively. The skillful sequencing of ritual symbols is an art form akin to musical composition or choreography, and the result is durable alterations in the connections within our brains. These alterations, which are only visible using modern neuroimaging methods, have overwhelming importance in determining how we decide, and how we act.

To act is sometimes to perform. To be successful in affecting other people, performance needs to be convincing, whether the performer plays a temporary, theatrical, fictional role, or whether the role is one of the decades-long repertoire of roles that we as human protagonists normally possess, whether parent, teacher, doctor, priest, or handyman. Performance fluency is likely to be a result of neural plasticity, in which aspects of the performance have become automatized and unreflective. One pathway towards this automation, which forms the essential basis of meaningful and expressive variation, is likely to be that of ritual, in this case the agonistic ritual of repetitive practice.

For a performance to be convincing, it must entrain the emotions of the audience. They then share the real or simulated feelings of the performers, and in doing so, they facilitate the neural plasticity in their own brains that has been the main theme of this chapter. Repeated calendrical religious ritual, insofar as it continues to induce emotional involvement among its participants, thus consolidates in brain networks the assumptions and values that are constitutive of the religion. Rites of passage, which generally entail far more overwhelming emotional experiences, can reorganize brain networks over a shorter time to produce a gestalt switch. So too can successful dramatic performances, especially in the genre of tragedy. Actions and objects that are richly endowed with symbolic meaning take a crucial place in these "set-piece" human social activities.

3

The Importance of Repetition: Ritual as a Support to Mind

Greg Downey

A Personal Prelude

Near the end of her life, my grandmother, Charlotte Downey, prayed the Rosary over and over again. Long a devout Catholic, as her anxiety increased, she would work the Rosary beads through her fingers, reciting innumerable times the "Hail Mary," the "Lord's Prayer" ("Our Father"), and the "Apostles' Creed." She prayed on a white stone Rosary that my brother, Mike, had brought back to her from a high school Latin club trip to Italy. The well-worn Rosary featured the five basilicas of Rome: St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, St. Paul's Outside the Wall, and St. Lawrence's Outside the Wall. For 15 years, she had prayed the Rosary every day my family suspects. With congestive heart failure, her devotion increased as her health grew increasingly precarious.

Saying the Rosary was an important part of growing up Catholic in the American Midwest, linked to the veneration of Mary. I said the Rosary many times, struggling to remember the long "Apostles' Creed" in primary school, lining up with other students from Ascension Grade School in the parking lot to form a "living Rosary." In St. Louis, Catholic neighbors gathered to pray for the mass conversion of the atheist Soviet Union, following the directive of Mary of Fátima, or "Our Lady of the Rosary"; now some groups pray the Rosary for a change in abortion laws.

My mother was with my grandmother when she died, and my grandmother had that white Rosary in her hands. Although my grandmother stopped breathing after three "Hail Marys," my mother completed the Rosary before telling the nurses that she had passed away.

Introduction

For my grandmother, as for a great many religious individuals, the humble daily exercise of prayer figured large in religious experience: a diligent ritual practice, striving for upright action, and repetition of small, emotionally charged but highly formal acts. With many religious individuals like my grandmother, I suspect religious experience is disproportionately this type of quiet, contemplative practice rather than the more intensely emotional feeling of a divine presence or supernatural inspiration more often explored in neurological studies of religion.

The study of religion has been an especially rich area for cognitive theory in anthropology; scholars such as Justin Barrett (2001a, 2004), Pascal Boyer (1994, 2001), Dan Sperber (1996), Scott Atran (2002), and Harvey Whitehouse (2000, 2004) have studied in religious beliefs how human creative capacities operate when the imagination appears particularly vivid and free. Many cognitive approaches to religion, understandably, foreground belief, theology, and cosmology. When they consider rituals and even religious experience itself, these are often treated as the enactment of belief. Buckser (2008) argues that "the bulk of anthropological work on religion" has maintained a long-stand bias, which Buckser traces to E. B. Tylor (1873), "seeing belief—defined as the cognitive acceptance of certain ideas or conceptions—as the defining feature of religious action" (Buckser 2008: 40). One could argue that the focus on belief is a kind of "Protestant bias," especially confronted by traditions that privilege practice or accept greater degrees of uncertainty among devotees. For this reason, anthropologists of religion have frequently criticized the privileging of belief, or an overly ethnocentric definition of "belief" (see Asad 1993; Lindquist and Coleman 2008; Masuzawa 2005; Needham 1972).

Approaching theology as the result of human cognitive bias—*structured by* the brain, we might say—is an exploratory strategy already widely deployed in the cognitive anthropology of religion (Barrett 2001a; Boyer 1994, 2001; Lawson and McCauley 1990; Whitehouse 2004; see also Whitehouse and Laidlaw 2007). However, from a neuroanthropological perspective, we might also consider the way that religious practices can *shape* practitioners' neurological development and complement our neurological functioning, as suggested by Schjødt et al. (2009: 332). From this perspective, we can build upon theories of embodied cognition and take into account human cultural diversity and the distinctive neurological endowment of our species (see Downey 2012; Lende and Downey 2012). This neuroanthropological perspective is especially promising for prayer because a predominantly cognitive approach to religion may not explain well the compellingness or developmental consequences of devout practice. For example, Luhrmann and colleagues (2010: 67) point out that cognitive approaches to religion help us to understand "how easy it is for people to

believe in God because those beliefs arise out of an evolved adaptation to the world," but these approaches do not show us how the devout train to feel the presence of the supernatural, nor do they explain the emotional importance of mundane ritual.

Specifically, the kind of repetitive prayer engaged in by my grandmother can be better understood if we consider the limits of the human nervous system and how a practice like prayer might be used to reinforce, supplement, or even replace cognitive functions. This approach is based on an enlarged reading of the cognitive science concept of the "extended mind," especially influenced by John Sutton's (2010) description of "complementary" extensions to human mental functions (see also Menary 2010). Although scholars like Boyer (2001) have criticized functionalist approaches to religion, we can recuperate the expansive literature on the role of prayer in psychological resilience without resorting to functionalism or reductionism by recognizing that cognition includes emotional, motivational, and perceptual dimensions. In particular, this chapter will suggest that repetitive prayer is intriguing in light of neuropsychological, brain imaging, and even clinical evidence of three distinct neural phenomena: variation in brain functions, cognitive decline in the aging, and diverse strategies for emotional self-management.

Complex processes of emotional self-management demonstrate the way that the brain involves systems that can come into conflict, such as motivation and restraint, or emotional excitation and inhibitory capacities (see also Downey and Lende 2012). Practices of self-management may involve conscious, well-honed techniques for tipping the internal dynamics of these competitive processes. Native accounts of prayer suggest that the ritual may serve as a socially constituted technology of neurological self-manipulation, especially in times of stress, existential fear, or moral conflict.

Cognitive and Neuroscience on Religion

Until the last decade, cognitive science has largely been dominated by what practitioners sometimes refer to as "GOFAI," "Good Old Fashioned Artificial Intelligence," or the tendency to see "intelligence" as a mental capacity evidenced in conscious thought like "beliefs" and "knowledge" (see Anderson 2003). In contrast, a significant heterodox tradition in philosophy and cognitive science argues instead that intelligence is the product of an *embodied* brain entangled in the world. Rather than focusing on logic, knowledge, or conscious reflection, diverse strains of what are now sometimes called "embodied cognition" focused on how thought emerged from the brain in an organism faced with tasks such as coping, perceiving, acting, interacting, and learning (e.g. Dreyfus 1972; see Anderson 2003: 91). Research in fields from cognitive neuroscience to robotics and artificial

intelligence have demonstrated the importance of taking account of the properties of the nervous system, including its relation to the body, in order to understand human cognition (Brooks 1999; Clark 1997, 1999).

In spite of a common interest in embodiment, anthropologists have not engaged substantially with research on embodied cognition, with rare exceptions (see Bender et al. 2010 for review). Social and cultural anthropologists have resisted integrating brain science research into their work, perhaps owing to a fear of "neuroreductionism": the attempt to explain complex social institutions (like religion) with overly simplistic neurological mechanisms (Martin 2000; see Downey and Lende 2012). In fact, some fear is warranted; at times, neuroscientists have offered painfully reductive accounts of religion as underwritten by simple brain mechanisms or anomalies (e.g. Joseph 2001).

One of the most prolific and controversial neuroscientists exploring the neurological correlates of religious experience, for example, Michael Persinger (1983, 1987), has argued that religious experiences stem from over-excitation of the temporal lobe. This hypothesis derives from observations of individuals with temporal lobe epilepsy who often have intense religious experiences, and from early neural imaging research with transcendental meditation and glossolalia (speaking in "tongues") that evidenced heightened activity in this region (Persinger 1984, 2001). In a sense, Persinger and collaborators argue that religious experience is misrecognized neural self-representation confounded by a temporary glitch in hemispheric specialization, induced by epilepsy or other breakdown in normal brain activity (see Cook and Persinger 1997).

Persinger's theory especially captured attention in the 1980s when he used a device, popularly called the "God helmet," that generated weak magnetic fields to stimulate the temporal lobe of the brain. Persinger reasoned that targeted transcranial stimulation might produce feelings of divine presence (1983). According to Persinger and his collaborators, transcranial stimulation of the temporal lobe successfully produced a "felt presence" in a majority of subjects who tried the "God helmet" (although not in skeptic Richard Dawkins). Replicating Persinger's findings has proven difficult, however, leading some critics to argue that the "felt presence" resulted from suggestion rather than magnetic neural stimulation (Granqvist et al. 2005; see also Schjødt 2009 for a discussion). In contrast, Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew Newberg (1999) argue that ritual can induce an altered state of consciousness by overloading the limbic structures involved in emotion and bodily self-regulation (the hypothalamus and amygdala). The overload allegedly blocks perceptual input in a range of areas, thereby disrupting normal perceptions of the self (see also Schjødt 2009).

Less controversial approaches to the neuroscience of religion have nevertheless privileged altered or extreme states, such as devout Christians "speaking in tongues," Buddhist monks meditating, or recollections of mystical experiences by Carmelite nuns (Newberg et al. 2006; Cahn and

Polich 2006, Beauregard and Paquette 2006). These approaches follow a tradition of arguing that religious practice is an institutionalized or routinized edifice built upon a core of charismatic experience, typified both by William James (1902) and Max Weber (1993 [1920]). One problem of these approaches, however, is that most religious individuals do not report these sorts of experiences; although ecstatic experience may be foundational in the history of a religion, only 20 percent to, at most, 60 percent of believers report any sort of extraordinary religious experiences even in traditions that privilege them (Saver and Rabin 1997).

Some cognitive anthropologists have responded critically to psychological approaches that concentrate on inspired religious experience by emphasizing, in contrast, the continuity between normal and religious thought (Barrett 2001a, 2001b). Most of the cognitive anthropology research on religion has argued that no special religious capacity or brain region exists, no unusual "glitch" leads to religious experience, and that religious thinking, in fact, comes quite naturally for humans rather than being terribly exotic, inspired, or inexplicable (see, e.g., Atran 2002; Boyer 1992, 1994, 2001; Barrett 2004; Guthrie 1995; Whitehouse 2004). In a review of the topic, Boyer and Bergstrom (2008: 112) explain that the effort is to understand "religious thought and behavior as consequences of human nature." Atran (2002: vii), for instance, has argued that religion is the understandable outcome of using "stone age minds for a space age world."

This sympathetic approach to religious thought, what Barrett (2001a) calls the "naturalness-of-religion thesis," often concludes that theological explanation erroneously over-extends logic rather than evidencing wild departures from reason. The thesis is especially important given that other cognitive theorists outside anthropology can be much less generous to religious belief. As Armin Geertz (2008) has pointed out, recent cognitive science discussions of links between religion, human evolution, and neurological development by authors like Dawkins (2006) and Dennett (2006) can take an overtly hostile, antagonistic approach to belief, as if the primary goal of studying religious cognition is to dispel it.

Prayer and Belief in Anthropology

The practice of prayer, however, poses other cognitive problems for anthropological consideration in addition to the plausibility of belief. In fact, the very concept of "faith" seems to require the presence of theological doubt, and practices of the "faithful," like my grandmother's prayer in the face of anxiety, suggest a complex relation between religious performance and psychological confidence. Lindquest and Coleman (2008: 5) explain that, at the extreme, faith transcends "belief" itself:

> "[B]elieving" as a cognitive stance is itself ambiguous. While believing is indeed "holding true", the verb "to believe" expresses doubt as well as assurance, affirmation of statement as well as distancing from it. "To believe" is to state a conviction, but with the added nuance "I am not sure". To state a belief is to open a possibility of doubt. As Pouillon ([1979] 1982: 1) puts it: "[I]t is an unbeliever who believes that the believer believes in the existence of God." For the believer, the existence of God is not "believed" but "perceived".[1]

All religious practice, then, is not simply the product of firm confidence in theological claims; "faith" can proceed in a context of doubt, emotional turbulence, or psychological uncertainty, rather than flowing from certainty.

In many of the world's religions, we find silent prayer a regular part of pious life (see Geertz 2008). In his unfinished work on prayer, Mauss (2003: 21) wrote:

> Of all religious phenomena, there are few which, even when considered merely from the outside, give such an immediate impression of life, richness and complexity as does the phenomenon of prayer. Prayer has a marvellous history. Coming from the depths, it has gradually raised itself to the heights of religious life. Infinitely supple, it has taken the most varied forms, by turns adoring and coercive, humble and threatening, dry and full of imagery, immutable and variable, mechanical and mental. It has filled the most varied roles: here it is a brusque demand, there an order, elsewhere a contract, an act of faith, a confession, a supplication, an act of praise, a hosanna. Sometimes the same type of prayer has passed successively through all the vicissitudes: almost empty at first, one sort suddenly becomes full of meaning, while another, almost sublime to start with, gradually deteriorates into mechanical psalmody.

Mauss highlights that the forms of prayer are themselves diverse, and the same prayer texts can take on quite a different character depending upon the context, intention, and manner in which they are invoked. Mauss's comparative approach highlights the variation in devotees' footing—their cognitive, emotional, motivational, and perceptual states—in relation to divine presence (see Zaleski and Zaleski 2005). Likewise, Geertz (1966: 79) points out the gulf between "belief in the midst of ritual, where it engulfs the total person, transporting him, so far as he is concerned, into another mode of existence, and religious belief as the pale, remembered reflection of that experience in the midst of *everyday* life."

Treating belief in supernatural beings as an extension of quotidian reasoning about agency or causation, as the evolutionary approach to religion in cognitive anthropology exemplifies, can overlook this rich and shifting cognitive-emotional topography of faith. For example, religious faith may be more phenomenologically varied and less confident than

quotidian types of belief, an act of will and behavioral pattern rather than a simple assumption of fact. Perhaps most importantly for understanding my grandmother's prayers, especially her persistent practice, is the recognition that a biography of "faith" often includes periods of doubt, discomfort, frustration, or an inability to understand divine wisdom. Especially in religions like Catholicism, where believers are called upon to will actively faith in supernatural claims, "belief" can be an heroic achievement, as Søren Kierkegaard argued in his masterful *Fear and Trembling* (2006 [1843]).

A Personal Interlude: My Grandmother's Faith

When my grandmother prayed the Rosary, she often sought relief from distress: finding calm when she was anxious, replacing grief with wholeness, or feeling committed to her faith if she doubted or feared that she suffered from divine neglect. According to my mother, my grandmother increased her devotion to Mary toward the end of her life. She had always felt especially close to the Holy Mother; Jesus and God the Father, my grandmother felt, were busy, but she trusted that Mary always found time for prayers, especially those of mothers. My grandmother worried as she grew older, however, that Mary was not "bringing her home" (to the afterlife), even though so many of my grandmother's friends had already passed away. My family suspects that, as her condition deteriorated, she prayed even harder to speed and smooth her passage to Heaven.

Given this moment in her life, especially her emotional state and increasing willingness to see death as respite, the words of the "Hail Mary" are especially poignant:

> Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;
> Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
> Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The prayer beseeches the Mother of God herself to intercede on behalf of the petitioner, bringing Mary's exalted condition and status as Mother of Jesus to bear for the support of the mortal sinner. As "the hour of our death" felt imminent to my grandmother, one can well imagine how intense the intermingling of hope and existential dread may have felt. In situations like this, prayer may be the result of internal turmoil, conflicting emotions, and an attempt to exercise some sort of control over one's emotional state using religious techniques.

Prayer as Emotional Coping: A Neuroanthropological Perspective

Studies of the efficacy of prayer for treating illness date back to 1873, when Francis Galton argued that prayer did not increase lifespan. Kings and religious figures, on whose behalf the devoted prayed during days set aside for these observances, lived no longer than merchants and bankers, beneficiaries of many fewer intercessory prayers (see Evans and Evans 2008: 93). Although studies of the alleged healing effects of prayer continue, more recent psychological studies focus specifically on coping, both in terms of health outcomes and the subjective sense of wellbeing (see Pargament 1997).

Research on prayer reveals that private religious practice often provides emotional succor in distressing situations and that religiosity may protect physical and mental health (Musick et al. 2000; Powell et al. 2003; Strawbridge et al. 1997; Townsend et al. 2002). Stuckey (2001), for example, in interviews with Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers, found that prayer maintained a sense of wellbeing in both groups. Pargament (1997) has identified rituals, including prayer, as crucial in the process of coping with distress and life change.

Neurological research offers several candidate mechanisms to explain how prayer might generate a subjective sense of wellbeing. Schjødt and colleagues (2008) at the University of Aarhus found in a splinter group of Danish Christians that religious individuals who prayed regularly stimulated their dopaminergic reward system during prayer. The human striatum is a subcortical brain region linked to habit formation and motor behavior, also involved in addiction and reward-based learning (see Schultz 2006; Wise 2004). The ability to release extra dopamine would seem to offer one explanation for prayer's ability to soothe.

The stimulation of the dopaminergic system during prayer might also help us to understand a convergence of findings on religious experience in some populations: dopaminergic drugs routinely alter religious experience (see Nichols and Chemel 2006). The religious delusions of individuals with a range of neurological conditions are linked to abnormally active dopaminergic processes (Siddle et al. 2002; Tek and Ulug 2001); and patients with Parkinson's disease, who suffer a selective depletion of neostriatal and meso-frontal dopamine, also demonstrate diminished religious sentiment and memory (Harris and McNamara 2009). The anticipation of reward may motivate private prayer as a form of cognitive self-manipulation. By praying silently, repeating familiar religious formulae, an individual might be able to reliably produce felt shifts in brain chemistry. The cognitive triggering of dopaminergic processes might also explain the predominance of anticipation- and cognition-related areas during prayer that induced religious experience imaged by Azari and colleagues (2001; see also 2005).

However, the dopaminergic system is not the only mechanism that might produce a sense of wellbeing. Schjødt and colleagues (2009) point out that different types of prayers do not function in the same way, highlighting a contrast between formalized and improvised personal prayers. As Schjødt (2009: 312) summarizes, "Religious behaviour encompasses widely different thoughts and practices and must be assumed, like other forms of mental practice, to differ widely in both cognitive content and corresponding neural correlates." In particular, the Aarhus-based team found that improvised prayer, when the believer talks spontaneously with God, recruits areas of the brain associated with social cognition that remain only at background levels of activation in formal prayer. Especially in situations where a person feels lonely or isolated, improvised prayer might provide many of the well-studied therapeutic benefits of social interaction. Formalized prayers, in contrast, have more effect on the caudate, which forms part of the dopaminergic system, because of tighter links between neurological cause and experiential reward.

Other forms of personal religious ritual, such as meditation, recruit different neurological systems that might prove beneficial.[2] Cahn and Polich (2006), for example, review the neurological evidence that meditation engages the parts of the brain responsible for attention (see also Brefczynski-Lewis et al. 2007). Travis and Shear (2010) go so far as to classify meditative techniques according to attention patterns and to empirically measure variations in neural rhythms. Building on a system proposed earlier by Lutz and colleagues (2008b), Travis and Shear suggest that the three basic types of meditation are "focused attention," "open monitoring," and "automatic self-transcending."

Over the long term, repeated contemplative practice can have measurable effects on brain architecture and function, as well as on the neurological regulation of the body's autonomic system. Whitehouse (2000) is correct to point out that everyday rituals like prayer may be less emotionally intense than more dramatic and infrequent rituals, like funerals, initiations, or weddings, but that does not mean diligent practice has no psychological consequence. Lazar and colleagues (2005), for example, found that insight meditation experience in a Western subject pool correlated with greater-than-normal cortical thickness in areas linked to somatosensory, auditory, visual, and interoceptive processing (see also Brefczynski-Lewis et al. 2007; Raffone and Srinivasan 2010). Luders and colleagues (2009) identified measurable increases in gray matter volumes in the right orbitofrontal cortex and in overall volume of the right hippocampus in long-time meditators, suggesting the diligent mental exercise had developed a more robust system for emotional regulation. Lutz and colleagues (2008b) demonstrated that expert practitioners of "compassion" meditation experienced greater brain activation in the insula in response to emotional sounds, symptomatic of an exaggerated empathy response (see also Lutz et al. 2008a). And Pace and colleagues (2009) even found widespread endocrine,

immune and reflex effects from long-term meditation, likely because meditation was affecting stress.

These neuroimaging and psychological studies suggest that quietistic mental activity, especially repetitive thoughts or mental exercise, can have a measurable impact on our neural physiology and functioning (see also Watkins 2008). Even short-term regimens, such as a five-day sequence of "integrative body–mind training," can affect non-conscious bodily processes and leave a detectable imprint on neural anatomy (see Tang et al. 2009). Because the physiological effects of patterned thought so violate the Cartesian common sense, these discoveries have been greeted with widespread media and public fascination that the "mind" can affect the "brain" (see, e.g., Begley 2008; Schwartz and Begley 2002). Our habits of thought affect the biological equipment of thought, and have additional impact on the autonomic, immune, emotional, and sensory capacities of the body. Moreover, far from a neuro-reductionist approach, many of the researchers in this area have argued for what Lutz and Thompson (2003) call "neurophenomenology," using both subjective accounts and neurological data to explore brain functioning.

The Rosary as Emotional Self-cultivation

According to Azari and Birnbacher (2004: 902), "an adequate understanding of emotion is crucial to conceptualizing religious experience." A closer analysis of my grandmother's practice suggests that prayer was actively used to hold at bay emotions that were either distressing or thought to be inconsistent with faith and morality. Prayer was a technique in the Catholic community for attaining a desirable self and resisting temptation. For example, countless times as a young man in Jesuit high school, my classmates and I were exhorted to pray for psychological resources—strength, confidence, self-restraint, patience, comfort in times of suffering. The dopaminergic and other neurological effects of prayer help us to understand how the practice might act as an avenue for self-comforting, self-shaping, and self-manipulation. The diligent practice of prayer may allow the devoted to train themselves so that they could provoke a powerful neurological response that they subjectively experience as the effect of "grace" or "God's love."

Luhrmann and colleagues (2010) argue that the ability to have inspired religious experience in a Christian congregation in Chicago is a conjunction of learned skill and a "talent" for enjoying imaginative experiences of "absorption." From this perspective, "belief" is not simply the extension of cognitive acceptance but a capacity maintained through motivated practice, in part because belief and ritual together yield desirable psychological results.

The use of prayer for emotional self-management offers a way to understand Justin Barrett's (2001b) observation that Protestant American students disproportionately petitioned for psychological, emotional, and relational effects, like peace of mind, comfort, or an end to interpersonal conflict, rather than divine mechanical or physical intervention. Barrett argues that this bias shows that the students do not violate implicit understandings of causation when calling on supernatural powers, a cognitive interpretation. But to his explanation we could add that devotees likely petition for effects similar to those that they may experience in prayer, a more emotional and pheneomenologically based argument. They pray for what they expect prayer to be most capable of delivering: changes in their emotional and affective state, not changes in the material world.

Some religious practice, like my grandmother's observance of the Rosary, is a technique that expands human cognitive capacities in part by manipulating the perceptual and external environment. Rather than just a product of "human nature," prayer is a way of molding an individual's "nature."[3] Elsewhere I have argued that imitative learning is "scaffolded" through social practices such as coaching and structured demonstration so that the imitative capacity cannot simply be understood as the ability of an isolated organism (Downey 2008). Similarly, here I suggest that prayer is a learned technique for better exerting control over one's emotional and physiological states, with physiological consequences that are not themselves observable or even fully understood by its users. Like breathing exercises that inhibit endocrine processes associated with stress or splashing water on the face to calm one's nerves, which activates the "mammalian dive reflex" and slows the heart rate, prayer is a technique that acts on phenomenological facts, including the contents of consciousness itself, that are proxies for physiological processes. The devoted may not be aware of the reflexes that they are calling forth, but they have techniques that are effective in producing neurological reactions, buttressing executive control and shifting the relative strength of competing neurological processes.

In this sense, prayer may be a *compensatory* technique, enhancing cognitive capacities, just as language can produce fundamental changes in cognitive ability even though it is simultaneously the product of human cognitive evolution. Prayer can allow the believer to exert influence over his or her own mental and emotional life, with long-term consequences for neural anatomy and functioning. As Schjødt told science writer Tahor Grundtvig, "The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays" (2009: 12). This self-managing dimension of prayer helps us to see that the "mind" as a conscious entity is only part of the human cognitive structure, and two-way relations between manifest and non-conscious mental processes are ongoing, just as thought and neural activity are mutually influencing (see Damasio 1999).

Prayer as Social Cognitive Technique

Although evolutionary accounts of the origin of religious belief focus on the religious imagination, for many devoted followers, belief is an act of acceptance rather than creativity. Marcel Mauss (2003) makes clear that prayer is an inherently social act because, even when unvoiced and alone, the ritual developed socially and was entrusted to the individual; my grandmother did not compose the "Lord's Prayer" or the "Hail Mary." Mauss disagrees with earlier, more theologically-inclined theorists, such as Tylor (1873: 371), who assumed that prayer was first and most authentically a personal conversation with God that becomes degraded: "something external and artificial, a sort of language which an ecclesiastical authority or some poet or specialist has invented for the convenience of the faithful" (Mauss 2003: 32).

Mauss, in brilliant Durkheimian logic, argues that looking to individual experience and creativity is especially inadequate for the study of an institution like prayer as it is "full of all sorts of elements whose origin and nature escape us" (ibid.: 33). He outlines the concentration of symbolic significance even in the simplest religious formulae, for example, in the Trinitarian "Sign of the Cross" (*In nomine Patris* …). The simple invocation is:

> [c]omplex, not only on account of its numerous components, but also because each of them is the product of a long history which naturally cannot be seen by the individual mind. An invocation, such as the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, is the fruit of the work of centuries. A prayer is not just the effusion of a soul, a cry which expresses a feeling. It is a tiny fragment of a religion. In it one can hear the echo of numberless phrases; it is a tiny piece of literature, it is the product of the accumulated efforts of men and women over generations … even in the religions which allow most scope to the individual, all prayer is a ritual form of speech adopted by a religious society. It is a series of words whose meaning is determined, and whose order is approved as orthodox by the group. Its value is that given to it by the community. It is efficacious because the religion declares it to be so. (Mauss 2003: 33–4)

In the case of my grandmother, the words she spoke silently had deep religious sanction; the "Lord's Prayer," for example, was offered to the disciples when one asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, retold in the Gospel of Luke. Although this chapter intentionally leaves aside the theological framework within which repetitive prayer makes any sense, we cannot explain religious practice comprehensively without returning to the whole. The specific words my grandmother recited only make sense in light of the complex history, theological debates, and political struggle condensed in virtually every rich phrase and even single words.

As Daniel Lende (2005) has discussed in his research on drug addiction, the pharmacological effects of narcotics alone cannot explain why some people become addicted to drugs and some people do not. For Lende, the individual's response to drug use has to be understood at a number of levels, from biochemical reactions and experiential salience to cultural legitimacy and accompanying institutions. Lende points out that theories of addiction that assume drugs are inherently pleasurable because of their interaction with the dopamine-producing parts of the brain cannot account for the wide variation in their prevalence and effects.

Similarly, the phenomenon of prayer cannot be reduced to the functioning of the dopaminergic system. This neurological mechanism cannot explain why prayer is compelling to some people and pointless to others. In fact, we can argue instead that the dopaminergic system is a neurological resource that human subjects can learn to access through culturally elaborated practices (including drugs and prayer), contingent upon supportive social environments and even phenomenal and theological worldviews. As Schjødt and collaborators' (2008) experimental design highlighted, the act of praying alone is insufficient in the absence of faith in the deity being prayed to or the habit of praying. A brain must be trained to produce dopamine during prayers and believe those prayers. Schjødt and colleagues found that when religious people thought instead of wishing to Santa Claus (in whom they presumably did not invest faith), or non-religious people engaged in prayer, neither group could engage the same neurological resources; the effect required the reinforced intersection of history, ritual, faith, and human neurophysiology. We might argue that a culturally legitimate practice of prayer colonizes, reinforces, and manipulates the dopaminergic system, cultivating culturally a capacity to self-influence one's body through conscious, well-rehearsed activity. The dopaminergic effects of prayer demonstrate that religious belief and practice can affect brain functioning down to core motivational and learning processes (see Wise 2004).

The observation of the neurological diversity of religious states leads Schjødt (2009: 334) to argue that the anthropological concern with diversity needs to be foregrounded in neuroscience research on the subject:

> [E]xperimental neuroscience must take the diversity of religious thought and behaviour into account in order to understand the complexity of religion and to give a realistic account of distinct religious practices and experiences. Beyond the fact that religious experience and practice across cultures all recruit various forms of "normal" cognitive processing (e.g., emotions, perceptions and actions), the only common feature that religious experiences and practices seem to share is an associated link to a supernatural instance. The cognitive underpinnings of this link are difficult to define because it varies from practice to practice, from person to person, and from culture to culture … It is uncertain

> whether we will ever find a common neural substrate of such diverse association. I therefore suggest that instead of spending enormous amounts of resources to pinpoint the neural substrate of a universal link to a supernatural instance … the major challenge of the experimental neuroscience of religion should be to investigate how specific cultural traditions modulate the "normal" cognitive processes of the brain. (See also Azari et al. 2005.)

A truly neuroanthropological investigation of prayer and ritual will recognize from the onset that the goal is not to find a universal neurological root for religion, but to recognize that the observable diversity in practice likely corresponds to underlying neuropsychological diversity in religious cognition and emotion.

Neural Change and Repetitive Ritual

In addition to helping brain scientists better appreciate cultural diversity, one of the many tasks for neuroanthropology is to subject anthropological theory to a brain-based scrutiny. The interdisciplinary effort may highlight where anthropological thinking about human nature is inconsistent with findings in the neurosciences and allow us to put forward more neurologically plausible accounts of human neural enculturation and potential (see Bender et al. 2010; Lende and Downey 2012). Some evolutionary and cognitive explanations of religious experience, in addition to ignoring variation as Schjødt suggests, also appear to fail the neurological plausibility test for two reasons: first, they assume that human neural structure is architectural rather than organic; and second, they assume a paucity of neurological means when, in fact, neurological systems are "extended" and "degenerate," in that they can accomplish the same outcomes with multiple, different structures, including structures external to the brain.

A number of anthropologists have pointed out that one of the outstanding qualities of prayer is that sacred speech is disproportionately formal and repetitive relative to unmarked speech (for a review, see Keane 1997: esp. 52–4). Gill (1981) argues that the formulaic nature of prayer signals the heightened register of speech and cues a shift in the interpretive frame. But the repetitiveness of prayer offers another possible interpretation from a neuroanthropological perspective, especially as we better understand the neurological challenges to producing continuity of cognition.

The idea of a single neural or cognitive religious generator may attribute greater fixity to the brain than the organ actually possesses. In fact, one reason my grandmother likely prayed with greater frequency and fervor toward the end of her life was that the normal organic processes of neural change, remodelling, and degradation were accelerating, with distressing

effects on her experience, including forgetting, growing anxiety, sensory disorientation, inability to stop ruminating, and other emotional discomfort.

The formulaic recitation of the Rosary, I am suggesting, is not an expression of an architecturally structured, inert brain but rather a practical way to try to nurture consistency in a shifting, organic medium and constantly moving experiential milieu. The devout don't just pray because they believe; they pray so that they can more firmly believe. They seek to feel the particularly religious combination of emotion and conscious activity they call "belief." The greater frequency of prayer can be seen, not as an expression of great religious certainty, but as compensation for changes in cognitive processes and greater fluctuations in emotional control with aging. Research on "focused attention" meditation has found that mental training can aid even individuals with serious pathologies (such as schizophrenia and ADHD) to improve the stability and control of attention (see Lutz et al. 2009). Prayer might be a type of culturally-modeled self-training in the face of disturbances in attention or persistent inability to avoid upsetting patterns of thought.

Understanding what brains and neurons are good at doing helps us to see human cultural achievements as both products of and supplements to our cognitive endowment. As Andy Clark (1997: 60) points out, artificial surrogates, like computers, theoretical models of the mind, and even human achievement over generations, may give us a distorted understanding of our brains' strengths and failings—"good at Frisbee, bad at logic," he offers as an example. The common-sense idea that the brain is "storage" or a physical substance on which experience inscribes indelible memories is one such folk misconception. One reason that computers are so useful is that they do things well that our brains do not (although our brains can often hack a solution that will conceal our own inadequacy from us, such as using "external storage" to fight the tendency to forget information).

The idea that a single cognitive generator produces religious experience is at odds with the way that the human brain and neurological system self-organize over developmental time, especially the degree to which the nervous system is constantly remodeling. As Edelman and Gally (2001) detail, biological systems must have multiple ways of accomplishing tasks, as individual genes, cells, or neurons can be damaged, die, or even be entirely absent without disrupting an organism's functioning. Over developmental time, organs like brains must continually find ways to perform essential functions. Edelman proposed that brain order emerges from competitive processes, and that if a neuron is damaged, others will vie to complete a particular function (see Edelman 1987, 1989, 1993; see also Edelman and Mountcastle 1978).

"Neural Darwinism" describes this competitive connective processes in brain formation. As Edelman and Gally (2001: 13765) write, the pattern of an individual's brain structure is not foreordained by our genetic code, rather:

> the pattern arises during development in part by a process involving excess neuron production, exuberant extension of neuronal processes that compete for targets in an activity-dependent fashion, variant cell migration, and massive cell death. Despite the very large number of neurons within any vertebrate nervous system, it is almost certain that no two neural cells within an animal are identical in overall shape. Similarly, no two "equivalent" neurons taken from two different vertebrate individuals have exactly the same morphology, even if the animals are genetically identical.

Edelman's "neural Darwinist" account defies the idea that the brain has fixed structures determined at the onset of development by evolution. That is, neurological systems do not suffer a paucity of means. Both neural determinism and economy of neurological means are structuralist fallacies that are not biologically plausible.

The brain must produce repetition using constantly changing structures and diverse patterns of activity. Russian neurophysiologist Nicholai Bernstein (1996: 181) pointed out that the central nervous system cannot simply reproduce stereotyped behavior as if it were a "motor formula or a motor cliché" because external conditions are never identical, even in repetitive activities, and the body and nervous system are themselves continually changing (see also Ingold 2000: 353). Or, as Edelman and Gally (2001: 13765) put it, "Even within the brain of a single individual, the detailed pattern of connectivity is not fixed, because neural activity within the nervous system at one time can affect the efficacy of intercellular communication at a later time." The consistency of performance is achieved, not because the nervous system is structurally fixed, but because of the redundancy in the system, so that a motion or a prayer can be repeated in spite of shifting conditions, externally and internally. If anything, repetitive formulaic prayer, especially late in life in the face of accumulating neurological damage, system degeneration, anxiety, and other perturbations, appears to me to be a performative mechanism for *seeking* consistency, not the invariant product of a fixed cognitive structure, which is more architectural metaphor than biological reality.

Conclusion

Clifford Geertz writes that, because of the "breadth and indeterminateness" of human capacities, "one of the most significant facts about us may finally be that we all begin with the natural equipment to live a thousand kinds of life but end in the end having lived only one" (1973: 45). Certainly, neuroanthropological research shows this to be the case. Our neurological endowment becomes suited to particular sorts of experiences when

cultivated by customary practices such as ritual. Over time, intentional projects of mind-shaping like prayer affect our neurological endowment. Like other bodily capacities, neurological resources for prayer can become more refined and "ready-to-hand"—or "ready-to-mind," in this case—as our brains become deeply encultured. Prayer does not so much spring from a universal human capacity, but rather, the wide cross-cultural varieties of prayer demonstrate how diverse practices cultivate a range of neurological capacities, depending upon the peculiarities of local practice.

This exploration of prayer is not meant to imply that all prayer functions as emotional self-management, nor do I wish to suggest that all religious practitioners have this potential technique at their disposal. In fact, a skills-based approach to neuro-cultural development highlights that different members of the same group might have diverse cognitive resources and neural problem-solving strategies (see Downey 2010). This inherent variation implies that even observable behavioral similarity might be underwritten by neurological diversity. Pargament and colleagues (1988), for example, through rigorous psychological examination found three quite distinct problem-solving strategies among devoutly religious individuals in two American Protestant congregations (Presbyterian and Missouri Lutheran). Theological uniformity, homogeneous practice, and shared group membership concealed fundamentally different profiles of religious practice and deployments of faith-based cognitive resources.

The way in which my grandmother prayed, including the solace she sought in the Rosary, strongly suggest that her prayers were not simply an expression of faith, although her words were certainly a social product of Catholicism. Rather, her prayers were a response to her situation, her distress, and perhaps even her sense that she, too, was inexorably changing. Prayer was the outward practice of a deeper psychological fact: the steadfast attempt to keep the sacred close, to banish doubt, to demonstrate devotion, and to prepare herself for what was to come.

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4

Place-making in the "Holy of Holies": The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem

Trevor H. J. Marchand

> In the experience of [architecture], a peculiar exchange takes place; I lend my emotions and associations to the space and the space lends me its aura, which entices and emancipates my perceptions and thoughts. An architectural work is not experienced as a series of isolated retinal pictures, but in its fully integrated material, embodied and spiritual essence. It offers pleasurable shapes and surfaces moulded for the touch of the eye and other senses, but it also incorporates and integrates physical and mental structures, giving our existential experience a strengthened coherence and significance. (Juhani Pallasmaa 2009: 12)

The anthropology of space, place, and architecture has, for the most part, been grounded in phenomenological methods or framed by practice theory, both of which emphasize the mutually constitutive relations between embodied subjects and place. Despite the important and continuing contributions made by these approaches to describing the experiential and situated nature of human activity, phenomenology and practice theory offer limited insight into the cognitive complexity involved in "place-making." Place, I contend, is a dynamic state of mind undergoing constant update and revision in fluid response to new and changing stimuli and available information. A "sense of place" is therefore grounded in the integral weave between mind, body, and environment, and, I will argue, it is inflected by, and fully formed in relation with, emotional states. Taking her cue from William James (1958), philosopher and psychologist Vinciane Despret evocatively describes the dynamic of the intimate relation between body, emotion, and world: "The world disposes us to feel, and our body makes that world available. Our feelings dispose our bodies, our bodies dispose our feelings" (2004: 127).

Grounded in careful observations and interview material recorded during a pilot study in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, this chapter will explore how the pilgrim's ritual engagement with the "Holy

of Holies"—namely the alleged sites of Jesus Christ's crucifixion and his burial—exhibits an exceptional kind of place-making strategy: one distinct from that employed in everyday life or in religious and spiritual contexts familiar to the Western European Protestant or Roman Catholic. Emotions and feeling, I shall suggest, are at the root of such a distinct place-making strategy. More specifically, it is the *inability* on the part of the (typical) Western European pilgrim to realize a desired emotional state. The inability to be affected in a manner anticipated while ritually engaged in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, namely to experience the feeling of communion with God (the Son), a sense of elation or rapture, or a deeply felt pathos for Christ's trials and tribulations in his final hours, forces a curtailment, indeed a postponement, of a fully articulated sense of place.

In the opening quote, Pallasmaa poetically captures the way that sacred spaces can be enablers of peaceful meditation and spiritual contemplation, and for experiencing a sense of place in direct and harmonious relation *with* the architectural surroundings, and *with* the religious community that animates them. In lieu of an emplaced sense of peaceful meditation, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher promotes anxious distraction and disorientation for many visiting pilgrims and thus the anticipated feeling of spiritual connection is suspended and can only be actualized (or, to use Antonio Damasio's term (2006: 155), constituted as an "as-if" emotion) at some later point in time. This may be achieved once safely returned to the sanctity of, for instance, one's denominational church in Jerusalem or the parish church back home, or while reviewing photographs, handling souvenirs, or interacting with relics or other memorabilia that represent the visit. These familiar sacred spaces and material objects, like the ritual symbols discussed by Robert Turner (this volume), supply sensory experience and may be used as vehicles for inducing physical responses that can be purposively experienced as complex emotions, such as spiritual communion or pathos. I suggest that this enables the pilgrim to "overwrite" the actually experienced emotion of anxiety that yielded a sense of displacement and turbulent disorientation while in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher with the desired or anticipated one, thereby allowing them to cognitively construct a sense of place when recalling or *reliving* their visit. Furthermore, I hope to convey that, in large measure, it is because of the distinct nature of this cognitive strategy that the Holy Sepulcher has the enduring and extraordinary status it does in the Christian imagination.

Method and Theory: An Overview

> [My paintings] are just an attempt to make a certain type of feeling visual … painting is the pattern of one's own nervous system being projected on to the canvas. (Francis Bacon, Ulster Museum)[1]

The ethnographic content of this chapter is based on a 12-day pilot study in Jerusalem conducted in November 2009 with a small interdisciplinary team of colleagues from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.[2] Our goal was to explore and record urban sensory experience, and the broader field site was circumscribed by the formidable sixteenth-century defensive walls of Suleiman the Magnificent that define the territory of the Old City. From the start, I elected to focus my investigation on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where I spent endless hours, day and night, observing, photographing, participating in masses and processions, and conducting on-site interviews and engaging in conversation with pilgrims, guides, tourists, Franciscan monks, Greek orthodox priests, and a Muslim guard.[3] Importantly, the study provided an opportunity to carefully think about issues of place-making which form a core concern both in my research with masons (2001, 2009) and woodworkers (2007) and in my graduate teaching on the anthropology of space, place, and architecture. More specifically, it allowed me to ponder the ongoing cognitive and embodied processes that situate and orientate us while remaining stationary as well as on the move (Marchand 2010a). I hope to illustrate how these complex processes are grounded in a necessary and indissoluble interdependence between mind, body, and environment, and I will argue that emotional states and feelings play a seminal role.[4]

American philosopher Edward Casey has cleverly sutured Heidegger's writings on dwelling, Merleau-Ponty's on perception, and Bourdieu's *habitus* into a critical rethinking about place that forcefully challenges presuppositions of Euclidean space, subject–object relations and mind–body dualism (1996, 1998). Place and human activity are conceived as mutually constitutive whereby place is constantly in the making, and human activity is always emplaced. In the way that Merleau-Ponty described the "self" as a "presumptive unity on the horizon of experience" (1989: 219, in Casey 2001: 717), Casey describes place as "open-textured, ever-altering, always challenging, never fixed" (2001: 719). The "event of place," as described by Casey, reincorporates synchronic space and diachronic time within a unified epistemological framework that takes the human body as its starting-point (1996). Casey posits not merely a sentient body as the locus of experience, but a body that is socialized, habituated, and, importantly, knowing (2001: 718). This theoretical maneuver opens a conceptual space for recognizing that knowledge is not confined to the semantic concepts and logical propositions expressed in language. The possibility of "knowledge" is extended to other cognitive networks including those supporting sensorial, spatial, somatic, and emotional ways of knowing.

Before proceeding, it is important to briefly clarify for the reader my own thinking on this matter. I maintain that a "sense of place," or equally of "displacement," is instantiated via a moment-to-moment assembly of information generated by a variety of neural pathways and cognitive networks that give rise to, as a minimum, propositional forms of thought (including

new and existing knowledge about a location, context, or situation); sensory knowledge acquired through and with our perceptual organs (and including the "internal" senses of kinesthesia and proprioception);[5] and emotional states and responses. I propose that a general, if you will permit, "higher" level of cognition is responsible for dynamically and syntactically assembling the different kinds of information, or concepts, into a complex, gestalt-like mental representation (Marchand 2003, 2010b; Damasio 2006: 136–8), thereby instantiating our ongoing experience of what might be variously described as emplacement, presence, situatedness, orientation, bearing, balance, equilibrium, congruence with one's surroundings—or conversely a sense of disorientation, dizziness, confusion, or being "out of place." A "sense of place" is continually under cognitive construction and update in relation to one's engagement *in* the world, and in relation to one's access to new stimuli and information *in* context. Following from this, I underline that the focus of my interest is not ultimately in "place" as a physical location in time and space, but rather in a "sense of place" as a cognitive state; and, as a cognitive state that is informed, constructed and continually updated with a diversity of mental representations, including emotional ones.

Emotions may be distinct, but not separated, from the other kinds of mental representations we entertain (Damasio 2006: 164; Milton 2002; Rosaldo 1984: 143). Emotions, as a kind of mental representation, render thought and perception with dimensionality (see also Downey, this volume). In short, an emotion is "a collection of changes in body state connected to particular mental images that have activated a specific brain system" (Damasio 2006: 145).

The uninitiated Roman Catholic pilgrim, upon crossing the worn threshold and entering the dark interior of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, is confronted by a kaleidoscope of unfamiliar stimuli which I shall describe in great detail later in the chapter. A flurry of mental representations of things seen, heard, touched, and smelled is instantiated. These sensory-based representations are assessed, categorized, and "made sense of" (or not) with conscious, deliberate considerations instantiated in the form of both propositional and non-propositional representations. Damasio explains that, at a non-conscious level, "networks in the prefrontal cortex automatically and involuntarily respond to signals arising from the processing of [these stimuli]." The response in the prefrontal cortex forms "dispositional" representations that, in his terms, "embody knowledge pertaining to how certain types of situations usually have been paired with certain emotional responses" (ibid.: 136).

These prefrontal dispositions "embody" the individual's acquired experience. In the case of the hypothetical Christian pilgrim introduced above, such dispositions are grounded, as a minimum, in his/her lifelong experience of entering, praying, and participating in communal rituals and social exchanges in their own parish church, or of visiting other

churches. Therefore the pilgrim's limited ability to accommodate the unfamiliar stimuli encountered in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher within their realm of existing embodied experience produces, I suggest, a disposition of anxiety (or something proximate). This prefrontal dispositional representation of anxiety is signaled "non-consciously, automatically and involuntarily … to the amygdala and the anterior cingulate" (ibid.: 137) where it induces coordinated changes to the autonomic nervous system and viscera, to the motor system and skeletal muscles, and to the endocrine and peptide systems; and it activates neurotransmitters in the brain stem and basal forebrain which release chemical messages to other regions of the brain (ibid.: 138). In turn, these changes in the pilgrims' breathing and heart rate, in their posture, carriage, muscle tension, and facial expression, and in their levels of adrenaline and other chemical regulators, are signaled back to the limbic system where emotion, behavior, motivation, and long-term memory are cognitively supported, and to the somatosensory cortices where such emotional changes can be monitored and experienced as "feeling" (ibid.: 138–44). The resulting state for the pilgrim is not a contented and fully-satisfied sense of place within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, but rather a disorienting displacement. The unsatisfied mental representation of place, I will suggest, drives update, requiring anxiety to be overwritten by an emotional state that allows the pilgrim to remake place in the act of remembering their visit to the "Holy of Holies."

My work with craftspeople has probed the senses, and explored spatial and motor cognition (2001, 2007, 2010b), but to date I have, for the most part, neglected to systematically consider the role played by emotions in cognitive strategies of place-making. Instead, as in the works of many fellow anthropologists, the emotions expressed and displayed by the subjects of my studies formed merely a backdrop to what they did and said. Anthropologist Thorsten Gieser underscores the importance of emotions in learning-by-practice and the need for the apprentice to enter into an empathic relation with their teacher in order to achieve a deep understanding of, and intentionality toward, the task, and for effective imitation to take place (2008). Robert Turner, too, notes the importance of emotional involvement to directing attention and learning a skill (this volume). This chapter aims to redress the absence of "emotion" in my earlier writings, but the ideas that I introduce here apply more specifically to place-making, not skill-learning, and are a work in progress.

Finally, I must also clarify my position as a researching anthropologist in relation to this particular field site. Though raised as a Roman Catholic, I have been an agnostic since youth. Ecclesiastical art and architecture nonetheless remain significant interests and my architecture thesis involved the design of a theoretical Charterhouse (Marchand 1994). As a non-believer, I did not, nor did I expect to, experience any "spiritual" connection to the sites and rituals in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. My understanding of the events and pilgrim experiences were informed by

my limited liturgical training, an existing body of historical and architectural literature, discreet observation, and the many exchanges I had with a vast variety of actors there. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is sacred to Christians of all denominations, and therefore does not constitute the privileged "place" of a single religious, cultural, or linguistic community. The sheer diversity of practices posed a particular challenge to fieldwork, and I cannot claim to understand all of the things I witnessed. In what follows, I attempt to render as complete an image as possible of the cultural and religious complexity of the place; but because a greater proportion of my time was spent with the Franciscans and Catholic pilgrims, my thinking about place-making pertains perhaps more specifically to that community of users.

After an introduction to the broader urban context of Old Jerusalem, the core section of the chapter explores the Church of the Holy Sepulcher: its multiple spaces and sacred sites, its resident clergies, and the diversity of its visitors. In documenting the architecture, ritual practices, social interactions (and tensions), and spiritual experiences (or otherwise), I rely on a phenomenological approach to construct a thick multisensory narrative. "Thick places," Casey notes, "call for full bodily engagement, most notably in the case of certain rituals and other forms of interpersonal experience" (2001: 719), and therefore demand thick description. The concluding analysis, grounded in the preceding narrative, develops a complementary cognitive model in an attempt to better understand "place" as a constantly transforming mental representation, and the role of emotions in that process.

Old Jerusalem: The Urban Context

The first-time visitor to the Old City is struck by its sheer complexity. Everyday social relations exhibit simultaneously tolerance and tension; factionalism and coexistence; hope and despair; euphoria and melancholia. Life here resists the sort of simplistic black-and-white categorization and explanation presented in popular media. Rather, the Old City constitutes a highly complex urban reality capable of accommodating seemingly incompatible histories, socio-economic forces, political ambitions, and religious convictions. The lives and livelihoods of its resident population tread a razor-thin line between fragile harmony and violent disruption, and have done so for millennia.

In addition to the historical, religious, and political intricacies of life in Jerusalem, the Old City's topography, too, challenges both orientation and stamina, and its sensory landscape is dense, multi-layered, and often contradictory, replete with phenomena that challenge ideological boundaries and compete for territory. Circulation through the city is both horizontal and vertical, demanding three-dimensional thinking about location, movement,

and directionality. Pedestrians, animals, goods, and vehicles passed one another along a hilly terrain of narrow streets, alleyways, and squares, but equally within a vertical distribution of stairways; pathways across rooftops; streetscapes supported atop gigantic superstructures of ancient archways; elevated skywalks bridging buildings; tunnels that descend steeply into cisterns, grottoes, and abandoned quarries; and high and narrow rampart walks that navigate Old Jerusalem's perimeter and gaze outward upon the city's sprawl to a horizon of towering, grim concrete barricades separating Israeli settlements and the Palestinian population in the West Bank. Movement within the city directly engages visitor and resident with its rich archaeological and cultural strata. Jerusalem's layers are being constantly excavated, revealed, renewed, and extended upward and outward, rendering boundaries porous and territories fluid, while simultaneously remapping territories, and thereby testing the limits of social volatility.

At the sensory level, myriad phenomena battle for attention. A Muslim call to prayer, hymns of Christian pilgrims trudging the Via Dolorosa, and scarcely audible recitations of Haredi Jews interlace in the open air of streets and infiltrate the interior spaces of mosques, churches, synagogues, vaulted bazaars, shops, and homes. Physical comportment and material displays of clothing, crucifixes, yarmulkes, beards, *payot*, and hair (and its stylish concealment) circulate as visual signs proclaiming ethnicity, religiosity, nationality (and nationalism), social class, and gender. The aromas of cooked food, frying falafel, baked bread, pungent cumin, mint leaves and sage, rotting garbage, urine-soaked corners, damp stone, burning frankincense, spicy perfume, Cyprus trees, and aromatic plants fleetingly demarcate and transgress political territories. Colliding bodies, rubbing shoulders, rumbling tractors and careening cartloads of merchandise travel the slippery paving stones worn smooth by millions of feet over thousands of years. The hot sun triggers beads of perspiration that condense and trickle down one's spine; an evening breeze cools flaring tempers. A constant babble of languages, blaring shop music, street musicians, birdsong, booming tour-guide lectures, and the click of a thousand cameras compete for sonic space. Amidst the city's roofscape, golden crosses vie with golden domes, towering menorahs, fluttering Israeli flags, satellite dishes, plastic water butts, guard towers, and caged-in, high-security playgrounds of shrieking children. Three faiths, countless denominations, entire nations, and individual lives are resolutely vested here, competing covertly and viciously for every inch, lying in wait to stake a claim.

The city is blessed and damned with supreme holy sites for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike: namely the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Dome of the Rock marking a spot on Temple Mount sacred to all three faiths. My field study focused on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher which, to my mind, represents a sort of microcosm of the Old City in terms of the bombardment of stimuli,

the simultaneous flows of horizontal and vertical circulation through its labyrinthine spaces, the intricate historic and architectural layers, and the political and religious sectarianism that play out daily among the various denominations with territorial rights to this "Holy of Holies."

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher

From the exterior, the overall shape and architectural massing of the vast Church of the Holy Sepulcher is impossible to discern since, over time, it has been literally carved into and built onto the topography of the site. The walls and rooftops are tightly integrated with the surrounding buildings and with streets and exterior spaces at various elevations, including the Ethiopian Monastery of Deir al-Sultan on the roof of the church. Streets, squares, and even the interiors rooms of other buildings and chapels surrounding the church are interconnected by bewildering networks of public staircases and passageways. But the interior spaces of the church itself present a far greater challenge to spatial sensibilities.

I do not offer elaborate political and architectural histories of this most fascinating church. These are published in scholarly detail elsewhere by authors with expertise far superior to my own (e.g. Biddle 2000; Coüasnon 1974; Duckworth 1922; Willis 2005). In brief summary, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher marks the locations associated with the final Stations of the Cross, where Jesus was crucified, died, lamented, buried, and resurrected[6] outside the city walls of Herod's Jerusalem.[7] In the way that Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday are a temporal compression of these most important events in the Christian calendar into a single, annual holiday weekend, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is the spatial condensation, and the chapels, locations, and stones contained within are spatial and physical testament to the belief that the sins of humankind were redeemed through Christ. It is thought that veneration at the burial cave, or sepulcher, commenced almost immediately following Christ's death, c. 30 CE. Roman Emperor Hadrian desecrated the site by erecting a Temple of Venus (Aphrodite) in 135, but this was replaced in the fourth century by a great church and martyrium built by Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine. Helena's church—consisting of a processional atrium, a grand five-aisled Basilica, a colonnaded courtyard enclosing the hill of Calvary, and a gold-domed Anastasis Rotunda housing the Holy Sepulcher—took more than ten years to build (Montefiore 2011: 147). Enormous quantities of rock were quarried and leveled to leave the tomb standing free of the original hillside, and Calvary (or Golgotha in Greek) was reduced to a vertical pillar of rock as the hill was successively hollowed out for chapels and altars. Over the following centuries, an architecture of power grew, demarcating and enveloping the space, and ultimately controlling access to the sites that commemorate Christianity's defining events.

Between the seventh and eleventh centuries, the church was burned by Sassanians, sanctioned by Umayyads, destroyed by Abbasids and again by Fatimids, and each time the building was restored to greater or lesser degrees. Monumental reconstruction was undertaken by the Crusaders in the mid-twelfth century, creating the late Romanesque (transitional Gothic) structure that exists today. Salah ad-Din spared the church in 1187, but denied control to any one of the fiercely competing Christian denominations. In 1192, he strategically placed the keys to the Sepulcher aedicule in perpetuity in the hands of the Judeh and made the Nusseibeh the "Custodian and Doorkeeper of the Church" (Montefiore 2011: 520; Williams 2012: 45). Both Muslim families have retained their respective positions to the present day. By the fourteenth century, competition between Greeks, Latins (represented by the Franciscan Order), Georgians, Armenians, Syrian Jacobites, Copts, and Ethiopians intensified. In the following century, Greek and Armenian communities made substantial territorial gains within the interior spaces of the church, while the Ethiopians and Georgians, unable to finance heavy Ottoman taxes, lost their holdings and were banished to the building's exterior. By 1699, only the Latins, Greeks, and Armenians maintained rights to conduct mass within the church, and Coptic priests, too, jealously guard their physical and sacred connection to the Holy Sepulcher. The past two centuries witnessed devastating fire, an earthquake, incompetent custody, and reprehensible neglect, with intermittent undertakings of repair, restoration, and redecoration, all agonizingly negotiated and excruciatingly executed against a backdrop of endless intrigue, constant quarrels, and, from time to time, vicious confrontation between stakeholders.[8]

"You know," began a hefty Israeli guide who, one afternoon, seated himself next to me on a wooden bench near the Holy Sepulcher, "these Christians are always preaching 'tolerance, tolerance …,' but they don't practice it themselves." He eyed distastefully the throngs of pilgrims waiting to enter the Sepulcher, pushing and elbowing one another to inch ahead. An Orthodox Greek and an Armenian priest hurriedly crossed paths in front of us, icily avoiding one another's gaze. The guide nudged me and pointed upward with a thick finger to a line of glass-globed candles suspended on chains above: "To add just one more candle here, it would take twenty years of negotiation." When his short break was finished, he tactically reassembled his group before they strayed into the warren of dark ambulatories and dimly-lit chapels, and then began broadcasting a stream of historical facts and anecdotes in auditory competition with the circus of other guides nearby.

Today's visitor to the church crosses a crowded parvis[9] toward the gaping darkness of a finely carved Crusader portal, once the south transept of the Crusader church. There they join the constant flow of pilgrims, priests, monks, nuns, and camera-toting tourists of every creed, forever entering and seemingly never leaving. On the other side of the threshold, eyes adjust slowly to the awesome, dizzying collision of spaces, partitions,

and objects: glittering gold, dark corners and ancient stones infused with sanctity and blessing—a crushing, shoving, delirious Christianity. This is at once a site of pious veneration and tourist spectacle; an intermingling of priestly processions in circumambulation, flowing robes, the flash of cameras, running shoes, headscarves, and miniskirts. The odor of candle wax infuses the nostrils, then swirling frankincense and the sweet tang of restless human bodies. Standing there, in a cloud of sound, in an estuary where exterior and interior soundscapes fuse, one's ears eventually attune to the plurality of noises. Countless tongues, holy hymns, recited prayers, rehearsed tour-guide narratives, the clickety-click of high heels, the squeak of a monk's Birkenstock sandal, a clash of cell phone rings, crinkling plastic bags bursting with souvenirs; a wafting, musical call to Muslim prayer invades from the nearby Mosque of Omar, a peel of baritone bells drowns out voices. The cacophony of sound reverberates brutally off hard, blackened stone surfaces, cyclically reaching a crescendo that mushrooms like an atom bomb in the sparkling gilded dome of the Greek Katholikon[10] and in the vacuous grey Cupola of the Anastasis Rotunda enveloping the Holy Sepulcher. Pallasmaa notes:

> Buildings do not react to our gaze, but they do return our sounds back to our ears … Hearing structures and articulates the experience and understanding of space. We are not normally aware of the significance of hearing in spatial experience, although sound often provides the temporal continuum in which visual impressions are embedded. (2009: 49)

In the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, one's auditory senses reveal that this church is not one, but many nested, competing sonic spaces. Indeed, inability to disentangle the clamor of sounds and to identify their sources triggers a profoundly unsettling sense of "dis-placement." Imaginably, the flux of sounds and sites, and the constant commotion of people, characterized equally Herod's Temple. "By night," Montefiore observes, "the Church resounds to a euphonic hum of many languages and chants like a stone forest in which many species of bird are singing their own choruses" (2011: 518). During a late-night exploration one Saturday evening after the church reopened at 11 p.m., my SOAS colleague from the Department of Ethnomusicology recorded the following telling passage in her notebook:

> It's 11.30 P.M. and we are in the church of the Holy Sepulchre. I am dislocated, lost. I feel small and frightened. I left the others to make [an audio] recording—I walked around and the sound of chanting continued, but I can't figure out where it's coming from. It's a confusing acoustic space. [There is a] lack of direction. New spaces open up. The chanting fades in and out. I hear [the voice of my colleague] Caroline and jump up, but it's not her … (Abigail Wood, field notes, November 14, 2009)

Ahead of the main entrance, a huddle of pilgrims and towering candelabra form a ring around a small empty space. Above, the space is festooned with bulbous globed lamps suspended on golden chains of interlinking crucifixes. This is the Stone of Unction where the body of Jesus was anointed by Nicodemus. The low slab of red polished limestone replaces a twelfth-century marker over the spot where Christ's body rested. The faithful impatiently wait their turn to kneel and prostrate themselves along the slab's edge, pressing palms, foreheads, cheeks and lips firmly against its cool surface; rubbing the stone with handkerchiefs and tissues; and laying out souvenirs, bottles of holy water, and bundles of new candles along its length for blessing. Taking his lead from Merleau-Ponty, Pallasmaa writes, "Every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of space, matter and scale are measured equally by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle" (2009: 41). The stones of the church are deferentially kissed, stroked, caressed, and even carved into with "devotional graffiti" that includes crosses, personal monograms, and prayers, and stones are made the visual focus of private prayer and meditation.

Jerusalem and stone are synonymous. David toppled Goliath with a single stone; prophets and the condemned were martyred by stoning; and throughout the city's history, political confrontation and religious strife have repeatedly incurred vicious stone-throwing matches. Stone is always to hand. The locally-quarried *maliky* (ملكي) or "king's" limestone has been the definitive building material from the Second Temple period onward, and features prominently in discourses on Jerusalem's architectural tradition, heritage, and authenticity. Stone is also the favored stuff for defining sacred sites and for rendering the holy tangible: an imprint of Muhammad's foot was left on the very stone outcrop of Mount Moriah where Abraham offered up Isaac; God is ever-present in the massive ashlar stone blocks of the Western Wall; numerous stone markers orchestrate the meandering Way of the Cross; Jesus pleaded to the Father at the rock in the garden of Gethsemane; the tiny, combined Church and Mosque of the Ascension is erected over an imprint in stone of the resurrected Christ; Virgin Mary's tomb is stone; a stone marks the place where a Jew was murdered along the busy al-Wad road; and the grave-strewn Mount of Olives is covered in headstones and sarcophagi. These are but a few examples. Stone connects locations to events, serving as a mnemonic for the re-enactment of ritual and memory, and ultimately enabling the pilgrim to bear "witness." Its relatively immovable and permanent nature guarantees an enduring "presence" of the past; and its cool solidity invites the believer to partake in the power and blessing of the sacred through direct and intimate contact with the skin.

Stones from Jerusalem's holy sites have also been chipped, collected, and removed, traveling back with pilgrims to their homelands as topographical reliquaries. Early Christian, medieval, and Renaissance reliquaries contained splinters of the True Cross or stone fragments of the Holy Sepulcher.[11] One

splendid sixth-century example, made in Syria or Palestine, is a small wooden box with sliding lid. The inside surface of the lid is painted with five scenes from the life of Christ including the nativity, his baptism, crucifixion, the Marys at the Sepulcher, and the Ascension. Notably, each painted scene rests directly above fragments of stone and wood removed from the respective Holy Land sites, each labeled and encased in plaster (Bagnoli et al. 2011: 36–7, Fig.13). Though the stones have been displaced, Alexander Nagel notes that "their real connection to their sites is proclaimed by a system of inscriptions and pictures," thus rendering the possibility for one site to exist in two different locations (2011: 218). These kinds of topographical reliquaries also involve a "displacement" of the devotee who is "confronted with an elsewhere, and with the fact that implied travel … to that place is built into the [reliquary object]" (ibid.: 219). That imaginary or fictitious form of travel is made via the visual and haptic senses, engaging sensuously with the stone and wooden fragments.

Relics provide empirical proof of the coincidence of events and locations, conveniently fixing that coincidence in the ever-present. Eric Palazzo's observation concerning the relation between reliquaries and the architectural evolution of churches is poignant in the case of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher: "Through relics and their cult, the church was transformed into a true monumental reliquary whose ultimate purpose was to express a theological understanding of the liturgy" (2011: 106–7). The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is replete with self-referential icons, images, and statuary that authenticate particular sites while also promoting a re-enactment of events in the minds of pilgrims, a modification in their posture, gestures, and comportment, and a consequent adjustment of their emotional state. The church is a treasure trove of sacred stones that are, in themselves, the "real" sites around which the building's envelope grew.[12] The arrangement of sacred stones within the church signposts the pilgrim's itinerary from Calvary, to the Stone of Unction, and onward to the Holy Sepulcher itself. Other lesser sites within the church monumentalized by, or carved into, stone include the marble *omphalos* under the dome of the Katholikon marking the "navel of the world," the stone-cut tomb of Joseph of Arimathea concealed behind the walls of the Jacobite Chapel, the stone altar of Mary Magdalene, the Pillar at which Christ was tied and scourged, the Arches of the Virgin Mary, Christ's dark, barrel-vaulted prison, the Chapel of the Finding of the Cross located deep within an ancient quarry below the main church, and the list continues.

Worthy of special mention are the deeply-worn treads of the stone staircase leading to the elevated chapels at Calvary, or "Place of the Skull."[13] The ascent along this steep, narrow, and somewhat treacherous passageway is somatically suggestive of the climb to the crucifixion and evokes compassion in the pilgrim for the heavy burden borne by Christ in his final hours. Long queues to visit the Altar of the Crucifixion commence at the top of the staircase. In turn, the faithful kneel on the cool marble floor

before the altar and prostrate themselves beneath the slab to peer at the Rock of Calvary under glass and to witness the hole where the crucifix was raised. Greek Orthodox priests are always close at hand to keep the lines moving and maintain order. A stern word ensures that any pilgrim guilty of stealing too much time gives way quickly to those waiting impatiently behind. Calvary is the most extravagantly decorated space of the church: its low, arched ceiling is hung with hundreds of shimmering lanterns and glittering chandeliers, and the backdrop to the altar is aglow with gold and silver relief panels. Larger-than-life renditions of the crucified Christ and the two mournful Marys stand sentinel behind the altar, inflicting deep pathos in the believer. The already cramped area of Calvary is shared by popular chapels dedicated to the Stations of the Nailing to the Cross (controlled by the Franciscans) and the Lady of Sorrows Altar commemorating the Deposition. The constant crowds and regular chaos drive the timid visitor to take refuge against a wall or pillar at the side lines in order to regain bearing and make sense of place.

Presumably by divine plan, Calvary is conveniently located directly above the dark, stone-cut tomb where the skull of Adam is buried, thereby physically mapping out the vertical arrangement of heaven and earth in stone. An upright crevice in the rock, allegedly formed by an earthquake that erupted at the moment of Christ's death, connects Adam's resting place to the base of the cross above. The crevice can be witnessed through a glass plate in the stone-hewn wall behind Adam's Altar. Importantly, the crevice served as a channel for a trickle of the Savior's blood to penetrate the earth and redeem Man's first sin. The story of redemption is central to the pilgrim's visit to the church, but the reminder of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden is equally important, and I will return to this toward the end of the chapter.

Individuals and groups of pilgrims circulate through the church in every direction, and at all velocities, visiting the minor chapels as they please, asking for blessing, and lighting candles. By contrast, access to the most sacred sites, namely the altar built over the site of the crucifixion and the aedicule of the Holy Sepulcher, is highly controlled. I now focus my description on the latter. As stated earlier, the rock surrounding Christ's sepulcher was quarried away at an early date, leaving the tomb freestanding of the hillside. The stone-cut tomb was subsequently encased in an aedicule (a small architectural shrine at the center of the large dome-covered rotunda), and this has been redesigned and rebuilt several times since the erection of Constantine's original circular shrine of the Anastasis.[14] After gaining a sure foothold in the church in 1345, Latin influence, represented by the Franciscans, grew, and by the fifteenth century they held the keys to the aedicule. During the fifteenth century, the Greeks and Armenians gained greater territories, while the Georgian and the Ethiopian communities of monks were exiled to derelict cloisters outside the building. The aedicule was rebuilt in 1555. By the late seventeenth century, only the Roman Catholic

Church, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the Armenian Apostolic Church were able to pay their Ottoman taxes and thereby retained exclusive rights to perform their separate masses in the Church.[15] Repairs and reconstruction following the devastating fire of 1808 were heavily financed by the Greeks and Armenians, and in 1810 the aedicule was rebuilt again, this time in garish Ottoman Baroque style and clad in marble. Today, a gigantic iron scaffolding, erected during the British mandate, holds the exterior cladding of the shrine in position. According to the still-operative Ottoman Status Quo of 1853, all three parties with rights to hold mass at the Holy Sepulcher must reach an agreement over any proposed additions, alterations, or repairs to the shrine. The seeming impossibility of reaching consensus means that it, like many other parts of the church, remains in a precarious state of disrepair, and sectarian tensions simmer.

Queues to enter the Holy Sepulcher form in an anticlockwise direction around the exterior of the aedicule, with typical waiting times reaching more than an hour by mid-morning and remaining long through to closing time at 7 p.m. during winter months.[16] Metal police barriers hold the thick masses of anxious pilgrims in some semblance of order. The tomb's guardian inflicts a barrage of commands upon all those who reach the front, and those who fail to comply are barred entry and hastily removed from the queue. Omar and his fellow band of guardians are members of the Muslim Nusseibeh and Judeh families historically appointed to man the entry to the shrine, and to the church itself, and to maintain peace on the premises. Montefiore notes, however, that rivalries between the two families are "just as vivid as those among the Christians" (2011: 520). Omar hurriedly ushers the pilgrims in and out of the tiny doorway: "In, in, in!" he shouts until the interior is full; and then after a few moments, "OK. Enough! If you are finished, come out!" "Excuse me, excuse me," he barks abruptly, "no photo inside!" The flashes continue unabated. "German! Go, go, go. *Yallah*, *Yallah*!" he herds inside an entire group who have endured the long wait. "*Ruski*. Wait!" and he obstructs the crush of bodies with his gargantuan stature. No one moves forward out of turn, and once inside, time is frantically brief.

A single doorway gives access to, and exit from, the aedicule, severely hampering the progression of pilgrims. Its low and narrow proportions force any full-grown adult to crouch and constrict their comportment into a tight carriage. "When they built this, they may have thought it was beautiful at the time, but it's not practical!" commented a Filipino tour guide standing nearby. "It should have another door on the left side to let people out. They just weren't thinking at the time about how many pilgrims we'd have here today." From dawn to dusk, the flow of visitors is overwhelming, with few and fleeting ebbs, even during the period of my fieldwork conducted outside the festive calendar.

As I sat nearby on a wooden bench, legs crossed, taking notes, I was reprimanded in a severe tone by one of Omar's Muslim assistants: "Not

in front of Christ's tomb!" he bellowed, gesturing with fiery eyes to the morbid painting of the crucifixion hung above the doorway to the Sepulcher. Momentarily puzzled, and mildly embarrassed, I then speedily made the connection to Christ's crossed legs and corrected my posture. Soon after, a middle-aged American couple seated themselves next to me to consult their Lonely Planet guide and to orient themselves in relation to the printed floor plan. "What is this?" the woman leaned sideways to ask me. I briefly explained the layout of the main sites in the church and pointed to the location of the Holy Sepulcher on the plan. She proceeded to read the description to her husband and then turned again to me: "Fascinating, but I don't get it," and we both glanced ahead at the crush of waiting pilgrims. "I'm a Jew, and I don't get that either!" she added with a friendly laugh. They continued to read for a short while, stood, took a picture, and carried on with their itinerary.

As stated earlier, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is a place of pious devotion interlaced with pure tourist bonanza. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim tourists come from all corners of the globe brandishing guidebooks published in multifarious tongues. I admired a troupe of orange-robed Buddhist monks as they wafted gracefully through the crowds, seemingly impervious to the commotion around them. One morning, while seated on my usual bench in front of the Holy Sepulcher, a Filipino priest disrobed in front of me, removing his outer white garment. He proudly announced to his fellow pilgrims that he had completed the Stations of the Cross—and for the second time. One of the men came forward to display the digital photo he had taken of the priest inside the shrine. The priest was pleased and studied the image. He then neatly folded his white habit, placed it inside his backpack, sat down on the bench next to me, and checked his phone for text messages. "Because of the inability [of the main stakeholders] to reach agreement on even the simplest matters," one Franciscan monk explained, "there is no official dress code and no ban on cameras or flash photography." The young monk, who had arrived less than two years earlier from his native Mexico, shared his grave concerns with me about the constant assault on the sanctity of the place. It was a very different church from the one he dreamt of before his posting.

On another occasion, again sitting on my usual bench and crouched forward taking notes, an arm reached past me from behind to tap the flashily-dressed Spaniard seated to my right on the shoulder. The stern-looking Russian woman, fully-sleeved and headscarfed, indicated with a cool stare and commanding gesture that she should get off her cell phone immediately. Pilgrims frequently take the policing of other visitors into their own hands, and especially in the areas around the most sacred sites. When a small clutch of Eastern European pilgrims tried to jump the queue for the Holy Sepulcher by sneaking in from the left, an angry crowd of Filipinos stridently voiced their protest from behind the police barriers, invoking Omar and his men to guard the doorway and justly grant entry to those in

line. Speaking one evening with Omar, I asked about the torturously long queues and the exceedingly short time that pilgrims are allotted for their devotions within the Sepulcher. He retorted without hesitation, "It's worth waiting in line for Christ!" and his lips curled slowly into a knowing smile.

The interior of the aedicule is divided into two tiny, interconnected chambers. The first and larger of the two is the Chapel of the Angel, with a small altar at its center allegedly cut from the stone rolled across the passage after Christ's body was entombed. The second is the burial chamber itself, or Holy Sepulcher. An altar rests against the right-hand wall of the minute room, protecting the tomb below. Maneuvering for space, the faithful typically prostrate themselves before the altar, stretching their necks into the tight opening between the top of the tomb and the underside of the altar slab, and they press foreheads or cheeks to the tombstone, or kiss it reverently—that is, if they manage to do so before being expelled.

In combination, the dreary expanse beneath the Anastasis Rotunda, the configuration of metal barriers, the aggressive regimentation inflicted by the guards (and by fellow pilgrims), the restrictive architecture of the shrine with its single entryway and tiny chambers, and the tight, unaccommodating space between altar and tomb, orchestrate and strictly constrain "possible" ritual performances. The body and mind of the pilgrim is coerced into taking up postures of submission, subordination, and vulnerability. Pallasmaa aptly notes that:

> When experiencing a structure, we unconsciously mimic its configuration with our bones and muscles: the pleasurable animated flow of a piece of music is subconsciously transformed into bodily sensations, the composition of an abstract painting is experienced as tensions in the muscular system, and structures of a building are unconsciously imitated and comprehended through the skeletal system. Unknowingly, we perform the task of the column or of the vault with our body. (2009: 67)

At 20 minutes to closing time, Omar bellowed at those still waiting in desperation, "Closed!" The ones at the front pleaded in vain. "No can stay. Tomorrow. *Domani*. *W'allah*!" The Greek priest, totally exasperated, heaved the metal police barrier across the stone floor. "Out! Out!" he shouted in perfectly articulated English. Moments later a gaggle of black-clad Greek nuns walked over to greet him and he was all sweetness and smiles. Loud, rhythmic banging on the massive wooden doors of the church resounded through the interior spaces, accentuating the urgency for immediate departure. The Greek priest fetched a wooden ladder and passed it to Omar who, by that point, was standing outside the church surrounded by an audience of the dejected. Once vacated of all visitors, the doors were shut tight. Omar climbed the ladder and ceremoniously bolted the locks to a thunderous applause from the onlookers.[17] The "casting out" and closure have long been a part of the church's daily ritual.

Concluding Analysis

In this concluding analysis, I consider how Christian pilgrims to the Holy Sepulcher derive a spiritual sense of the place despite palpable sectarian tensions, crowds, noise, displays of blatant disregard for sanctity, spatial and spiritual disorientation, aggressive policing, and, crucially, severely curtailed time for performing devotions and achieving the emotional experience originally anticipated. In grappling with this conundrum, I propose a possible cognitive strategy that pilgrims might be employing to manage the bombardment of detracting stimuli and, eventually, to re-attune recollections of the experience with the desired emotions.

First, my arguments are grounded in the assumption that we do not have direct access to the "thingness" of things. What we can know of the world is essentially and necessarily mind-dependent. All information received from our total environment is cognitively mediated and meaningfully represented as mind-internal concepts. Furthermore, concepts are primitive, information-bearing building blocks that are cognitively and dynamically assembled in a syntactic manner to form more complex, meaning-laden mental representations. The instantiation of mental representations *is* the act of "knowing." Crucially, knowledge, or more correctly the act of knowing (anchored in the context of the present moment) is not restricted to what is classically referred to as "propositional thought" (i.e., internal language-like statements comprised of lexically-defined concepts). Instead, all information processed by our brains takes the form of concepts: for example visual (Marr 1982), auditory (Jackendoff 1997), motor (Jeannerod 2006), emotional (Damasio 2006), and so on, and each presumably has its own syntactic rules of assembly for the construction of domain-specific mental representations.

"Place" (or the "sense of place" or "displacement") is a complex kind of mental representation, drawing upon information made available from a diversity of cognitive networks. As such, it arguably is not network specific in itself, or produced by some dedicated module, but rather a sense of place must be generated at a (for lack of a better word) higher, general level of cognition. Place, as mental representation, instantiates a state of situatedness, or conversely one of disorientation. Place is continually under construction and being updated in relation to one's engagement in the world. This ongoing cognitive activity of constructing such mental representations *is* the act of "place-making."

My study in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher suggests that place, as mental representation, is variously constituted. Certain kinds of conjunctions of subjects and locations promote different cognitive strategies for place-making. This I have tried to demonstrate by describing pilgrim encounters with the "Holy of Holies." The deferral of emotions such as exaltation, elation, rapture, or pathos that are anticipated in a deeply

spiritual or religious encounter, and that are necessary to complete an experience of "sacred place," points to an exceptional kind of place-making—one distinct from place-making in everyday life, or in more familiar devotional settings.

Strikingly, there is little emotional display at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher—at least not of the sort that can be witnessed in other churches of Jerusalem where pilgrims are deeply moved by their ritual encounters with Christ's trials and tribulations, with the life of the Virgin, and with the fate of the apostles: they weep, meditate serenely, empathize in agony, speak in tongues, chant and sing. In the exquisite Norman Church of Saint Anne, for example, situated in a peaceful garden off the busy Via Dolorosa and renowned for its acoustic qualities, parties of pilgrims take turns singing hymns in its unadorned limestone nave, and for that moment their voices make the ancient church their own. The song of the singers is richly amplified by the curved stone surfaces of the apse walls and vaulted roof. The sheer splendor of the sound resonates within the pilgrims, arousing "spiritual" euphoria and, often, tears. A second illustration is the Room of the Last Supper (or Cenacle), located on Mount Zion at the opposite side of the Old City. This is a popular destination for Pentecostalists, some of whom during their prayers fall into trances, speak in tongues, sway rhythmically back and forth, or writhe about on the hard stone floor. In this room, they seek and find inspiration from the Holy Spirit, and through their embodied performances they achieve a personal encounter with God in that place.

By contrast, the spaces and regiment of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher seemingly deny, or at least impede, such personal and emotionally-charged experiences. Pilgrims and custodians of the various resident denominations nonetheless devise strategies for laying claim to minor chapels and the circulation spaces that weave a trail between the church's holiest sites, and by doing so they manage, to some degree, to make the strange and mysterious familiar. Some groups sing hymns, individuals find (relatively) quiet corners to pray, and the Franciscans, Greeks, Armenians, Copts, and Syrians say mass in their respective chapels in native tongues and amidst recognizable furnishings and regional aesthetics. The majority of visitors make their pilgrimage on organized tours, many sporting matching neckties, hats, or knapsacks, and tagged with badges declaring nationality and parish of origin. Such accoutrements of a "mobile community" create visual and psychological boundaries that shore-up identities and offer security against the strange and the unexpected. Snapshots and video footage or, less frequently, a carved monogram or cross in the stonework of the church with a penknife are vehicles for validating one's presence and for testifying that "I am/was here." Where the pilgrim's parish church is a place of familiar structure (spatially, socially, liturgically), the Church of the Holy Sepulcher represents a kind of anti-structure that tests efforts to make "sense" of the place and bring a comprehensible order to experiences had within it.

Roman Catholics discover tranquility in the Franciscan Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, the only chapel in the church with fixed pews and an abstract-style altarpiece to serenely contemplate. The monastic community is made up of Franciscans from around the world, and each oversees their national (or linguistic) flocks of pilgrims and guides them on a Roman Catholic itinerary of the sites and treasures. I joined a Franciscan procession that commenced at 4 p.m. in the Chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene. A gathering of mainly southern Europeans carrying lit candles followed the monks clockwise around the ambulatory, slowly but surely, stopping at each of the main chapels and sites to chant Latin prayers. Halfway through the procession, Armenian chants suddenly boomed out, sonically dominating the church and drowning out the rather quieter, meeker Franciscans and their entourage. The Armenians had begun their own procession, clearly irritating the Catholic gathering who had hitherto been staking out their claim to the church sites. By the time the Latin procession reached the Stone of Unction, the Latin organ began to play, boosting the auditory power of the Franciscans and belligerently drowning out the Armenians. Our gathering then stopped to pray in front of the Holy Sepulcher. As we chanted from our prayer sheets, the spindly candle held by a member of the congregation drooped and sizzled the hair of the woman standing in front of her, exacerbating an already stressful experience. After an hour, the beleaguered Catholic procession finished up in the refuge of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament where Latin mass was then performed.

Indeed, I venture that for the majority of pilgrims, their visit is marked by turbulence, disorientation, chaos, and even violence, especially in their encounter with the shrine of the Holy Sepulcher. The emotion most visibly displayed is "anxiety." Any "soulful" encounter with this "Holy of Holies" is, by necessity, delayed, deferred, postponed, until one can reconfigure the experience through private recollection, narrative accounts, writing postcards, reviewing photos, handling souvenirs, or re-enacting personal and familiar rites in the sanctuary of one's parish church back home. Seventeenth-century pilgrims carried back with them architecturally-accurate models of the church "made from olive and pistachio wood, and inlaid with mother-of-pearl" (Williams 2012: 45). In the comfort of their homes, such models allowed them to revisit the sacred destination virtually, and re-experience it in a more controlled, meditative manner. I suggest that, effectively, the experience of anxiety in the physical church serves as an emotional place holder, of sorts, that devotees subsequently overwrite by cognitively (re)structuring their experience of "sacred place" after the event.

In preparing for their visit to the Holy Sepulcher, pilgrims anticipate that they will undergo such emotional states as awe, elation, exultation, ecstasy, or enrapture. Pilgrims, generally, are hopeful of an encounter with the divine—a sublime connection between themselves and their God, or the attainment of deep and moving pathos for the suffering of their Lord,

Jesus Christ. But, at some deep level, there is recognition that the anticipated emotional state was *not* realized during the visit; that, despite bearing witness to the locations and stones that authenticate Christ's death and resurrection, there was a failure to make the desired spiritual and emotional connection with these events. In a fitting description of the experiences of conquerors and visitors to Jerusalem more generally, Montefiore writes, "The contrast between the real and the heavenly cities is so excruciating that a hundred patients a year are committed to the city's asylum, suffering from Jerusalem Syndrome, a madness of anticipation, disappointment and delusion" (2011: xxi).

Genesis, chapter two, tells the story of Adam and Eve, of original sin, and of humankind's banishment from the Garden of Eden. The pilgrim, too, is physically "cast out" of the aedicule, the "Holy of Holies," forbidden to consolidate a sense of place there. This experience metaphorically reinforces the separation of man from God.[18] For Christians, *the* "Holy of Holies" is the Holy Sepulcher; for Jews, the Temple Mount;[19] for Muslims, the Kaaba.[20] By its nature, the "Holy of Holies" expels. Devotees are forbidden to "dwell" there, to make home, to formulate a completed mental representation of "sacred place," rendered with a congruent emotional dimension. Rejection from the inner sanctum, the impossibility of having a close and personal encounter with one's God, makes plain man's profane constitution and the hopelessness of meeting our Maker in this life. A visit to the "Holy of Holies" is therefore both a re-enactment and confirmation of this historic separation. The impossibility of "dwelling" with, and in, the divine, the futility of trying to make the emotional connection, are affirmed.

The divine cannot be found in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. In fact it is a location that marks not the presence of God, but his departure and absence. Calvary marks the spot where Jesus died and departed from life among man; and the aedicule marks his resurrection, but also his absence, where he was *not* found by the mourning Mary Magdalene. So, while yearning for closeness to God, the pilgrim must inevitably be prepared to encounter his distance.

In combination, the disjuncture between an "anticipated" sense of place and the one "actually" experienced; the stark impossibility of forging a connection with God; and, perhaps most significantly, the requisite cognitive task of reconfiguring the emotional dimension of one's encounter with sacred place *after* the event, make the "Holy of Holies" so powerfully resonant in the minds of the faithful. More to the point, it is precisely because of the exceptional nature of the cognitive strategy employed for "making sense" of the "Holy of Holies" as "place" that such sites, and more importantly the thinking that we entertain about them, have the enduring and extraordinary status they do in the human imagination.[21]

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5

The Spaces and Places of Ramnagar Ramlila

Richard Schechner

"I've been to the Four *Dhams*,[1] Ayodhya, Chitrakut, Mathura-Brindavan, *lakhs* [hundreds of thousands] of pilgrimage places. I tell you, I've seen thousands of *lilas* [gods' plays], but among all those pilgrimage places and *lilas*, there was not even one place where I got as much peace of mind as here at the Ramnagar Ramlila, and there is no place as holy as Kashi [Varanasi]." So spoke a farmer from Bihar to anthropology student William Sax.[2] Ramnagar Ramlila takes place across the Ganga river from Varanasi—where because of a bend in the stream, the ordinarily northern bank is on the east; this "other side" is ritually polluted. And yet Ramnagar is within the sacred circle of Kashi as determined by the Panchakroshi pilgrimage route. It is no accident that there are inconsistencies, if not contradictions, built in to Ramlila's mytho-poetic geography. After all, much is being accomplished simultaneously: time and space are conflated; the Ramlila performance, apparently so traditional and steady over time, is actually fluid and dynamic in terms of meanings and affects. Rama's story is told; the Maharaja of Banaras is on display—his very authority both sustaining and depending on Ram's presence.

Unlike other former kings who after their domains were absorbed into India upon independence in 1947 converted their palaces into grand hotels, Vibhuti Narain Singh, the Maharaja of Banaras from 1938 until his death in 2000, felt his duty was to maintain his presence as the spiritual ruler of the region, a being greeted in the streets of Varanasi and Ramnagar with vigorous shouts of "*Hara, Hara Mahadev!*" ("Shiva, Shiva, Great God!")—the maharaja being the representative if not the incarnation of Shiva, the protector deity of Kashi-Banaras-Varanasi. Vibhuti was more likely to proceed through his (fictional but still real) domain on a richly bedecked elephant than in a swifter, less anachronistic automobile. His son, the current Maharaja Anant Narain Singh, is more up to date, and to some degree his royal–spiritual stock has declined because of his modernity. People say that HRH Anant spends "too much time" in New Delhi: his absence is noted. However, come Ramlila season, Bhadrapada–Ashvina (September–October), HRH Anant is atop his elephant or in his antique

carriage. The maharaja's patronage of and participation in the Ramlila beyond providing money and land (many of the Ramlila scenes take place on the maharaja's property) are signs that Shiva for a month recognizes and celebrates Rama's sovereignty. The maharaja as part of Ramlila embodies the convergence of India's two great Hindu deities—Rama being an avatar of Vishnu. Seeing the maharaja on his elephant watching and worshipping Rama is a powerful reminder that Kashi–Banaras–Varanasi is an island of Shiva in a sea of Rama. the Qila, though actively used only once in the Ramlila—for the final *lila*, Kot Vidai, the Farewell, unique to Ramnagar—is nevertheless the staging ground for the daily emergence of the maharaja. And every Ramlila-goer crossing the river from Varanasi spies the Qila upon approaching Ramnagar. The principal boat-landing is just a few hundred yards upstream from the Qila, whose immensity is equivalent in terms of square feet to the great field of Lanka, more than 1¼ miles to the south-east of the Qila. Lanka, Ravana's kingdom, is on land owned by the maharaja.

The Ramlila environments form their own triangle of *dhams* within Ramnagar from Ayodhya next to the Qila to Lanka several kilometers to the south-east to Rambag in the north-east. These and in-between them are all the points of drama that enliven the *Ramayana* story: Janakpur, Nishad's forest realm, Chitrakut, Panchavati, Kishkindha, Rameswaram, the rivers Yamuna and Ganga, the spot where Ahalya, touched by Rama's foot, is liberated from her cursed imprisonment as a stone—and more: every event of the *Ramcharitmanas*, Tulsidas's redaction of Valmiki's epic, is acted out *in its own place*. And to "go there" to the Ramlila performance is to "be there" in (believed-in) fact.

And still more: the carnivalesque inversion of authority, the festive *mela* (fair) that accompanies the Ramlila, the incessant singing and dancing of what once were hundreds of *sadhus* (wandering holy men—a population much dwindled from the end of the twentieth century after the destruction of Babri mosque in Ayodhya became for many *sadhus* more real than what Ramnagar provided). But what is real, anyway? Ramlila's spaces are a realization of what Tulsidas describes, which is a version of what Valmiki sang. Yet the theatrical environments are just that: elevated stages or platforms of wood, bamboo, and vegetation erected and decorated in different parts of Ramnagar. Ordinary roads and pathways are transformed for the month of Ramlila into what they signify: a miniature Hindu India from Ayodhya in the north through the central core of the subcontinent to Rameshwaram in the south-east, then across the sea to the island kingdom of Lanka, region of demons, whose sovereign is 10-headed, 20-armed Ravana. The small—Ramlila—contains the large—India; but India herself is infinitesimal with regard to the boundless Vishnu of whom Rama is an incarnation. Rama, the one who in his *lila*—he is playing (imagine if he were not!)—keeps all creation in his throat. To follow this kind of theater is to enter into the body of god while also regarding these gods as boys. As a *sadhu* told Sax, "The

swarups [divine incarnations] appear to us as boys, and it is as mere boys that they exist, until the time of crowning. As soon as god's crown is placed on their heads, they are as god himself, and that is how we regard them."

How is all this created and staged? What are its dimensions? Can a mere theatrical performance accomplish what the Vishnu of the *Rig Veda* does?

> I will now proclaim the manly powers of Vishnu
> Who measured out earth's broad expanses,
> Propped up the highest place of meeting:
> Three steps he paced, the widely striding! …
> Haunting the mountains: in his three wide paces
> All worlds and beings dwell. (R. C. Zaehner, translated, 1966: 4–5)

Of course not, literally. But within the realm of the performed imaginary, Ramlila comes close. As Vishnu's seventh avatar, Rama (most often called "Ram" in Ramlila), leads multitudes—the Maharaja of Banaras and his family, *sadhus*, *nemis* (avid Ramlila goers), and throngs of ordinary people—around the town's roads and fields, through a number of theatrical environments that interlace contemporary India (a shifting entity over the roughly 190 years of Ramnagar Ramlila's existence). Ramnagar means "Ramatown," and this settlement on the "bad side" of the holy Ganga river acquires its very reason for being from the month-long presence of all the personages of Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*, but most of all the conjoined numinous couple, Sita-Ram. Rama and his wife Sita draw to them not only the ancient narration of the birth on earth of gods who take human form to rid the world of an arrogant, breathtakingly handsome 10-headed, 20-armed demon, wife-stealing, a war of recovery, and the dawning of an epoch of perfect government, but also a range of activities from worship to partying. Ramlila month is a good time to be in Ramnagar, which during the rest of the year is a dusty, boring across-the-river dormitory town. For the month of Ramlila, Ramnagar is transformed into Ram's India—an India imagined before the advent of Muslims, British, and globalization. An epic India as reconceived by the sixteenth-century poet Tulsidas who wrote during an epoch of high hopes and intense devotion. For a month at least some northern Indians can put aside their cell phones and walk in Ram's footsteps. Is this going back in time? At some level; but it is more importantly bringing Sita-Ram into a time–space that abolishes sequentiality except as it is enacted in the narrative: an always "now" of the narrative and characters; of the heat of *darshan*[3] at *arati* (temple service for the *swarups*); the cool of rowing across the Ganga river at 10 p.m. when the river is dark. At least in the days before motorboats, a group of 30 passengers was led by a boatman named Atmaram (soul of Ram), in a *bhajan* (singing ceremony) celebrating Ram's sovereignty and divinity.

The Ramlila spaces-places are mytho-theatrical entities. For the duration of Ramlila, these spaces-places are what they represent. Because Ramlila

takes place outside of an ordinary theater, because there are no theater seats, only places to stand or to sit on the grass or tramped-down mud, sometimes dry, sometimes oozy, the participants enjoy and/or endure the real of "being there." The Ramnagar Ramlila theater environments are not matched anywhere. Yes, there are larger events in terms of miles traversed or paraded or even crowds assembled in a single place. But none are nearly so big in terms of the overall scope, the square miles used, the number of distinct venues—some blended into "local space", some specifically constructed, some already marked spaces reconfigured for Ramlila.

A unique thing about Ramnagar Ramlila is how the physical act of making a journey is knitted into the dramaturgy. Each day's *lila* ends at around 10 p.m. The following day's *lila* begins in the same place, but frequently after a few minutes, the performance proceeds from one venue to the next: from Ayodhya to Janakpur, from Chitrakut to Panchavati, from Panchavati to Lanka or to Pampasar, from Rameshwaram to Lanka, and so on. The authors of the staging could easily have ended a *lila* at one place and began the next day at another. This, in fact, would be the way ordinary theater would stage things. But the intention of Ramlila is to be on the move. The ur-text behind the *Ramcharitmanas* (also known as *Manas*) is Valmiki's *Ramayana*. The meaning of the Sanskrit "*yana*" of "Ramayana" is journey, moving, leading, and so on. Vishnu as Rama must mark out with his stepping the dimensions of the world. This is, of course, the very action of the dwarf Vamana, Vishnu's fifth avatar, who enlarges himself to such an astonishing size that his three strides encompass all of the three worlds of earth, underworld, and heaven. Rama does not change size, but in his wholly human form, played in Ramlila by a pre-adolescent boy, he travels from his birthplace of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh to Janakpur, Sita's home in Nepal. In exile, Ram, Sita, and Lakshman first go to Chitrakut in Madhya Pradesh, and then in order to go deeper into the forest, further away from "civilization" as they know it, they turn south-west, crossing the Vindhya Mountains into Maharashtra. There in Panchavati, Sita is kidnapped. Rama and Lakshman trace Ravana's path southeastward into Karnataka through the wild Dandaka Forest ruled by Khara, one of Ravana's brothers, whom they kill shortly after the encounter with Ravana's sister, Surpanakha. At Kishkindha they ally themselves to the monkeys Sugriva and Hanuman and the bears led by Jambavan. This army of gods and animals—not a human among them except that the gods have taken on human form—move south-east into Tamil Nadu. They come to the seashore at Rameshwaram, where India is closest to Sri Lanka.

Yes, I am using the names of modern Indian provinces, unknown by these names in Valmiki's and Tulsidas's days. And who knows if there was an "historical Rama" who followed this path from east to west, north to south. True or not, people believe it is true and that belief reinforces in a positive feedback loop with the myth: actual geographical India is time-stamped by Rama's footprints. And more than a few locations to this

day retain their Rama-story names, temples, and lore, all of which are significant for local residents and pilgrims alike. And all of these places are real in Ramlila. They are real because for the 31 days of the performance, Sita-Ram and everyone they come in contact with are actually present. Not only do the crowds take *darshan* of them, and listen to them actually speak,[4] but the attendees to Ramlila become the citizens of the places Sita-Ram go to. The logic is clear: if the gods are truly present then so is the land they walk on, the places they journey to, and the people they meet. Do all the performers and spectators believe this all the time? Certainly not. But at decisive moments, at *arati* and some other high-points, more behave as if they believe than do not, and this creates a powerful field of believed-in. All this is compressed into Ramnagar and lived out there for the month. All this is both "as if" and "is."

Sometimes the travels in Ramlila involve a going out and a return. For example, on *lila* 2, Rama and his brothers get aboard horses and go hunting. They leave Ayodhya—a large enclosure with a stage on one end—for a field. After some time, the *swarups* return and *arati* is performed. Sometimes a single *lila* goes back and forth among two or more locations. For example, *lila* 16 begins in Panchavati where Surpanakha is disfigured by Lakshman. Then there is a battle in a field near Panchavati where Rama and Lakshman defeat the many demons lurking in the Dandaka Forest. Next the *lila* shifts to Lanka where Surpanakha tells her brother what's happened. Ravana leaves his four-gated Qila and goes a few hundred yards to the ashram of his ally, the magician Maricha, who agrees under threat of death to transform himself into a golden deer—which is how Ravana will trick Rama and Lakshman into leaving Sita alone so that Ravana can abscond with her. This plan is then acted out as the *lila* returns to Panchavati. In a little added irony, Rama—who knows everything that will happen—tells Sita that he does not want her to endure the ordeals ahead. So the god fashions a "*chhaya* Sita" (a shadow of Sita), who will undergo everything from the kidnapping until her liberation a year later, that is, ten days later in Ramlila. Of course, this being theater and theater itself being *maya* (illusion, or truth-as-illusion), the same boy who is Sita is also *chhaya* Sita. The episode of the golden deer is enacted at some distance away from where *chhaya* Sita sits within her magic circle. After Ravana seizes Sita (no one really bothers to remember she is "*chhaya*"), he flies off with her to another location where the old vulture Jatayu intercepts him, battles the demon king, and is dismembered and left nearly dead. Ravana, Sita in hand, rides away on his flying machine, the *pushpaka*—all the way back to Lanka. There Sita is installed in the garden of Ashoka trees where she will remain until the day after Ravana is slain and cremated on *lila* 26. *Lila* 16 cannot end without an *arati*; and certainly no demon can perform that. So, back to Panchavati goes the crowd. There Lakshman performs the *arati* to a forlorn Rama. He knows, but seems to have forgotten, or at least—this whole thing being a "*lila*"—god's play—pretends to have forgotten that his beloved Sita is safe inside the flame, while all the bad stuff is happening to *chhaya* Sita.

It is not until *lila* 27 that the real Sita returns. On that day, *chhaya* Sita enters a circle of fire, is embraced by the fire god (a man dressed in saffron), and emerges unscathed as the real Sita. But this emergence is clouded by Rama's ambivalence. He is a god, but he is also a king. He hears that his subjects are gossiping. Can Sita have resisted Ravana's advances? Rama declares that before he can accept Sita back she must prove her fidelity by an ordeal of fire. In Tulsidas, this doubting is another of Ram's tricks. With one action, he dispels the rumors and recovers the genuine Sita.

So important are the journeys, that the Ramlila program distributed each year is more a map of Ramnagar in its Ramlila form than a list of *lilas* with a summary of events. The program from 1946 illustrates what I am writing about.

The program–map and sequence of events have not fundamentally changed over the nearly 70 years since this map was made. There have been considerable incursions of economic activity, population growth, and pressures on land use in the interim. But, all in all, Ramlila has—until very recently—resisted change in terms of spaces. The map names dozens of places as well summarizes what happens on each of the 31 days of Ramlila. On the upper left is a seal which reads (in translation), "Map, Shree Ramleela Ground, Ramnagar, Kashi State, 1946." Kashi is the sacred name for Varanasi or Banaras, an ancient name redolent with the memory-promise of "Ramraj," the golden age when Rama rules. Depicted in the lower right is the scene in *lila* 22 where the grievously wounded Lakshman lays unconscious in Rama's lap while overhead Hanuman bears the mountain on whose slope grows the healing herb. To their right is a sage reciting the story: doubtlessly Tulsidas. This famous scene enacts Rama's great love for his brother and Hanuman's total simple-minded devotion—not certain what herb Rama asked for, and fearing a fatal error, Hanuman brings the entire mountain. While waiting for Hanuman, Rama moans his regret that rescuing his wife may cost him his brother. "If I had known I would lose my brother in the forest, I wouldn't have obeyed my father. Wealth, sons, wife, home, family come and go repeatedly in this world, but a true brother cannot be found … What face will I put on going back to Ayodhya? For my wife I lost my dear brother. Better to suffer disgrace, for the loss of a wife is not such a great loss."[5] The program-map has other illustrations, too. One shows Hanuman reporting to Rama about conditions in Lanka. Another, near the top right, depicts King Rama and Queen Sita seated on their thrones under a royal umbrella, a whisk-fan stirring a breeze, with Rama's brothers standing behind them as Hanuman folds his hands in worshipful respect.

The main features are the depictions of the *lila* sites and the clear marking of the roads that connect them. These, taken together, detail the environmental theater and pilgrimage circulation at the core of Ramlila. Ramnagar during Ramlila is a model of mytho-poetic India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka as it was imagined by Valmiki in his *Ramayana* (c. fourth–fifth centuries BCE) and reimagined by Tulsidas in his *Ramcharitmanas* (1575–77). If the gods,

Fig. 5.1 *Map, Shree Ramleela Ground, Ramnagar, Kashi State, 1946. Map from the Ramlila Archives of the Maharaja of Banaras. Photograph by Richard Schechner*

demons, monkeys, bears, other animals, and people of the *Ramcharitmanas* are real for 31 days, then so must be the places where these beings are born, walk, fight, sleep, eat, suffer, triumph, and rule. Among and between these environments, these roads and temples, *kunds* (temple ponds) and rivers, from a maharaja's palace to a demon king's domain, amidst gardens, woods, cornfields, and a great battlefield there is worship and spectacle, silence and

bustle, *prasad* (food sanctified by the gods) and *chat* (street food, snacks). The drama offers adventure, love, war, wisdom, sadness, triumph, death, and life beyond death. Some scenes are intimate, others gaudy spectacles featuring 40-foot-high blue or pink demons with movable jaws the better to gobble up or mock mere humans with. On *lila* 26, Ravana is set ablaze, the ascent of his spirit, its acceptance by Rama, signified by five small hot-air balloons rising into the night sky. Those slain by Rama find instant *moksha*, release from the cycle of birth–death–rebirth. In this, their liberation is parallel to the reward given to any Hindu who dies within the sacred city of Kashi–Banaras–Varanasi, anywhere inside the circle of the Panchakroshi Road. As Diana Eck writes:

> The great Panchakroshi Road circles the whole of Kashi. The sacred circle of the city has its center at Madhyameshvara, the "Lord of the Center." To follow the Panchakroshi Road around Kashi is, they say, to circle the world. The pilgrims who circumambulate Kashi on this sacred way take five days for the trip and visit 108 shrines along the way. And, of course, it is fitting that if one cannot make the long trip … there is a single temple in the heart of the city—the Panchakroshi Temple—which one can visit. By circumambulating the sanctum of this temple, with 108 wall reliefs of the stations of the sacred way, one honors the whole of Kashi and, in turn, the whole world. (Eck 1982: 41–2)

The Ramlila is like the Panchakroshi Road. By following Rama, and all, by assisting when called on, by taking *darshan* at the end of each *lila*, the attentive Ramlila-goer makes the full journey from Ayodhya to Janakpur, Chitrakut to Kishkindha, Panchavati to Lanka. The small encompasses the large; the model becomes the actuality it represents.

Let me list and discuss briefly the stations or, if one prefers a film analogy, the locations of Ramlila: the spaces-places where and between which the action takes place. I list the locations below in the sequence that they are used. I am not at this time detailing the routes of the journeys that Rama, Sita, Lakshman, the maharaja, *sadhus*, and spectators-devotees use to get from place to place. This network of connections is as important as the fixed nodes or stopping-points. Indeed, Ramlila embodies and enacts a system of tensions between being on the road and resting; between stasis and activity. At certain intense moments—most particularly the *arati* temple ritual that ends each *lila*—everything stops; the living gods are "in place" as icons, *murtis*, as still as stone. In this presentation-of-who-they-are-as-they-appear, *darshan* happens: the focused looking-at wherein all who gaze come, literally, face to face with the numinous.

For each space listed below, there are two photographs: one of it in use during Ramlila and one of it at rest during some other time of year. The contrast is obvious between the sacred and the ordinary, the manifest and the latent, the theatrical and the humdrum. But even when latent, ordinary,

and humdrum, the Ramlila spaces emit the *rasa* (flavor, emotion) of what they can become during Ramlila.

Several of the locations I will now describe are used over and over; a few only once. The roads and smaller pathways are traversed repeatedly. Unlike most festivals that use the streets for one or two days—Mardi Gras and other carnivals—Ramlila transforms Ramnagar each day after 4 p.m. for 31 days. And even in the hours before 4 p.m., much evidence of Ramlila persists throughout Ramnagar.

Outside Rambag

The Ramlila begins here, against the west wall of Rambag, Rama's pleasure garden. Thirty days later, the Ramlila will begin its last day at the center of Rambag. Once all the hubbub of exile and war are over, and he is finally king, Rama will invite the citizens of Ayodhya/Kosala, including the maharaja, into Rambag to teach them the principles guiding his rule, Ramraj. The first *lila* is the opposite of the last. Instead of teaching, it features asking. The assembled gods ask Ravana what he wants as a reward for his extraordinary devotion. The very first words of *samvad* (dialog) in the Ramlila are:

> Brahma: O son, ask for the desired boon. I am pleased to grant you.
> Ravana: O lord of the Universe, listen: I should die at the hand of none but a man or monkey.

Fig. 5.2 *Ravana getting his boon from Brahma. Photograph by Richard Schechner*

Brahma: So be it, you have done a great penance.
Shiva: So be it.

Ravana fearing neither man nor simian, his extreme good is transformed into the very bad. The ten-headed demon slays *yakshas* (nature spirits) and strategizes how the gods can be overthrown: by preventing brahmins from feasting, making sacrifices, conducting funeral rites, and reading the Vedas and epics.

Why stage this scene next to Rambag's main gate? Probably to signify opposites: Rama's wisdom versus Ravana's folly; Rama's well-governed pleasures versus Ravana's unbridled appetites; Rama's discourse versus Ravana's unwise and unholy actions. Another reason for the location is, theatrically, to start Ramlila in a more or less out-of-the-way place, a no place, the liminal in-between space near Rambag's gate—a bit off-center, a good place to arouse chaos.

As the world is being overturned by Ravana's actions with brahmins and gods in consternation, the daylight portion of the first *lila* ends.

Kshir Sagar

The night scene of the first *lila* is as placid as the day scene is chaotic. The rush of Ravana's outrages are met by the deep calm of Vishnu reposing on the belly and under the hoods of Sheshanag, the thousand-headed cobra whose name means "what remains" when the universe is destroyed at the end one of the *yugas* or cycles of creation–destruction. Like the ocean he floats on, the king of snakes is endless–ceaseless. Ramlila's Kshir Sagar is the *kund* of what is probably Ramnagar's oldest structure, a temple dedicated to Durga, Shiva's consort. As Vishnu rests, his wife Lakshmi strokes his legs in a conventional gesture of devotion. Again and again, red and white flares illuminate the scene. Brahma makes an impassioned plea, to which a "voice from heaven" is heard in reply: "O saints, O Gods Indra do not be afraid, we will assume the form of man for your sake." In a tower at a corner of Rambag overlooking the *kund* stand Rama and Sita, awaiting the call to be born. Thus the very first *lila* lays out the basic conflict—and portends its resolution: from the daytime conclave of gods and demons Brahma, Shiva, Ravana, Kumbhakarna to the night-time calm where Vishnu's readiness is all. Under the light of the flares, the crowd marvels at the simultaneous revelation of the great gods and their avatars, of the divine formula: Vishnu-Lakshmi = Rama-Sita. The gods entreat Vishnu to take human form because only a man or a monkey can vanquish Ravana. As the day's performance comes to an end, Vishnu agrees to "play" (*lila*) Rama, with Lakshmi playing Sita.

The Qila

Actually, all *lilas* start from the Qila, the residence of the kings of Banaras. Even the first *lila*, described above, starts from the Qila when the maharaja emerges and proceeds to the front gate or Rambag. In fact, the Ramlila of Ramnagar cannot begin without the presence of the Maharaja of Banaras.

The Qila, or Fort, once was exactly that—and more too. According to Varda Vasa Priya, the granddaughter of Maharaja Vibhuti Narain Singh:

> This Fort was built by Maharaja Balwant Singh [raja, 1738–1770] from its very foundations strategically (in fact this is the last water fort made in India) reaping the full benefits of the natural flow of the Ganga and other water bodies surrounding Ramnagar as well as a safe passage to the forest and vindhya range of hills … It is said that when the conflict of the great immortal sage Maharshi Vayas with the residents of Kashi was resolved,[6] he left his ashram … and selected a sand dune amidst the flow of Ganga from where he could behold Kaashi … at the point where the Fort is presently situated. The "Vayas Temple" in the Fort marks the spot. (email to author, November 6, 2013)

The Qila is a sprawling conglomeration of Moghul-style buildings, courtyards, gates, stables–garages, and countless rooms ranging from big

Fig 5.3 *View of the Qila from a boat. Photograph by Richard Schechner*

halls to small offices. There is even a derelict Ramlila museum now closed to the public. The Qila, a rundown, provincial palace that has seen better days, has long been derelict. In 1976, when I first laid eyes on it, the Qila was in need of repair, plaster, paint, and refurbishing. The Qila tells the end-story of the House of Mansaram Singh, a Bhumihar Brahmin, who from 1730 managed the Varanasi lands of the Moghul Nawab. For this work, the Nawab made Mansaram a raja, a title he shared with his son Balwant, who became the sole raja upon the death of his father in 1738. Balwant, ruling until his death in 1770, built at least part of the Qila. His successor, his son Chait Singh, was deposed in 1781 by the British administrator Warren Hastings. The crown passed to Mahip Narain Singh, who died in 1794. Then under the long reign to 1835 of Udit Narain Singh, the Ramlila became a 20- to 30-day spectacle moving from place to place. Raja Udit was succeeded by Ishwari Prasad Narain Singh, who, because of his loyalty to the British, was elevated to the rank of "maharaja" upon ascending the throne in 1835.

During the "Mutiny" of 1857, Ishwari continued to support the British, who in 1859 rewarded him with the title "*Maharaja Bahadur*" (brave great king). Sometime after this, the king was drawn to what became the "Hindu renaissance" championed by playwright, poet, and journalist Bharatendu Harishchandra. Over Ishwari's long reign to his death in 1889, the king and the poet-playwright-nationalist worked closely with each other to craft the *samvads*, the dialogues of Ramlila recited in modern Hindi. This was a profound change in the performance. No longer were the gods, soldiers, kings, forest-dwellers, *rishis* (sages), monkeys, and demons represented only by the chanting of the Avadhi[7] poetry of Tulsidas. Now they all spoke a prose ordinary people could readily understand. The Ramlila of Harishchandra and Ishwari offered those at Ramlila a modern-speaking warrior-king—someone people could identify with, worship, and emulate. This was no small contribution to the morphing of the Hindu renaissance into the Indian independence movement.

No matter the pedigree of the line or the physical state of the Qila, mythic-historical memory confers a grandeur on person and place each day of Ramlila as the king emerges atop his royal elephant or in his royal carriage, reinforcing by his presence and authority the legitimacy of his very own Ramlila. This is an extremely powerful positive feedback loop. The Ramlila makes the maharaja who he is just as he makes the Ramlila what it is. So closely bound to each other are the two that tradition dictates that the Ramlila cannot begin without the presence of the maharaja. This mutuality confers on the Ramlila the authority of the king and on the king the sanctity of Sita-Ram.

Two *lilas* use the Qila as a stage. On Dussehra—also known as Vijayadashami, the Victorious Tenth day of the month, the day Rama slays Ravana[8]—before riding out to Lanka in Ramlila's grandest procession of adorned elephants tramping amidst multitudes of people, the maharaja in

the presence of a few invited guests performs a special ceremony, his *hathiyar puja* (weapons ritual). On Vijayadashami, people traditionally worship the tools of their trade: weapons, paintbrushes, books, whatever. The maharaja worships swords, long-barreled rifles, daggers, and so on, implements from bygone days laid out for viewing. He is asking the gods to bless Rama in his final battle against Ravana. This is ironic, of course, because Rama is god. The ritual is doubly ironic as these archaic weapons testify both to the royal line's imagined past glories and present-day (military) irrelevance. Furthermore, this royal line barely fought a battle.[9] Nor does the maharaja have any martial role to play today, even symbolically as do the British royals. What is happening is a homage to Rama on the day of his victory over Ravana. The weapons puja seems to say, "If Rama is a warrior-king, so are we; and here is our proof, these old weapons." Performed with such solemnity, the weapons puja approaches Gilbert and Sullivan parody. Once the weapons puja is over, the maharaja mounts his elephant and buoyed by Ramlila's largest mass of people he heads for the battlefield, but he does not stay there. Never stopping, he troops through the battleground between Rama and Ravana and returns to the Qila. When I asked Maharaja Vibhuti Narain Singh why he did not stay to witness Rama's great triumph, the climax of the whole Ramlila, the reason Vishnu takes human form, he told me: "It is not proper for one king to witness the death of another." One king-in-imagination watching another boy-become-king-god shoot toy arrows in the direction of a farmer-become-demon-king—theater made real. The maharaja also told me that the practice of not witnessing Ravana's death was instituted by his immediate predecessor, Maharaja Aditya Narain Singh. Also, and for the same reason, the maharaja leaves before the death of King Dasharatha at the end of *lila* 11. In Ramlila fact, Dasharatha does not die on stage; he succumbs only in the singing of the Ramayanis. There are two other Ramlila events not witnessed by the maharaja. In *lila* 9, Queen Kaikeyi demands Dasharatha honor his promise of two boons as a reward for her having saved his life in battle some time before. Kaikeyi demands that her son Bharat be crowned king and that Rama be sent into exile for 14 years. Not wanting to witness King Dasharatha in great, even mortal, distress, the maharaja leaves. In *lila* 16, Ravana disguised as a *sadhu* tricks Sita and then in his own 10-headed, 20-armed form, he lays hands on her and kidnaps her. The maharaja leaves the *lila* before this scene.

The other *lila* inside the Qila is Kot Vidai (farewell), a scene unique to Ramnagar Ramlila performed on the "extra" 31st day. Here the interior courtyard is open to the public who throng to participate with the maharaja and his family in welcoming the state visitors King Rama, Queen Sita, Bharat, Lakshman, and Shatrughna. Once settled on sumptuous carpets, the *swarups* enjoy a meal of sweets. Finally, the maharaja himself bathes Ram's feet and performs *arati*. Here in a thrilling conflation, two royal realms, one earthly, one godly, meet. Of course, there is the irony that after 1947 when upon gaining independence from Great Britain India abolished

the princely states,[10] so the earthly king was no longer a king in political fact. However, as long as the maharaja can enact Kot Vidai in Ramlila, his status is renewed at the level of ritual and imagination. Before 1947, at least the maharaja's realm was actual. Today, both are realms of the imagination. Kot Vidai embodies the religious–mythic–poetic–time–space at the core of Ramnagar Ramlila.

Ayodhya

King Dasharatha's and then Rama's capital is just a few yards east of the Qila. Its "historical" counterpart is 125 miles north-west of Varanasi. Ramlila's Ayodhya is used often during the first nine and a half *lilas* before Rama's exile and during *lilas* 29–31 when Rama returns home.

Lila 2 at Ayodhya enacts the insemination of King Dasharatha's three queens who each eat a portion of a fertile *kheer*-like substance.[11] Almost immediately, the queens give birth: Kausalya to Rama, Kaikeyi to Bharat, and Sumitra to the twins Lakshman and Shatrughna. Of course, theatrically, narratologically, and theologically this is not the way it is. Ram is "oldest" and always the tallest of the *swarups*. Lakshman and Bharat are usually of the same height while Shatrughna is the youngest *swarup*—a boy who often will graduate to one of the more major roles the following year. Occasionally, a boy will be Ram for more than one year. In 2013, I met a man in his thirties who was Ram for three years running. This is most unusual. When I asked him about what the experience of being a god was like, his eyes misted. "It was the best time of my life," he said.

Early in the Ramlila, Ayodhya and Janakpur alternate as sites with everyone moving back and forth over the considerable distance of more than 1¼ miles separating the two kingdoms. Once Ram, Sita, and Lakshman go into exile, Ayodhya is fallow until their return. Bharat installs Rama's sandals on the throne in Ayodhya and moves to the Nandigram ashram nearby. At one time, I thought the boy who was Bharat sat there for 19 days and that Rama's sandals remained on the throne in Ayodhya for the period of his exile. But this extreme verisimilitude is not done. Bharat places Rama's sandals on the throne and removes himself to Nandigram for *arati* on *lila* 14. Bharat appears in Nandigram again the day of Bharat Milap, *lila* 29. Rama's coronation on *lila* 30 takes place in Ayodhya. Right after Rama is crowned, he and Sita bid farewell to their stalwart allies of monkeys, bears, and (even) a demon, Vibhishan, Ravana's brother. Hanuman, unable to bear separating from Sita-Ram, begs to stay. His loving loyalty is rewarded: he remains forever with Sita-Ram, standing behind them slowly waving a giant fan. The *arati* for the coronation *lila* is at dawn. Until around 2 a.m., the *swarups* remain on their dais as thousands of worshipful thankful Ayodhyans—spectators-cum-citizens—approach the

swarups, touch or squeeze their feet, some with tears in their eyes knowing that soon they must bid these divinities farewell … for a year. From around 2 a.m. until dawn at around 5.30 a.m., the *swarups* are carried up to the second story of Ayodhya and laid out behind the stage. I saw them there, on their backs, their feet straight out, sleeping. If one of the boy-gods turned to his side, or tried to double up into the comfortable fetal position, a *vyas* or an assistant to the *vyas* (priests who oversee the Ramlila; instructors and stage directors) straightens the *swarup* out: even in sleep, for this night at least, they are always gods.

Janakpur and Sita's Garden

Janakpur and Sita's garden is King Janak's capital and Sita's home. Its "historical" counterpart is in Nepal. This big environment straddles one of Ramnagar's main roads. On one side is a large yard and mid-sized temple as well as two platforms. On one is Shiva's great bow; the other is where Rama and Lakshman sit awaiting Rama's turn to contest for Sita's hand by lifting Shiva's bow. Rama not only lifts it, but with a flick of his wrist, breaks it into three pieces. Across the road is a small temple at the center of Sita's garden. This is where Rama first sees his wife-to-be. *Lilas* 4–7 go back and forth among Ayodhya, Janakpur, and Sita's garden. *Lila* 6, the wedding of Rama and Sita and of Rama's three brothers too, begins in Ayodhya where Bharat and Shatrughna set forth meeting Rama and Lakshman halfway to Janakpur. Then they join parties and proceed to Janakpur for the weddings.

Chitrakut

This is the first residence-in-exile for Rama, Sita, and Lakshman. Chitrakut, situated on a grassy field just west of the Kshir Sagar, is a cluster of connected wood platforms overarched with a flowing tent. Not much has changed since the 1920s. In 2012, Maharaja Anant Narain Singh built a concrete framing structure, intending to provide stability for the Chitrakut tent in strong winds. The impression one gets is of a summer palace. The structure is large and the *swarups* are well-elevated. Located near to Rambag, Chitrakut is as permanent as a temporary abode can be. True, Ram, Sita, and Lakshman are in exile, but they are near enough to Ayodhya that Bharat pays them a visit and entreats Ram to return home. Indeed, in the *Manas*, Chitrakut is described as "a beautiful hill with pleasant woods … where you will find every comfort," a bucolic paradise. The gods send their chief architects (disguised as Kols and Kirats) who fashion "fair dwellings of leaves and grass; two beautiful huts … one small and one large"—and this

is what is represented in the Ramlila (RCM: Ayodhya, C. 132–7). Because of the needs of the narrative, Ram cannot stay long in Chitrakut: he must endure the hardship of exile in the deep forest; suffer the kidnapping of Sita; make war against Ravana. He realizes that if he stays at Chitrakut, "There will be a crowd here, for everyone knows who I am. So the two brothers and Sita took leave of all the hermits and departed" (RCM: The Forest, C. 3).

But before Ram, Sita, and Lakshman leave Chitrakut, during *lila* 14 one of Ramlila's most participatory events takes place. Bharat knows he must return to Ayodhya. Once there, he will place Ram's sandal on the throne to mark his elder brother's absence. Then Bharat will move to Nandigram—in Ramlila, a few yards distant from Ayodhya—where he will live as an ascetic awaiting Ram's return. But before leaving Chitrakut, Bharat asks, "Oh lord, if you give permission I would like to go and see the sacred spots and holy places of Chitrakut, the woods, the birds and beasts, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, hills, and especially the ground marked by your feet" (*samvad*). As Kapur relates, spectators "set off with Bharata and Atri [the sage] to the well near Rambag's gate. Along with them walks an actor carrying a pitcher decorated with golden paper. This pitcher contains holy water brought by Bharata for Rama's coronation … Bharata pours it into the well … henceforth, this well will be known as the Bharata Well, famous for its pure and sweet water … Leading 2,000 people around Chitrakuta and walking barefoot like a common pilgrim, Bharata begins his miniature pilgrimage. The crowd is orderly and patient … they sing and chant as they walk along. They raise clouds of dust … and through this haze Rama and Janaki [Sita] survey them. Joined as they are by Bharata, the spectators today are not only pilgrims of god, but *with* god as well, because Bharata worships with them" (Kapur 1990: 106–7).

This literal movement of the spectators into the time–space of the Treta Yuga, the epoch of Ram, is paradigmatic of Ramnagar Ramlila. There are rising levels of intensity in the audience participation. People watch, then they do, and are *with* the gods they worship; finally, at *arati* they are with and worshipping simultaneously, being joined to the gods at the moment of the *arati*'s *darshan* which transports the spectators beyond looking into *seeing*. This transformation is possible, I believe, only because spectators participate, take part in the action, become the people of Ayodhya, Janakpur, and Chitrakut. This kind of transformation happens frequently at Ramlila, night after night. It would not be possible without the extensive reach of the environmental theater town-as-stage.

Panchavati

A modest site suitable to the deep forest of the "true exile," is about 1.5 miles south-east of Chitrakut. During *lila* 15, Ram-Sita-Lakshman make a

three-hour journey from Chitrakut to Panchavati. The trip takes so long because they make lots of stops along the way, marking their plunge into the forest and all that such a word implies in Indian lore: the "away" where ascetics can meditate in their ashrams; the "wild" where animals and demons contest for control; the "primitive" where peoples who have not yet been "civilized" live. In the *Ramayana*, civilization is the equivalent of Aryanization; and those not Aryanized are still animals, albeit often fine and noble ones such as Hanuman the monkey and Jambavan the bear.

In Ramlila, the *swarups* set out along the road between the Kshir Sagar and Rambag. As an omen—who can say of good or bad?—the god Indra glides by overhead, a small cardboard figure in a frail chariot 25 feet aloft guided by wires and pulleys running from the Sumeru temple to one of the Rambag towers. The spectators along with Ram admire Indra as he jerkily moves along. Next, the *swarups* go behind Rambag and turn south, visiting the ashrams of Atri, Lomasha, Sharabhanga, Sutikshna, and Agastya.

They meet the brave old vulture Jatayu who will be mortally wounded in *lila* 16, battling Ravana who, seizing Sita, rushes with her through the sky on his magic *pushpaka*. Jatayu lives long enough to tell Rama in *lila* 17 what happened to Sita and where Ravana took her to. This *pushpaka* is the same magic conveyance that in *lila* 29 will carry Rama, Sita, and Lakshman to the Bharat Milap, where they will be reunited with Bharat and Shatrughna. Given the gender politics of the *Manas* and of the Ramlila founded on the *Manas*, it is no surprise that Sita literally occupies a back seat during this climactic scene.

The *arati* at Panchavati that ends *lila* 15 is sublimely simple. For the only time in Ramlila, Lakshman, Sita, and Rama are alone. Lakshman waves the flame in worship as the crowd who have followed along for these hours watch rapt. Husband, wife, and brother are at last deep in the forest. Panchavati is a peaceful place. Shouldn't there now be a long pause? Rama is ready to fulfill his vow to honor Kaikeyi's boon: to live 14 years as an ascetic in the forest. But Ramlila is theater as much as it is anything else. The exile is an arrow flying toward the heart of the grand narrative: ridding the world of Ravana. It is at Panchavati on the next day that the "real story" begins. In *lila* 16, Surpanakha—Ravana's sister—played by a Hijra (transgendered or transvestite) and using the name Sundari (beautiful) approaches Rama. Sundari says, "There is no man equal to you and no woman like me. The creator has thought carefully and then made this match. I have searched the three worlds and found no man worthy of me, so until now I have remained unmarried. But on seeing you I feel a little attracted." Ram, who knows full well that Lakshman is married, tells Sundari: "My brother is a bachelor." But Lakshman, after reciting a long speech about loyalty and his own subservient role, rejects Sundari, who returns to Ram. Without a word, Ram sends her back to Lakshman. It's a farce. Lakshman, after telling her, "Only he will marry you who tosses away every last bit of shame," cuts off her ears and nose, much to

the spectators' delight. Rigged with a can of stage blood under her mask, Sundari's torn face drenches her dress in blood. The Hijra rushes away and the giant effigy of Surpanakha emerges. Joined by her brothers Khara and Dushana and their army of 14,000 demons, played in Ramlila by some bamboo paper-mache effigies and masked little boys wielding cardboard swords, this band makes war against Rama, who, as a prelude of what's to come, single-handedly routs them.

Panchavati is south and slightly east of Chitrakut. Moving south and east is important because it mirrors Ram's journey through India, also tracing the spread of Aryan-Sanskritic culture from the north-west to the south-east. To this day, the cultural memories and tensions between the Aryan northerners and the Dravidian southerners persist. The domain furthest to the south-east—both in Ramnagar Ramlila and in South Asia—is Lanka, aka Sri Lanka, a land where the dominant religion is Theravada Buddhism, and where in 2009 after 26 years of civil war, an uneasy peace was made between the Hindu Tamil Tigers and the government. To many in south India and Sri Lanka, Ravana is a brave hero, a devotee of Shiva, peace-loving and just, brought down by Rama's cunning, Hanuman's might, and Vibhishan's treason.

Rishyamukha, Pampasar, Pravasharna, and Kishkindha

Once Sita is kidnapped, the direction of the narrative shifts toward the south-east. There are a series of rapidly moving *lilas*—the theatrical sense is of an impending climax, a figurative movement across the subcontinent to near the Arabian Ocean then diagonally down through the spine of India to the sea facing Lanka. This rush of movement is even more apparent in the Ramlila than it is in the *Ramayana* and the *Ramcharitmanas*, where the demands of poetry and devotion slow the swift current of events. In the Ramlila, Rama and Lakshman are literally on the hunt following the trail Sita leaves, including a piece of cloth, signifying her torn sari, she drops from Ravana's flying chariot. *Lilas* 17, 18, and 19 are full of journeys back and forth from the mainland to Lanka in ever-shortening leaps as Rama gathers his army of monkeys and bears and moves to Rameshwaram.

Although they are all-strong, Rama and Lakshman cannot fight the war against Ravana without allies. This is because two stories are being told at the same time: the unswerving tale of gods on earth cleansing the world of demons; and the more complex story, ethically and narratologically, of humans of many different social strata, alliances, and beliefs in conflict with each other. Rama the god can accomplish anything, but Rama the general needs sub-commanders and troops. On his way westward and

then south-eastward, Rama does what is necessary to acquire his allies, most specially Hanuman. To align Hanuman, Rama must aid Sugriva, the weaker of two monkey brothers. And to do this, Rama behaves in a cowardly manner. In concealing himself in the bushes and shooting Sugriva's brother Bali in the back, Rama comes the closest ever to being a cunning, flawed human being. But in the Ramlila—as in the *Manas*—this dastardly act is not condemned except by Bali himself. I never heard anyone in the crowd criticize Rama for doing what he does. These north Indians are savvy to the ways of politicians.

Indeed, in the *lilas* from Chitrakut through Pampasar and Kishkindha to Lanka, Rama shows himself to be most human. He is outmaneuvered by Ravana; he is tricked by Maricha; he is angered, saddened, and humiliated by the loss of Sita; he needs help from strangers—the brave old vulture Jatayu who loses his wings and his life battling Ravana in the sky and the monkeys and bears. These three *lilas* do not draw vast crowds. They are, in a sense, bridges and leaps from the brief idyllic time after Chitrakut to the turbulence ahead in Lanka.

In *lila* 17, Rama's human *lila*-self weeps upon losing Sita even as his god-self knows the whole story. *Lila* 17 shows Rama not only seeking Sita but also lecturing the assembled that women are not to be trusted. In this *lila*, after the mortally wounded Jatayu tells Rama that Ravana has taken Sita to Lanka, he takes the form of Vishnu ascending to heaven while Rama cremates his vulture's body. Ironically, the imaginary Vishnu and the fiery flames fly up to the sky where the paper-mache bird cannot actually go. From the burning grounds to Shabari's ashram is only a few hundred feet. On the way, Rama slays the headless demon Khanda, whose soul is free at last: a universal benefit bestowed on myriad demons, including Ravana, who when struck down by Ram acquire instant *moksha*, release from the cycle of birth–death–rebirth. Rama's arrow liberates the individual *atman* (soul) into the infinite *brahman* of all-in-all. After washing Rama's feet, Shabari feeds the *swarups* berries, tasting them first so that the gods will get only the sweetest. She sends Rama and Lakshman to Lake Pampa where the monkey Sugriva will help them. Then, her life complete, Shabari throws herself into the fire.

Rama and Lakshman proceed a few dozen feet to the middle of a blacktop road strewn with leaves and branches. A couple of bamboo-and-paper elephants stand there. Here, ancient narration and nineteenth-century poetry trump modern actualities. Rama surveys the scene, which is theatrically inadequately suited to his words:

> Lakshman, look at the beauty of the forest. Whose heart is not enchanted to see it? All the birds and beasts are with their mates—they seem to reproach me … On seeing me the buck runs away and the doe says, "There is nothing for you to fear. Go in happiness. He has come in search of a golden deer." The female elephants stay close to the males as

> if to teach me a lesson … Look, dear brother, how beautiful the spring is. Yet without my beloved I find it frightening. Seeing that I am distraught from separation, without strength, and alone, Kamdev [the god of love] has come rushing at me with the bees, birds, and woods by his side … The vines tangled in the huge trees seem like tents. The many kinds of trees and flowers of many colors seem like banners and flags. The strong, fine trees standing here and there seem like heroes standing. The cuckoos trumpet like maddened elephants. Cranes and rooks are like mules and camels. Peacocks, chakoras, and parrots, pigeons, and swans are his Arabian horses, partridges and quails his foot soldiers. Kamdev's army can't be described. The mountain rocks are his charioteers, the waterfall his kettledrums, the cuckoos his bards, the buzzing of bees is his shehnai, and the soothing, fragrant winds are his spies … Oh, Lakshman, looking at the army of the love-god who can remain calm? (*samvad lila* 17)

The *swarups* do not linger long before proceeding to the small hill that represents Rishyamukha, Sugriva's hideout.

On Rishyamukha are arrayed the animals who will soon be Rama's main allies: Hanuman, Sugriva, Angad, the bridge-building brothers Nala and Neela, and Jambavan the bear-general. It turns out that Sugriva saw Sita in the sky as she cried out, "Rama! Rama! O, Rama!" and dropped her "outer garment" which the monkey recovered and now passes to Ram. Sugriva then narrates how the king of the monkeys, his older and stronger brother Bali, challenged the demon Mayavi. Thinking Bali slain, Sugriva took the throne. But Bali in fact was victorious, returned home, and chased Sugriva away to live in a cave. In order to gain allies, Ram promises to help Sugriva. Of course, all this must be understood on two levels. Rama is omnipotent: he could rid the world of Ravana with his little finger—why does he need allies? He is omniscient: he knows how the story plays itself out. But the Ramlila is what Bertolt Brecht called a *Lehrstück*, a "play for teaching." Thus it is necessary for pedagogical, if not theological and plain fun, reasons for Rama to put aside his infinite power and knowledge, and play the role of the human in order to instruct people in right conduct. Ditto for his brothers and Sita. How much more ironic, then, that the actions of *lila* 18 show Rama as not so smart and as deceitful.

At Kishkindha, knowing that in a fair fight Bali would kill Sugriva, Rama hides in a bush ready to pierce Bali with an arrow. But Rama does not shoot because the brothers look so much alike he can't tell which is which. If, as some say, the monkeys in the *Ramayana/Manas* represent the indigenous peoples of central and south India from the point of view of the conquering Aryans, then this "I can't tell them apart" is a familiar racist perception, a flattening of individuality in favor of "they all look alike." In any event, in the Ramlila, Sugriva disentangles himself from his brother and complains to Rama who garlands Sugriva, marking him. Then, able to tell one monkey from the other, Ram shoots Bali—in the back. Dying, Bali

bitterly complains, "You have descended for the sake of righteousness, yet you kill me like a hunter. I your enemy, Sugriva your dear friend? For what reason did you kill me?" (*samvad*). For strategic reasons, as "collateral damage." But Ram does not say this. He chastises Bali for not listening to his wife Tara who advised, "Oh husband, the two brothers with whom Sugriva is allied are of incomparable might … Take Ram to your heart, give up delusion. Mind my words" (*samvad*). Of course, being killed by Ram wins Bali instant release from the wheel of karma.

Once Rama has cemented his alliance with the animals, he leaves Kishkindha for the forest. "I will not go into a town for fourteen years. The hot season is over and the rains have begun. I will stay on a hill nearby" (*samvad*). In the next *samvad*, Ram describes the beauty of the forest. But of course, he cannot remain there long in Ramlila time. Sita draws him south-east, to Lanka. In fact, the years of lonely wandering before the great Lanka war are compressed into a few *lilas*, while if they were sized to fit, most of the Ramlila would consist of the placid idyllic life. The tranquility of a long forest exile is summarized in several lyrical *samvads*, not enacted in *lilas* devoted to the simple life. The contradiction is obvious. Ram and Lakshman must be in a hurry to make war against Ravana; yet the narrative tells us they spend years deep in the beautiful, tranquil forest—two bachelor brothers far from their wives. At one level they seem in no hurry to make war. But in the Ramlila the necessity of drama takes over. The rhythm of Ramlila is intense. Even though the performance extends for 31 days, there is no relaxation. Instead of showing three ascetics, and then two, who have renounced city comforts to wander through the forest, Tulsidas and the Ramlila provide readers and spectators with plenty of conflict and adventure. Crossing diagonally the face of each *swarup*'s golden crown is a black ribbon, the visible but ignored reminder that these gods are alone, on the move, barefoot, with knotted unwashed hair, dressed in animal skins, bereft of wealth and privilege. But in theatrical and religious fact, they are well tended, magnificently garbed, wreathed, and jeweled; their exposed arms and legs coated with sandalwood paste; gazed on by thousands of worshipful eyes. Everything is provided them. Their very words are whispered in their ears by the *vyases*; their costumes are always being adjusted; they arrive by bullock-drawn carriages and when they alight they are carried on willing men's shoulders to and from the Ramlila grounds; their feet feel earth only when required to by the drama—otherwise they are touched or squeezed in reverence. The *swarups*' divinity overwhelms the poverty required of them by the narrative. No one can forget for a minute who they really are, no matter what the story says.

Ram, Sita, and Lakshman leave Ayodhya in *lila* 10, spend a night at Nishad's forest ashram, and then settle into Chitrakut where they remain until *lila* 15. Chitrakut is not deep forest—the links to Ayodhya remain strong. In fact, it is because Ayodhya is so close that Ram, Sita, and Lakshman decamp to Panchavati. At Panchavati the great conflict is

engaged, first with Surpanakha and then with Ravana himself. Next, the *swarups* follow Sita's trail during *lilas* 17 to 21. These five *lilas* compress the span of their 14-year exile while the war in Lanka dilates narrative time, taking from *lila* 21 to 28. This is the longest span of days at any Ramlila site. So long in Ravana's island kingdom reminds us that in origin Ramlila was a battle spectacle climaxing at Dussehra with the defeat and cremation of Ravana. The long *samvads* where Rama describes the beauty, plants, and animals of the forest are scattered amidst more dramatic events. And in the *samvad* quoted earlier, Ram entangles the beauty with his vision of a needed army. Action is never far away from consciousness, even amidst lyrical descriptions. Tulsidas, too, does not leave his heroes lolling in the countryside. There is always something dramatic going on: demons to kill, *rishis* to consort with, *atmans* to liberate, Surpanakha to humiliate and wound, a golden deer to shoot, a monkey king to ambush, a giant serpent to challenge, a long bridge to build, a family of demon giants to war against. Most *lilas* have big events, this being theater.

Rameshwaram

Here Hanuman launches himself into the air for his flight into Lanka to see how Sita is faring. Here, also, Rama builds his bridge bringing hordes of monkeys and bears across to Lanka the better to wage war against Ravana supported by his family of ferocious demons. In today's India, the line of rocks known as Rama's Bridge extends for 18 miles from Rameshwaram to Sri Lanka. Local temple records say that Rama's Bridge was above sea level until 1480, when a cyclone submerged it. Who knows? But certainly this is another example of conflating myth with physical certainty. The rocks are there, and so are India and Sri Lanka. The Hindu-Indian landscape is populated by godly and miraculously "inhabited" places: temples, trees, small and large shrines, ashrams, river flowings, crossings, and intersections (the Triveni for one), pathways, roads, *dhams*. There isn't a square mile not doubly inhabited—by whoever lives there in "this life" and those beings, spirits, saints, gods, and entities who once lived there or passed through or flew overhead or stopped for a rest or performed some miracle. Rameshwaram is one of those places.

The bridge from India to Lanka—so impressive in the epic—is in Ramlila a tiny two-plank structure, barely six feet long, spanning a miniscule *kund*. Why is this? Possibly the bridge of imagination is so vast and grand that any attempt to theatrically reproduce it would be a parody rather than an actualization. Better to build a sign, a synecdoche—the way, in Japanese Noh theater, a very young boy portrays the Emperor whose divinity is too enormous to simulate. And yet during other Ramlila scenes no such semiotic nicety is performed. The big demons and beings—Kumbhakarna,

Surpanakha in her true form, Surasa the giant serpent blocking Hanuman's way to Lanka, Ravana's to-be-cremated effigy—are all gargantuan. By contrast, the *swarups* are of small stature: young boys; and the other major characters—even Ravana in his usual presentation—are normal-sized people. Perhaps the point is that the demonic world is distorted, overblown, and preposterous. The gods and those who are devoted to the gods are "just like us normal people"—and this provides a good lesson for devotion. It is not so different from the Judeo-Christian Genesis notion that "man" was created in God's image—thus visually at least giving a face to the infinite and a limitation to his distance from the "us" of humanity.

Before crossing into Lanka in *lila* 20, Rama shapes a Shiva lingam from wet clay at Rameshwaram and worships the deity of Kashi, the one whom the maharaja incarnates. Here the incredible devotional energies of two great Hindu god-forces—Vishnu and Shiva—conjoin, focused as a magnifying glass focuses sunlight, igniting whatever it touches—which in this case is the excited crowd pressing in to witness Rama's making the lingam and puja.

Lanka

Lanka is Ramlila's largest theatrical environment, equal in overall size to the maharaja's Qila. More Ramlila time is spent at Lanka than at any other location. Rama and his army arrive from Rameshwaram in *lila* 21, and

Fig. 5.4 *Lanka on Dussehra. Photograph by Richard Schechner*

Rama, Sita, and the others do not start their journey back to Ayodhya until *lila* 28. Rama sets up camp under a large tent on Mount Suvel, a hill on Lanka's north side. Rama faces Ravana's Qila and Throne Room on Lanka's southern edge. To the west, Sita sits in captivity. The theatrical spaces imply that Ravana lives on a gigantic scale; Rama, still in exile, modestly camps out; and Sita's confinement is not harsh. During *sandhya* (twilight) puja breaks, many people visit Sita, press her feet, take *darshan*. Taken together, these figures map the boundaries of Lanka, and of the socially conservative Ramlila narrative. The three form an eternal triangle of a passive woman awaiting the outcome of the struggle between two extremely active … if not men … then at least males, one a demon, the other a god.

Ravana's Qila is a large earthen structure. In the nineteenth century, it was grandiose. Not from the time I first saw it, in 1976, to now (2013). The grandeur of Ravan's domain—and much else depicted in Ramlila—is seeded by Tulsidas's poetry and flowers in the imaginations of the participant-spectators. It is not possible, nor is it right, to disentangle the Ramlila places as sometimes tawdry, amateurish theatrical sets from what is imagined via the *Manas*, the *samvads*, the costuming, the brightly painted effigies, the pageantry, the devoted throngs, the dancing-*bhajaning sadhus*, and the almost continuous journeying through Ramnagar as Rama's India. None of the Ramlila palaces are as grand as they are described in the poetry or as big as the Qila. Neither Ayodhya, Rama's capital, nor Janakpur, home to Sita, nor Lanka can rival the Qila in size or complexity. Ravana's Qila and Throne Room are a kind of mimicry of the maharaja's, erected by the maharaja's servants after all. Clearly, within the spatial-cognitive scheme of Ramlila, the "real king" is king; the others, no matter how sacred or storied, are less. With the who-is-more-than-whom at the heart of Ramnagar Ramlila, the apparently smaller entity—what the maharaja rules—contains the cosmic vastness of Rama's domain; pre-adolescent boys—subjects to the king, children to their parents—embody divinities as infinite as infinity.

Ravana's Qila and Throne Room do not equal the maharaja's, but the vast field of Lanka surpasses any of the maharaja's palace courtyards. From the vantage atop Ravana's Qila, one scans a flat space easily capable of holding 80,000–100,000 people. For Dussehra, the day Rama defeats Ravana, Lanka is full to capacity. Otherwise, the crowd ranges from 25,000 to 40,000. During a week, people come to watch Ravana's son Meghnad, his giant brother Kumbhakarna, and hordes of demons fall before Hanuman, Lakshman, Rama, and their army of monkeys and bears. The people also happily come to relish Ramlila's biggest *mela* (fair), sponging up snacks, trinkets, clothes, religious items, pamphlets, and more, all displayed on blankets or carts. The climax is when, finally, Rama defeats Ravana in face-to-face combat. Between the afternoon, when Rama pierces Ravana's navel with an arrow and, instead of melodramatically dying, the demon king strides across the battlefield to surrender-worship Rama, and

night, when Ravana's effigy burns—transforming the demon's *atman* into that which becomes one with the infinite *brahman* that is Rama—ordinary people have a good time, *sadhus* dance/sing Sita-Ram's praise, Ramlila characters lounge with their masks off, and the devoted visit Sita at last freed from captivity. During the seven and a half days in Lanka, the bigness of the place provides a grand setting not only for the battles but also for the *mela*. The outcome of the war is certain. It is only a matter of time—and by this point in Ramlila, being in it has become a way of life, so time matters less than usual. There is no rush to conclude, to go back from this place which is the farthest away from the Qila, from Ayodhya, from the river, from Varanasi, from daily life.

Only in Lanka do all the three kings of Ramlila—Rama, Ravana, and the Maharaja of Banaras—come face to face with each other. The frame of the narrative with regard to these royals is complex. Rama and the other *swarups* are manifest in Ramlila as actual gods. However, as everyone knows, Rama and the other *swarups*, before they are dressed and on the Ramlila grounds, are "just boys" who in the mornings kick a soccer ball around the yard or earnestly rehearse their lines and gestures under the strict supervision of the *vyases*. Their divinity is a function of the belief of the thousands who come for *darshan* of them: the make-believe of theater transformed into the make-belief of religion. The man playing Ravana is no *swarup*; he is theater. Ravana is a role played for generations by a farmer family who lives in the vicinity of Ramnagar. Ravana is respected locally: whoever plays him is called "Ravanraj"—King Ravana—but no one believes he is really Ravana as the boys who are Sita and Rama are Sita and Rama. The maharaja is somewhere between Rama and Ravana with regard to who he "really is." Anant Narain Singh is the Maharaja of Banaras in name and in inheritance, while his father, Vibhuti Narain Singh, was a real king from 1939 until the abolition of the princely states in 1947.[12] When Vibhuti's kingdom ceased to exist, he retained his title, his authority in the realm of ceremony and religion, and the worshipful regard of his (former) subjects.

Of these three kings, who is the most real? Within the frame of Ramlila and the circumstances of Varanasi, both Ravana and the maharaja have domains. Rama, by contrast, volunteers to forego his kingdom, go into exile, and wander the forest. However, once Ravana is vanquished, Rama returns triumphant and is crowned king. He rules the whole world from his capital, Ayodhya, a walled-in courtyard a few yards from the much more imposing Qila of the maharaja. The small real projects out into the immeasurably large, the three strides of Vishnu. Indeed, for the time being, the time of Ramraj in Ramlila, a time-space existing in the imagination of the crowds worshipping him, Rama is sovereign over the three worlds of sky, earth, and underworld. These conflations of meanings and coincidings of narrative with actual places give Ramlila its special authority and reality. Within these circumstances, Rama and the maharaja are more real than

Ravana—Rama is god-king and the maharaja is king. Ravana is a mere actor. And yet, because Ramlila is such convincing theater, Ravana exists within a suspension-of-disbelief reality. Also—and this is clear for many who attend Ramlila—during the hours of performance, the reality of Rama and the maharaja enfold Ravana and all the other characters theatrically speaking. Some, such as the sage Narad, seem to have a reality more than most of the actors if less than the *swarups*. And, to unpack the circumstances, the maharaja is not "just" the make-believe king of Banaras; he is also—with a reality as powerful as Rama's—the living, moving Shiva.

In one of the several creative ironies that shadow the Ramlila, the maharaja is and is not a king; is and is not a god. His position in Kashi—the devout Hindu name for this ancient city which on today's maps is Varanasi, another ancient name but one less shining with the light of Shiva—is as Shiva's earthly self. Eck writes:

> Kashi is the city of Shiva. Its Shiva temples number in the thousands … Over the centuries Kashi's connection with Shiva became so firm that by the time of the *Kashi Khanda*[13] this city was said to have been the "original ground" created by Shiva and Parvati, upon which they stood at the beginning of time, when no other "place" existed … the place where Shiva's *lingam*, as the unfathomable symbol of the Supreme Lord, first pierced the earth. (Eck 1982: 94)

Exactly where this lingam is today, no one knows. Under Moghul rule and image-breaking mosque-making, many temples were razed, rebuilt, destroyed again, built in new places. Today's most brilliant Shiva lingam is in Kashi Vishwanath temple, where the daily crush of pilgrims squeezing down Vishwanath Gali for *darshan* is formidable. The role of the maharaja is to embody Shiva's presence: when he appears in Kashi he is always greeted with shouts of "*Hara! Hara! Mahade-eh-eh-vv*," with the last syllable drawn out in admiration. From the nineteenth century onward, the Maharaja of Banaras has been a patron of music, painting, dance, religious festivals—and, of course, Ramlila. Why Ramlila? Because in Ramlila the two great presiding deities of north India come together in one time-place. Kashi–Banaras–Varanasi, people say, is "an island of Shiva in a sea of Rama." To the north-east is the "real" Ayodhya; to the west is Mathura and Vrindiban, home of Krishna, Vishnu's eighth avatar. During Ramlila, in Kashi, Shiva and Vishnu coincide.

For all this, modernity—if not post-modernity—are closing in. This can be seen at Lanka more clearly than in any other Ramlila environment. Once the vast expanse of Lanka reached into the countryside, and the big field itself remained fallow, being used only during Ramlila. Then in the 1990s, large steel structures bearing high-tension electricity ran across the outer reaches of Lanka, reminding everyone at Ramlila that, in fact, Ravana's kingdom wasn't so big after all. Then, around 2012, Maharaja Anant

Narain Singh leased land directly behind Ravana's Qila to people who were breaking big rocks into smaller ones as road filler. The maharaja told me that this was temporary. But who knows? For however long, the presence of the facility and the piles of rocks greatly diminishes the grandeur of Ravana's kingdom. But who can blame the maharaja in this epoch of India's emergence as an economic power? In order to maintain his (once) royal lifestyle—or even a more modest lifestyle—the maharaja must make his land pay its way. Unlike some former princes who converted their palaces into hotels, the Narain Singh family has not done so. The royal family owns the Taj Hotel in Varanasi's Cantonment[14] and they converted a small residence in "downtown" Varanasi into a boutique hotel with fewer than ten rooms. How heavily Anant Narain Singh is invested in business or how he exploits his extensive real estate beyond Lanka's "temporary" rock works, I do not know. His father, after ascending to the throne of a real kingdom in 1938, kept to his conservative ways after independence, focusing on maintaining the Ramlila and tending to cultural and ceremonial matters within his (imaginary but real) domain. Vibhuti Narain Singh paid attention to both the overall reach of Ramlila as well as to the myriad details involved in staging it: maintaining the *lila* sites, supervising the selection of *swarups*, supporting the *vyases* and Ramayanis,[15] paying attention to every detail. From my own observations, I do not think that the current maharaja is as invested in Ramlila as was his father. Or if he is equally devoted, he is not equally empowered. Local opinion differs regarding Anant Narain Singh's wealth. Some say he is squeezed and some laugh at that idea. "If he wanted to spend, he has it to spend," I was told. My own face-to-face meeting with him in 2013 convinced me both of Anant's sincerity in wanting to maintain Ramlila and his need to make money. "The *lila* costs 15 lakh of rupees," he told me. "The UP government gives me five. From where can I get the remaining ten?"[16]

Dussehra Procession

This movement from the Qila along the banks of the Ganga to Lanka several miles to the south-east is the longest one in Ramlila. It mirrors the actual positions of Ayodhya and Sri Lanka on both maps of today's India and in the epics *Ramayana* and *Ramcharitmanas*. If Rama represents the Aryan conquest of India by force and religion, then the procession of the maharaja recapitulates Rama's expansion. This procession begins in the interior of the Qila immediately after the weapons puja. No characters of *Manas* take part. This is the maharaja's show entirely. He emerges on his largest elephant as one majesty in a procession of elephants. All around him the throngs adore him as they move with him. Elephants move with steady steps—they travel fast because they are so big, but they seem to be

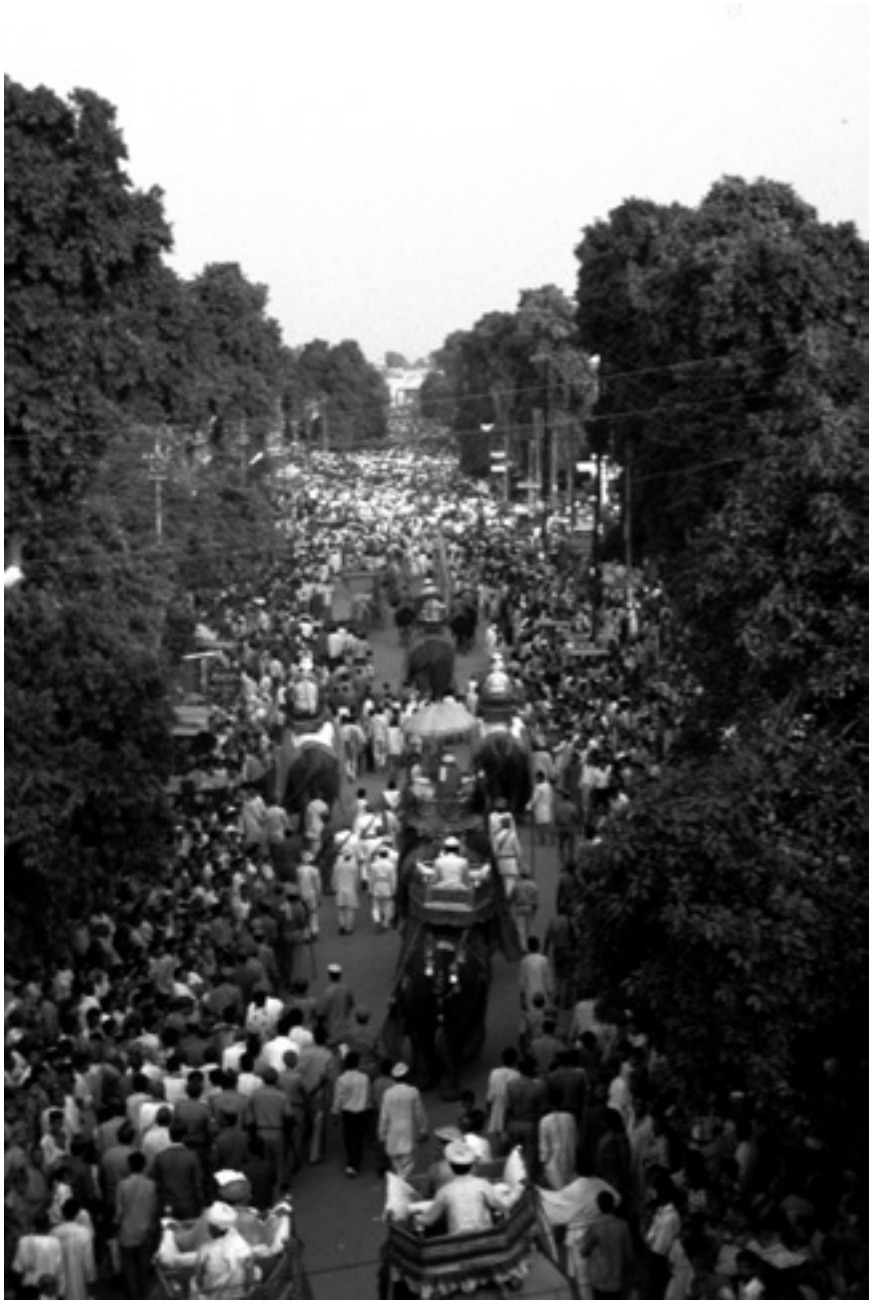

Fig 5.5 *Dussehra procession from the Fort. Photograph by Richard Schechner*

moving slowly. The procession moves from the Qila's main gate down the road to the intersection where later the Bharat Milap will take place—the commercial center of Ramnagar. Then the procession goes straight onward, not turning left toward Janakpur, the path of the wedding procession in *lila* 6.

Step by ponderous step, the maharaja and his party move toward Lanka, always accompanied by thousands of citizens. Citizens of what country at what point in time? India and Kosala both; now and then simultaneously. Still for all this, the maharaja is the king of no nation, really, but during this procession the Prime Performer and Prime Spectator both. He is also the Owner and Rent Collector as he moves through his domain from the Qila he owns to the Lanka he owns. In the Dussehra procession I see a ghost of Mansaram Singh, founder of the Narain Singh dynasty, making his rounds. From *zamindar* (landowner) to king, a neat promotion if one can pull it off. For an hour, Anant Narain Singh pulls it off. If at other times in the Ramlila, this maharaja must suffer the shame of knowing his lands are diminishing, his authority coming into question, his Shivadom almost a parody, then here during this glorious procession on the day that Rama triumphs everything is restored to him, for the time being. The crowd is dense, the land is his, he is on the march across the breadth of his domain. But the time is brief. As soon as the parade of elephants reaches Lanka and traverses the battleground, pays respectful worship to Ram and Sita, it retreats back to the Qila.

Next, the final battle between Rama and Ravana happens. It is an anticlimax. Rama descends from his chariot and shoots his 36 arrows toward Ravana. The demon king does nothing. Finally, he leaves his war chariot and walks to where Rama has reseated himself. Ravana bows, touches Ram's feet, signaling his surrender, rises, and applauds. Is this theater? Is it the modern signal of completion? Then Ravana leaves Lanka with an assistant trailing him, carrying the paraphernalia of mask and weapons. The man playing Ravana told me he does not attend the Ramlila's final days. "I have given myself to Ramji. There is nothing more for me to do." In the evening of Dussehra, the demon-king's remains, a gigantic bamboo-and-paper effigy representing Ravana's torso and head sitting atop his Qila, goes up in crematory flames. The next day, Ravana's brother Vibhishan is crowned King of Lanka. Aboard Ravana's sky-chariot, victorious Rama and Lakshman depart for Ayodhya. Sita will join them once her chastity is tested by a ring of fire. Actually Sita herself never endured the perils of the forest. It is the *chhaya* Sita, a shadow image of her, who accompanies Ram, is snatched by Ravana, and sits imprisoned in the Ashoka garden. At the center of the ring of fire the real Sita crouches as the *chhaya* Sita enters. They embrace, and she who was *chhaya* now becomes real and walks through the flames unscathed.[17]

Bharat Milap

The Bharat Milap is the first of the converging dramas of Ramlila to be resolved: the end to Rama's 14-year exile. The Milap transforms all of Ramnagar into Ayodhya. The Milap takes place on a 15-foot-high square platform erected at the heart of Ramnagar's *chowk* (market), at the intersection of the town's two main avenues. One road runs from the Qila to Lanka and beyond into the UP countryside, the other forms the base of a triangle whose sides are a trans-Ganga bridge and road to the north linking Varanasi to the Mughal Sarai railroad junction and the Vishwa Sundari Bypass Road south across the Ganga to close to Mughal Sarai. A little beyond Mughal Sarai, at Khan Jahan Chak, the two roads merge into the Grand Trunk Road from Delhi to Kolkata. A third bridge, a few hundred feet to the north of the Qila, is under construction.

For the Milap, dozens of thousands of Ramnagar residents pour out into the streets, look down from windows, balconies, and rooftops, giving the whole core of the town a festive feel. How different this is from Lanka, at the outskirts of town. That environment draws people away from Ramnagar, while the Milap whirls them back to the center where they live and shop. For hours before the four brothers embrace each other, the crowds eat, talk, cheer, and chant, anticipating the sweet end of Rama's exile. Step by slow step, the *pushpaka*—Ravana's flying chariot—approaches the intersection from the east. At about 10 p.m., the maharaja's elephants amble from the Qila, turn left, and take their position at the outer northern edge of the one axis of the vast crowd. Then the *pushpaka* is pushed the final few feet up to the edge of the Milap platform. Sita remains in the chariot regarding the spectacle as Ram and Lakshman step down from the east, as Bharat, who has come from Nandigram where he has been waiting, and Shatrughna (who has been out of costume since his wedding in *lila* 6) ascend from the west. Under the brilliant glare of fireworks, the brothers meet at the center of the platform. Wave after wave of cheering engulfs them as Ram hugs Bharat and Lakshman hugs his twin brother Shatrughna. Then the two couples rotate clockwise, posing at each cardinal direction so people on all four sides can take *darshan* of them. The scene is *jhanki*, marvelous beauty, full of intense emotion. The 14 years of exile, 19 days of Ramlila time, are over. Thousands of Ramnagarians, citizens of Ayodhya for the time being, celebrate with Bharat and Shatrughna the homecoming of Rama, Sita, and Lakshman. The final two days of Ramlila will continue and even intensify this conflation.

Milap means "meeting," and it is not only the meeting of the brothers but the meeting of the various realms of Ramlila. From the Milap to the end of the drama, Ramnagar "meets" Ayodhya "meets" India "meets" Kosala. The journeys of Ramlila (those of the *Ramayana* and the *Manas*) are from city to nearby settlements to forest, wilderness, and mountains,

down to the sea and into an alien kingdom. At one point, the Maharajas of Banaras, with their wealth and land, were able to mirror this mythic journey in the town of Ramnagar and its surroundings. It used to be that Ayodhya and the Milap were where the population and buildings were densest. As one moved out to Nishad's and then to Chitrakut and on from Panchavati and Pampasar to Rameshwaram and Lanka, houses and people were fewer, roads became paths, "civilization" receded. The revelation of Ravana's enormous fortress at Lanka provided a suitable challenge for the boy-gods' frail bodies—Rama's dismemberment of Kumbhakarna and defeat of Ravana was, truly, both expected and miraculous. Much of this wonder has evaporated by 2013—or at least receded from the actuality of the journey out from the Qila through the countryside to Lanka. Today, all of Ramnagar is heavily settled; roads are paved; shops and industries are scattered throughout. The physical distance is the same, but the actuality of following Rama, Sita, and Lakshman into their forest exile is changed. The going forth from the urban into the wild and on to an alien grandeur which once was modeled on environmental theater fact is now something more to be imagined than experienced.

From the Throne Room to Rambag

At the end of Ramlila, all Ramnagar becomes Ayodhya. The Ayodhya of Ramlila's first days—the large walled-in yards close to the Qila—is now Sita-Ram's Qila. In the evening of *lila* 28, after the Milap, Rama, seated on his *gaddi* (throne) next to Sita with his three brothers close by, is crowned. What in *lila* 8 was torn apart by Kaikeyi's boon, is knitted whole. What Dasharatha intended is accomplished—after the long exile, wandering, kidnapping, and war. After coronation, Rama's kingdom of the imagination extends from his throne to the whole world as Ramraj, Rama's perfect rule, begins. A corollary to Ramraj is sending back to their fiefdoms all of Rama's allies. One by one, Rama and Sita bid farewell to their stalwarts: Vibhishan, Nishad, Sugriva, Angad, and Jambavan must each depart to their own places to rule in Rama's name. The parting is both triumphant and sad. Angad stumbles in tears down the stairs of the Throne Room. Only Hanuman is allowed to stay, forever the guardian of Rama and Sita.

Then, Rama and Sita through many hours sit still as stone *murtis* as crowds press up the stairs and against the Throne Room for *darshan*, a cluster of *tulsi* (holy basil) leaves, a wreath of flowers: some tangible evidence of an encounter with the numinous. Looking closely at these boys-cum-gods during these hours of intense devotion, I am amazed at the deep blank stare they maintain. Inside their emptiness is the infinity they supposedly are. Then, at about 2 a.m., the *swarups* are placed on the shoulders of men and carried upstairs in Ayodhya to rest. However, they do not toss and turn as

ordinary boys might, but are tended in such a way to keep them flat on their backs, not moving. As dawn begins to color the eastern sky, the *swarups* are reinstalled in the Throne Room. The maharaja arrives for *arati*. Finally, exhausted, certainly human again, the boys are carried to their *dharamsala* (resthouse) for nourishment and hours of needed rest.

At about 6 p.m., the Ramlila begins again. Rama, Bharat, Lakshman, and Shatrughna are hoisted onto two royal elephants for the journey from Ayodhya to Rambag. Sita remains on the throne in Ayodhya. As the *swarups* arrive in Rambag, Ramlila's circle is closing. The drama began 31 days earlier outside the main gate to Rambag, where Brahma granted Ravana the boon of invulnerability against all but men and monkeys. On that first night, Vishnu reclines on the Kshir Sagar. Now Vishnu's seventh incarnation, Rama, the god who in the form of a boy representing a man slew Ravana, is seated in the gazebo at Rambag's center delivering his teachings to the assembled. In an extraordinary passage of *samvad*, Rama celebrates the human body, the form he has chosen for himself:

> By great good fortune you have a human body, difficult for even the gods to attain, as the holy books have sung. It is the abode of spiritual discipline and the gateway to liberation. … Oh brothers, the object of the body is not sensual enjoyment … The fool who gives his mind over to sensuality on attaining a human body turns nectar into poison … The human body is a boat to cross the ocean of existence. My grace is a favorable wind, and the guru is the helmsman who steers this strong boat on the right course.

All those listening to Rama are equipped with this "boat." To make the best use of it, Rama urges *bhakti*, devotion, the easy path rather than the *jnana*, knowledge, the more difficult:

> If you want happiness in this world and the next, listen to my words and hold them firmly in your hearts. Brothers, devotion to me, as sung in the Vedas and Puranas, is an easy road to happiness. The way of knowledge is difficult of access and has many obstacles. The practice is difficult; there is no basis for the mind. Many try hard, but scarcely one attains it. Even that one, without devotion, is not dear to me. Devotion is independent, the source of all virtues …

Hearing this, a Citizen praises Rama:

> Oh abode of grace, dearer than life, Sri Ramchandra, you are our king, mother, father, guru, brother, body, wealth, home, our benefactor in every way. No one but you could give such teaching. Even father and mother are devoted to their own interests.

Then, finally, Narad sings a song in praise of Rama, concluding with:

> Oh destroyer of Ravana, embodiment of joy, greatest of kings, moon shining on the lily-like line of Dasarath, victory to you. Your glorious fame is known to the Vedas, Puranas and Shastras, which are sung in assemblies of sags and saints. Oh supremely compassionate one, breaker of false pride, ornament of Ayodhya, you are skillful in every way. Your name wipes away the impurities of Kaliyug and removes attachment. Oh Lord, protect those who come to you for shelter.

These are the last words of Ramlila. The concluding scenes in the Qila and Ayodhya are without *samvad* or *Manas*. The teaching in Rambag is a stunning scene because Rama the boy is eternal, his high-pitched voice that of the Absolute instructing not only the maharaja but the assembled people of Ramnagar-Ayodhya.

The gazebo inside which Rama and the maharaja sit was until 2013 a delicate filigreed marble structure. But the maharaja sold it … to the Taj Hotel in the Varanasi Cantonment where it now is a bar (so I am told). In its place the maharaja erected a concrete pavilion of the same shape but of much less beauty. The maharaja told me, "The former structure was being damaged by the weather and also open to defacement and theft of the marble. What is there now will last." In my years at Ramlila, I didn't notice either weather or people inflicting damage or making off with pieces of the gazebo. As of 2013, the new gazebo is unpainted—undecorated in any way, plain vanilla.

The Qila Inner Courtyard

The final two scenes of Ramlila collapse still further the distinctions between the Ayodhya of the Treta Yuga, Ramraj, and the Ramnagar of "today"—meaning the present of whomever is maharaja, whomever the citizens of "today's" India are. For the location and intention of Ramlila's concluding scenes take place in the inner courtyard of the Qila and in Rama's Ayodhya, just a few dozen yards to the east.

Once Rama finishes teaching in Rambag, he and his brothers ride back to Ayodhya. In the meantime, a huge crowd has massed inside the Qila's inner courtyard. During the day, crowds have visited the Dakshinmukhi Hanuman temple there, which is open to the public only once a year. At night, Ramlila's final scene is enacted—a scene not in the *Ramcharitmanas*. At about 10 p.m., illuminated by continuous white flares, aboard two richly decorated elephants, the *swarups* arrive. Lakshman drives the elephant bearing Sita and Rama; Shatrughna drives the one carrying Bharat.

What follows is the maharaja worshipping and then feeding the *swarups*. An inversion of social realities is performed. The king is servant to the boys who are gods. The maharaja washes each *swarup*'s feet; then he marks their foreheads with the *tilak* (symbol) of Vishnu, who they are; as a devotee, he

Fig. 5.6 *The Qila inner courtyard for Kot Vidai. Photograph by Richard Schechner*

wreathes their necks with garlands of magnolias. Next, as the Ramayanis chant the final portion of the *Manas*, the *swarups* very slowly and ceremoniously enjoy a royal supper, course by course, their boys' right hands reaching onto their banana leaf plates, the food deliberately conveyed to their mouths, even the chewing more a performance of feasting than feasting itself. They do not speak or even look at each other. Their eyes are gazing into an empty middle distance, not at anything. Meanwhile, thousands of eyes are watching them—and here there is no guidance from Tulsidas about what to do: this scene happens only in Ramnagar Ramlila. Then, the meal ended, the maharaja takes from a major-domo a silver coin which is conveyed to a *vyas* and from there, one performer at a time, to each one including the Ramayanis and the *swarups*. This ritual payment is *dakshina*, an offering not a wage. Tomorrow, the Ramlila really over, the maharaja will give each *swarup* 2,500 rupees (in former years it was less, but inflation has probably kept the actual earnings about the same). Other performers will also get something for their Ramlila work. Meanwhile, other members of the royal family, including the current maharaja's sisters, niece, and nephew come down from the balcony where they have been watching and line up to wreathe the *swarups*. These wreathes rest for only a few seconds around the gods' necks. As with temple *prasad* (food offering), the flowers are returned to those that gave them—a circle of sanctification well known in Hindu temple practice. The maharaja ends with the biggest collection of *malas* (garlands). The exchange is clear. He hosts and worships them; they honor and gift him.

Once all this ritual eating, paying, and garlanding is done, the maharaja performs his status as a brahmin priest. He waves the camphor flame of *arati*. Through all this, the crowd of commoners squeezed into the courtyard is silent, focused, delighted, moved. Then seemingly out of nowhere—but how can this be, they are so huge—the elephants reappear. Climbing the ladders leaning against the animals' sides, the *swarups* mount, settle in place, and slowly parade around the inner courtyard and through the great archways. Their way is lit by flare after flare glowing red and then brilliant white. Sadly, triumphantly the gods are departing for Ayodhya amidst clouds of luminescent smoke.

Ayodhya for Ramlila's Final *Arati*

The maharaja is gone. The Ramayanis have finished their chanting of the *Manas*. The story is over. But still a few thousand people have jammed into Ayodhya as the *swarups* return from the Qila. What takes place next is a "people's *arati*." The boys are installed on the *gaddi*. The Ramayanis sit in a circle on the ground near the throne platform. The *vyases* are not on this stage but below, looking up at the *swarups*. There is a casual feel to the crowd where former characters, *vyases*, and Ramayanis mingle with *nemis* and one-timers. People take their final *darshan*, but more easily than after Rama's coronation two nights earlier.

Fig. 5.7 *Kausalya performs* arati *on Ramlila's final night. Photograph by Richard Schechner*

For about an hour, Rishika Mehrishi and I hob-nobbed with Nishad and Jambavan—now out of costume—and many other *lila* participants. Finally, at about midnight, the camphor flame was put into Kausalya's hands. Rama's mother waved the sacred fire—the Ramlila's last *arati*. When the flares died down, the crowd dispersed, maybe exhausted but certainly happy. The *swarups* were carried back to their *dharamsala* near to the banks of the Ganga. There I knew they would bid thanks and farewell to Rama. The next day there is an "after Ramlila party" in Janakpur where the boys—not yet fully ordinary, not still divine—celebrate with and are celebrated by so many who made the Ramlila possible. The maharaja is not at the party. This is for the many without whom there would be no Ramlila. This is in recognition that the Ramlila belongs, ultimately, to the people of Ramnagar.

6

"Inner Movement" between Practices of Meditation, Martial Arts, and Acting: A Focused Examination of Affect, Feeling, Sensing, and Sensory Attunement

Phillip B. Zarrilli

> Sensing is this living communication with the world that makes it present to us as the familiar place of our life. The perceived object and the perceiving subject owe their thickness to sensing.[1] (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 53)

> To be sentient is to open up a world, to yield to its embrace, and to resonate in one's inner being to its illuminations and reverberations. (Ingold 2011: 12)

The Latin *sentire* means "to feel." As the above quotations suggest, to be sentient is to be open to "feeling," that is, to "sensing" and thereby experiencing "a world." But precisely how many senses there are, how they are understood, and how a "world" of sensing/experience is defined varies widely across cultures, histories, and religious-philosophical perspectives (Classen 1993; Elberfeld 2003; Guerts 2005; Howes 2003, 2005). Furthermore, as Giovanna Colombetti argues, "the activity of sense making is simultaneously also affective" (2014: 2).

Specific sensory/experiential "worlds" are potentially opened by long-term, in-depth practice of meditation, martial arts, and acting/performance.[2] Within many approaches to embodied practice there exists the potential to gradually elaborate or unfold a certain complexity or "thickness of sensing" that constitutes the living "world" of that practice.[3] There is available—if one attends to it and opens one's awareness to it—the experience of "what it is like" to inhabit/sense/live within that specific "world."

How does one learn "to be sentient" and "to open up a world," yielding to the resonance "within" offered by that specific "world?" What are the "illuminations and reverberations" afforded by particular processes of embodied practice within a specific context?

Given that one of the primary concerns of phenomenology is examining what it is like to experience specific phenomenally conscious states, that is, with what it is like to perceive, attend to, imagine, feel, sense, remember, and so on (Thompson and Zahavi 2007: 75), I will primarily use a phenomenological approach to examine selected aspects of attention, sensory awareness, and affect/feeling that can be experienced as part of the "inner movement" in these related but diverse practices.[4]

Example 1: Opening Breath-control Exercise

I stand with my feet comfortably open to the width of my shoulders, my knees slightly released (*not locked*), my arms comfortably at my sides, my mouth gently closed. My external focus is directed through a point at eye level across the space from where I stand in the studio. I am "looking" *through* this point from *dantian*—from a place in my lower abdomen about two inches below my navel. That is, I have (imaginatively) "moved" my external visual opening to the world from the physical eyes "in my head" to *dantian*. (The "feel" of choosing to "look" or "visually attend" to the point ahead from *dantian* is decidedly *different* from an ordinary/everyday mode of perceptual visual scanning.)

As I settle into this position, I sense down through the soles of my feet, opening my awareness to and inhabiting the "grounded-ness" available to me in this "ready" position. On the impulse of the next in-breath, while keeping my external gaze focused ahead through a point, I focus my "inner eye" on following the in-breath from the initiation of *this* in-breath as it travels down from my nose through my upper torso, lower abdomen, eventually arriving at *dantian* in my lower abdomen. Then, on the impulse of the out-breath, I follow the breath with my "inner eye" as it travels up from *dantian* through my torso, and eventually out through my nose into the surrounding space. On the "cusp" of the completion of each in-breath and each out-breath, I allow myself to sense the space/time "between," that is, I open my awareness to and sense the completion of each in-breath, and the subsequent initiation/impulse of the ensuing out-breath as it arises. There is a space between to be inhabited.[5]

In addition, while keeping the external eyes focused ahead, and while following the breath with the "inner eye," I also sense an "opening" of my awareness to the periphery both right and left, as well as behind me.

Some Initial Terminological and Methodological Caveats and Qualifications

For the purposes of this chapter, I assume that there are ordinary states of consciousness (or modes of conscious awareness) and that there are transition or borderline experiences between and among these ordinary states of consciousness (Austin 1998; Tart 1975b; Cardeña 2009). Cardeña explains how we "transit" between and within these states of consciousness and that such states organize experience, cognition, physiology, and behavior. Considered from a phenomenological perspective, meditation, martial arts, and acting may all be described as modes of embodied practice whose purpose is to shape socio-culturally, aesthetically, and/or historically specific forms of *extra-ordinary*, non-dual phenomenal consciousness that are somehow *different* from one's ordinary states of consciousness and experience. Austin describes these as "*extraordinary discrete altered states of consciousness*" that "are rare, highly valued, distinct states that represent *a sharp break from other states of perception or intuition*" (1998: 306–7, italics in original). For example, one of the most common and important phenomenal dimensions of in-depth, virtuosic practice of various forms of meditation, martial arts, as well as acting is that the practitioner usually attains through specific training and/or hard-won experience, a heightened ability to *sustain their attention* even if the "object," quality, shape, and type of attention is extremely different. When developing and sustaining a particular discrete altered (or alternative) state of consciousness, "new logics" and "new ways of perceiving" (Tart 1975b: 28) come into play. In addition, as I will argue here, new modes of deploying one's sensory awareness and/or active imagination are also shaped and experienced (Zarrilli forthcoming a).

But "meditation," "martial arts," and "acting" are all highly problematic general categories. Each could be described as a "catch-all" term that includes such diverse techniques, purposes, approaches, socio-cultural histories, and styles/lineages of teaching, that it is difficult if not impossible to provide a definitive definition.[6]

But from a phenomenological perspective, are strict definitions possible or even useful? As Stefan Schmidt argues, "it is almost impossible to draw a straight 'demarcation' line which separates the practice of meditation from other techniques" (2014: 140). As anyone who practices "specific" types of meditation (such as yoga), martial arts (such as *taiqiquan*, Wu-style), or acting (such as the Michael Chekhov technique) knows, there is *tremendous* variation in how any of these specific types of practice are taught. Therefore, it is not the "label" ("yoga," "*taiqi*," "Chekhov technique") that is important, but what techniques the teacher uses, how each teacher engages the student and approaches the specific process of transmission in a specific context, and how an individual's experience is

shaped by that practice.[7] Too often, studies of meditation simply name the specific tradition which their participants practice rather than examining the very specific context, techniques, and specific state(s) which it is the aim of any practice to achieve. Schmidt concludes that "it seems advisable not to insist on a definition which separates meditation from other practices but rather to *develop a system to describe in detail what a certain practice entails*" (2014: 141, emphasis added). Therefore, examining any specific state of attention or deployment of one's sensory awareness should include identification of the specific embodied practice/process, the discourse/teaching process used by the instructor through which actualization of that state of attention or awareness is ideally achieved, as well as the historical and philosophical origins and traditions of a practice.

Clearly, to phenomenologically open up any experiential "world" within practices of meditation, martial arts, or acting, and unfold the potential "thickness to sensing" within that world, requires *specificity*. Therefore, I focus on specific examples of embodied practice between meditation, martial arts, and acting in a specific context, and the optimal state(s) of attention/awareness arising within specific moments of practice. In keeping with phenomenological methodology, I utilize a first-person account of the experience of sensory/experiential states (such as Example 1 above) by focusing on "'the *first person givenness*' of that experience" (ibid.), that is, the qualitative nature of what it is like to be having that experience.[8] The first-person accounts I provide are based on the in-depth modes of bodymind attention and sensory awareness training I have practiced, developed, reflected upon, and utilized over the past 30-plus years as an actor, director, martial artist, and teacher (Zarrilli 2009).[9] When using first-person accounts, I am aware that we must avoid a naïve form of introspection (Walach 2014: 12), since "verbal reports about inner experience can easily be biased" (Lutz et al. 2008c: 167), and that "an explanation of a subjective content of mind, such as a feeling, an emotion or a particular subjective phenomenological experience, is not identical to that experience itself" (Walach et al. 2012: 55).

My focus in this chapter on "inner" experience reflects the phenomenological experience of an embodied practice when it presents itself as having both "inner" and "outer" dimensions. Even in practices where the worldview is monist, and where the problem of extreme forms of dualism are not present, there is often an articulation of both the "inner" and "outer" dimensions of the experience of practice. For example, in traditional practice of *kalarippayattu*—the yoga-based Indian martial art that developed in Kerala during the tenth and eleventh centuries and is still practiced today—students are understood to gradually progress over time by obtaining "compete knowledge of the body," that is, by mastering both the physical, fluid body of humours and saps (*sthula-sarira*), as well as the "subtle (yogic) body" (*suksma-sarira*). The student first learns "the outer forms" through which the physical body becomes extremely flexible/fluid,

and only later through assiduous daily practice does one actualize "that which is internal" (*andarikamayatu*)—"the inner secrets" of the practice (Zarrilli 1998: 84–153).[10] At very advanced stages of practice, inner/outer are no longer differentiated, but there exists the feeling of what it is like to inhabit a state of non-differentiation.

The above example of initial differentiation between "inner" and "outer" dimensions of one's experience of embodied practice reflects the fundamental, intractable "problem" of attempting to reconcile our inhabitation of the physical body, and our "inner" experience of that embodied practice—the feeling (or "inner movement") of what it is like to be "inside" that experience, the state(s) of "consciousness" we inhabit in that process, and so on. The phenomenological/methodological recognition of "inner" and "outer" dimensions of our experience in no way condones Western, Cartesian body-mind dualism; rather, it reflects how our experience sometimes presents itself to us. Recognizing "inner" and "outer" dimensions, points toward one optimal state of accomplished embodiment in which a practitioner senses that she has transcended this type of differentiation.

How Might the "Body become All Eyes"?

As explained in my monograph on the practice of *kalarippayattu* in Kerala, India,

> [K]alarippayattu [is] a "body art" (*meyyabhyasam*), and the only way to learn it [is] through "daily practice." "Daily practice" is *the* phrase used with mantra-like repetition to emphasize the fact that only with repetition can the practitioner begin to develop the proper "body expression" (*deham bhavam*). As his bodymind begins to assume this appropriate expression, a student gradually begins to embody the ideal state of accomplishment assumed in practice—a state where, according to the popular folk expression, like Lord Brahma, the thousand-eyed, "the body becomes all eyes" (*meyyu kannakuka*). This is an optimal state of [attention], awareness and readiness, often compared to the intuitive, instinctual state of an animal in its natural environment where it is ready to respond to any stimuli in that environment. (Zarrilli 1998: 18–19)

Working as an actor, actor-trainer, theatre director, and martial artist, over time I developed a composite process of pre-performative bodymind training for actors that includes intensive daily practice (two to three hours per day, five days a week) of *kalarippayattu*, hatha-yoga (including simple yoga-stretching), and *taiqiquan* (Wu-style).[11] While developing this process, I asked myself:

> What specific studio-based discourse and what modes of "hands-on" instruction might "best" help cultivate and attune actors to specific heightened, extra-daily, non-ordinary "inner" states of attention and sensory awareness "available" in these embodied practices and of immediate use for the actor's work?

By the mid to late 1980s I had assembled from my primary and secondary teachers of *kalarippayattu*, yoga, and *taiqiquan* a specific progression of exercises responding to the above question.[12] I gradually articulated a specific discursive formation and set of metaphors to help actors more fully experience specific states of attention and sensory awareness which contribute to the possibility of the body "becoming all eyes" when acting.[13] To complement the studio-based language that I use to initially guide practitioners toward elaborating the "inner" dimensions of the training, I also developed specific forms of "hands-on" partnering to enhance and help the practitioner discover and attune herself to the specific sensory awareness or "inner movement" or "feeling" available when practicing the pre-performative training. Finally, I created a series of bridging exercises known as "structured improvisations" which is a set of very simple psychophysical tasks organized into increasingly complex rule-based structures played in a workshop setting. The most essential elements cultivated in pre-peformative training—focusing attention, sensory awareness, and the felt-sense of the circulation of *qi*-energy—are applied to these tasks. They provide a bridge between the ongoing pre-performative training and acting (Zarrilli 2009: Chapter 6).

The language I use to guide practitioners through the sequence of pre-performative exercises is intended to "open" them to a number of "states" of attention and awareness. I use the term "state" to mark the experience of what it is like to enter and inhabit the specific "world" being opened through these modes of bodymind practice as they are discursively elaborated in the studio. As emergent, these "states" are not absolute or fixed, and as I discuss below, one's attention, awareness, and consciousness is often working not in a single "state" but rather dialectically between and among the following states:

- *Attention states*
  - (1) concentrated/focused attention
  - (2) open attention/awareness
  - (3) "dialectical" engagement of attention between concentrated/focused and open/awareness
  - (4) "dialectical" engagement between "inner" and "outer" focus/awareness
- *"Feeling" the form(s) of training*: inhabiting the subtle nuances of specific forms of training—"feeling" the form as its "inner movement"

- *Sensory awareness states*: elaborating and opening up one's sensory awareness in a variety of modes such as "deep listening," or opening to touch/being touched (elaborating modes of visual focus—direct and indirect; elaboration of ways of focusing [outward or inward/indirect])
- *Toward an "optimal" state where "the body is all eyes."*

These states of attention and awareness are in some ways "progressive," in that each individual must begin by learning to focus their attention in a concentrated way, as well as how to keep an "open" attention/awareness; however, the "states" are also being developed *simultaneously* during the training process. How and precisely when specific practitioners experience these and come to inhabit and attune themselves to these states can be idiosyncratic.

The process of actor training I have developed might productively be viewed as a specific form of "perceptual apprenticeship" (Downey 2005: 24; see also Downey 2007), through which the actor learns increasingly subtle and complex modes of directing one's attention and opening one's sensory awareness in/to/through the specific tasks, actions, and qualities that constitute the horizon of a performance score actualized in a specific theatrical environment.[14] Using a series of examples of embodied practice, I will elaborate further on the above states of attention/awareness, and on how one deploys attention/awareness *between and among* these states, especially in the practice of martial arts and acting. To initially help describe each "state" of attention or awareness, I have adapted and expanded on a set of questions suggested by James H. Austin (1998: 296–7) that focus on the phenomenal qualities or dimensions of states of attention/awareness:

- What specific field is one attending to or opening awareness toward?
- What is the degree of intensity or amplitude of attending/opening?
- What is the structure or organization of a state?
- What are the properties of the state, that is, is it "clear or indistinct, expanded or contracted?"
- Is there fluidity/movement or "flow" within that state? Even when seemingly still, is there still inner movement?

Attention States 1–4

Example 1 above provides a description of the first of four breath-control exercises that begin the pre-performative training process.[15] Most important for purposes of this discussion, is that the practitioner *begins* to develop what is usually described as "concentrative" (Austin 2014: 24), "focused

attention" (Lutz et al. 2008c: 164), or "contentless awareness of the mind" (Fontana 2007: 155), that is, the ability to direct and sustain attention on a specific object—initially, the point at eye level directly ahead.[16]

But given the structure of the exercise, there is already *complexity* within this initial "state" of attending to. As described above, even on the first day of introducing individuals to these apparently "simple" breath-control exercises, I invite participants to not only attend to the point ahead, but simultaneously relocate their "external eyes" from their heads to *dantian*, to begin to exercise their "inner eye" on following the in-breath and out-breath, *and* to begin to open their peripheral and back awareness. Therefore, the "structure" of these exercises is quite complex as one is invited to work *between and among* attending to the point ahead with the external eyes, "looking" from *dantian*, following each in-breath/out-breath with the inner eye, and developing an ability to openly attend to and be aware of the space one is inhabiting. All four are specific ways of learning to still the mind, direct one's attention, and thereby quiet a too often naturally busy brain, "monkey-mind," or "squirrel-like" mind that races here and there (see Austin 2006: 33).

Unlike some forms of meditation where one focuses in solo practice exclusively on entering and visualizing a single image within and withdraws all other awareness, for the practice of the martial artist and actor it is essential to learn to direct attention while *simultaneously* keeping a completely "open" awareness to anyone/everything in that environment. Two aspects of the experience of practicing these exercises stand out. In being attentive with the inner eye, in being attentive through the point ahead with the external gaze, and by opening one's sensory awareness both outward and inward, one is stretching both attention and awareness "*toward* something. Attention reaches out into the environment as well as 'out' within one's own bodymind. We attend *to* things, orient toward them, face them" (Austin 2006: 38, italics in original), while simultaneously sustaining an awareness of *the from*, that is, keeping open to the subtler modes of awareness available to us from which the "to" emerges.

"Feeling" the Form as "Inner Movement"

Given the primary purpose of the opening breath-control exercises—to help the individual initially still the mind, attend to, and open awareness—the intensity and amplitude does not overtly vary greatly as one continues the exercises daily. What *does* alter over time is the degree, type, and quality of the "felt" sense of connection; what inhabiting the exercises is "like." When one begins, there is little "that it is like," since sufficient repetition and experience have not as yet attuned one to what is possible within the exercises. "What it is like" only emerges over time, and changes in the

sense that—like learning to have a discriminating sense of smell for the perfumer, or taste for the expert wine-taster—the subtle ability to discriminate and "taste" or savor the quality of the "feeling" is enhanced. It is like a process of sedimentation—the "depth," "clarity," and "quality" of (a) "concentrated attention" and (b) "open awareness" are both enriched. Likewise depth, clarity, and quality are simultaneously enhanced as one (c) *dialectically works between* single-point focus and open awareness, and (d) *between* "outer" and "inner" focus.

Attending to in-breath and out-breath is an essential or "base-line" part of the ongoing training, as overt physical movement is added in the additional breath control exercises, as well as when practicing yoga and *taiqiquan*.

Example 2: The Opening Movements of *Taiqiquan* (Wu-style, short form)

Using the type of attentive-breathing described above, I "settle" into the opening standing position from which I will begin a repetition of the short form of Wu-style *taiqiquan*. After several cycles of attending to each in-breath/out-breath, on the *next* in-breath, while simultaneously keeping my external gaze ahead through space and while continuing to focus my "inner-eye" on tracking this in-breath, I allow the impulse/movement of breath-as-*qi*[17] to travel up through my torso, out through my shoulders and eventually out through my two wrists, "moving" both my arms in a gentle upward arc as they rise together (elbows *not locked*) to about the height of my shoulders. Sensing the completion of this in-breath, on the cusp of the space/time between this "in-breath" and the impulse/initiation of the next out-breath, I attend to and inhabit the transition space/time "between" this completion and the initiation of the exhalation with the simultaneous initiation of (now downward) movement of the wrists/arms, returning toward the place where the arms began at my sides.

Long-term practice of *taiqiquan* is understood to internally cultivate *qi*. It does so via an even pattern of inhalation and exhalation while in constant motion—the give and take of complementarity, of up with down, out and in, of balance and counter-balance, in the flow and transition from one moment to the next. Following Yuasa Yasuo (1993, 1987), I define one's awakening to this inner energy that can be circulating within as the development of *qi*-awareness, that is, one becomes aware that *qi* is present and can travel within, as well as outward through the bodymind into the environment. There is a "felt"/sensory quality when *qi* is present.

Having practiced this short form of Wu-style *taiqi* for more than three decades, I also have available, throughout the approximately 20 minutes

it takes to complete the entire form, the inner "feeling" generated by each movement of breath/*qi* in relation to each physical movement within the form. Attentive practice offers further modes of opening one's awareness to, and attending to, the "feel" of the "inner movement" available in practicing the form. In the transition between the "upward" movement of the wrists/arms/breath-*qi* and the "downward" movement, there is what might be described as the felt quality of an "echo," "inner vibration," or "resonation" of the "up" with the "down". That is, there is the felt quality of the energetic continuation of the "upward" movement *as I begin the "downward" movement described above*.

Once practitioners have gained sufficient experience with the basic forms, one strategy to help open and sensitize inner awareness is the use of side-coaching through *short activating phrases* and/or verbal prompts to utilize one's *residual awareness* or continuation of *qi* from the previous movement. For example, while doing the opening movements of *taiqi* described in Example 2, I invite practitioners to "sense the residue of the up in the space between, and as the arms are traveling down." Or I might prompt practitioners to "sense the downward movement of *qi* through the entire body, that is, downward through the soles of the feet and simultaneously extending upwards through the top of the head."

The following vivid, subtle description of *taiqiquan* practice is offered by master Chang San-Feng, dating from approximately 1200 CE. The description encapsulates some of the underlying psychophysical principles informing *taiqiquan* practice:

> In all of this, you must emphasize the use of mind in controlling your movements, rather than the mere use of the external muscles. You should also follow the *taiqi* principle of opposites: when you move upward, the mind must be aware of down; when moving forward, the mind also thinks of moving back; when shifting to the left side, the mind should simultaneously notice the right side—so that if the mind is going up, it is also going down. (Liao 2000: 87–93)

In master Chang San-Feng's text, the Chinese term *hsin* has been translated as "mind." While the translation is technically correct, in the context above his use of mind in the phrase "when you move upward, the mind must be aware of down" does *not* refer to analytical, propositional, discursive consciousness. Rather, "mind" refers to the "felt" (cognitive/mental element) present when the practitioner fully engages *qi*-awareness *while in movement*.

Sensory Awareness States

Awareness is further and more specifically elaborated in the pre-performative training by inviting participants to open alternative sensory modes *while performing specific exercises*. One of the most important and difficult parts of the body to awaken and attune are the soles of the feet.

Example 3: Attaining a "Thickness of Sensing" in the Soles of the Feet

Figure 6.1 shows one of the basic "animal poses" in the practice of *kalarippayattu*: the "lion pose" (*simhavadivu*). Notice that the right and left heels are in a single line, that the knees of each leg are situated above the ball of the foot, that the weight is slightly forward over the right foot, that the palms are open with the fingers slightly extended, and that the eyes are wide open. When moving forward from one lion pose to another, the back foot slides inside next to the stationary foot, and then as it slides forward the stationary foot pivots on the ball of the foot to the outside.

Fig. 6.1 *Lion pose. Image courtesy of Phillip Zarrilli*

Instructing participants while moving forward from one lion to another, I invite them to "sense down through the sole of the back foot … as you slide the foot forward, keep sensing through the sole of the foot … sense through the sole of the opposite foot as it pivots to the outside." Optimally, vital energy/awareness (*prana-vayu*) is "driven" down through the soles of both feet from the lower abdomen (*nabhi mula*). The soles of the feet are gradually awakened. There is the sense of a line of vital energy moving down through the soles of the feet. The practitioner can attune oneself to the *tactile sensation available through the skin*.

For very advanced practitioners, the degree of tactile/sensory awareness available through the soles of one's feet as well as the palms of the hands is most fully and subtly developed when one learns the unique form of *kalarippayattu* massage (*uliccil*). The massage is given by using the soles of the feet (Figure 6.2) while holding onto ropes suspended from the ceiling, and with the palms/hands. This extremely intensive massage is traditionally given over a 15-day period only to students of *kalarippayattu*, when a special oil is liberally applied to the entire body. Just as the practitioner gains the ability to control one's vital energy (*prana-vayu*), raise his internal power (*sakti*), and channel both out through his hands/arms during the preliminary exercises or in armed and unarmed combat, likewise he controls and applies his vital energy and power through his palms and soles of the feet for healing.

Kalarippayattu uliccil massage is understood to effect both the humeral balance and the alignment/tone of the physical body, as well as the channels and centers of the subtle "inner" body. The massage originates and terminates at the small of the back opposite the navel region (corresponding to *muladhara-cakra*), at the point of confluence of many of the major channels of the subtle body. Administering massage strokes out from and back to this region with the palms and soles of the feet stimulates and circulates the internal wind (*vayu*) to move through the channels (*nadi*) of the subtle body, and thereby enhances the student's gradual embodiment of correct form through which strength and power emanate outward from the lower abdominal region.[18]

For the practitioner giving this massage, one gains an extremely subtle ability to circulate the internal wind (*vayu*) while simultaneously controlling the intensity and amplitude of pressure/energy released into each stroke of the palms or feet originating from the lower abdomen. Giving the massage leads to a further sensitization of the entire bodymind. One learns to simultaneously touch while "being touched."[19]

In addition to inviting tactile sensory awareness in the feet discussed above and the palms/hands through other exercises, I eventually also invite opening one's auditory awareness during repetition of the preliminary training—especially the opening breathing exercises and yoga. I invite practitioners to "open your ears to each in-breath and out-breath." Attending to the subtle resonance/sounding of the in-breath and out-breath

Fig. 6.2 Kalari *foot massage. Image courtesy of Phillip Zarrilli*

leads to a process of "deep-listening" especially important in the work of the actor (Zarrilli 2012).

Opening these modes of subtler sensory awareness in the pre-performative training attunes the practitioner to the types of heightened sensory awareness that can be discovered in psychophysical training, which is crucial to full embodiment in their work as actors. One of the most crucial dimensions of the actor's work that differentiates it from meditation is that actors must not only become sensorially attuned within themselves, but must do so inter-subjectively. Therefore, as part of the training process I gradually invite practitioners to open their visual and auditory awareness to the others with whom they are working.[20]

As a final example, I provide a description and analysis of enacting one specific part of the performance score for *Told by the Wind*, in which heightened tactile/sensory awareness through the palm was crucial to the full embodiment of this moment of performance.[21] In this production there are two "figures" on-stage throughout the approximately 53 minutes' performance—a male figure (P. Zarrilli) and a female figure (Jo Shapland). Throughout the performance these two figures simultaneously inhabit the playing area, but never once do they look to each other, nor do they overtly interact. The production is inspired by "quietude" (Boyd 2006, 2012). Except for incidental noise in the performance space, the male figure

delivers fragmentary/suggested text during about ten minutes of the total performance time. Otherwise, most of the performance is in silence.

Fig. 6.3 Told by the Wind. *Image courtesy of Phillip Zarrilli*

Example 4: "A Hand"—Touching a Chair

In Figure 6.3, the male figure approaches a chair located downstage centre-left. Moments prior approaching the chair as the male figure, I had been standing at a writing desk, looking out of a window frame suspended in air, sensing the "presence" of someone … but who that "other" is I do not know. Is this "other" out-there in the space through the window, *or* is this other *behind* me? My performance score consists of a series of what might be described as "questions"—but these questions are *not* formulated in my mind, nor are these questions literally shaped into words or thoughts that are verbally expressed. Rather, these "questions" are formulated in my bodymind "sensorially." While looking out of the window, I begin to sense through my back the possible presence of this "other" … and so, I turn, looking across the playing space behind me … but no one is "there" (for/to me).

What the audience sees/experiences is that there *is* an "other" present— a female figure. From their perspective, I stand up suddenly and look out of the window at the very moment that the female figure arrives and suddenly stops at the upstage threshold to a square of earth in the playing area on-stage. While I am looking out of the

window, the female figure eventually steps *across the threshold and onto the earth*—entering the "space-time" demarcated by the earth and its four thresholds.

When I am sensing that there might be a presence behind me and turn, I do not "see" this space-time she has entered. I am looking beyond her as I cross the width of the playing area upstage of the earth square "she" inhabits. She is *not* part of what I "see," although I "sense" that some "other" may be present … somewhere in that space … but where? While standing looking into the upstage left space toward what might be there, this "where?" *moves* me again … I turn facing downstage … and see *the chair* in Figure 6.3.

I begin to approach the chair—it is a chair I "know," but equally do not know. It seems familiar, but at the same time "strange." It possesses me in the sense that it invites me to touch it … to inhabit it…But why, I do not yet know. The "why" has not as yet revealed itself to me in this moment of time. And so, as I approach the chair, I *sense it sensing me*, inviting me … inviting the palm of my left hand to sense it … to reach toward it … slowly, and finally, to touch it. Before I literally touch the chair, I am already "touching" it … or is it "touching" me … through the palm of my hand? Words come to me, and I speak: "A hand [*my palm makes contact with the chair*] conducting [*sits in chair*] striking the air. Stroke … beat … stroke … beat."

Through my palm as it touches the chair, there is a moment of re-membering—the reverberation … echo … or "feel" of each "*stroke*" and each "*beat*" of my right hand when it was "conducting … striking the air," a musical score I had been writing in an earlier structure of this performance.

The process of enhancing the actor's subtle modes of (visual, tactile, auditory, etc.) awareness elaborated during the pre-performative training is—in the above example at least—deployed in this specific moment of performance. The extension of "vital energy" (*qi/prana-vayu*) through the palm when approaching the chair provides a "felt" bodymind connection that leads to re-membering, that is, a visitation of the embodied "feel" of the "past" in the present moment.

In terms of actor training, the great Russian director and acting teacher Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863–1938) was primarily concerned with the actor's ability to inhabit the stage environment as a living/sentient being:

> [A]ll our acts, even the simplest, which are so familiar to us in everyday life become strained when we appear … before a public … That is why it is necessary to correct ourselves and learn again how to walk, move about, sit, or lie down. It is essential to re-educate ourselves to look and see, on the stage, to listen, and to hear. (1980 [1936]: 73)

The examples of pre-performative training briefly outlined above have the potential to offer a constant process of re-education which "thickens the senses" and invites an opening up of the "world" of performance where there is, as Ingold suggests, the potential for resonation "in one's inner being to its illuminations and reverberations" (2011: 12).

The Bodymind "as All Eyes"

The overall/optimal state of the martial artist and actor is when the bodymind "is" or "becomes all eyes"—an apt metaphor for the optimal state of sensory awareness to the immediate environment. This type of extra-ordinary state is a state of being-doing, in which there is no thought and in which "*the self drops out*" (Austin 1998: 296, emphasis in the original). The ultimate "aim" of the training process for the actor is to become attuned to the possibilities offered her as a sentient being, that is, one who perceives, attends to, opens one's awareness to, feels, re-members, reflects, senses, and/or imagines as appropriate to (1) the performance score, (2) the aesthetic that has shaped the creation of a performance, and (3) in response to what is available within the immediate performance environment at each moment of performance.

As Evan Thompson explains, one gradually suspends "one's inattentive immersion in experience" and develops "meta-awareness"—an "awareness of awareness" (2007: 19). What develops is one's ability to constantly "reinhabit" the flow of experience "in a fresh way, namely, with heightened awareness and attunement" (ibid.). Second, there is an integrated, inter-sensory relationship between, and engagement with, our other senses, including proprioception, *as a gestalt*. The bodymind ideally operates as an integrated whole, as one dialectically engages, attending to and aware of what one is doing as it is done. In achieving heightened attention there is equally an "attending 'with' and attending 'to' the body," and to the body in the act of its deployment of attention and awareness. Over time, this heightened mode of somatic inhabitation can become a form of tacit, practical knowledge informing how one utilizes attention and awareness in performance.

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7

Exploring the Andean Sensory Model: Knowledge, Memory, and the Experience of Pilgrimage

Zoila Mendoza

In this chapter, through the example of pilgrimage in the Peruvian Andes, I argue that the study of public performance, ritual, and the religious experience in any society needs to start from a careful understanding of how the senses are organized in such society. Along with scholars in the anthropology of the senses, and sensory studies in general, I am convinced that we need to understand a society through its "sensory model" in order to fully understand the practices within it (Howes 1991, 2003; Classen 1993a and b). As Classen has put it, "our knowledge of the world comes to us primarily through our senses, and thus the value we assign to our different senses has a profound influence on the way we conceive of the world" (1993a: 3). This simple but significant statement has guided me towards a deeper understanding of why religious festivals and folkloric/ritual music and dance are such essential practices in Andean society. It has allowed me to realize that this relevance can only be understood by paying close attention to the predominant Andean form of knowledge and memory, which in turn can only be captured if we understand the Andean sensory model.

Having spent a significant portion of my work explaining the importance of Andean performance for the creation, maintenance, and transformation of socio-cultural identities (Mendoza 2000), and investigating the larger social and political phenomena of which these performative practices are part and parcel (Mendoza 2008), there still remained an important portion of my analysis that needed to be completed. This portion has to do with fully answering the question of *why* Andeans choose these particular practices as a privileged form of social action. An anthropology/sociology that took bodily practices as crucial to understand ritual, performance, and society in general (Comaroff 1985; Fabian 1990; Bourdieu 1987), and the interdisciplinary fields of ethnomusicology (Erlmann 1996; Seeger 1987), dance studies (Novak 1990; Ness 1992; Sklar 2001), and performance studies (Schechner 1986; Taylor 2003), with their emphasis on the specific

qualities of the performances and their power for realizing, or making real, social experience, certainly paved my way into the study of the sensory experience. This is not an uncommon path, as noted by Howes (1991: 3).

In 2006, I set out to a new research project that would help me answer the question posed above: *why* do Andeans choose festivals and folkloric/ritual music and dance as privileged forms of social action? For that purpose, I decided to focus on the most important regional festivity of the Cuzco region, and the largest pilgrimage in the Andes, where the performance of music and dance is the main way of worship: the pilgrimage of the *Señor de Qoyllorit'i* (Lord of the Shiny Snow). I had previously participated and done some research in this event in 1989 and 1990, and knew that there was still much to learn about Andean society and performance in it. The sanctuary, to which once a year 40,000–50,000 pilgrims flock, is the highest in the world (16,000 feet above sea level).[1] The focus of this pilgrimage is a Christ painted on a rock located near the mountain/glacier of Ausangate, venerated since pre-Hispanic times.[2] Pilgrims have traditionally walked from their towns to this site and worshipped this image through their music and dance, although this has changed since the closing decades of the past century (see Poole 1988).

This chapter focuses on the dance troupes that once a year walk to the sanctuary for three days and two nights, along 85 miles, up and down mountains, accompanied by the incessant music of flutes and drums. After another two and a half days and two nights at the site, where they perform their ritual dances and participate in an unremitting musical experience, these Quechua-speaking[3] pilgrims go back to their towns to leave the site deserted. My analysis focuses on the intrinsic relationship between the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic sensory experiences of the pilgrims, a relationship that, I hypothesize, is the keystone of the predominant Andean form of knowledge/memory. In the Andes, the unity of what people in the Euro-American societies may tend to conceive as three separate senses—hearing, sight, and bodily movement (kinesthesia)[4]—is essential to the cognitive process that takes place during this and other religious/festive experiences. Understanding the importance of the unity of this triad leads us not only to better comprehend the Andean sensory model and to begin answering the question driving my current research, but also to think about how this unity may work in religious and ritual experiences elsewhere. Here, the argument developed by David Parkin (whose work puts performance and embodiment at the center of analysis), that ritual is "always concerned with movement, directionality, and spatial orientation" (1992: 16), offers an interesting way to project the Andean-specific model into a more universal perspective. Adding to Parkin's argument (and I think implicit within it), we may hypothesize that intrinsic to ritual, or at least to many rituals (and only many more sensory-oriented studies would be able to probe this), this movement and spatial orientation is in a close relationship with the auditory and visual experiences of the participants,

and that it is this close relationship which is essential to the effectiveness of the ritual. I will come back to this extension of Parkin's argument in the concluding section.

More specifically, in this chapter I analyze the intrinsic relationship that for the people of Pomacanchi[5] exists between walking to the sanctuary and the music that accompanies them. I will pay particular attention to the significance of the main melody that accompanies their walk, which is the same one (although with local variations and different instrumentations) that accompanies all pilgrims on their way to the sanctuary and in their movement within it. Therefore, this melody permeates the experience of all participants in the ritual, non-stop day and night.[6] Its name is *Chakiri Wayri*[7] and it is derived from one of the most popular dances of the region: the *Wayri Ch'unchu*. I will also look at some aspects related to another melody played as well by all groups for veneration at specific stops during the walk and in the sanctuary: the *Alawaru*.[8]

During the walk, which I have done with the people of Pomacanchi in 2006, 2008, and 2010, a central aspect of the Andean culture and sensory model documented by previous studies becomes evident, that is, the primacy that for Andeans the unity of the visual and the auditory has in the cognitive processes (Classen 1997; Harrison 1989). However, in this walk a third dimension emerges as a key missing element in this sensory model: the sense of motion or kinesthesia. In other words, the unity of the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic is what makes the participation in this pilgrimage a unique and unforgettable experience. I argue that the obvious primacy that the unity of these three senses has for the people of Pomacanchi during this particular pilgrimage is not unique to this town or this particular ritual occasion. It is simply that this particular case allows us to analyze more closely a phenomenon that I believe to be spread throughout the Andes.

After my first pilgrimage experience with the Pomacanchi people in 2006 and a particular situation in the town in 2007, it became obvious that the experience of walking to the sanctuary with the appropriate music was even more important for them than to perform their dance at the sanctuary or participate in any of the other ritual practices carried out at the site. This music not only makes them experience vitality and other positive feelings/concepts (which I will discuss later in the chapter), but provides the very concrete appropriate way to mediate the multiple encounters that will take place along the way and at the sanctuary: the meetings with territories out of their community, with the sacred sites, with the sun when it rises, with other groups of pilgrims, and, of course, with the rock image of the Lord. Moreover, it seems obvious to me that the theme of the "encounter" is central to the whole festival of the Lord of Qoyllorit'i and that the multiple encounters that take place during it are mediated in a crucial way by the audiovisual and kinesthetic experiences of the participants. Continuing with the theme of the encounter, I will present the first element of my analysis, an encounter that according to the oral and written tradition gave birth to the image and festival.

The Shepherd Boy and Boy Jesus Dance the *Wayri Ch'unchu*

There are many oral and written versions about the origin of the cult of the Lord of Qoyllorit'i. The written ones go from the "official" one registered by the Catholic Church in 1932 (Flores Lizama 1997; Sallnow 1987) to the multiple versions sold at the sanctuary and in the local markets of the region. The oral versions, as would be expected, not only vary from town to town but also according to the narrator within the same town. I cannot do a full analysis of all the central elements of the story here, but only highlight one that has been left aside and not analyzed by any of the existing studies of the cult and that I believe to be central to the experience of the festival for all participants. I am referring to the fact that all oral versions emphasize two kinds of movement as central to the story: the dancing of the *Wayri Ch'unchu*, as the main interaction between boy Jesus and the shepherd boy, and the movement across the landscape, sometimes in the form of an escape or a chase or simply as a back and forth movement from one place to another. In this section I will refer to the aspect of the dance and in the next I will come back to the movement across the landscape.

In a highly summarized way, the longest and most elaborate version that I gathered in Pomacanchi highlights the following points:

- The shepherd boy is neglected and mistreated by the older brother who is supposed to take care of the boy and the family flocks. For that reason, the boy decides to escape towards the Amazon for a better future, and in order to reach that region he has to pass glaciers.
- During this escape the shepherd boy finds the boy Jesus at the foot of the glacier where the sanctuary is now located. The boy Jesus consoles the shepherd boy, promising that he will help tend the flocks and keep him company.
- Every day, the two boys meet at the same place to play and mainly dance the *Wayri Ch'unchu*, and as a result of the dance the flocks multiply.
- Finally, the boys are discovered by the shepherd boy's parents, community members, and the local clergy and after a long chase the boy Jesus disappears, jumping into a rock and leaving behind a wooden cross and an image of a crucified Christ on the rock. The shepherd boy dies in shock when he sees his friend dead. The boy is then buried under that rock.

Even reducing the story to these elements, there would be much to analyze and discuss, but here I will concentrate on the fact that the most important element that mediates the encounter between Jesus and the

shepherd, or the main thing they share, is the performance of the *Wayri Ch'unchu* dance. In other local oral versions and some written ones many sections are dropped but never the fact that the two boys met and then danced that particular dance and that was how the flocks increased. This point was always emphasized by dancers and musicians with whom I shared the pilgrimage and who explained that the *Chakiri Wayri* is essential for this experience. They considered this music the favorite of the Lord of Qoyllorit'i because it was what he danced to with the shepherd boy.

Interestingly enough, the dancing of the *Wayri Ch'unchu* is something that is not present in the official written version recorded by Catholic Church authorities, but it is emphasized in the oral tradition. The priest who was the chaplain of the sanctuary for many years pointed this out:

> Evidently there are variations, as in any religious tradition, in the sense that certain aspects are highlighted according to the necessity of the listener or of the community that passes on this tradition, that is, depending on the context. To give an example, it is said that the so-called [*Wayri*] *Ch'unchu* dance, which we all dance the vespers of the central day, was what the boy shepherd and the boy Jesus danced while playing and watching the flocks and that is why it is the dance that the Lord likes the most. (Flores Lizama 1997: 34)

This and other authors have clearly indicated that it is well known among people in the region that because the *Wayri Ch'unchu* is the favorite of the Lord, the tune has become the central theme of the pilgrimage (see Allen 1988, Poole 1988, and Sallnow 1987). We need to note here that this dance is an Andean representation of the inhabitants of the Amazon and that it is considered to be one of the most traditional ones of the region. It is also one that the peasant and herder communities identify with. As elsewhere, Andeans represent themselves using the image of an "other" that they consider opposite (see Cánepa Koch 1993; Poole 1991; and Seeger 1995). In this case, the location of the sanctuary is key as it is in a province that borders with the Amazon, so it is not a surprise that the character of the "*Ch'unchu*," which in Quechua means inhabitant of the Amazon (and also "wild"), was chosen.

The closeness of the Amazon is also highlighted in the Pomacanchi version summarized above, as in others in the region, when it is mentioned that the shepherd boy had plans to go to the Amazon (even a couple of specific towns in that area are mentioned) as a way to escape from the mistreatment of the brother. For that purpose, he had to cross a glacier at the foot of which he met the boy Jesus. Again, this is not the only image of moving on foot across the landscape or escape present in the story. It is to this movement on foot to which I now turn.

"The Dancers Want/Like to Go on Foot": The Experience of the Walk

A particular situation in the community of Pomacanchi in 2007 allowed me to better understand the why it is important for the local dance troupes to do the journey to the sanctuary on foot. That year, the recently re-elected mayor gave the three dance troupes of the town a truck to transport them to the town of Mawallani, from which one only has to climb 8 kilometers[9] up to reach the sanctuary. While other people from Pomacanchi have used motorized transportation to reach Mawallani for some time now—and probably over half of the participants do so these days—it remains a tradition for the dance troupes, as for their ancestors, to make the journey on foot.

That year I arrived at the community after the pilgrimage had concluded. Since I had not participated in it, the dance troupe members with whom I had done the walk the year before were quick to tell me that they had traveled by truck, and to relate to me all the negative aspects about that experience compared with the positive ones when they do the walk. The following excerpt of a conversation illustrates some of these points:[10]

Z: This year you traveled by truck, right?
D: Yeah, the municipal government helped us all.
Z. Right, how was traveling by truck?
D: Well, a little … not as it should be. We found ourselves more tired. We were very uncomfortable. There was no fun. We arrived by truck and only from Mawallani we went up, we climbed. There was not much atmosphere/ambience as there is when we walk.
Z: For you, is it better to go on foot or …?
D: On foot, going on foot there is happiness, looking at the landscape, like a tourist, right? Also with our cargo on our backs, with our cargo on our backs, that is what we like the most. Because the municipal government helped us paying for the truck we said: "OK, let's take advantage then."

This segment, besides explaining why they decided to go by truck, points out some elements that were also present in many of the other conversations that I had with the members of the group. First, that traveling on truck, besides being uncomfortable, does not fulfill the expectations of "fun" that there is when traveling on foot, and that in a motor vehicle there is not the expected "atmosphere/ambience" that there is when walking. In many conversations it was mentioned that what makes the walk fun is everything that they share during it. During this walk they joke among themselves and also share moments of reflection and prayer. During their rests they exchange and chew bundles of coca leaves, food, and drinks,

invoking the powerful mother earth and the mountains, sharing with these powers as is commonplace in Andean rural communities (see Allen 1988). The experiences that emerge from hearing the *Chakiri* tune while walking are also frequently pointed out as an essential part of the walk, as was also stated by the dancer quoted above in another section of our conversation. This last aspect is discussed in more detail in the next section.

A second element mentioned in the conversation quoted above emphasizes an aspect of the walk that was not only verbalized many times by the participants, but which I could partake of during the three pilgrimages that we did together. This is the fact that along the path they learn about and remember, through sight (*rikuy*), the vast and beautiful territories that surround them and the special places marked as important and/or sacred. Here once again, the music that accompanies them plays a central role in the visual experience while walking, sustaining my argument about the Andean sensory model—that is, the importance of the unity of the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic in the cognitive experiences of Andeans.

But concentrating for a moment on the visual aspect, I would like to quote one of the women who did the walk for the first time in 2008, accompanying the dance troupe as a *Mama Wayri* (a woman in charge of the cooking during the travel). Commenting on what she considered an unforgettable experience that she would like to repeat now that her children are older, she stated:

> Wanting to see/know [*rikuy*] the journey on foot I have gone as *Mama Wayri* … I said, "I am going to see/know." I wondered, "How are all those mountains? Where does the path go?"… That is why I went. Wanting to see/know, wanting to see/know; that way we have arrived happily. I have loved seeing/knowing the path, besides, seeing/knowing how they walk as a group is what I wanted to see/learn about the most, I have loved it.

The omnipresence of the Quechua term *rikuy*, which I translate here as see/know, indicates that there is an important experience of learning/knowing for the pilgrims on their way to the sanctuary. Pilgrims learn/know through sight, while walking with the appropriate accompanying music. In her study of Quichua (as Quechua is called in Ecuador) oral tradition in Ecuador, Regina Harrison (1989) has argued that, for Andeans, the verb "*rikuy*" which also means "to see" is crucial in referring to the experience of learning. As is the case in Ecuador, it is clear that for the people of Pomacanchi "seeing" is an important part of retaining information (Harrison 1989: 79). Moreover, I believe that in this pilgrimage and in other situations in the lives of Andeans, learning and retention of new information, as well as the remembering of already acquired information, is intensified or augmented by the sensation of movement and by the accompanying appropriate sound.

Focusing for a moment on the aspect of movement across the landscape, I want to recall here that Andean oral tradition, from pre-Hispanic times until today, provides countless examples where the central theme of this movement is that of a chase or persecution, or exploration (Salomon and Urioste 1991; Itier 2007). It is during this constant movement that the important encounters between the central characters of the stories take place, or when crucial transformations happen, often leaving behind a visible mark on the terrain. One example is the story of the origin of the Lord of Qoyllorit'i cult referred to in the previous section, where the movement is omnipresent from the intended escape of the shepherd boy towards the Amazon when he encountered the boy Jesus, through the performance of the *Wayri Ch'unchu* dance, to the final persecution of the boy Jesus by the parents, community members, and local clergy. Of course the result of the final persecution, as in many Andean oral traditions, ends by leaving a visible mark on the land: the rock where the image of the crucified Christ appears and under which the boy shepherd is buried.

But the movement along the path toward the sanctuary is not just of any kind: the ideal is that the members of the dance troupe always move in one solid mass in an orderly and coordinated way. The formation, not only during the walk but also during their rests, is on a single file. This ideal type of group movement was referred to as a special feature of the walk that the *Mama Wayri* wanted to see/learn about. In the preparatory meetings and throughout the walk, the group leaders emphasized the importance of this coordinated group movement. This movement, which needs the appropriate music to take place, can be seen as a prelude to the main activity that the group will perform at the sanctuary, namely, the ritual dance in honor of the Lord. Therefore, it is the coordinated movement accompanied by music that makes possible a meaningful and proper encounter with the Lord and makes the whole experience have a profound impact on the participants.

Another element that was obvious during the pilgrimage and in the conversations with the majority of the Pomacanchi pilgrims is that they see the walk as a privileged way to expiate their sins. As some members of the group have pointed out, while the walk itself is not that hard for those who are used to walking frequently on that kind of terrain (which is still the case for most adult members of the Pomacanchi), there are other aspects of the journey that are associated with sacrifice. For example, there is the cold at night (the journey takes place during the frost season) and the heavy packs carried. In special moments during the walk, the pilgrims add stones to their packs that they pick up from the ground and carry to the top of a particularly steep hill to a sacred point, an *Apacheta*,[11] where they will leave them as a sign of having cleansed themselves. This makes the idea of the expiation of the sins even more visible and palpable, as the rocks are considered to be the sins: the bigger the stone, the bigger the sin to be pardoned.

I could quote many statements to illustrate the association between doing the journey on foot and expiating one's sins, but I will share just a couple

of them here. The first one, which gives the name to this section, comes from an adult woman who sponsored the dance troupe in 2007 and who commented on the fact that the members had decided to never go by truck again said: "The dancers want/like [*munay*][12] to go on foot. They said: 'We want/like to go on foot'; that way at least our sins are pardoned … our sins are forgiven if we go on foot.' That is what they said." Another participant, a dancer who in 2008 had completed the walk six times as an *Ukuku*[13] character (one that is found in all the troupes that go to the sanctuary and in other rituals of the region as essential companions to the main dancers), remarked on this preference to go on foot: "On foot, on foot, no doubt, on foot, sometimes we acknowledge our sins inside our hearts, we confess our sins inside our hearts as we go along. With great faith we go and therefore nothing happens to us, that is why we go on foot."

Before moving onto the next section, I would like to mention an element of the experience of the group walk that, while not fully analyzed here, should be explored further in the future if we want to advance our understanding of the sensory model and the predominant form of knowledge in the Andes. This point takes us back, once again, to the necessary auditory counterpart of the visual experience in the cognitive process, but this time pointing out the position that is assigned to these essential parts. This is the association of the visual with the front, and the auditory with the back. In the established order for the walk, all the visible icons representing the dance troupe go in front of the file: the banners, the Peruvian flag, the community's flag, the troupe's flag, the Inca Empire flag, and the miniature replica of the Lord that is carried by the main sponsor of the troupe and which is the symbol of his/her status. The musicians always go at the back, as if pushing the group ahead. While there might be moments when this order is altered because a person lags behind, the leaders in charge of the group order intervene so that the order is restored as soon as possible.

Constance Classen (1993a), analyzing the sensory model privileged by the Incas, has also emphasized this association of the front with the visual and the back with the auditory: "Sight is associated with the visible, structured past, situated in front of the body; and hearing with the dark, fluid future, situated behind the body" (1993a: 6). Furthermore, ethnomusicologists have found this same kind of association, of front with the past and back with the future, in contemporary Quechua-speaking peasant communities (Solomon 1997; Stobart 2006; Bellenger 2007). As Solomon notes, bringing the space/time dichotomy together:

> Here to move forward in space means to continue to be in force, to be alive, vibrant. The Quechua spatial metaphor, while superficially similar to the English idea that "to move forward" is to "promote" (transitive) or to "progress" (intransitive), is actually very different, invoking at the same time a model from the past that must be followed.

> Thus, in Quechua to move forward one must look toward the past. The conceptual unity of past time and progress represented as forward space is coded semantically in the term ñawpa [a term used for referring to the past and also for the front]. The richness of the associations this term evokes explains its prominence in the metacultural discourse of the people of the *ayllus* [Andean communities]. For people raised speaking Quechua, this space-time relationship goes without saying—they would not even conceive that there is an alternate way of thinking about it. (1997: 46)

It is clear that a close study of the musical experiences in the Andes from the perspective of the Quechua-speaking actors will help us to better understand not only the sensory model but also the different spatial/temporal concepts that are central in the cognitive processes in such a society. With this thought, I now move to the importance of the musical experience during the walk.

"Without Music it would be like Not Going at All … Everything would be Silence": *Chakiri Wayri* and *Alawaru* during the Walk

For anybody who has been to the sanctuary or has encountered a group of pilgrims on their way to the Lord of Qoyllorit'i, it is evident that the music that accompanies their journey (on foot or by car) is full of vitality and happiness. While, as noted, there are multiple local variations of the melody, they are all easily identified by inhabitants of the region as *Chakiri Wayri* or *Wayri Ch'unchu*. This simple pentatonic melody with its short ascending and descending phrases is produced, in the case of Pomacanchi and many other peasant communities, by two traverse flutes (*pitus*), one snare drum (*tarola*), and one bass drum (*bombo*). It is specially the bass drum that clearly marks the beat during the walk and the one that can be heard from a long distance. The combination of the incessant repetition of the short melody and the strong beating of the bass drum has led some authors to characterize this music as "mesmerizing" (Allen 1988: 192) or "hypnotic" (Sallnow 1987: 186).

There are a few observations worth noting. First, this melody, as has been pointed out by Allen (1988), clearly displays patterns that are widespread in traditional Andean music, as it is structured in pairs that are opposed but that support each other (192). In this melody, it is also easy to appreciate the high pitch and the pentatonic scale, both recognized characteristics of Andean music since pre-Hispanic times (Romero 1988). Finally, the combination of flute and drum also links this melody to the pre-Hispanic Andean tradition (ibid.).

In the community of Pomacanchi, musicians, dancers, *Mama Wayris*, and *Ukukus* all call this accompanying music *Chakiri*, *Chakiri Wayri*, or sometimes *Chakira*. I have never heard this music called *Ch'unchu* when it is referred to as the music for walking. In Pomacanchi, I have not been able to establish the specific differences between the *Chakiri* and the music for the *Wayri Ch'unchu* dance, as I have not seen the latter performed in this community. However, according to some local musicians there is a difference that makes the *Chakiri* special for walking in a group. While I have not done a close analysis, I agree with this statement based on watching many *Wayri Ch'unchu* dance troupes over the years at the sanctuary and elsewhere in Cuzco, plus my experience in the three pilgrimages. One of the most notable differences is that in the *Chakiri* the role of the bass drum is much more prominent, marking the beat strongly. This strong marking gives the melody the air of a march.

As to the name of the melody for the walk, I want to note, especially for those who are not familiar with Quechua, that in that language *chaki* means foot, so the name itself relates the melody to the journey on foot. As explained, for Pomacanchi and other Cuzco people, the term *Wayri* is directly associated with the journey and with the Lord of Qoyllorit'i in general. Let us also remember that the name given to the accompanying women who cook for the group is *Mama Wayri* ("*Mama*" meaning mother or respected woman). In Pomacanchi a new troupe was formed in 2007 with only *Ukukus*, and the members said they had decided to go just with the *Chakiri Wayri*. When asked why they had chosen to use this melody alone and not a specific dance on the way to the sanctuary, as do other troupes of the town and most other troupes in general, they said that it was because of the story about the shepherd boy and the boy Jesus. They indicated that this music is the most important one for meeting with the Lord.

I would now like to explore further the intrinsic relationship between the music that accompanies their walk and the important feelings/concepts that emerge during it. I begin with the idea that gives the title to this section and that was expressed by the sponsor of the group in 2008, who also traveled on foot with us. Talking about the music he said, "[W]ithout music it would be like not going at all … everything would be silence [*ch'in*]." This phrase, in a way, summarizes the main arguments of the present chapter and encompasses all the experiences that emerge during the walk in relation to the music—that is, that without the music, the pilgrims could not fully experience the festivity in honor of the Lord of Qoyllorit'i. All the encounters that take place during the walk and at the end with the Lord could not take place without the appropriate music. Silence, "*ch'in*," represents the very antithesis of the ritual. Moreover, silence is opposed to everything positive and everything that represents the socio-cultural activity of humans.

In many conversations, members of the dance troupes, musicians, and other accompanying members such as the *Mama Wayris*, agreed that

silence, *ch'in*, was something associated with the non-human and also was something dangerous. Silence is associated with the beings and wandering spirits that show up in the places not inhabited by humans. For example, one of the older members of the troupe said, "[I]f there was no music, it would all be silence, right? We would walk like dammed spirits/souls [*condenados*], like souls [*almas*], in silence, without noise, right." As widely documented in the Andes, *condenados* and *almas* pose a threat to humans (Allen 1988). In relation to the potential dangerous silence that would predominate if there was no music, one *Mama Wayri* commented that "the mountains are all silent, perhaps we can get scared with that if walking on the path would be silent."

All the pilgrims also agreed that the music of the *Chakiri Wayri* helps them concentrate on the path and walk with an appropriate rhythm in order not to break the group. They assert that, without music, tiredness and sleepiness may cause them to lose this group coordination. In fact, many of the comments emphasized that the music sharpens their senses during the walk. One member, using the word "*thama*," asserted that without the music they would be disoriented, without rhythm. Another, using the term *ñawsa*, stated that without the music they would walk like blind people. A third used the term "*upalla*" to contend that they would walk like deaf and dumb people if they did not have the music to accompany them. Finally, many pilgrims asserted that if they did not do the walk with the appropriate music, other dance troupes would feel sorry for them. This subject gives me a point of entry into the melody of the *Alawaru*, which is the one that is played when two dance troupes meet during the walk.

Alawaru means "praised" and is a melody that expresses respect and veneration. In many ways it is a melody opposed to the *Chakiri*, since the *Alawaru* is only played when the pilgrims are at a stop, either standing or kneeling. The *Alawaru* is not exclusive of this pilgrimage, featuring in almost all ritual celebrations in the region. It is a slow melody that invites the participants to absorption and reflection. However, this melody always ends with a kind of upbeat and celebratory fugue to indicate that the moment of introspection has ended and that the meeting with another group or with the Lord has concluded successfully.

One actually needs to do the walk to fully realize the importance that the *Alawaru* has for mediating the multiple encounters. For example, many of the comments of the pilgrims highlighted that one of the most important functions of this melody is to greet and honor another dance troupe during the journey. These meetings tend to happen at *Apachetas* (defined above), but also at other points during the walk. Generally, the group that is at the particular place first, receives the other by honoring them with the *Alawaru*. Most often, the two groups face each other, each in single file, and they all look down as a sign of respect. When the upbeat fugue starts, this formation breaks and they shake hands and/or embrace. The quality of the music is carefully observed by the dance troupes. The members

consider these encounters to be a form of competition to judge who has the better music. It is unthinkable then to have these encounters without music. Pomacanchi dance troupe members said that if they did not have the proper music with them, the other troupes would "challenge" them, they might even "threaten" them; in sum, problems would arise if they did not have the proper music.

Another main encounter that the *Alawaru* mediates is with the places that require greeting and veneration. Some of these places are marked by *Apachetas*, and others not. Sometimes they venerate the entrance into a new territory; some others, a cross on top of a mountain that just became visible on the walk; or in some cases, the main mountains themselves, which are regarded as the protectors of the traveled territories and which become visible at various passes. Sometimes the *Alawaru* is directed to the territories or mountains that are left behind. The *Alawaru* is also played to honor every sunrise as soon as the first light start to appear behind the high mountains, while the pilgrims kneel and face that direction.

Performing the *Alawaru* is also a must for those dance troupes that reach the bottom of the sanctuary by truck because, as mentioned, there is a final climb of 8 kilometers, and every kilometer is marked by an *Apacheta*. All troupes are required to honor each of them with an *Alawaru*. The final *Apacheta* signals the entrance to the sanctuary. The climax of the walk is marked both by the *Chakiri Wayri* and the *Alawaru*, performed in front of the image of the Lord on the rock: the *Chakiri* to approach and the *Alawaru* to venerate and pray while kneeling.

Going back to the *Chakiri*, I want to conclude this section and this chapter with some comments that explicitly associated this melody with the feelings of happiness and vitality that are experienced during the walk. This association was probably the one made most often and most enthusiastically in the conversations about the walk and the music. It was also something that made an impression on me the three times I shared the experience. The majority of the comments refer to the heart (*sonqo*) as the source of life and feelings, as noted here:

> [B]ecause during the walk the musicians go playing the *Chakiri*, our hearts revive [*kawsariy*] in the most beautiful way. Therefore we feel proud, I do not know, we feel different, that way we walk in peace, without getting mad, we forget our sorrows, we do not remember the negative stuff with the music, when the musicians play…

The idea that their hearts, or they themselves, revive when they walk with the *Chakiri* was expressed in different ways and using different verbs associated with the renewal of life and vitality. For example, the president of the dance troupe said that "listening to the music play [makes] our hearts rekindle/sprout [*llanllay*] again." Another member said that with that with the music his heart "flourishes [*phanchay*]." This vitality was almost always

associated with the feeling of happiness that emerges from the combination of walking and listening to the *Chakiri*. And one other pilgrim observed that "it is so happy with that music that is always behind us," reminding us that in the Andean sensory model the auditory is associated with the back.

Conclusion

The methodological and theoretical frameworks offered by the anthropology of the senses have much to offer in the study of ritual and religious experience, especially if combined with those used in ethnomusicology, dance, and performance studies. As is the case in the Andes, in many societies the religious experience cannot be separated from movement across the landscape, the music, the dance, and/or the theatrical representations that are essential parts of the ritual experience. I hypothesize that one of the main reasons why the performance of fiestas, folkloric/ritual music and dance is such a crucial part of social life for Andeans is because these practices work mainly through the privileged sensory model in that society. This is also the reason why Andeans have chosen for centuries these realms to contest and accommodate colonialism and repression, to define their individual and group identities, and to engage with global phenomena such as tourism and mass media (Mendoza 2000, 2008).

Scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology, dance, and performance studies have for some time emphasized the importance of understanding in detail the specific qualities of the performances studied. Perhaps this engagement has helped them overcome some of the limiting aspects of the classical anthropological "participant observation."[14] Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and other sensory experiences have been at the core of their analysis and that may be why they have found themselves closer to merging with the theories and methodologies offered by the anthropology of the senses (Banes and Lepecki 2007; Potter 2008). The methodologies and theories in these fields certainly helped me to overcome the linguistic-based framework and the visual bias that has dominated anthropology for so long. Having discovered the rich literature of the anthropology of the senses (and the study of the sensory in general) only a couple of years after I had started my current research, the theories and methodologies in this field have also, and perhaps more crucially, already shaped my understanding of Andean ritual/folkloric performance and religious experience.

In this chapter, I have concentrated on some aspects of the relationship between music and the walk to the sanctuary of the Lord of Qoyllorit'i as a way to approach the Andean sensory model. Investigating this model is crucial because it not only helps us to understand better the centrality of the festive/ritual practices in Andean society, but also appreciate how the cognitive processes work for the members of this society. For those of us who come

from the outside, this festive occasion gives us a privileged opportunity to learn about these processes, which may be harder to appreciate in other social contexts. To the local youth, it offers an opportunity to learn more in depth, or simply learn for the first time, about the principles that have ruled their society for centuries and that perhaps are getting lost as a result of official education in Spanish, the abandonment of traditional economic activities (and the long walks that go along with them), and the influence of mass media.

Everything that is learned during the walk—from the right path and the story of the shepherd boy and the boy Jesus, going through the greeting protocols, the feelings of repentance, pardon, vitality, happiness, among others, to the deep respect and faith experienced towards the sun, the mountains, the glaciers, and the Lord of Qoyllorit'i—takes places via the privileged sensory model in the Andes. This model combines in an intrinsic relationship the visual, the auditory, and the kinesthetic to impregnate in the experience of the participating human beings a deep knowledge of their ancestral cultural principles and history. What is learned during the walk, at the sanctuary, or in other regional and local festivities of this type cannot be learned in the same way in other social contexts or cannot be learned at all without this experience.

While Classen has pioneered the study of the sensory in Andean society, and a few other scholars, outside of this theoretical framework, have contributed to our understanding of the sensory experience in this region (Harrison 1989; Solomon 1997; Stobart 2006), there still remains plenty of work to be done to fully understand the sensory model in this society. Adding to the importance of the unity of the audiovisual in cognitive processes in the Andes pointed out by Classen and Harrison, I have "unearthed" (Sklar 2007) kinesthesia as a third key element in a triad that is at the heart of these processes. Moreover, even though more research needs to be done, it might be that in traditional Andean society, as for the dancers studied by Potter, kinesthesia "is a crucial sense that frames the shaping of all other sensory modes" (2008: 453).

Beyond the Andean sensory model and ritual practices, and going back to Parkin's (1992) argument about the centrality of movement, directionality, and spatial orientation in rituals everywhere, this Andean example encourages us to ask if the source of the power and effectiveness of rituals is the combination of the kinesthetic, auditory, and visual experiences of the participants, with the kinesthetic perhaps the sense around which the other senses tend to be organized. In light of the analytical and methodological framework of sensory studies used here, at least two important questions emerge right away. Can the predominant sensory model of the society be different and still have this unity of the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic as central for the ritual and religious experience? Can the unity of this triad and the organization of the senses around the kinesthetic still be important for understanding ritual and religious experiences where there is not much emphasis placed on public ceremonies, music, and dance?

Scholars in the fields of cognitive science and/or cognitive anthropology, and/or neural anthropology, some of whom are contributors to this volume, may want to take up these questions since in their study of ritual practices and religious transmission they are interested in generalizations based on the study of universal "mental" processes, strategies, and/or tendencies. However, I would argue that before any generalization can be made in terms of answering these questions, we need to do many more sensory-based studies about ritual and the societies where they take place.

8

Sensation and Transmission

David Howes

The word "sense" is a polysemous term. Exploring some of the meanings embedded in it provides an apt point of departure for this investigation into sensation and religious transmission. The word refers, first of all, to any of the bodily faculties by which sensation is "roused," as the *Oxford English Dictionary* puts it: the faculties of seeing, hearing, smell, and taste, and so on. Beyond this, it refers both to the ability to perceive and the proper understanding or "intelligibility" of a word or situation. Otherwise put, the term "sense" includes both sensation *and* signification, feeling *and* meaning in its spectrum of referents. To "sense the world" is, therefore, both to register it through the senses and to imbue those registrations with significance.

Reflecting on the compound nature of the act of sensing is important. It helps guard against reductionism, whether it be the physiological reductionism of the brain sciences which typically reduce sensations to neural impulses, or the semiological reductionism (read: logocentrism) of the social sciences, which tend to conflate sensations with signs.[1] In illustration of the first point, the discipline of psychology has, until recently, enjoyed a monopoly over the scientific study of perception. The understanding of perception which prevails within psychology is rooted in the doctrine of psychophysics. According to this doctrine:

> The events that culminate in perception begin with specialized receptor cells that convert a particular form of physical energy into bioelectric currents. Different sensors are sensitive to different types of energy, so the properties of the receptor cells determine the modality of a sensory system. Ionic currents are the currency of neural information processing, and current flows that begin in the receptors are transmitted through complex networks of interconnected neurons and, in the end result in a pattern of brain activity we call perception. (Hughes 2002: 7)

On this account, perception is a matter of "information-processing." It begins at the edge of the central nervous system (CNS) and is conditioned by the properties of the receptor organs. The focus is on the neural pathways leading from receptor organ to brain. This vision of the sensorium was first

outlined by Johannes Müller in the early 1800s. His theory of "specific nerve energies" can be seen as continuing, in broad outline, to inform the psychophysical study of perception to this day (Meulders 2010). It is further reflected in the authority ascribed to the highly vivid pictures of brain activity produced by contemporary neuroimaging technology. Indeed, the MRI, PET, and other such scans give the impression of allowing one to "see" the brain at work. In point of fact, there are many highly complex and intricate levels of mediation to the production of the apparent transparency of a brain scan (Dumit 2003; Joyce 2010).

There is a world of difference between the psychophysical account of perception and the cultural account of perception that comes out of sensory anthropology and history. On the latter account, the sensorium is an historical formation. Perception begins at the edge of the built environment and is conditioned by the "social preformation" of the senses (Howes 2009). The focus is on studying the "techniques of the senses" people use to apprehend and make sense of the world around them (Howes 1990, 2003). Hence, sensory anthropology is not limited to the study of neural pathways and brain areas, the way sensory psychology is, for it encompasses cultural practices and social contexts as well. It is grounded in the analysis of all the mediating factors (such as social norms, beliefs, corporeal techniques, and extracorporeal technologies) which condition the interface between sense organ and world. For example, social norms may prohibit touching and mandate seeing (as in a museum), a technology may extend one sense while restricting others (as with the telephone), a given sensation may trigger associations (as with the smell of sulphur evoking notions of Hell or the smell of roses inspiring a vision of the Virgin Mary).

This anthropological focus on the interface generates important insights when it is extended to the study of how perception is framed in the psychology laboratory.[2] In the psych lab, researchers pride themselves on the procedures they have developed to "control for" (i.e. eliminate) the "interference" or "biases" which may be caused by subjects' expectations, associations, skills, and so on. Furthermore, sensory psychologists limit their investigations to the registration and analysis of reaction times, thresholds, preferences, and such like. In this way, they make sense of the senses by, basically, draining them of cultural signification. That is, they manage to concentrate on and analyse what they take to be "pure" sensations while remaining oblivious to the artificiality of the regime they have set in place to produce the "raw" data they seek. Sensory anthropology attempts to liberate the senses from the restrictive regime of the psychology laboratory, and the theories that are hatched there, and explore how people make sense of the world—including the senses—in the context of everyday life.

While sensory psychology and sensory anthropology are worlds apart, it is important to bridge them in order to advance the study of perception. One possible bridge is provided by the "hierarchical systems view of

neural organization" that has emerged within cognitive neuroscience in recent years. Sometimes referred to as the theory of "the extended mind" (Clark and Chalmers 1998; Clark 2008), this view holds that cognition "is not confined to the brain but also includes loops through the body and the environment, most crucially, through a social world that is culturally constructed. On this view, 'mind' is located not in the brain but in the relationship of brain and body to the world" (Kirmayer quoted in Howes 2011: 165–6). In order to flesh out this understanding, we need to focus on the "loops"—that is, on the mediation of experience by specific cultural practices. Another way to describe these loops would be as "ways of sensing" (Howes and Classen 2014), for the senses have a vital role to play in framing—or *mediating*—the relationship between mind and environment, self and society, idea and object (see Bull et al. 2006: 5). What is needed, in other words, is a theory of "the extended sensorium." In what follows, my aim is to sketch the contours of such a theory through a series of case studies keyed to the notion of religion as "sensational form."

Religions as Sensational Forms

Just as the conventional "scientific" understanding of perception stands in need of revision from an anthropological perspective, so does the preoccupation with the transcendental or "metaphysical" in the conventional Western definition of religion. For instance, religion is commonly defined as consisting of "ideas and practices that postulate reality *beyond* that which is immediately available to the senses" (Bowen 2002: 5, emphasis added). However, a more nuanced and fruitful definition would underscore the mediatory role of the senses *in* the production of religious experience. This is the point of Birgit Meyer's definition of religions as "sensational forms" (Meyer 2006, 2009).

Meyer treats religions as modes of inducing experiences of divinity, or "mak[ing] the transcendental sense-able":

> Sensational forms are transmitted and shared, they involve religious practitioners in particular practices of worship and play a central role in forming religious subjects. Collective rituals are prime examples of sensational forms … [The] notion of "sensational form" can also be applied to the ways in which material religious objects—such as images, books, or buildings—address and involve beholders. Thus, reciting a holy book such as the Quran, praying in front of an icon, or dancing around the manifestation of a spirit are also sensational forms through which religious practitioners are made to experience the presence and power of the transcendental. (Meyer 2006: 9)

As a corollary to her emphasis on sensation, Meyer is more concerned with the analysis of deeds than creeds, practices than representations, aesthetics than interpretation, and with the experiencing body than with inner states or transcendent entities. Everything turns on the notion of "mediation" in her approach.

Mysterium Tremendum

Donald Tuzin's analysis of the roots of religious experience in "Miraculous Voices" (Tuzin 1984) goes along with Meyer's material and sensual definition of religion. Tuzin begins by noting that many cultures seem to favour sound (drumbeats, chants) as the medium through which to awe worshippers and exchange messages with the gods. This is particularly so in the context of the secret men's cult among the Ilahita Arapesh of Papua New Guinea (Tuzin 1980). During the elaborate yam harvest ceremonies which are the focal point of the Arapesh ritual calendar, the initiated adult men use drums and slit-gongs, bullroarers and giant voice-amplifying pipes to mystify and intimidate cult outsiders. The ritual sounds are said to be the "voices" of the spirits, and because of the secrecy surrounding their production (inside the screened-off men's house), the illusion of spirit presence is presumed to be a compelling one for the non-initiates (women, children, and younger men) who remain outside. The curious thing, however, is that these sounds are mysterious to the men who produce them as well:

> The initiate discovers that the interpretation revealed to him, *viz*., that the sounds are man-made, is inadequate to the experience he continues to have upon hearing them. While the naive illusion is dispelled, something about the quality of the sound rededicates the initiate to the truth that the spirits *are* real, though invisible, and that the ritual sounds *are* their voices. (Tuzin 1984: 580)

One possible explanation for this conviction is that the rhythm of the drums and so forth puts the initiates in an Altered State of Consciousness (ASC) due to the phenomenon of "auditory driving" (Rouget 1985). Tuzin does not wholly discount the auditory-driving-as-technique-of-ecstasy hypothesis, but he is not content to let his analysis rest there. This is partly because Arapesh ritual sounds are more cacophonous than they are rhythmic, and partly because he wants his theory to extend to other cases, such as the Gregorian chant, which are equally unamenable to explanation in terms of the auditory driving hypothesis.

Tuzin's own explanation is that "the common denominator of drumbeats and chants is not what can be heard but what cannot" (Tuzin 1984: 581). It is the *subauditory* sound waves propagated by drums (especially those

of great diameter) and human voices (especially when they are augmented and distorted in a resonating chamber such as the giant amplifying pipes of the Arapesh or the space of a basilica in the case of a Gregorian chant) that "affect the brain in a manner that arouses feelings of the uncanny, the preternatural … and other mysteries commonly indicative of 'religious experience'." They do so precisely because such "sounds" *exceed the ordinary range of human hearing* and so remain inaudible *even as their effects on the body are quite palpable*. There is the experience of "high intensity sound pressure *in the absence of perceived sound*" (Tuzin 1984: 581, 586). The *mysterium tremendum*—to invoke an old (but peculiarly apt) way of referring to the experience of the godhead—may on this account be related to the mystery inherent in experiencing vibrations that cannot be heard.

Tuzin notes that part of this effect among the Arapesh is due to the topography of the region in which they live and the timing of the yam harvest ceremonies during the dry season. There is little wind and no rain during this period. At the same time, there are spectacular lightning displays over the tall mountains off to the south of Arapesh country. The area is therefore literally bathed in infrasonic waves of very great intensity, which are "greater in their effects than an actual thunderstorm, since they are free of the mask of audible concussion and distracting wind and rain" (Tuzin 1984: 588). Tuzin makes an analogy to the familiar (albeit uncanny) experience of the quiet-before-a-storm to which we can all relate. This experience is intensified in the case of the Arapesh, however, because of the central importance attached to aurality in their culture (Tuzin 1980). Given the cultural primacy accorded to audition, the Arapesh listen intently to the "voices" of the spirits, as conveyed by the instruments. But this conscious focus is eclipsed by the way in which:

> the infrasonic waves generated by the [same ritual] instruments unite with and exploit the roar of the unheard thunderstorm. Creating an object where none is apparent, they persuade the listener that the powers *felt* belong not to the puny (because man-made) illusion but to the majestic (because supernatural) forces which invest and transform that illusion. (Tuzin 1984: 588)

Summing up, Tuzin argues that certain sound stimuli may produce an "experience without an object" (because they register as feelings not as sounds) and religion steps in to resolve (but also fan) the quandary by positing an "interpretational object"—namely, the numinous, or supernatural.

Novel and intriguing as Tuzin's theory may be, it seems to us to place too much emphasis on the psychophysical and to pay too little attention to the importance of social values in shaping the experience and significance of the sensual and spiritual.

The Sensual Icon

Meyer refers to the action of praying in front of an icon as an example of her theory of religion as sensational form. In *The Sensual Icon*, Bissera Pentcheva presents an extremely fine sensory analysis of the fabrication and veneration of religious images in medieval Byzantium. Her focus is on the luxury bas-relief metal icon, which was fashioned from gold, silver, or ivory and decorated with exquisite filigree along with pearls, gemstones, and coloured glass, as opposed to the more familiar (to us moderns) painted icon which consisted of a flat wood panel painted with tempera.

The metal icon bears the "imprint of form" as distinct from the "imitation of form." This distinction is important for a variety of reasons. The first is that the metal icon involves the mechanical reproduction of a prototype as opposed to the illusion of resemblance to some originary being that is achieved through painting (Pentcheva 2010: 9–14, 28–36). The second reason is that it is non-essentialist because the metal icon, being a mechanical copy, is connected to its prototype only in appearance, in form, not in essence. This renders the metal icon immune to the charge of idolatry which was a matter of considerable importance in medieval Byzantium, given the successive waves of iconoclasm that swept the civilization. The third reason is that in its imprinted relief, the metal icon *materialized* the absent sacred figure and thus rendered the latter tangible, even as the icon itself consisted of nothing more than the imprint of absence on matter.[3] The fourth reason has to do with the properties of metal as a medium, and the ambient conditions under which the icon was perceived, on which more below. Briefly put, the icon was a "performative object" (Pentcheva 2006), lacking in "presence" (essence) but rich in "presence effects," on account of its abundance of textures and polychrome incandescence.

Before turning to Pentcheva's description of these effects, it is necessary to disabuse ourselves of certain (modern) assumptions about how the senses function so that we can appreciate more adequately the "ways of sensing" that framed the experience of the icon in Byzantium. As discussed above, the modern view holds that perception goes on in the head or brain; it is a passive process, the senses are receptors. By contrast, many pre-modern views hold that perception goes on in the world as well as the body; it is an interactive process, the senses are emitters, not just receivers (Classen 2000).[4] This interactive understanding of how the senses function is readily intelligible when approached through the lens of touch, for when one touches something, one is touched by it at the same time. Touch is reciprocal. It is less obvious in the case of sight, which seems more unilateral, unless one conceives of sight on the model of touch, which is precisely how sight was conceived in the Middle Byzantine. The prevailing theory of vision held that "the eye of the beholder is active, constantly moving and sending light rays that touch the surfaces of objects. The eye seeks the tactility of textures and

reliefs. Sight is understood and experienced as touch" (Pentcheva 2006: 631). This theory is known as the extramission theory of vision. It was in the ascendant and survived (if in increasingly attenuated form) down to the time of Locke and Descartes, who extinguished it, and substituted the doctrine of the passivity of the senses for that of their agency (Howes 2009: 33–4; Howes and Classen 2014: Ch. 6). The widespread folk belief in the evil eye is one of the few remnants of the extramission theory of vision that survives to this day, and it is, of course, dismissed as superstition. By contrast, in Byzantium, touch and seeing were to a large extent equivalent and interchangeable. For instance, the standard way of venerating an icon was the kiss (*aspasmos*), which involved "touch[ing] the icon with eyes and lips" (Pentcheva 2010: 6).

In the following passage, which I quote at length, Pentcheva describes the phenomenal effects of the relief icon in all its "exuberant materiality." She suggests that these effects be thought of as "performative," and proceeds to show how the icon's performance tied in with other aspects of the liturgy of the Byzantine Eastern Orthodox Church, such as the use of incense, to produce a sense of liveliness, or animation.

> These luxury *eikones* became animated under the agitated light of flickering candles, whose flames were in turn stirred by drafts of air or human breath. Dense layers of fragrance and smoke from burning incense enveloped the icon, while *polykandelia* (metal disks with multiple oil lamps or candles) and wrought metal grilles cast lace shadows moving across its face. This luminous, umbral, and olfactory richness was enhanced by the reverberation of music and human prayer. The phenomenal changes affecting and reflected from the icon's material layers activated the polymorphous appearances of the *eikon*. In turn, these phenomenal transformations inundated the human senses to the point of saturation, arousing an internal agitation (*pathema*). Experiencing this *pathema*, the faithful projected their own psychological stirrings back onto the surfaces of the icon, seeing in the passing phenomenal changes, the shifting shadows and highlights, a manifestation of inner life, of indwelling spirit, transforming the inanimate object into *empsychos* (animate, inspirited) *graphe*. (Pentcheva 2010: 1–2)

As this account suggests, the perception of the icon takes place *in the space between* the worshipper and the object of devotion. It cannot be telescoped into the gaze of the worshipper the way a painting might, firstly, because a painting recedes from the plane of the picture creating the illusion of three-dimensionality in the mind's eye, whereas the metal icon *extends* into the space between worshipper and object on account of being cast in bas-relief (see Pentcheva 2006: 539–540, 2010: 5, 9); and secondly, and more importantly, because the veneration of the icon engages all the senses thanks to its performative aspects. It engages sight on account of the radiant

colors of the glass and gemstones, the shimmering glitter of the metal, and the tremulous shadows cast by the flickering candles; but it also engages touch through its variegated surfaces; smell, on account of the incense in which the icon is envelopped;[5] hearing, through the reverberation of voices joined in prayer or song;[6] and even taste, on account of the worshipper kissing the icon.[7] As Pentcheva observes, the icon was perceived as animate or lifelike precisely because of its "performance of shifting appearances" (Pentcheva 2010: 13, 2006: 644), rather than its pictorial naturalism. The agency of the icon is one of "dissemblance" through the saturation of the senses, rather than resemblance.

Pentcheva proposes that the term *synaesthesia* (*syn-*, "together," and *aesthesis*, "sensual apprehension") be used to characterize the conjunction of the senses in icon veneration. Her use of this term is etymologically and culturally correct, but it runs afoul of the contemporary neuroscientific definition of synesthesia as entailing "concomitant sensation: the experience of one sense through the stimulation of another, such as colour experienced as sound" not "consonant sensation: the simultanaeity of senses" as in icon veneration (Pentcheva 2006: 631). However, there is no intrinsic reason why this term should not apply to both types of experience.[8] The real difficulty consists in the neuroscientists' insistence that "true synesthesia" is a purely neurological condition, to be explained by some genetic mutation in the way the brain is "wired" (see Ramachandran et al. 2004; Howes 2011: 164–7). However, this "truth" merely reflects the privileging of the brain and cognition in the modern Western understanding of perception, which operates to the exclusion of all those "loops through the body and the environment" (Kirmayer) that the theory of the extended sensorium advocated here would underscore. It is necessary to open up the definition of synsesthesia to accommodate the multiple ways in which different cultures make sense of the cosmos through positing and practicing different modes of combining the senses (Howes and Classen 2014: Ch 6).

Listening to the Silence

We have seen how Birgit Meyer's material and sensual definition of religion is borne out by Bissera Pentcheva's analysis of the medieval Byzantine icon as "performative object." It could easily be extended to the analysis of contemporary Eastern Orthodox and even Roman Catholic liturgy, where the mass remains an intensely multisensory affair. But what of the Protestant tradition of Christianity, which is more known for its sensory austerity? To take an extreme example, consider the religious life of the Religious Society of Friends, popularly known as the Quakers, founded in the mid-seventeenth century.[9] The dress code of the Quakers is decidedly

somber ("plain dress" or black being *de rigeur*). The Quaker meeting house is also distinguished by its plainness: no stained glass, no cross, no altar, just a table with a Bible, a copy of *Quaker Faith & Practice*, and perhaps a vase of flowers (Massard-Vincent 2011); the only furnishings consist of wooden pews, or chairs arranged in a circle. Other manifestations of this regime of sensory restraint traditionally included pacifism, teetotalism, living simply, plain speech, and, above all, the overwhelming emphasis on silence within worship. In sum, there would appear to be very little for Meyer's theory to latch on to.

The apparent absence of (external) ritual and stimuli in general is tied to the privileging of the "inner life" in accordance with the Quaker doctrine of "direct personal revelation" and the "Inner Light." To elaborate, the Quaker understanding of the transmission of revelation departed from that of their Protestant brethren by virtue of its insistence on the Scriptures being but "*a* Word of God" rather than "*the* Word of God." Revelation was not given once and for all, in the Scriptures, but instead involves an ongoing and progressive *process* through the faculty of the Inner Light. The idea was (and remains) "that God had given to us, every one of us in particular, a light from himself shining in our hearts and consciences; which light, Christ his son, the saviour of the world, had lighted every man withal" (Burrough cited in Bauman 1989: 145). Richard Bauman explains:

> By its very nature as the Spirit of God within man, the Inner Light was inaccessible to man's natural and earthly faculties, for "*the natural man discerneth not the things of God, nor can*" (D. Barclay 1831: 100, italics his). Thus, a suppression of the earthly self was required of those who were attentive to the Light, and the basic term employed by the Quakers to refer to this state of suppression of self was *silence*. "Since then we are commanded to *wait upon God diligently*, and in so doing it is promised that our *strength shall be renewed*, this waiting cannot be performed but by a *silence* or *cessation* of the natural part on our side, since God manifests himself not to the outward man or senses, so much as to the inward, to wit, to the soul and spirit" (D. Barclay 1831: 366, italics his). (Bauman 1989: 146)

Probing deeper, we can begin to see how the very emphasis on the curtailment of the senses institutes a sensory regime in which "silence" takes on positive qualities, instead of simply denoting an absence, and opens the individual to the most infinitesimal sensation—the quickening of the spirit. This quickening was given in the notion of the "opening." Bauman states:

> Although the silent meeting was the ideal, there was no "resolution not to speak" … and few meetings were actually conducted in complete silence. There were, in fact, a number of *openings* in which speech was not only

> appropriate but necessary. *Opening* was the term used by the Quakers themselves for the points within the meeting. These openings occurred when a member of the meeting for worship—any adult member, of either sex—became sensible in his attendance on the Inner Light that the Spirit was leading him to a message or an understanding intended for others as well as himself, as a means of helping them to reach inward to the Light, or otherwise enriching the quality of their worship. (Bauman 1989: 149)

As this account suggests, the senses operate inwardly as well as outwardly, and once a member of the congregation could feel certain that their message "came from the Light" they would "speak in the Light," and thereby contribute to the ongoing process of revelation. What is interesting about this complex of ideas is that we find the same emphasis on the conjunction of the faculties, or synesthesia—here that of word and light, or speaking and seeing—as in the other two cases discussed thus far.

The Divine Touch

Pentecostalism belongs to the same Protestant tradition of Christianity as Quakerism, and places a similar emphasis on the "inner life" and spontaneity. Conversion is understood to be an affair of the spirit and depends on shunning the temptations of the flesh. For all its emphasis on interiority and the separation of spirit and body, content and form, immediacy and mediation, a crucial role is nevertheless played by the sense of touch and in particular the idea of "feeling the Holy Spirit at work" within the self. This concept of "feeling" or "being touched" by the Holy Spirit takes on particular forms in the diverse cultures in which Pentecostalism has come to be practiced.

In "Touched by the Spirit: converting the senses in a Ghanaian Charismatic Church," Marleen de Witte, a student of Birgit Meyer, presents a perspicacious analysis of the role of the senses in bringing about inner transformation and spiritual rebirth in the 7,000-member-strong International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) in Accra. She uses the term "format" to refer to the bodily practices that "tune the senses to the touch of the Spirit that underlies the transformation" (de Witte 2011: 505). This term was suggested to her by observing the ways in which video recordings of the services were edited and formatted by the audiovisual technicians employed by the ICGC to produce the *Living World* TV program which is broadcast both nationally and globally.[10] Depending on whether the service is a "message-oriented" event (with an emphasis on the sermon) or a "miracle-oriented" event (with an emphasis on healing and "spiritual problem-solving"), the clips show converts listening attentively to the pastor's words (with back straight, on the edge of their seats), or alternately stretching out their hands in

expectation of receiving a miracle, falling backwards when anointed on the head with holy oil by the pastor, and speaking in tongues. De Witte argues that it is through a process of mimesis—through adopting and repeatedly practicing select bodily formats—that the inner transformation is achieved. Conversion does not precede the new bodily forms: it is produced in and by them. Thus:

> Becoming a born-again Christian [in the context of Ghanaian Pentecostalism] involves two forms of knowing and two forms of learning that are inextricably related. Through language [i.e., attending to the sermons], one acquires cognitive knowledge; through mimesis [i.e., the training of the senses] one acquires embodied knowledge … Theosomatic [de Witte's term for the bodily formats] and theological knowledge are mutually constitutive … (de Witte 2011: 506)

De Witte points to how Ghanaian charismatic-Pentecostalism is continuous or resonates with certain aspects of "traditional African religion," such as having a practical, this-worldly focus directed at material and social well-being, and involving a bodily regime that "values expressive, emotional modes of worship and authenticates the body as a primary medium of interaction with the spirit world" (de Witte 2011: 497). At the same time, she documents how, from its inception in the 1970s, the charismatic movement in Ghana was closely tied to mass-media technologies, from public-address systems to satellite connections, adding layer upon layer of mediation to the channels of evangelization. These technological extensions have fed back into the language used to describe the immediacy of the encounter with the divine, such that various "ritual practices are said to 'establish points of contact,' working as 'spiritual electronics' and making the Holy Spirit 'flow like electricity'" (de Witte 2013: 65). These electronic media, then, end up closing and informing the "loop through the environment" on which the conversion experience rests.

Conclusion: For a Sensitive Science of Religion

In this chapter, four case studies have been presented, which each in their own way illuminate possible modalities of religiosity. Starting from Birgit Meyer's theory of religions as sensational forms, we have seen how the transmission of religion is mediated by the conjunction of sensations in different modalities, whether outward or inward. This chapter has also presented a theory of the extended sensorium as an alternative to the mentalism, and privileging of the brain and cognition, in the conventional Western "scientific" account of perception—including the theory of the extended mind.

By way of closing, a few words are in order concerning how the performative, sensual account of the modalities of religiosity presented here differs from Harvey Whitehouse's theory of the "modes of religiosity." Whitehouse is one of the chief proponents of the cognitive science of religion (CSR). In this view,

> religious transmission is shaped and constrained by implicit (unconscious) cognitive processes. A central feature of this approach is that it seeks to fractionate religious thinking and behaviour into myriad different components that are explainable in terms of a finite array of relatively discrete cognitive mechanisms. Sometimes construed as "modules," or at least as "domain-specific" systems, these cognitive mechanisms are often assumed to have evolved in response to evolutionary pressures that are, at least in principle, discoverable by evolutionary psychologists, physical anthropologists … and other students of human evolution. (Whitehouse 2007: 250)

While explanations in terms of adaptive advantage and reproductive success are preferred,[11] CSR also draws on experimental research by developmental and cognitive psychologists for evidence of potentially relevant cognitive mechanisms.

Whitehouse explicitly states that CSR involves a "piecemeal approach" to the study of religious behavior.

> Rather than asking, for instance, "how are rituals in general transmitted?" cognitive scientists home in on some strikingly recurrent features of ritual behaviour around the world (e.g. the tendency to repeat nonsensical verbal formulae) and try to explain each component more or less in isolation, before moving on to explain other aspects of the same ritual behaviour (perhaps with reference to very different mechanisms). (Whitehouse 2007: 251)

Thus, explanations take the following form: fear of menstrual pollution is to be explained in terms of a "hazard-precaution system" (Whitehouse 2007: 253); being sensitive to the presence of possible agents (e.g. animism) is to be explained in terms of an "agency-detection system" (Whitehouse 2004: 32), and so forth.

Whitehouse's own most important contribution to the CSR literature consists of the delimitation of two complementary "storage systems" or "modes of religiosity" which are rooted in different sorts of memory:[12]

> One (the doctrinal mode) emphasizes frequent repetition of core concepts and the connections that bind them together in semantic memory. The other (imagistic mode) emphasizes rare, climatic religious experiences and the formation of epiphanic and exegetical innovations. These two

> modes of religiosity, often present within the same tradition, not only bring about (and reinforce) highly distinctive patterns of activation of cognitively optimal religious concepts [i.e., concepts that are adaptationally indicated like fear of menstrual blood which guards against the risk of contamination] but they also give rise to massively counterintuitive religious knowledge, such as the "theologically correct" concepts of doctrinal elites … (Whitehouse 2007: 272–3)

It is important to underscore how this psychologically-inflected theory of religion departs from the classic social anthropology of religion in the British tradition as represented by the works of E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Mary Douglas. For example, in *Theories of Primitive Religion* (1965), Evans-Pritchard rejected explanations of the "If I were a horse" variety because such explanations merely substitute the anthropologist's own "intuitions" or practical reasoning for those of the culture under study (see further Sahlins 1976). In *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937), Evans-Pritchard endeavored to identify and describe the assumptions and modes of reasoning that the Azande *themselves* used to justify their belief in witchcraft and recourse to oracles. As regards notions of contamination, in "The Abominations of Leviticus," Douglas argued that "Defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas" (1966: 41). Hence, the piecemeal interpretation of the Israelite prohibition on eating pork by reference to the risk of contamination (trichinosis) fails because this cannot explain why numerous other animals were also considered unclean. Only by reference to the "total structure of thought" (Douglas), which classified God's creatures according to certain criteria, and in the process generated various anomalies, such as the pig (but also the hare, the camel, the snake, etc.), is it possible to make sense of the pollution ideas in Leviticus. It appears that the caveats of the classics have largely been forgotten by contemporary anthropologists such as Whitehouse, who prefer to embrace the certainties of cognitive science (see Xygalatas and McCorkle 2013).

Our own reservations concerning the cognitive science of religion arise in part from the way it marginalizes the social by telescoping religion into the mind of the practitioner. Since it is the unconscious mind that is at issue in CSR, and it is assumed to be an acultural network of neurons, this leaves the cognitive scientist free to speculate on the "real" motivation of behavior, or "primal" mechanism of cognition without fear of contradiction. But the most astonishing thing about CSR is that it presumes (without the least trace of reflexivity) that all religious behavior, past and present, Western and non-Western, can be "explained" by reference to a twenty-first-century Western model of the brain.

Our reservations also concern the failure on the part of most cognitive scientists[13] to adequately address the crucial issue, from Birgit Meyer's standpoint, of how the transcendental is rendered sensible. For example,

is the animation of the Byzantine icon to be explained by reference to some hypothetical "agency-detection system" or is that agency a palpable manifestation of the confluence of shifting sensory impressions (i.e., the icon as performative object)? At the opposite extreme, is the Quaker "mode of religiosity" doctrinal or imagistic?[14] Verbal argument, one of the key traits of the doctrinal mode, is evidently central, but it is subordinate to the regime of silence and spontaneity. Intense sensory stimulation bordering on trauma, a hallmark of the imagistic mode, is muted, pointing again to the doctrinal mode as paramount (see Whitehouse 2000: 12), but the imagistic mode is nevertheless present in the infinitesimal sensations that prompt the Quaker to "speak in the Light" (and the imagery of the Inner Light is, of course, a palpably sensory cue as well). Whitehouse's typology is simply too crude to pick up on these gradations in the modalities of religious transmission.

What is needed is a *sensitive* science of religion attuned to the ways in which practitioners themselves perform and experience religiosity through culturally-mediated corporeal practices, such as Marleen de Witte provides in her careful analysis of the interplay between theological and theosomatic knowledge in the ritual life of the ICGC in Ghana.[15] "Attending to the sensible" (Laplantine 2014), within its particular cultural and historical context, is crucial to understanding both the collective and personal dynamics of the transmission of religion.

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NOTES

Introduction

1 Victor Turner's approach to ritual could be said to have contained in embryo all three of the approaches advocated in this book . Drawing on the neuroanatomist Paul MacLean's theory of the "triune" brain, Turner (1986) laid out an evolutionary approach to ritual in "Body, Brain, and Culture." (This strand of Victor Turner's thought is taken up by his son, Robert, in this volume.) It was out of his close and highly productive association with Richard Schechner that the anthropology of performance/performance studies was born (Turner 1986; Schechner 1985). And,Turner (1967) proposed a very sensually-minded theory of ritual symbols (in contrast to Geertz's textually-minded approach). Above all, Turner was responsible for problematizing the notion of "experience" and moving it from the margins to the centre of anthropological inquiry (Bruner and Turner 1986). Much theory has transpired since Victor Turner's untimely death in 1983, but in many respects we are just catching up.

2 For example, the theories of brain modularity, which see cognition governed by innate "modules" which deal with different kinds of information (Barkow, Cosmides, and Tooby 1992; Fodor 1983).

Chapter One

1 These examples are, of course, taken from the canon of anthropological accounts of the "apparently irrational": Evans-Pritchard 1956, 1976; Mauss 1990 [1922]; Morris 2000; Sperber 1985; White 2000; Stewart 1991.

2 The "ontological turn" is not a homogeneous intellectual "movement," but refers to a recent trend within anthropological theory that builds on work by Vivieros de Castro (2004), Wagner (1981), and Strathern (1988) to construct a radical anti-representational theory of culture. Key publications include Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell (eds) (2007) and Holbraad (2012). For useful reviews, see Carrithers et al. (2010), Geismar (2011), and Pedersen (2012).

3 Infinition is a contraction of "inventive definition" (Holbraad 2008: S101).

4 There is a broad north–south divide in Malta, with the north seen as more refined, wealthy, and educated, and the south seen as more earthy, poorer, "rough"—an ambiguous category that simultaneously connotes relatively low social status and "salt-of-the-earth" respectability. The north–south divide is also party political,

with the north generally supporting the Nationalist Party (Christian Democrats), and the south supporting the Labour Party (socialists) (see Mitchell 1997, 2002).

5 The Maltese paper *Illum* (February 18, 2007) cited interviews with a number of Birzebuggia residents who referred to the Caruanas' debt problems. Available from http://www.illum.com.mt/2007/02/18/t2.html (accessed June 10, 2012).

Chapter Three

1 Internal citation from French anthropologist Jean Pouillon (1982 [1979]: 1).

2 Schjødt (2009: 333) points out that the vast majority of neuroscience research on religious experience has focused on Christian prayer and Buddhist or other Eastern forms of meditation, in spite of the fact that billions of religious people do not engage in either of these practices.

3 My account has been shaped by discussions of the "extended mind" with John Sutton, Paul Mason, Paul Keil, and Richard Menary. In their seminal paper on "extended mind," Clark and Chalmers (1998) argue that considering the "mind" to be contained within the skull, like the brain, is arbitrary when so many thought processes engage with the world, manipulate space, and introject external objects (see also Clark 1997, 1999; Menary 2010). As Bender and colleagues (2010) highlight, anthropologists are better practiced at considering how the cognitive "unit" might extend beyond the individual to include supportive context, so the extended mind concept should come especially comfortably to our field (e.g. Hutchins 1995).

Chapter Four

1 Caption under Head II painting by Francis Bacon.

2 The team included Caroline Osella (anthropology), who studied the negotiation of self and personhood through culinary practices; Dina Matar (media studies), who studied the interpersonal circulation of news and information via community networks; and Abigail Wood (ethnomusicology), who conducted a longer study of Jerusalem's soundscapes.

3 Glenn Bowman's extensive research on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher has served as an important source of inspiration. See Bowman 1998, 2000, 2001, and 2007.

4 See, too, David Parkin's thought-provoking chapter on the intimate and necessary relation between reason, emotion, and embodiment (1985).

5 See David Howes, forthcoming.

6 Although the resurrection of Christ is not officially one of the 14 Stations of the Cross, it is sometimes considered to be the 15th.

7 Herod the Great, who rebuilt the Temple, reigned from 37 to 4 BCE. Archaeologists believe that the area outside the city walls where Christ was

crucified and buried was a stone quarry in the seventh century BCE and was later a site for stone-cut tomb burial until the first century CE. Alternative sites for Calvary (Golgotha) have been proposed throughout Christian history, whereas authors such as Montefiore (2011: 108) maintain that the site is genuine.

8 See for example BBC News, July 30, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2162406.stm; September 27, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3695390.stm; April 20, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7357496.stm; and November 9, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7718587.stm (accessed June 10, 2012). Montefiore offers historical accounts of the "priestly brawls" in the church (2011: 310, 518–19).

9 A "parvis" is an enclosed courtyard in front of the entrance to a cathedral.

10 The Katholikon, controlled by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, occupies the crossing of the earlier Crusader church, and is spatially separated from the rest of the surrounding church by high partition walls.

11 See, for example, Bagnoli et al. (2011), figures 46 (88–9) and 118 (203–4).

12 See Montefiore's (2011: 152) description of the "ever-expanding panoply of relics in the Holy Sepulchre," based on the fourth-century pilgrimage account of Egeria, a Spanish nun.

13 The name Calvary comes from the Latin *Calvariae Locus*, "place of [the] skull."

14 See Bagnoli et al. 2011: 11, figure 7, of a tin-lead flask depicting the Anastasis rotunda as it appeared prior to its modification in the seventh century. In Europe, medieval churches with rotundas were built in imitation of the Jerusalem church, including the Temple Church in London (Williams 2012: 45).

15 Williams interestingly notes that: "Christians living in the Ottoman world came to see their pilgrimage to Jerusalem as the equivalent of the Muslim *hajj*, even calling themselves *hajji* in imitation of Islamic custom" (2012: 45).

16 In winter, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher closes its doors at 7 p.m. and reopens at 4 a.m. In the summer, it closes at 8 p.m. (9 p.m., Jerusalem time). On Saturday evening, it reopens at 11 p.m. and stays open through the night until Sunday evening. The clocks within the church are not subject to daylight saving time so, unlike the city outside, they remain unchanged throughout the year. In a temporal sense, the church therefore operates separately from the secular world of the state.

17 See Montefiore (2011: 518), for a description of the ritual church opening by the Nusseibeh in the morning.

18 The concepts of "nearness to" and "distance from" God are captured in the Islamic dual principles of *tashbīh* and *tanzih*, referring respectively to the accessibility to Allah, his closeness, and his incomparability and distance from us (Murata and Chittick 1994).

19 Access to the Temple Mount has been forbidden to Jews since the destruction of Herod's Temple by the Romans.

20 The Kaaba marks the center of the Islamic world, and the gates to heaven are located directly above. The Kaaba is believed to be the first house on earth,

originally built by Adam, rebuilt by Abraham, and rebuilt on numerous occasions since. According to Joseph Rykwert, the Kaaba reflects a house in paradise (1981). During the haj, circumambulation (*Tawaf*) around the Kaaba is the most important ritual, but the structure remains separated from the pilgrims by the *kiswah* cloak. The keys to its inner chamber are held by members of the Bani Shaybat, a privilege and duty bestowed by Muhammad, and entry is severely restricted. During *Tawaf*, it is desirable for pilgrims to kiss the stone on the eastern corner (thought to date from Adam and Eve), but this is made exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, by the shear crush of the crowds, so most pilgrims resort to pointing at the stone each time they pass it.

21 There is similarity between my reasoning here and Sperber's *Rethinking Symbolism* (1975), whereby symbols acquire their potency because of the cognitive inability to overcome the inherent contradiction between the content of the symbol and what we know of the world, and the inability to comfortably accommodate it in our encyclopedic knowledge.

Chapter Five

1 Four principal Hindu pilgrimage destinations at the "corners" of the Indian subcontinent: Badrinath (north), Dwarka (west), Puri (east), and Rameshwaram (south). If a pilgrim reaches all four, the belief is that s/he will obtain *moksha*, release from the cycle of birth–death–rebirth.

2 In 1978, Sax was a student, part of my Ramlila research team. He studied pilgrimage including mapping the movements from *lila* to *lila* of performers and spectators. Except where otherwise noted, all references to Sax's work are from his typed reports.

3 *Darshan* means "to see"—but in its Hindu religious context, as part of "*bhakti*" or devotion, *darshan* is more than a mere sighting. It is a visual–tangible face to face with the divine.

4 What is spoken by Rama and the other figures of Ramlila is called *samvad*—a word meaning "dialog" or "discourse." These Hindi dialogs were assembled/written in the mid-nineteenth century by a group of literary men, led by the poet–playwright–journalist–Hindu cultural advocate Bharatendu Harishchandra, commissioned for the task of making the Ramlila more available to ordinary people who might have had difficulty comprehending Tulsidas's sixteenth-century text by Maharaja Ishwari Narain Singh (1822–89; ruled 1835–89).

5 This *samvad* is based on the Lanka Kanda, C. 61, of Tulsidas (in W. D. P. Hill's translation, 1969: 394).

6 According to legend, when Vyas—arranger of the Vedas, author of the *Mahabharata*—was refused alms in Varanasi, he cursed the city. Soon after, at a house where Shiva and Parvati lived as humans, Vyas was so pleased with the alms they gave him that he forgot his curse. "Who would not live in Kashi," he said, "where you can get both delicious food and liberation?" However, because of his bad temper Shiva banished Vyas from Kashi, allowing him to

visit only on the 8th and 14th day of the lunar month. Wanting to live within view of Kashi, Vyas built a temple—still to be seen at Ramnagar inside the Qila.

7 A dialect of Hindi spoken in the Avadh (Ayodhya) region of eastern Uttar Pradesh and in Nepal.

8 Also the day that Durga slays the demon Mahisasura.

9 At the start of the line in 1770, the raja was a vassal of the Moghul Nawab of Avadh. Authority soon passed to the British led by Warren Hastings, India's first Governor-General. In 1781, Raja Chait Singh rebelled, was defeated, and fled into exile where he remained until his death in 1810. In 1781, the British installed Chait Singh's nephew, Mahip Narain Singh, as raja. In 1828, the British confiscated the last of the royal lands. These were not returned to the rajas until the long rule of Ishwari Narain Singh (1835–89). Maharaja Ishwari Prasad Narain Singh was a stalwart supporter of the British, who rewarded him for his loyalty. However, he never had autonomous military power—nor did any of the maharajas coming after him. Thus the weapons *puja* honors a fiction.

10 The princely states were abolished in order to create a unified India; and also to punish the maharajas, most of whom were British colonial vassals.

11 The rice-pudding-like substance is divided into four portions: Kausalya, Rama's mother, eats half; Kaikeyi, Bharat's mother, eats one-quarter; Sumitra, the mother of Lakshman and Shatrughna, eats two one-eighth portions.

12 Vibhuti Narain Singh was born in 1927. He became maharaja in 1939—but was put under the authority of a regent. He assumed his full authority in July 1947, barely a month before India's independence spelled doom to the whole princely state system. Vibhuti signed the order abolishing his kingdom in October 1947. Yet, as I knew him, he was every inch a king.

13 The *Kashi Khanda*, part of the *Skanda Purana*, "is 100 chapters long and contains myths, *mahatmyas*, ritual prescriptions, and geographical information" (Eck 1982: 347). The *Kashi Khanda* describes the city during the Ghadavala times, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

14 The Cantonment is the area where during the colonial era the British built their headquarters, residences, and barracks for their officials, officers, and soldiers. Colonialism being what it is/was, the Cantonment resembled England in many ways, and the structures there are still regarded as spacious and lavish. Many of Varanasi's large and expensive hotels are in the Cantonment.

15 The *vyases* are priests who train the *swarups* and guide each *lila* from start to finish. The Ramayanis are 12 priests who chant every word of the *Manas*, alternating that text with the more vernacular *samvads*. The first portion of the *Manas* is not suitable for staging. But the whole text must be sung. Thus for ten days before Ramlila-as-theater begins, the Ramayanis gather each evening on the second floor of a building near to where Bharat Milap takes place and chant the text up to the birth of Ravana.

16 A lakh = Rs100,000. Thus 15 lakhs = Rs1,500,000. A sizable sum, but not a fortune. For the Maharaja to spend Rs1,000,000 on Ramlila does not, to me, seem out of line.

17 In Valmiki's *Ramayana*.

Chapter Six

1 Donald A. Landes in his recent translation of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* uses the "more active 'sensing' rather than the less active 'sense experience'" to translate *le sentir* (2012).

2 In this chapter I use acting/performance interchangeably to refer to the "work" of the actor/performer, that is, how the actor/performer deploys her bodymind focus, consciousness, awareness to enact and experience a specific performance score. The actor's performance score may be defined as that structure or sequence of actions determined in part or in full by conventional performance techniques, and/or through rehearsal processes (sometimes responding to and embodying a dramatic text), and/or through devising/making processes. The score provides the performers with a repeatable template or map that guides her embodiment (through movement, enactment, vocalization), the deployment of her consciousness (attention/awareness), senses, and experience of that score within each live performance. For a more detailed discussion, see Zarrilli (2013a).

3 Conversely, for some practitioners of Indian yoga (for example), the ultimate purpose of their practice is to control the senses, cease all mental activity, and literally withdraw from the "world."

4 My approach to the study of experience, sentience, embodiment, affect/emotion, and consciousness within bodymind practices (Zarrilli forthcoming) is interdisciplinary, as I draw upon comparative philosophy, anthropology, cognitive science (especially that branch best known as dynamic systems theory—see Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991; Thompson 2007), and recent interdisciplinary studies utilizing neuroscience (Walach, Schmidt, and Jonas 2011; Schmidt and Walach 2014). Similar concerns are found in Paterson's study of touch (2007), and Richard Shusterman's "somaesthetics." Somaesthetics "highlights and explores the soma—the living, sentient, purposive body—as the indispensable medium for all perception" (Shusterman 2012: 3). A major concern within the overall project of somaesthetics is better somatic self-use, and therefore the well-being of the individual. Shusterman's project originates from a philosophical pragmatism which insists "on the body's central role in artistic creation and appreciation" (ibid.). He focuses on somatic practices that increase "our powers of awareness, focus, and feeling through better mastery of their somatic source" (ibid.). See also Shusterman (1997, 2000, 2008, 2009). I agree with Shusterman's criticism of Merleau-Ponty's at-times "essentialist phenomenological approach," which assumes that "all normal people enjoy the same primordial level of spontaneous perception and action … I think the situation is more complex. Many (if not most) of us manage to get by with habits of sensorimotor spontaneity that have various minor defects that do not disqualify us from being normal in the sense of having more or less average functioning" (2009: 139). Shusterman's important point is that "Some people have better skills of perception and performance than others, and training is one way they have acquired them" (ibid.).

5 For a lengthy discussion and analysis of these opening breathing exercises between phenomenology and dynamic systems theory of cognitive science, see Zarrilli (forthcoming a).

6 As Stefan Schmidt reminds us, the term meditation is of Western origin, deriving from the Latin *meditari* ("to consider," "to think over"), "used in the Middle Ages to describe the continuous mental dwelling on a spiritual or other topic, and later a discourse about a certain topic" (2014: 139). "Meditation" has become an increasingly popular subject of neuroscientific research (Walach et al. 2011; Schmidt and Walach 2014; Awasthi 2013). Major definitional problems have yet to be fully addressed (Awasthi 2013; Schmidt 2011, 2014). Awasthi reports "conflicting results" in many studies of meditation, which may be due to a "lack of consensus on the definition of meditation," the huge diversity of techniques/procedures (chanting, mental imagery, following the breath, etc.), and the fact that subjects may be at very different stages of practice (some neophytes; some masters) (2013: 4). Lutz et al. argue that it is "*essential to be specific about the type of meditation practice under investigation*" (2008c: 163, emphasis added).

7 As I have explained at length elsewhere, to understand the context within which embodied practices both are shaped, and in turn "shape" the experience of practitioners in particular ways, a complex nexus of four interactive arenas should be examined: the literal arena or context of practice (such as the specific place of training/performance); the social arena; the arena of cultural production in/around that practice; and the arena of "experience" and self/other formation potential within that practice in that space/context (Zarrilli 1998: 1–10, *passim*).

8 This quality is known as *ipseity*—the constitutive way in which there is a sense that experience is always to or for "me" and not for someone else.

9 William James focused on the importance of subjective/first-person experience as a basic source of knowledge when he announced that "Introspective observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always" (1918: 185). A relatively recent approach which draws equally upon quantitative research of neural activity and first-person/introspective reports on a subject's experience is neurophenomenology (Depraz et al. 2003; Lutz et al. 2008c; Depraz 2009; Awasthi 2013: 9; Hasenkamp 2014; and Shear 2014). For several first-person accounts of performance, see Zarrilli (2013a: 20–2; 2012: 143–5). Some actors resolutely refuse to reflect upon and/or discuss their own process and experience of acting, often declaring that to do so would break the "magic" or the "muse" that inspires them. Other highly experienced actors choose to reflect in depth on their own processes and experiences, and do so with the type of depth, reflexivity, and specificity characteristic of lifelong practitioners of specific forms of meditation.

10 Elisabeth Hsu carefully articulates the historical variability and diversity of the use and meanings of *qi* ("breath, vapour, air") in Chinese history, especially with reference to its use in medical texts (2007). She notes that as early as the third and second century BCE, key Chinese texts focused on self-cultivation as well as medicine "distinguished between *qi* and *feng* as inner and outer winds" (2007: S119; see also Mroz [2011] for a discussion of practice). Here again the "outer" and "inner" dimensions of experience of practice are culturally and phenomenologically recognized and marked.

11 I began training in *kalarippayattu* in 1976–7 with Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar (1930–2006) of the C. V. N. Kalari, Thiruvananthapuram. Between 1976

and 1989, for intensive periods of three to twelve months at a time, I lived and trained in Kerala for a total of seven years. During those seven years my *primary* practice was with Govindankutty Nayar, but I also underwent additional training with C. Mohammed Sherif, Raju Asan, and Mohamedunni Gurukkal in other styles/forms of *kalarippayattu* and *varma ati*, and hatha-yoga training with Dhayanidhi (Thiruvananthapuram) and Chandran Gurukkal (Kannur). In 1980 I was fortunate to work alongside and train with A. C. Scott in a short form of *taiqiquan* (Wu-style) for an intensive year. In all of the above, my own training was primarily mimetic—observing the teacher or an advanced student and then attempting to embody each form. Teachers observe and correct. Occasionally in *kalarippayattu* training, Govindankutty Nayar would place his hands on a student to help correct a form—such as keeping the lower back lengthened.

12 For the most complete account of this approach to training actors, see Zarrilli (2009). As with any attempt at a "good" pedagogy or process of directing actors, the discourses I use in training and the insights I bring to work with coaching individuals doing the training and/or when working with actors continues to evolve. This specific reflection on the training and the states of consciousness/experience it evokes will no doubt subtly influence precisely how I work with practitioners in the future.

13 This optimal state of heightened attention and awareness is similar to but also *different* from that embodied and actualized by a traditional *kalarippayattu* practitioner. In this state for both actors and *kalarippayattu* practitioners one inhabits a 360-degree bodymind awareness that is active/passive, and therefore is able to immediately respond within that environment to whatever is happening and to be active in response. However, for the martial artist when in combat with (for example) sword and shield, there is the extra rather extra-ordinary element of extreme danger in the actual use of lethal force and the literal release of "power" (*sakti*) in slashing cuts that have the potential to "kill." Until the introduction of firearms and the creation of a modern army, the life of a *kalarippayattu* practitioner *literally* depended on getting as close as possible to attaining this optimal state of attention and awareness. For an extended discussion of this optimal state of "doubtlessness," "mental power," and transformative "fury" in the martial practitioner, see Zarrilli (1998: 201–14). It should be noted that today in Kerala, and 99% of the demonstrations one sees in public and video clips available online of *kalarippayattu* emphasize the external, highly gymnastic flexibility of the physical body performing exercises done as fast as possible, and the speed of exchanges with weapons rather than the subtler "inner" dimensions of fully heightened attention, awareness, and release of deadly lethal force discussed here.

14 Following the work of psychiatrist Jeffrey Schwartz, anthropologist Greg Downey calls our attention to the importance of considering "directed neuroplasticity" in discussions of skill acquisition, and therefore to forms of "perceptual learning" (2005: 21–2).

15 For a complete description and analysis of these breath-control exercises, see Zarrilli (forthcoming a).

16 Fontana differentiates between "two major strands" of meditation, although there is "considerable overlap between them": (1) "meditation with ideation,"

which is sometimes described as "meditation with seed"; and (2) "meditation without ideation," which is sometimes described as "meditation without seed" (2007: 154). My focus here is on the latter.

17 *Qi* animates all movement, i.e., gross physical activity such as walking, the involuntary movement of the heart, the act of eating, or the generation of thought. *Qi* can be dense, as in rocks and earth, or ethereal, as in one's thoughts. In Chinese medicine, *qi* is read according to its manifest qualities, i.e., it may be strong or weak, etc. If *qi* is out of balance, one is ill. Within the body, *qi* is understood to be in constant motion: entering, leaving, ascending, or descending (Kaptchuk 1983: 37).

18 For a full description, see Zarrilli (1995).

19 For an extensive discussion of "touching," see Paterson (2007).

20 For an account of work on inter-subjectivity in this process, see Zarrilli (2013d).

21 *Told by the Wind* was co-created by Kaite O'Reilly, Jo Shapland, and Phillip Zarrilli, and produced by the Llanarth Group (Wales). It premiered in 2010 at the Chapter Arts Centre (Cardiff) and continues to tour internationally. For further discussion of *Told by the Wind*, see Zarrilli (forthcoming b).

Chapter Seven

1 It is located in the district of Ocongate, in the valley of Sinak'ara at the foot of the glacier called Qollqepunku, 16 miles south of Ausangate Mountain/Glacier.

2 As has been widely documented, mountains have been the focus of veneration and ritual since pre-Hispanic times (Allen 1988).

3 The estimated number of Quechua speakers in the core Andean countries of South America (Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia) varies between 8 and 12 million. King and Hornberger (2004) give the number of 10 million, noting that despite this number it is considered an "endangered language" due to its drastic and rapid demise in a short time (1).

4 Here I am using Potter's (2008) definition of kinesthesia, which incorporates Sklar's (2001) differentiation between "felt experience" and proprioception. Potter states:

> [I]n describing a sense of motion grounded in the daily experiences of the lived body, I will employ the term "kinaesthesia", which I define as: a dynamic sense of constantly shifting one's body in space and time in order to achieve a desired end. Although at times used interchangeably with "proprioception", kinaesthesia carries less emphasis on a specifically biomedical understanding of movement and instead conveys a more general ability to feel the motion of one's body and to adjust it in culturally preferred ways. Sklar implicitly makes a similar distinction, referring to kinaesthesia as "felt experience" and proprioception as "the reception of stimuli produced within one's own body, especially as movement" (2001: 72). (2008: 449–50)

5 Pomacanchi has the double legal political status as a peasant community and as district. It is located in the province of Acomayo, in the department of Cuzco. It has approximately 8,000 inhabitants.

6 See http://www.gf.org/fellows/16918-zoila-s-mendoza for a short video and photos of this specific research (accessed October 16, 2014).

7 As will be seen later, the name privileged in Pomacanchi is *Chakiri or Chakiri Wayri*, but in other towns it may be called *Wayri Ch'unchu* or simply *Ch'unchu*. See Allen 1988 and Sallnow 1987.

8 This name is derived from the Spanish word "*alabado*," which means "praised."

9 I use kilometers here because it is the measurement used in Peru and also for the stops marked during the climb.

10 The conversation took place in Quechua and the translation is mine. Here "Z" stands for the author, and "D" for dancer.

11 An *Apacheta*, basing our definition on Hornberger and Hornberger 1983, but modifying it a little, is a crossroad or a point on the path that is marked with a pile of stones, put there in order to invoke a superior force such as the local mountains, the Lord of Qoyllorit'i, etc. All the ones I have seen on the path have a wooden cross in the middle, with the stones placed underneath and around it.

12 The verb *munay* in Quechua can be translated as both "want" and "like" in English.

13 About the *Ukuku* in Andean oral tradition and ritual, see Allen 1983 and 1988; Itier 2007; Poole 1991; and Sallnow 1987. This is a half-man, half-bear character ever present in Cuzco festivals.

14 For example, Potter (2008) borrows the term "participant experience" to describe her methodology, differentiating it from the more detached "participant observation" (446).

Chapter Eight

1 For a critique of logocentric approaches in the human sciences—that is, approaches in which "meaning" is construed primarily in terms of linguistic signification as something to be "interpreted" or "read"—see Stahl 2008 and Mitchell and Mitchell 2008, see further, Howes 2003: Ch. 1.

2 The most extreme forms of psychophysicalism are to be found in the sensory science research laboratories, where self-proclaimed sensory professionals ever so carefully discriminate and evaluate the sensory properties of consumer goods. For an exposé of how this approach obfuscates the social, see Rozin 2010.

3 Pentcheva gives the example of the figuration of the Archangel Michael by way of illustrating what is meant by this notion of "the imprint of absence on matter":

> By nature, the [Archangel Michael] is fire and spirit. Human beings can grasp him only through the imprint he leaves on matter. For instance,

> Saint Michael's shrines at Chonai and Monte S. Gargano are perceived as imprints left by him on the landscape. A chasm (Chonai) and a shrine carved in the rock (S. Gargano), they form giant fossils: contact relics giving tangibility to the angel's present absence. For this reason, the relief icon as *typos* becomes the only truthful form of representation for the Archangel. By its definition, it is the imprint of absence. His enamel icon in S. Marco is even closer to the truth, for it is an imprint of fire on glass. Its materially saturated surfaces inundate the senses and simulate the angel's presence. (Pentcheva 2006: 639)

4 As Classen observes, "[The Ancients] were apt to think of the senses more as media of communication than as passive recipients of data" (1993: 2). This extended understanding of the sensorium is also given in the way each sense was correlated with a different element: vision with water; sound with air; smell with fire; and touch (including taste) with earth. This schema prevailed in antiquity and down to the early modern period, with some variations (see Moulton 2010: 124). In this way, psychology and cosmology were intimately interconnected.

5 On smell, and in particular the smell of incense, as a means of attaining divine knowledge and grace, see Pentcheva 2010: Ch. 1; Classen 1998: Ch. 2; Howes 1987.

6 For an account of the complex layering and circulation of sound in Byzantine places of worship, and how this echoed the play of light, see Pentcheva 2011 and 2010: Ch. 2. Also of relevance in this connection is the way in which the borders of many icons were engraved with epigrams (*graphe)*, so that the worshipper "envoiced" the icon through the act of reading the inscription aloud (Pentcheva 2010: 160–70). In this way, word and image were joined. Behind this unison was the idea of the incarnate Christ—that is, of the Word (Logos) made flesh, or in other words, the icon rendered sentient (see Pentcheva 2010: 70).

7 On taste as a medium for divine revelation, see Pentcheva 2006: 649–50; Fulton 2006.

8 As discussed elsewhere (Howes and Classen 2014: Ch. 6), the most common form of synesthesia consists of a system of correspondences across different sensory registers. For example, in the ancient Chinese Theory of the Five Elements, each of the principal elements of Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water corresponded to a distinct odor, flavor, color, musical tone, season, and direction. Peak religious experiences are frequently expressed in synesthetic terms as well. For example, a hatha yoga practitioner describes the sudden arousal of *kundalini* after many years practicing meditation as follows: "Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord" (Hollenback 2009: 99). Acoustic, visual, and haptic sensations all coalesce in this description of a "transcendental" experience.

9 For an insightful account of the reformation of the senses—and religion—during the Reformation period see Milner 2014.

10 Other formats include: how and when to sit, stand, raise ones's arms, kneel, fall down, jump, dance, clap, and "trample on the Devil" with one's feet. As de Witte relates:

> Watching the *Living World* editors select those body images that support their programme format, I realised that the process of "formatting" the church audience already started in church, as peoples' bodies are made to conform (or unconsciously conform themselves) to what is deemed appropriate bodily behaviour. I have thus extrapolated the term format from its specific media-related use to include the performative aspects of religious practice. (2011: 503–4)

This passage, with its blend of media analysis and sensory analysis, brings out nicely how the inner experience of transformation is mediated by the "loop" through the environment that is provided by television. On the progressive technologization or mediatization of conversion in twentieth-century religions, see further Weiner 2014.

11 Evolutionary thinking is currently in vogue in many social science disciplines, especially marketing. Books such as *The Evolutionary Bases of Consumption* (Saad 2007) and *The Consuming Instinct: What Juicy Burgers, Ferraris, Pornography and Gift-Giving Reveal About Human Nature* (Saad 2011) project the sexual and other impulses of the thoroughly modern (Western) male back on the "caveman" and purport to demonstrate how these "instincts" or "mechanisms" were "selected" by evolution. Such thinking is tempered in the case of CSR by a certain openness to ethnography and history (e.g. Whitehouse 2000, 2007), albeit usually only to the extent such disciplines can provide illustrative material for the cognitive scientist to digest. No attempt is made within CSR to historicize or contextualize cognitive psychology itself, such as an ethnopsychological or history of mentalities approach would involve (Classen 1993, Howes and Classen 2014). This unilaterality on the part of CSR is problematic—the "integration" (Whitehouse 2007) or "consilience" (Slingerland and Collard 2012) of the human and cognitive sciences has to cut both ways (see Pink and Howes 2010).

12 "Semantic memory refers to mental representations of a general, propositional nature," such as the routine account an Anglican layman might give if asked to recall the chain of events at a Sunday service five years previously. "Episodic memory refers to mental representations of personally experienced events, conceptualized as unique episodes in one's life," such as the recollections tinged with shock and trauma that a novice who survived a Melanesian male initiation rite might harbor (Whitehouse 2000: 5–12).

13 Some cognitive scientists are more sensitive to the sensory dimensions of religious transmission than others; for example, the importance attached to "perceptual symbol" theory in Slingerland (2012), or the key role attributed to "sensory pageantry" in McCauley and Lawson's ritual frequency hypothesis (McCauley and Lawson 2002). However, Whitehouse is highly critical and dismissive of the latter position (Whitehouse 2004: 140–51). In a similar vein, Whitehouse criticizes the media theory of Jack Goody (1986), which (like that of Marshall McLuhan [1962]) sought to specify the cognitive implications of the transition from orality to literacy. After dismissing Goody, Whitehouse then subsumes Goody's model within his own theory of the doctrinal mode of religiosity while purging it of all its sensoriality (see Whitehouse 2000: 172–80).

14 It simply confuses the typology to suggest that both modes are "often present within the same tradition" (Whitehouse 2007: 272) without any attempt being

made to specify the articulation between them. Whitehouse does occasionally make a stab in this direction (e.g. Whitehouse 2007: 270–2), but on the whole his explanations unfold in a piecemeal fashion. By contrast, the focus of a sensory analysis is always on how the senses interact, and how this interaction mediates the relationship between mind and environment, self and society, idea and object (Bull et al. 2006).

15 Also noteworthy in this connection is Greg Downey's touching portrait of his grandmother feeling her Rosary beads and reciting the Hail Mary, with the manual action of fingering the beads serving as an extra-mental support, or material "loop," that enables her to slow the descent of her mind into dementia (Downey, this volume).

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