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CONTENTS VOLUME 22 | ISSUE 4 | 2023

- 233 **CURATORIAL: You Must Remember This.**
- 239 **POEM: Auspicious Homecoming.**
John F. Sherry, Jr.
- 242 **CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: Imaginary Worlds.**
Astrid Van den Bossche
- 244 **MEMOIR: Remembering Rethinking Marketing:
Who Knows Where The Time Goes?**
Michael Saren
- 250 **MEMOIR: Warwick's Always On My Mind.**
Bernard Cova
- 256 **MEMOIR: Bliss Was It In That Business School...**
Stephen Brown
- 263 **ELEGY: Ride 'Em Cowgirl.**
Richard L. Celsi
- 265 **TRIBUTE: Taking It To The Streets:
The Making Of A Consumer Ethnographer.**
John Schouten
- 276 **PHOTO-ESSAY: The Art Of Pedagogy.**
Patricia L. Sunderland
- 284 **SOUVENIR: The Perfumed Battlefield.**
John Baxter
- 296 **ESSAY: The Collector's Manifesto.**
Clinton D. Lanier and C. Scott Rader
- 310 **ESSAY: Cut And Paste.**
Maurice Patterson and
Renata Couto de Azevedo de Oliveira
- 321 **VIDEO-ESSAY: Wonders Of Waste:
Upcycling And Creative Deconsumption.**
Stephen O'Sullivan and Grace O'Rourke
- 330 **POEM: Reverie.**
John F. Sherry, Jr.
- 334 **RECALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: Worlds Imagined.**
Astrid Van den Bossche
- 336 **PHOTOSHOOT MEMOIR: Creating Utopia In The Rubble.**
Eric Krszjzaniek





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CURATORIAL

**You Must
Remember
This**



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Whatever else we have, we'll always have *Casablanca*. Released in 1943, it is one of the most unforgettable films in the history of the cinema.¹ Apart from the imperishable line about Paris, it boasts 'Here's lookin' at you, kid,' 'Round up the usual suspects,' 'This could be the start of a beautiful friendship,' and the one that's misquoted again and again, 'Play it, Sam.'² When the American Film Institute released its list of 'all-time best movie quotes,' *Casablanca* had five in the top fifty; its sublime signature song, 'As Time Goes By,' was voted second in the rankings behind 'Over the Rainbow'; and, if awards were handed out for *homages*, Warner Brothers' much-cited, oft-invoked, frequently-spoofed masterpiece would win hands down. Or paws down in the case of Bugs Bunny's peerless parody, *Carrotblanca*: 'In this crazy world, the lives of three people don't amount to a hill of greens.'³

Casablanca's storyline, similarly, is more than a hill of green beans. A heart-warming, life-affirming, war-torn tale of lost love, duty calls, reluctant heroism, rebellious resistance and deathless memories of better days, happier times, it won the triple crown of Best Picture, Best Director and Best Screenplay at the 1943 Oscars ceremony. It showcased Ingrid Bergman's 'luminosity' to unforgettable effect, established Englishman Claude Rains as everyone's favourite Frenchman, and not only transformed the image of Humphrey Bogart from typecast gangster to testy good-guy, but made him the highest paid actor of his generation. By far 'the most beloved of all Hollywood movies,' *Casablanca* has enjoyed more revival screenings than any other film before or since.⁴ And, according to Umberto Eco's postmodern classic, *Travels in Hyper-reality*, Michael Curtiz's masterpiece 'became a cult movie because it is not *one* movie. It is "movies":

Casablanca is a cult movie precisely because all the archetypes are there, because each actor repeats a part played on other occasions, and because human beings live not 'real' life but life as stereotypically portrayed in previous films. *Casablanca* carries the sense of déjà vu to such a degree that the addressee is ready to see in it what happened after it as well.⁵



For a fair few consumer researchers of a certain age, Warwick is the Paris they'll always have, the gin-joint of postmodern marketing, the *Casablanca* of critical thinking.⁶ Their immediate predecessors had fought tooth and nail in the paradigm wars of the 1980s. And then went walkabout on a Winnebago, heading east, in order to show that there was more than one way to skin the cat of scholarship...⁷

Thus inspired, the new kids on the block felt moved to flay the mangy moggy's epistemological, ontological, axiological and methodological epidermis. It was high time, the young guns contended, to radically rethink marketing, an inherently incongruous, increasingly incoherent academic discipline. But how is it possible, the cool cats wondered in Warwick while contemplating Rethinking Marketing, 'to render the familiar strange, the comfortable uncomfortable, the understood misunderstood, the predictable unpredictable, the ingenuous disingenuous, the normal abnormal, the transparent opaque, the intimate alien, the settled unsettled,



the acceptable unacceptable, the taken-for-granted problematic, the balanced unbalanced, the thinkable unthinkable; the thought rethought?'.⁸

An answer, entirely appropriately, is contained in their question. A quick count shows that it contains fourteen clauses, oxymorons all. Unwittingly perhaps, Warwick's warriors had produced a scholarly sonnet, a postmodern poem where paradoxes replace poesy and the rhyme scheme doesn't scan. The academic equivalent of automatic writing, it epitomises the temper of the times, when artistic endeavour fought pseudo-science for the heart and soul of a subject in sore need of rethinking. And, although the Warwickistas subsequently concluded, with regret, that 'we could not find a poetry sufficient to the task of unpicking our knotted imaginations',⁹ their deconstructed sonnet more than sufficed.

The simple fact of the matter is that, half a century after *Casablanca* cast its spell, the Rethinking Marketing Symposium spellbound those who attended. A Euro-centric complement to the postmodern rumblings across the Atlantic,¹⁰ it was organised by a quartet of critical thinkers and held in the University of Warwick's business school. If not exactly marketing's Woodstock festival – three days of peace, music and mud – it felt like Altamont Speedway for some, especially when Shelby D. Hunt expressed his disapproval. In no uncertain terms. But Warwickfest's three days of dialogue, discussion and, on occasion, discombobulation proved unforgettable all the same.

Thirty years on, the palpable intellectual excitement of the Warwick event is a dim and distant memory. But memory, remembrance, recollection, retrospection and times past remain high on the academic agenda. Nostalgia is more popular than ever before. Looking back is the way forward for more than a few. Forgetfulness, if far from forbidden, is frowned upon right now.¹¹

Accordingly, this issue of *JCB*, a journal that initially sought to turn the clock back to the days when customers were kings and, in its current incarnation, seeks succour once more in marketing's artistic heritage, is devoted but not confined to memorial matters. Predicated on the classic three-act structure that served *Casablanca* so well¹² – and innumerable golden age Hollywood movies in addition – it begins with *recollection*, turns to *regret* and culminates in *recovery*. That's followed by a brief yet incandescent *recap*. As novelist Ray Celestin artfully observes, echoing Walter Benjamin's iconic 'Angel of History':

I never thought of time as moving forward, I always thought of it as falling into the past, each moment shed as soon as it's born, flung back like spray from a boat, sparks from a fire. I feel sorry for time, always dying and discarded into the feckless night.¹³



Feckless first, last and always, we get the party started by returning, for old times' sake, to the early 1990s, when postmodern playfulness was all the rage. More specifically, by turning back to the front cover of this issue, which is our first contribution. Photographed by Eric Krszjzaniek, it shows a seated figure surrounded by the detritus of consumer culture, seemingly staring into the wide blue yonder of





yearning, the yesteryear of bright new tomorrows. Or perhaps they've nodded off, dreaming dreams of the dear departed American Dream. You decide.¹⁴

Next up is an elegant elegy by the Bard of South Bend, John F. Sherry, Jr, who ponders his past professional self while packing up his prized professorial possessions prior to departing for the state that comes to us all (bar Russell Belk): Retirement! Bereft we may be, but fear not for our field. Akin to the Arnie of academia, he'll be back. As shall Astrid Van den Bossche, whose poetic 'Call for Contributions' – aka a special issue of *JCB* on 'Imaginary Worlds' – materialises immediately afterwards in our itinerary. She too will be back...

But not before Warwick's veterans have their say. A triumvirate of survivors from the historic event, Mike Saren, Bernard Cova and Stephen Brown, reflect on what the occasion meant at the time and means thirty years later. For Saren, one of the farsighted organisers of 'Rethinking Marketing', the response to and resonance of their call for reform far exceeded the foursome's expectations. For Cova, it was transformative, turning him away from B2B to a bigger, broader academic canvas which spans the post-postmodern Mediterranean. For Brown, Warwick marked the beginning of his dalliance with postmodernism, a long-drawn-out affair that ended unhappily in the bowels of London's Victoria and Albert Museum.



Endings of a very different and distressing kind feature in the next section. Skydiver supreme Richard L. Celsi proffers a plangent poetic tribute to his late wife, Mary, who lived life to the full in the great outdoors. But she passed away in her prime, before her time, with her boots on...riding Preacher.

John Schouten follows suit with a beautifully-written essay about his late, great colleague, companion and co-author, Jim McAlexander. They too rode the range together on Harleys, and their legendary 'Bikers' article made an indelible mark on the history of our field. Hail and farewell, old friend.

Solace is in short supply in the subsequent photo-essay by Patti Sunderland. Ostensibly a heart-warming tale of consuming education in Ethiopia, a war-torn part of the world where women suffer incessant indiscriminate discrimination, the cultural anthropologist's story is heart-breaking in its denouement. A beacon of hope is crushed beyond repair and only the skeletal remains of old school desks mark its passing. If you have tears to shed, save them for Sunderland's sorrowful tale of heroic failure.





Where to turn when all seems lost and despair drags us deeper than down? Love is a good place to start and love, as any lover of *Casablanca* knows, is best found in Paris. John Baxter, renowned cinephile-cum-cultural critic, gives us a *tour d'horizon* of the City of Light during its golden years when the watchwords *du jour* were 'Anything Goes.' And they did. Several times a night. Every night. Every night': From all sorts of eye-popping, jaw-dropping, knee-trembling angles...

Exhausted by our efforts, we thereafter seek succour in another supremely aesthetic activity; music. And who better to get us movin' and a-groovin' than that celebrated, bop-till-you-drop combo, Clinton 'Leiber' Lanier and Scott 'Stoller' Rader. Big Beatles lovers both, they are avid collectors of musical instruments as well. Their richly illustrated, high tempo account doesn't just shake it all baby. 'The Collector's Manifesto' has a twist and shout in its tail. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeeeeeeeah.

Luxury likewise offers a retreat from real-world travails, though pain can be part of the pleasure. Not least in the killer-driller-thriller case of tattoos. An ancient artform that has reemerged of late in innovative, invigorating, increasingly expensive varieties, luxury tattoos are scrutinised for our delectation by Maurice Patterson and Renata Couto de Azevedo de Oliveira. They've walked the talk too, with abundant body art on eye-catching display. Thinking of inking? Tours of their galleries can be arranged on request...

If, alternatively, you are yearning for upcycling, why not try Stephen O'Sullivan and Grace O'Rourke's video-essay? Complete with a link to their compelling videography, and blessed with a recycled soundtrack, 'Upcycling' artfully illustrates the practice and purpose of repurposing and, with the permission of the retropreneurs responsible, includes an outstanding collection of on-trend cast-offs. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back.



Talking of back, we said he'd return. And, like Rick in *Casablanca*, John Sherry remembers this, that and the other in a reverie of his upbringing. A four-tined fork of reminiscence, he impales the past poetically and pierces the present with presence. Astrid Van den Bossche is back as well with a through-the-snowglobe reminder of her special issue on worlds imagined and imaginary.

Ditto Eric Krszjzaniek, the photographer-scholar whose images bookend this issue. 'Creating Utopia in the Rubble' tells all about his evocative photoshoot and the heart-warming story within. Eric's tale calls time on this precipitous, possibly precipitate, plunge into the infinity pool of remembrance. Relax. Replenish. Rekindle. Rejoice.

NOTES

1. *Casablanca's* premiere took place in late 1942 – it was rush-released to coincide with the Allies' invasion of North Africa – but the movie didn't go on general release until early 1943. The Academy Awards it won relate to the latter year. See Isenberg, *We'll Always Have Casablanca*, 115.
2. Most notably by *Play it Again, Sam*, Woody Allen's successful Broadway stage show and movie of the same name.





3. Isenberg, *We'll Always Have Casablanca*, 251. The AFI list was issued in 2010. There are hundreds of *homages*, inventoried by Isenberg, everything from the Marx Brothers to the Muppets. Perhaps the most famous of these features in *When Harry Met Sally*.
4. Isenberg, *We'll Always Have Casablanca*, xiii.
5. Eco, *Travels in Hyper-reality*, 208.
6. Brownlie, et al, *Rethinking Marketing: New Perspectives*.
7. Among other things, this involved staring at goats. See Bradshaw and Brown, 'Scholars who stare'.
8. Brownlie et al, *Rethinking Marketing*, 1.
9. Brownlie et al. *Rethinking Marketing*, 5.
10. The rumblings included John Sherry's (1991) definitive literature review, Hirschman and Holbrook's (1992) methodological monograph and a special, two-part issue of the *International Journal of Marketing Research*, edited by A. Fuat Firat, John F. Sherry, Jr. and Alladi Venkatesh.
11. Brown, 'Retro galore!'.
12. Isenberg, *We'll Always Have Casablanca*, 38.
13. Celestin, *House of Shadows*, 54.
14. In addition to the front cover, Eric is responsible for the back. The former is entitled 'Creating Utopia in the Rubble', the latter 'Open for Business'. We are very grateful for Eric's permission to reproduce his wonderful work.

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POEM

Auspicious Homecoming

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AUSPICIOUS HOMECOMING

sacrifice begets a hopeful journey.
it seals the last home
in a subtle bubble,
the joy and grief,
relief and aggravation,
embrace of the familiar
neatly wrapped and nearly numbed,
a shunt to sheltered storage
on a backlot of imagination,
and bathes the next home
in the cold light
of prospective transformation,
a challenge
too uncertain to resist
a mystery
too alluring to resolve,
an unlocked portal
to another afterlife.

winnowing the library
is like severing limbs,
shelves swollen past capacity,
books once destined
to be stolen or gifted
accumulate like delta silt
for lack of hungry students,
surfeit of honest colleagues,
qualms over orphaning.
triaging volumes,
desperately separating
wheat from chaff,
goats from sheep,
the treasuring
of chalk and cheese
inhibits disposition.
first painful box of discards
primes a cascade of donation,
new lives to edify and entertain

old grad school notebooks,
curated knowledge
from the seventies,
term papers salvaged for the comments
that might whet a blunted take,
articles with endless annotations
for projects never gotten off the ground,
and fledgling fieldnotes,



sentimental must and mildew
like the mold on cheese
seasoning them for further savor,
spill out of basement closets
in battered boxes,
packing tape gone brittle
and frayed with age,
tired metaphors for life
in ivory towers, halls of ivy,
tired trophies, binned with ambivalence

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Imaginary Worlds

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IMAGINARY WORLDS: A CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS¹

...lost pasts and potential futures...

...utopias that cannot be...

...fictions we should heed...

...dystopias that creep...

...roads (not) taken old and new...

...portals into the deep...

...worlds experienced by the few...

...worlds that will not keep...

*For more information on this special curation of JCB, contact
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NOTES

1. Image generated by DreamStudio with Stable Diffusion XL 1.0.

MEMOIR

Remembering Rethinking Marketing: Who Knows Where The Time Goes?

Michael Saren
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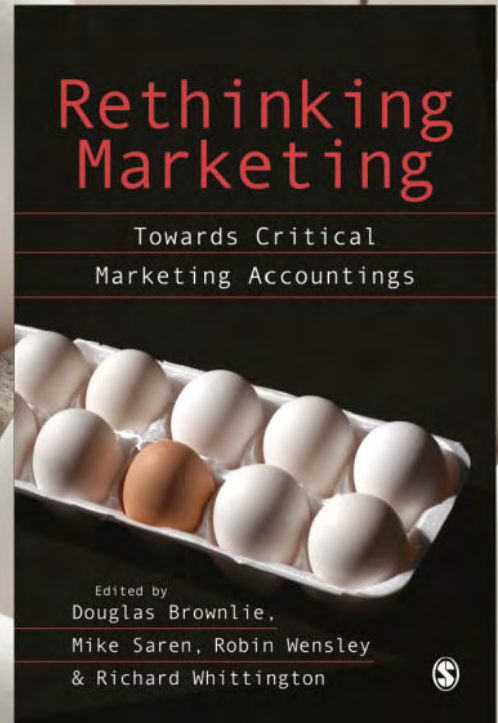
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Mike Saren, one of the organisers of the Rethinking Marketing symposium, reminisces about the people who contributed, the background to the event, its format and highlights.¹

When Bernard Cova recently reminded me about the 'Rethinking Marketing' symposium in Warwick, I was astonished to realise it had been so many years ago. Re-reading the contents of the proceedings 30 years later, it is not the papers themselves, or even the ideas expressed therein, that come most powerfully to mind. It is the people, presentations, events, incidents and encounters with which I associate the symposium. Of course, I realise these are not really memories at all. They are more like nostalgia-tinged images from the past.

As I recall (and this caveat applies to everything I write here), it was Robin Wensley who initiated the event as well as hosting it at Warwick. Sometime during the summer of 1992 he contacted me and Douglas Brownlie with the idea for a seminar or small conference. He said it was the recent publication of three papers in the *European Journal of Marketing* that was the inspiration for a seminar or conference. The papers were by Wensley,² Richard Whittington and Richard Whipp³ and Brownlie and Saren.⁴ Written completely independently, they all questioned the application of marketing practice and/or the underlying basis of the marketing concept itself.

Robin, Richard, Douglas and I had a meeting at Warwick and firmed up on the idea of holding the symposium. As organisers we had no idea what response our call for papers would receive, or even who to send it to. I don't think we knew if anyone would be interested. So I remember we were astonished by the number of papers, and above all the variety and types and topics of 'rethinkings' we received. We were after all proposing a symposium bearing the ambitious title *Rethinking Marketing: New Perspectives on the Discipline and Profession*, as Bernard Cova says he reacted on receiving the call for papers, 'whose astonishing goal was nothing less than to rethink the whole of marketing!'⁵

Well, yes indeed, I think we did see it that way, to rethink the whole of marketing. I certainly did. Taken together, our papers in *EJM* which had brought us together raised a lot of questions about different aspects of the discipline, its practices and its received doctrines, theories and concepts. We planned the conference with a special edition of *EJM* to follow agreed with the editor David Carson and later, thanks initially to Sue Jones at Sage, an edited book, both comprising selected papers from the conference.

I don't think any of us arrived at a critical stance towards marketing from a radical, consumerist, let alone Marxist or postmodernist position. Far from it, both Douglas and I came from B2B marketing backgrounds and Robin was mainly in strategic marketing and management, while Richard's discipline was strategy.

For me, the experience of the 1980s had shown that, even if the marketing concept had salience for business and consumers (which I had also come to doubt), it had been stretched far too far. This had occurred both ideologically promulgated by marketing advocates and in its applicability, not least by politicians. In 1969 Kotler and Levy had proposed that marketing is a society-wide function and its concept and application should be broadened beyond commercial enterprises to encompass all types on non-business organisations and social exchanges such as schools, labour unions, governments, political parties, etc.⁶ Kotler broadened this still further in

1972 as a 'generic concept of marketing' in which he makes the following striking statement:

Marketing is an approach to producing desired responses in another party that lies midway between *coercion* on the one hand and *brainwashing* in the other.⁷

By the early 1990s the Kotler/Levy vision of a vastly expanded conceptualisation and role for marketing had been largely realised. In 1991 Regis McKenna argued in the *Harvard Business Review* that technology had transformed consumer choice and markets such that 'marketing is everything', for business at any rate.

...the critical dimensions of the company – including all of the attributes that together define how the company does business – are ultimately the functions of marketing. That is why marketing is everyone's job, why marketing is everything and everything is marketing.⁸

In the UK in 1992, after more than a decade of Thatcherite reforms, it wasn't just business that had been transformed by the broadening of marketing. More and more aspects of economic and social life were becoming 'marketised' by means of privatisation of public services or through transformation of non-profit organisations such as charities into market-driven enterprises. It seemed as though marketing thinking was being applied uncritically everywhere to public goods, non-competitive markets, public utilities, the church, prisons, etc. And usually these applications weren't even being modified or even contextualised.

The implications of all this had hit home to me with two incidents. One was a TV interview with a vicar who said his new approach to stemming the decline of church membership was to communicate better and more widely the benefits of the church to its customers. Visibly taken aback, the interviewer asked 'but surely these aren't your customers, they are your parishioners, your congregation, your flock?' For the church to embrace a marketing approach somehow sounded wrong, but why?

The second event was when a colleague conducting an organisational development project for the Prison Service who was grappling with how marketing might apply to a public service like prison asked me who I thought their customers were. I said that the (expanded) marketing answer would first ask who do prisons serve, who benefits? Pressed about whom these might be, I suggested that we could identify three groups of potential beneficiaries: (1) the courts who impose imprisonment, (2) society that is protected and (3) criminals who are reformed. 'Criminals as customers!' she exclaimed. 'but they don't pay anything; and they have no choice.' That's the case for many monopolies and public services, I responded, 'and in any case they do pay with their time and they choose whether to commit a crime or not.' The tautological trope tripped off my tongue with alarming ease.

The shocking thing for me with identifying these groups of churchgoers or prison beneficiaries as 'customers' was precisely how readily it made sense when you adopted the customer analogy of the broadened marketing concept. By the end of the 1980s the applicability of marketing to almost any context had become normalised. The marketing concept wasn't really a concept at all; it was an example of Althusserian ideology, which now masqueraded as 'common sense'. People's thinking about customers and markets, as Axel Leijonhufvud said of economic matters, 'is often in important respects shaped by what they think before they start thinking'.⁹ Marketing ideology and the customer analogy is now so well-entrenched

that it can be unquestioningly applied to public goods, monopolistic and non-competitive markets, public utilities, the church, prison service, etc.

In 1992 these developments were the genesis of my awareness of the need for a complete rethinking of the discipline and the transformation of marketing during the past decade represented the background to the three papers in *EJM*. Wensley speculated about the limits of the marketing analogy, opening with a quotation from a 1987 *Social Work Today* cover headline 'Tuning in to the Voice of the Customer' to introduce his brilliant analysis of how far the marketing concept and the 'voice of the customer' could and should extend.¹⁰ Whittington and Whipp argued that the weakness of marketing implementation stemmed from the discipline's neglect of ideology in the organisational change process and its failure to appreciate and develop its own 'professional ideology'.¹¹ In the Brownlie and Saren paper we questioned the domain of both marketing theory and practice as articles of faith and the ideological underpinnings of marketing which should be subject to more critical accounts.¹²

Such were our grand ambitions as we set about planning the symposium that we didn't want it to be like a standard conference format with set presentations and a series of questions from the audience. We wanted to encourage genuine and free-ranging debate, so although plenary events had speakers presenting in the normal fashion, the parallel session tracks comprised a panel of the papers' authors, not 'presenters' as such. This is explained in the following extract from the instructions in the proceedings:

Note for participants at track sessions.

Rather than allowing the formal giving of papers, we propose to rely on discussants raising the main issues before opening up for more general debate. Discussants will be asked to outline in 5-10 minutes at the start key issues raised in the session papers followed by authors' responses of around 5 minutes each. After this the chair will open up the session for general discussion and debate. Authors are asked to meet with discussants beforehand to agree the opening of papers and key issues they will want to discuss.

The track sessions were entitled Postmodernism, Critical Marketing, New Contexts, Consumption and Consumer Culture, Relationships and Networks, Ethics and Professionalisation. Looking through the papers again I am struck by how up-to-date the topics still appear three decades later, but also by topics that were *not covered* which, even looking back, one might have expected to have been. As far as I can see there is no mention in the paper titles or abstracts of sustainability, the environment, race, neo-colonialism, internationalisation, social marketing, and there is only one paper on gender.

There was much more attention to research methodology in the papers and during the discussions, than I had expected from our original concerns about the broadening of the discipline. I don't remember the details of the contributions and debates during Shelby Hunt's session, but I do recall that it was very lively and controversial. The following snippet from the article he wrote for the special issue of *EJM* following the symposium perhaps gives a flavour of the reasons for the heated atmosphere during his session.

It should be easy now to understand why relativism, constructionism and subjectivism are minority views in the philosophy of science. Relativism

does not imply a constructively critical stance towards knowledge claims, nor does it imply acknowledging that the knowledge claims of science are fallible. Relativism implies nihilism – the belief that we can never have genuine knowledge about anything. Relativists, incoherently, know that no one else can ever know anything. Furthermore, relativism does not imply a tolerant stance towards outside ideas and other cultures; it implies indifference to the norm of tolerance.¹³

None of the other Americans who attended this ‘minority’ academic marketing event were unreconstructed positivists like Shelby Hunt. I hadn’t even heard of most of them, let alone read their work. It was an eye-opener for me to hear US academics taking a critical, broad, culturally-informed approach to marketing. The striking ones I remember from whom I learnt a lot were Fuat Firat, William Hetrick and Hector Lozada.

Like Bernard Cova, the Rethinking symposium did affect the direction of my life and career in the end. I don’t think I would have applied to Leicester University to join the embryonic critical management school if I hadn’t seen Gibson Burrell at Warwick and met other inspirational academics at the symposium from outside marketing such as Hugh Willmott, David Knights, Andrew Sturdy, Paul du Gay and others. I had never met many of the marketing academics who were there either, notably Stephen Brown, Richard Elliot, Gordon Foxall, Donncha Kavanagh, Evert Gummesson and of course Bernard Cova.

NOTES

1. The *Rethinking Marketing* book cover image is reprinted with permission from Sage Publishers to the Rethinking Marketing book editors to reprint with this article.
2. Wensley, ‘Voice of the consumer’.
3. Whittington and Whipp, ‘Professional ideology’.
4. Brownlie and Saren, ‘The four Ps’.
5. Bernard Cova in this issue.
6. Kotler and Levy, ‘Broadening the concept’.
7. Kotler, ‘Generic concept of marketing’, 50, italics in original.
8. McKenna, ‘Marketing is everything’.
9. Leijonhufvud, ‘Ideology and analysis’, 189.
10. Wensley, ‘Voice of the consumer’.
11. Whittington and Whipp, ‘Professional ideology’.
12. Brownlie and Saren, ‘The four Ps’.
13. Hunt, ‘On rethinking marketing’, 20.

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MEMOIR

Warwick's Always On My Mind

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If academics form communities, how do these communities come into being? A personal and subjective account of the 1993 'Rethinking Marketing' symposium.

Like so many of anyone's favourite experiences, the whole thing was not only unplanned but also pretty random at first.

In early 1993, I was married with two young children, living in Paris and working as a professor at the European School of Management (EAP), which also had campuses in Oxford, Berlin and Madrid. I'd already decided at the beginning of my academic career in the late 80s to focus on B2B marketing research and had therefore already started attending conferences like the ones run by the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group (IMP). This was also the time when I started toying around with the idea of postmodernism and how it might relate to marketing. Working together with Olivier Badot, a colleague from Paris, and Ampelio Bucci, a friend from Milan, my interests translated fairly quickly into a search for alternatives to French academics' tendency back then to bathe most if not all marketing studies in a thick broth of positivism.

Right off the bat we found ourselves being labelled troublemakers, considered irrational at best and dangerous at worst. Even worse – and because the Internet had yet to take off in French universities – we had a feeling of being isolated. We didn't have anyone we could share our ideas with besides from the French sociologists who had been our original inspirations – a list, it is worth noting, that did not include all those Gallic theorists who were being treated as stars at the time in North America (Baudrillard – Deleuze – Derrida – Foucault – Lyotard) but which was comprised instead of luminous thinkers like Michel Maffesoli, the Sorbonne's very own Dionysian oracle, and Alain Caillé, the founder of *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* and an ardent proponent of what would become known as the 'giving/receiving/reciprocating' gift paradigm.

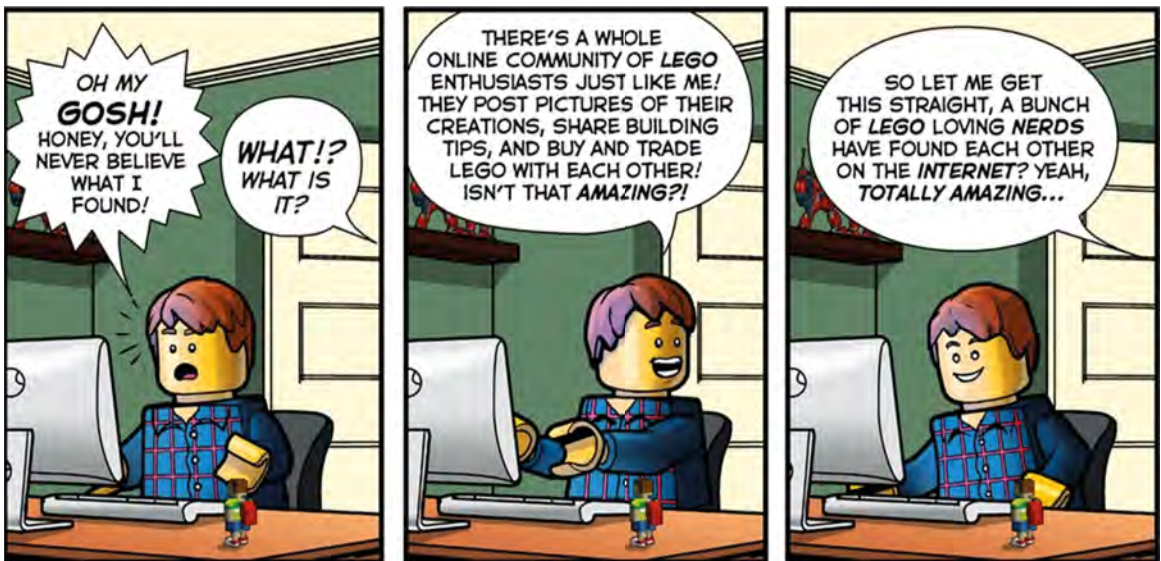
Four years after defending my doctoral thesis (on tendering processes in industrial environments) in front of a Paris Dauphine University jury, in spring 1993 I found myself back in the same place but this time seeking, in that very formal French way, an accreditation allowing me to work as a research supervisor. Once the formalities were over, a member of this second jury – comprised of university professors who had volunteered for the occasion – invited me back to his office for a congratulatory drink. We toasted my success, whereupon he picked a piece of paper off his desk and handed it to me. I glanced down and saw it was an invitation to a 1-3 July 1993 event being held in England – a symposium whose astonishing goal was nothing less than to rethink the whole of marketing! Whereupon the professor suggested that I submit a conference paper seeing as the theme was, in his words, my 'thing'.

So there I was, staring at a leaflet inviting me to quickly write up a text capable of adding value to a Warwick Business School symposium bearing the significant title of 'RETHINKING MARKETING: New Perspectives on the Discipline and Profession'. I felt a little inadequate, largely because despite having recently managed to get an article published in the *International Journal of Research in Marketing's* special issue on postmodernity, I really wasn't used to submitting texts to English-language journals. In the end, though, I sent in a paper, one corresponding to my interests at the time. Pompously entitled 'Beyond Marketing: From Marketing to Societing?', its brief summary would declare that "This article encapsulates the

recent debate on the concepts of postmodernity and marketing. It explores the consequences of postmodernism at the level of social links and communities. The discussion concludes with an exploration of the implications of these arguments for rethinking marketing’.


With the way things worked in 1993, a few months had to elapse before one day, suddenly, I received a letter in the post telling me that my paper had been selected and that I was expected in Warwick on 1 July. The problem was that since there wasn’t any Google Maps back then, I had no idea where Warwick was. I still don’t, if only because I’ve never returned. The only thing I understood was that getting there would involve a deeper foray into the English countryside than travelling to Oxford, which I’d already done many times since EAP had a campus there. Still, I didn’t have a clue about how to get to Warwick. To this day I still don’t remember how I did it. Everything after London is a blur.

Having said that and as blurry as the images from that 1993 symposium are in my head, I continue to feel very strong emotions whenever I reminisce about it. This is because Warwick is where I felt, maybe for the first time ever, as if I had finally discovered a community that I was happy to call my own. It’s similar to the feeling that the Adult Fan of Lego expresses in the comic strip below. I was deeply affected and actually quite elated to have finally come across people I could consider family, whom I could call my tribe. Neutral observers might find it a little overblown but that sudden, new sense of belonging went a long way towards compensating for the feeling of being an outsider that I always had when interacting with the marketing community in France.



(Reproduced by kind permission of Paul Lee)

Among the images still circulating in my head 30 years later, there is the Warwick Business School lobby and the heartfelt welcome I received from Mike Saren and Douglas Brownlie. I also have an image of everyone (maybe around 40 people?) gathering together and the symposium kicking off in the building’s small amphitheater. Of course, I knew almost no one. Well, there was one IMP colleague from Portugal – Luis Araujo, who was living in Lancaster – and I got along famously with him, in part because he spoke excellent French. But aside from Luis? No one.



But then the presentations began and I still remember the impression it made on me. First there was Mike who seemed to be exhorting the heavens during his introductory speech, always gazing upwards towards the ceiling, if not beyond. Already, Mike's long flowing hair and illuminated face made me feel like I was a million miles away from the French university scene.

Then came some young guy, all dressed in black, looking like a priest or some kind of preacher. My first thoughts were that he'd be really boring to listen to but I was dead wrong. His talk was captivating and hilarious, really funny to listen to. Plus he was covering a topic totally aligned with my own postmodern marketing research interests. That was my introduction to Stephen Brown.

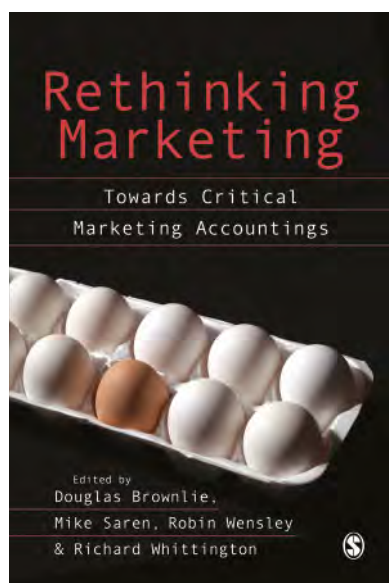
Next up was Richard Elliott, a self-described former prison psychologist advocating a worldview very close to my own – and analysing it in a way that I found brilliant. He was followed by the illuminating Stephanie O'Donohoe who introduced me to the concept of intertextuality and the way my experiences of particular ads shaped and were shaped by my experiences of other texts. Finally, I remember Hugh Willmott, who taught me a great deal about critical management studies, mobilising Michel Foucault's thinking to criticise marketing's ability to inhibit reflection upon the seeming self-evident-ness of needs and the capacity of goods and services to fulfil them. I was simply blown away!

Needless to say, not all of the aforementioned luminaries presented their research in a way that today's academic journals would deem scientific, to wit, complete with literature review, gap and research questions, methodology, findings, discussion, limits and further research. What they were offering instead were essays synthesising evolutions in the authors' thinking. Their theses were often highly speculative but for me this made them all the more exciting. As noted by Yannis Gabriel,¹ 'Essays are works of individual authors. They are not products of brainstorming or group work. Instead, they express a single individual's reasoning and argument... The essay authorises the author to use the first person singular and say, 'I believe that', not as an expert or as a witness but as a thinking subject. Style is not incidental to the essay but of the very essence, since each essay is the product of its author's unique ways of thinking, of seeing and of speaking.'

After hearing the opening presentations, I turned to my new colleagues and started chatting with them in broken English. The main thing I remember them saying is that they were jealous of my secret advantage of being able to read the Gallic Theorists in the original French three to five years before the English translations would come out. This was because my conference paper quoted something that Michel Maffesoli had said in his seminal book *The Times of the Tribes*, which wouldn't be translated into English until 1996. The same went for the latest books by Jean Baudrillard or Gilles Lipovetsky, published only 12 months before in France but still several years away from being translated into English; or for the works of Italian sociologists who were totally unknown to my colleagues and who I had no problem reading in their native tongue. Otherwise, I can't say whether they found my own presentation interesting, although I do remember it well.

The symposium continued with presentations that had less of an effect on me, if only because they were not directly relevant to the things I was interested in at the time. They mainly involved either critical approaches to management or studies of marketers' real-life professional experiences. But I do remember what came next, largely because it was the craziest moment of all for me. Following all these postmodern and critical theory-oriented talks, the organisers got us to gather in what looked like a large amphitheatre in order that we might listen to an individual

portraying himself as the guru of scientific realism, and who therefore followed an approach that was diametrically opposed to the flowery deconstructionism which we had been hearing up until that point. My friend Luis and I acted like disruptive students during this session, whose substance and form we felt were completely out of sync with the rest of the proceedings. Indeed, everyone in the audience got pretty noisy and restless – and would continue in this vein when two eminent French colleagues came on stage to make the case for a more positivist approach to marketing. Battle lines were clearly being drawn, with a gaping chasm opening up between the two camps – a real us versus them scenario. This would later be formulated in the following terms in the introduction that Warwick's four co-organisers wrote in the book published after the event: 'The symposium was an attempt to stir the marketing imagination from its apparent lethargy.'²



This image is reprinted with permission granted from Sage Publishers to the *Rethinking Marketing* book editors.

The almost two decades that followed this seminal event (1993-2010) were marked by increasingly creative European research projects, embodied in the launch of Interpretive Consumer Research workshops that resembled analogous North American research streams in terms of anticipating Consumer Culture Theory – but which also differed somewhat in their methodological choices. Of course, we had Stephen Brown, who offered his own humorous take on the changes that 'postmodern methodologies, epistemologies, axiologies, ontologies, eschatologies (any ologies you can think of, really)' were causing.³ That's because for the most part, consumption-related cultural perspectives have been (and indeed, are still being) structured by postmodernism and postmodernity, notwithstanding the fact

that the momentum sparked by Warwick's landmark symposium would appear to have run out of steam in the early 2010s – in large part because more and more voices in the interpretive community started criticising postmodernism's limitations even as they continued celebrating its strengths. Some texts even began sounding like eulogies for postmodernism as a whole, with the new question being what should come next. Insofar as the movement met its coup de grace, this probably happened in 2011 during a major retrospective exhibition held at London's Victoria & Albert Museum and entitled 'Postmodernism – Style and Subversion 1970-1990'. It was at this event that many commentators hastened to announce the death of postmodernism and the need to conjure up a successor.

The reality is that in incorporating (hence, in their view, transcending) the ideas that came to fruition at the Warwick symposium, scholars had transitioned from a revolutionary to a conventional outlook. As the sociologist Alan Warde noted in his August 2012 speech opening Oxford's CCT conference, it is normal in science for theories to succeed one another, with a new generational filter expected to arise every 25 years or so. The net effect is the uprooting of current established theory as well as the destabilisation of those researchers whose careers had been largely predicated on it. The Russian-born American sociologist Pitirim Sorokin explains this shift from one dominant theological framework to another by means of a 'saturation'

mechanism emphasising the fact that when the framework used to represent and organise the world no longer works very well, a new composition must and will arise. As far as marketing – our discipline – is concerned, we can already see that the postmodern framework has become saturated. New theoretical frameworks are being proposed to replace it, including (and inevitably) post-postmodernism as well as a liquidity or liquid society construct. Thirty years on from the Warwick symposium, the generation of researchers who had first espoused postmodernism finds itself slightly out of sync with today's more innovative discourses. Where Stephen Brown once evoked the idea that postmodernism might signal 'the end of marketing', the spotlight today is on people like our young colleague Jack Coffin with his work on a 'terminal marketing' construct and its 'less than net zero impact' axiom.

I kept paraphernalia from that seminal Warwick happening for a very long time, not because I saw it as some kind of sacred text but more because it was so precious to me as a talisman. Even after Sage published the symposium's collective works and the *European Journal of Marketing's* special issue came out,⁴ I'd still reserve a special place on my bookshelves for Warwick's white document with its title in bold black font. But then, two years ago, we needed to make room in my house for some non-academic stuff, so time was up for my old talisman. Parting was such sweet sorrow, however. This collection of texts had come to symbolise a whole revolution in my life, academically but also personally. That's because of another story from my eventful stint at Warwick Business School, when I rang someone very dear to me from the phone booth in the lobby and rebuilt my love life in a way that I'll never forget – a story to keep for another occasion.

NOTES

1. Gabriel, 'The essay', 245.
2. Brownlie et al., *Rethinking Marketing*, 4.
3. Brown, 'Recycling postmodern marketing', 226.
4. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 31, Issue 3/4, 1997.

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MEMOIR

Bliss Was It In That Business School...

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...to be alive/But to be in Warwick was very heaven.¹

Or was it? I'm no William Wordsworth, as you know. And even my titular allusion to the Lakeland Poet's 'Prelude' leaves a lot to be desired.² But just as his unfinished epic extols the tumultuous events of the French Revolution – Wordsworth spent well over a year there, witnessing history³ – insurrection was also in the air during the 'Rethinking Marketing' symposium. Warwick was our storming of the Bastille.

Thirty years have passed since then and, considered in retrospect, the occasion could be construed as an Anglo-European aftershock of the paradigm-quake that had hit the United States. However, it didn't feel like an afterthought at the time. The prior 'paradigm wars', rather, were widely regarded as prelude to *Pax Postmodernis*, a whole new marketing dispensation. Warwick was a peace conference of sorts that would, fingers crossed, reach resolution in a live-and-let-live consensus. Hell, the Great Satan of positivist marketing science, Shelby D. Hunt, was there in person, bearing an olive branch. Or so I naively assumed beforehand, after reading the pre-event programme. In reality, Hunt was carrying a conceptual cudgel, a scholarly shillelagh, a billystick for beating the restless natives into submission.

I know this for a fact. Because I was there, in the front line, frightened to death. My most vivid memory of the three-day chinwag was chairing a session attended by rootin', tootin', six-gun shootin' Shelby. Wearing a string tie, white suit and crocodile-skin cowboy boots – think Southern Baptist Texas Ranger of thought⁴ – he was determined, so help him God, to go to war for positivist perspectives. Repent ye radicals. Confess your scholarly sins. It is not too late for absolution. Got that? If not, you'll git what's coming to you!



Okay, I'm exaggerating. But Shelbs was definitely wearing a black string tie and his attitude toward those around the table was less than accommodating. If memory serves, he shanghaied the session and spent the entire time mansplaining neo-positivism to the little people who'd strayed from the straight-and-narrow path of marketing research righteousness and had the temerity to think heretical thoughts about postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-positivism and all the other post-perspectives then in vogue.⁵

Luckily, we had a spokesperson of our own, an eloquent Irishman called Kavanagh, Donncha Kavanagh. With the aid of a boxing metaphor, he skilfully deconstructed the 'Hunt vs. Anderson' confrontation, arguably the key battle of marketing's mid-80s 'paradigm war'.⁶ Shelby D., as was his wont, poured withering scorn on our champion. But Donncha gave as good as he got, ducking, dodging and deflecting the bully's blows. Whether this agility reflected Kavanagh's years of training as an Irish dancer is not for me to say. But he was very light on his feet that day, to be sure, to be sure, so he was.

Indeed, it was just as well we had a conceptual Cú Chulainn on our side. Because the referee of that donnybrook – and subsequent pseudonomous advocate of a Celtic Marketing Concept⁷ – spent most of the time curled up in a corner, whimpering. As

was *his* wont. Such was the trauma of the occasion, that I recall very little of the event. Not unlike William Wordsworth's 'spots of time' – specific memories charged with feeling which cushion painful memories when recollected⁸ – I only have the vaguest sense of what went on in Warwick. It's thirty years ago, but still...

Thinking back, the other thing that memory serves is my own presentation on postmodernism. I've a vague sense that I was the very first speaker after the opening plenary. And that I was delivering my 'words of wisdom' in an in-the-round auditorium. And that everywhere I looked the big-hitters of British marketing thought, Gordon Foxall, Michael Thomas, Sally Dibb and so on, were staring back at me, as were future marketing megastars such as Bernard Cova, Richard Elliott and high-flyer Helen Woodruffe. All politely listening to my pretentious postmodern prattle.

I also remember, though this was some years later, being told on the QT that the co-edited book-of-the-conference had been held up on my account.⁹ Surely not! Apparently, Shelby D. Hunt took great exception to my playful postmodern contribution, which may have mentioned the great man in a less than reverential manner. He refused to publish his positivist profundities alongside the railings, raillery and, let's be honest, *rudeness* of someone like me. Stymied, the editors were forced to paraphrase the great man's paper. Shelby 'Diddums' Hunt didn't want impertinent postmodern paddies playing with his theoretical toys. So he stomped out of the playroom instead...



Postmodernism, I should perhaps add, was the biggest buzzword back then. At a time when Steven Spielberg's PoMo masterpiece, *Jurassic Park*, was rampaging through the multiplexes, it was the Tyrannosaurus Rex of thought.¹⁰ In the very same year as the Warwick shindig, a special two-part issue of the *International Journal of Marketing Research* was published. Edited by esteemed deep thinkers, A. Fuat Firat, John F. Sherry and Alladi Venkatesh, it was filled with post-positivistic pieces penned by America's equivalent of Warwick's warriors, plus a sprinkling of leading European lights. Not the least of these was Dominique Bouchet, the erudite figurehead of Scandi-school postmodernism.¹¹

I too joined the '93 Club with a negligible little number in *EJM*, long since forgotten.¹² But at least I had my foot in the door, hat in the ring, ear to the ground (other clichés are available). Never reluctant to board a passing bandwagon, I banged the PoMo drum for several years. Then jumped off the fast-fading fad when – mixed metaphor alert! – CCT scooped the postmodern pool. And poisoned it, some septic sceptics say. Cough...

Looking back, I now realise that PoMo was a moment of 'collective conceptual effervescence', when the world went wild for the crazy guys, gals and galoots of cultural theory, critical thinking and 'anything-goes' pseudo-intellectualism.¹³ I kinda went crazy too, trying to comprehend the collected works of Lyotard, Foucault, Lacan, Kristeva, Derrida, de Man and those who followed their less than luminous lead. I'm not kidding when I say that I was moved to tears on numerous occasions by the A to Z of continental philosophy.¹⁴ And they weren't tears of joy. Deleuze

and Guattari, the Dolce & Gabbana of thought, were my deathwatch beetles. Judith Butler still gives me the heebie-jeebies.

The only thinker that tickled my fancy, if you will, was Jean Baudrillard. His counter-intuitive view on consumer society were never less than compelling and, not infrequently, laugh-out-loud funny. His way with metaphor had me green with... gratitude. *The Illusion of the End*, a retrotastic, tongue-in-cheek take on the anxieties that accompanied the turn of the millennium, was as figuratively fertile as academic fields can be.¹⁵ Perfectly captured by Jeffries' precis of the postmodern mindset, it was an irreverent attitude I found enormously attractive. Still do...

Where modernism was functional, self-denying, austere, mechanical, utopian and committed to progress, post-modernism was exuberant, fun, irresponsible, anti-hierarchical and had lost faith in progress.¹⁶

Suffice it to say that, when it came to philosophy with a capital P, I was out of my league, comfort zone, happy place, safe house, whatever you want to call it. I well remember, having foolishly accepted an all-expenses-paid speaking invitation (i.e. taken the bait), being torn to shreds by PoMo gurus based at the University of Southern Denmark. They even invited their undergraduates to watch my ritual disembowelling. 'This is what happens,' you postmodern imposter, 'when you tread on our intellectual territory. Keep your trite remarks to yourself, asshole.'

They were secret agents of Shelby's Army, I reckon.



Actually, now that I think about it, there were a couple of other intellectual lifeboats in the tempestuous seas of postmodern thought. The first, if not the foremost, of these was Fredric Jameson, the Freddy Krueger of critical cultural studies, whose coruscating writing and inordinately lengthy sentences took some time to get used to. The skeleton key, if you're wondering, is the semi-colon; everything hinges thereon. No, don't thank me. You're welcome.

However, the intellectual lifebelt that kept my head above water, and for which I am eternally grateful, was thrown from the good ship Feyerabend.¹⁷ *Against Method* was, and to some extent remains, my guiding light. An Austrian escapee from war-torn Europe, who'd been dragooned into the Nazi party, Paul Feyerabend was the *enfant terrible* of the philosophy of science. Arguing, contra the positivistic philosophies of Popperites, that scientific progress was not attained by a series of civilized conjectures and regretful refutations, he considered it closer to a free-for-all brawl. R U Ready to Rumble, Russell?¹⁸

In addition to Paul's put-'em-up trash-talking, our congenital conceptual contrarian further contended that it was necessary to keep our options open, to resist the lure of conformism, to challenge entrenched ideas and the accepted way of doing things. Ever ready to embrace the unorthodox, Feyerabend firmly believed that creativity was chaotic, confusing, counterintuitive. He was a punk philosopher, basically, a highbrow headbanger:

For Feyerabend, scientific progress is not attained through adherence to the 'proper' procedure, since adherence to the proper procedure *inhibits* progress. It is necessary, rather, to keep our options open when investigating the world, to adopt a pluralistic methodology, to avoid the specification of rules of best practice, to assume that nothing is settled and that no idea, no matter how ancient or absurd, should be abandoned or overlooked. Science, in short, should be an anarchistic endeavour, involving the proliferation of as many incompatible theories as possible, all of which should be tenaciously held, vigorously defended and defiantly promulgated by their proponents, even in light of disconfirming evidence and the disdain of the scientific mainstream.¹⁹

Thirty years later, I fear we've forgotten what Feyerabend stood for and the irreverent way he plied his trade. As I said at the time about the Sex Pistol of scholarship:

Let's be honest, an academic can't be all bad if he concludes his lectures, as Feyerabend was wont to do at University College London, by leaping out of an open window, on to a powerful motorbike and driving off at high speed.²⁰

Nowadays, when I read some of the stuff published under the aegis of CCT, I too feel like jumping out of a window. Except in my workplace there's no waiting motorbike. Or electric scooter, for that matter. There's just a prairie of paving stones nine stories below. And there's no beach below them.



Just to be clear, I'm not saying CCT's *coup d'état* was a retrograde step. On the contrary, the construct and the community that gathered around it has been a lifesaver for interpretive consumer research. More than that, it's a rescue ship, a sturdy seagoing vessel, capable of accommodating copious refugees from declining academic disciplines whose student body is less robust than before and where job opportunities are few. Whatever else is said about CCT, it is an intellectual citadel, our Minas Tirith against the orcs, trolls, Nazgûl and Balrogs of Big Data.

But I can't deny that CCT's cornucopian outpourings are less refreshing than they used to be, more conformist, more conservative, more convention bound. All too often eye-catching titles belie the brain-deadening boilerplate beneath. When was the last time you were enthralled by the content of *JCR's* current issue, unless of course it contained your own magisterial contribution? Whose heart doesn't sink when yet another academic assemblage materialises before us? Where are the ANTeaters when we need them? I'm not jealous. I'm *not*. Believe me. I swear to you!

I'm conscious, of course, that CCT's progress from fire-breathing postmodernism to damp-squib scholarship is part of the 'maturation process', somewhat similar to swashbuckling entrepreneurs morphing into sensible small-businesspeople where rectitude rules their every move.²¹ Much the same thing happens when slacker-tech start-ups get angel-inaugurated managerial makeovers before their money-spinning share offerings. It's the way of the world, and the world wide web. Wordsworth too, as edgy artists often do, mellowed with age, affluence and ascension to the position of Poet Laureate.

The corporatisation of CCT has come at a cost, however. Our insouciance is absent, irreverence is irrelevant, 'anything goes' has gone to the big, bad buzzword boneyard. And I, for one, fear for the future. Although the subject matter of our articles is getting ever more exciting – mud running, Bond movies, climbing Everest, etc.²² – the way we communicate our findings is increasingly exasperating. I reckon these countervailing trends are connected. Astounding topics make tiresome accounts more bearable, if not readable. Bring back Baudrillard, I say!



As someone who doesn't subscribe to the cult of CCT – unless proclaiming my allegiance will get me published – it's not my job to pass judgment on the community's stylistic infelicities. I'm fairly infelicitous myself. I believe, however, consumer research can do better. I've several suggestions to share with you. But I'll save them for another day.

Suffice it to say that if we don't shake things up, as we did way back when in Warwick, we'll suffer the fate of postmodernism. PoMo is a dodo nowadays. It bit the dust a decade ago, when London's Victoria & Albert Museum held an exhibition entitled 'Postmodernism: Style and Subversion, 1970-1990'. According to Jeffries' history of the movement's maturation, the V&A event put the final nail in its coffin by treating PoMo as merely one among many short-lived artistic insurrections that had come and gone.²³ It is noteworthy, though, that the exhibition's stated timespan ended before marketing got its paws on the postmodern. We were dealing with a dead parrot all along and, although some diehards maintain that there's life in the post-postmodern puppy, the old dog itself has gone to the conceptual kennels in the sky.

For my sins, I paid my respects at the Victoria & Albert's requiem mass. One of many postmodern mourners, including Bernard Cova, I queued for hours before entering its house of rest. The funeral was held in a desolate wing of the labyrinthine museum and the exhibition itself was a gloomy spectacle. Far from being the jaunty Irish wake I'd been expecting, it was a sombre and sobering experience, like staring into an open coffin. The once striking artifacts on display – Sottsass bookshelves, Alessi lemon-squeezers, Holzer's neon slogans and suchlike – looked the worse for wear and tear. Even the David Bowie tableau at the end of the tour was nothing to write home about. Death revived his career a few years later but the exquisite corpse to come was on display in the V&A.

Will death become us? I don't know. It seems to me, on reflection, that we were graverobbing at the Warwick symposium. It seems to me that we're the Burke and Hare of scholarship, necrophiliacs of thought.²⁴ If that's the case, it's high time we exhumed Jean Baudrillard. Or his *Illusion of the End*, at least:

Ideas proliferate like polyps or seaweed and perish by suffocating in their own luxuriant vegetation. Every idea becomes universalized before it disappears. As with stars, their maximum expansion comes at the point of death, their transformation into red giants and black holes... The ending of cultures is not perceptible from within.²⁵

Final thought: if CCT is a red giant of scholarship, does that make *JCB* a black hole? Don't answer that!

NOTES

1. Trigger warning: This essay contains multiple mixed metaphors and manifold grammatical mistakes. Don't have nightmares. Wordsworth's enraptured line about the French Revolution, FYI, comes from *The Prelude*, Book 11
2. Mason, *The Cambridge Introduction*.
3. Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*. See also Bate, *Radical Wordsworth*.
4. Yes, I know I shouldn't speak ill of the dead and I apologise if any reader is offended. But Hunt was obdurate that day, just as he was in his voluminous writings. Those writings didn't include the words 'compromise', let alone 'live and let live'.
5. Jeffries, *Everything, All the Time*.
6. Kavanagh, 'Hunt versus Anderson'.
7. Aherne, 'Chronicles of the Celtic'.
8. Mason, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 91.
9. Brownlie, et al, *Rethinking Marketing*, 23-26.
10. A self-referential tour de force, Spielberg's movie featured the tie-in products that were on sale in reality. These included a book about the making of the movie.
11. The second special issue, which included a landmark article by Bouchet, was published the following year, 1994.
12. Brown, 'Postmodern marketing?'
13. Cronin and Cocker, 'Managing collective effervescence'.
14. Agamben to Žižek, since you ask.
15. Baudrillard, *Illusion of the End*.
16. Jeffries, *Everything, All the Time*, 8
17. Feyerabend, *Against Method*.
18. I'm referring to Bertrand Russell not Russell Belk. No one in their right mind rumbles with Russ. He's too well read.
19. Brown, *Postmodern Marketing*, 93.
20. Brown, *Postmodern Marketing*, 93.
21. My former colleague David Carson devoted his career to the maturation process of SMEs. I mention his work in *Postmodern Marketing*, 160.
22. Cova, 'The new frontier'. Note, I'm referring to the 'top journals' here. Lots of encouraging developments are occurring at the 'lower levels'.
23. Jeffries, *Everything, All the Time*, 329.
24. Both Burke and Hare, BTW, came from the north of Ireland and learned their trade in my home town. Just sayin'...
25. Baudrillard, *Illusion of the End*, 103, 105.

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ELEGY

Ride 'Em Cowgirl

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RIDE 'EM COWGIRL

It ended with cancer.
With no goodbyes, no explanations
Just an exit virtuoso, unscripted,
unpracticed.
'Die with your boots on,' she said.
A stark prairie, a mesquite tree, two horses
and me.

No longer a city girl, open spaces
replaced the myths.
She now believes.
A sign left on her wall, simply states
'All is well with my soul'.

And the wind still rings a symphony of unheard bells,
the same bells, a different place,
a changed time,
still a spectacular landscape.
Her west.

She has well learned to ride and
at a gallop they race ahead of me.
'Vivid floods of sorrel grace,' she wrote
Preacher and Mary. Mary & Preacher.

I watch as they edge into one
ahead of me,
apart from me –
Flying for the finish.



TRIBUTE

Taking It To The Streets: The Making Of A Consumer Ethnographer

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Dedicated to the memory of Jim McAlexander.

Jim McAlexander and I established the Bedrock Volunteer Fire Department in 1987 in Ames, Iowa, USA, the cornsilk-crowned navel of the North American continent. BVFD was code for ethnography which, in turn, was code for getting away from our wives and kids under the auspices of work.

I had just arrived at Iowa State University, one year behind Jim, both of us from the University of Utah and both with unfinished dissertations. Jim's was far less unfinished than mine. When I was hired, all I had was a three-page precis of half-baked intention that I had used for talking points in job interviews. Fortunately for both of us, ISU in the mid-eighties was a forgiving institution trying to keep up with the mad growth of business school enrolments across the country.

I dropped into Jim's office one morning to say hello. He pushed his chair back from his desktop monitor, shook his head, and greeted me with a look that blended bafflement and frustration.

'What is it?' I asked.

'Thick description', he said. 'Belk wants thick description'. He shook his head. 'I mean, sheesh... I've sent him three different drafts now and it's always the same. More thick description! What the hell is thick description anyway? Seriously, if I don't figure this shit out, I'm gonna have to go back and take an accounting class and settle for an MBA'.

Russell Belk had become the de facto chair of Jim's dissertation. Other members of his committee, including the nominal chair, had pretty much signed off on the work already, but Russ, well into his personal paradigm shift from positivist to interpretive research, was adamant that the story needed more context, more life, a more Geertzian touch. Jim had just missed that watershed change in Russ's thinking and had never read Geertz.

A year before, I had helped Jim with his data collection, interviewing people, mostly Mormons, about their experiences with financial advisors. Mormondom, it seemed, was a hotbed of financial fraud. Between Jim's notes and our collective memory, I was confident he had what he needed.

'If Russ wants thick description', I said, 'we'll give him thick description'. Then, sensing Jim's desperation, I added, 'Here. Move over'. I sat at his keyboard and began writing descriptive prose about places and characters I remembered, as if it were the setting for a story. Which, of course, it was. Jim quickly took over the role of context creation, and his next draft passed muster and earned him his degree.

Neither Jim nor I was an ethnographer, but I had aspirations in that direction. Russ, my own doctoral supervisor, had steered me to courses in cultural and economic anthropology, and I had found the combination of social science and storytelling to be a good fit for my sensibilities.

Over the course of that first year as an assistant professor I struggled with my own thesis research. I had tried over and over to write a compelling proposal for something that looked vaguely like a multivariate analysis to optimize the combination of benefits – functional, symbolic, and experiential – consumers looked for in their service encounters. The deeper I got into it, the more I hated it. I felt increasingly lost and inauthentic. In trying to do something conventional, I was heading for the same cliff that had nearly sent Jim to his doom.

Meanwhile, the mystique of anthropology called to me with increasing persistence.

The first real inflection point in my journey to ethnography came from another conversation with Jim. He had just discovered, reading *Inc.* magazine, that the entrepreneurship story of the year was unfolding right there in Ames, Iowa in the form of a laundromat franchise. Duds 'n Suds was a revolutionary coin-operated laundry with a college-town twist: it served beer. That's all I took from the story at first. I imagined a traditional laundromat joined to an equally traditional bar by a set of swinging saloon doors. *Gunsmoke-meets-Altman*, circa 1985. The functionality of a laundromat paired with the hedonics of a bar, all wrapped in the symbolism of generation-spanning noir. It sounded a lot like my thesis ideas but taken out of the world of multivariate stats and into the world of story.

What if – I asked Jim – we used the case of Duds 'n Suds to experiment with ethnographic methods? He agreed that it sounded fun. That evening we bundled up some laundry and went off to immerse ourselves in something new. One result was our first joint publication in the *Journal of Services Marketing*.¹ Another result was the founding of BVFD.

'Do you remember,' I asked Jim as we were concluding our evening of fieldwork, 'the episode from *The Flintstones* where Fred and Barney joined Joe Rockhead's volunteer fire department?'

'Yes...?'

'Every so often Joe Rockhead would ring the fire station bell and all the volunteer firefighters would grab their slickers and hats and head to the station...'

'Where they spent the evening playing poker!'

'Exactly. There were never any fires...'

'Because Bedrock was built of stone!' We were both laughing.

'They used it as a ploy to get away from their wives and kids for a while,' I said, slipping into a more thoughtful mood. 'I think ethnographic research could be our Bedrock Volunteer Fire Department.'



The next inflection point in our journey came the following year.

During the summer, despite increasing pressure to finish my degree, I had literally shit-canned all my dissertation work up to that point – floppy disks and printouts all in the trash. I just couldn't bear to look at it anymore. Fortunately, while wrestling with questions of my own identity and life transitions, and greatly influenced by Russ Belk's landmark work on the extended self, I stumbled into a new dissertation topic. My sister, a tomboy and ultimate Mountain Mona, had called me from Utah to get my take on her (utterly incomprehensible at first) intention to undergo breast-augmentation surgery. I said, 'Tell me more,' and I had my first informant. I couldn't use participant observation, because the population of ordinary people getting elective cosmetic surgery in those days was too small and dispersed. The majority of the market was clustered on the paragraph coasts, in New York and Los Angeles. No matter, I could use ethnographic interviews without the PO, and the analysis and

storytelling aspects would be basically the same. The new context and phenomenon – cosmetic surgery and identity reconstruction – and the resulting article in the *Journal of Consumer Research* saved my nearly stillborn career.²

In the meantime, as the sole instructor of consumer behaviour in the ISU Marketing Department, I had a realization. There was a massive and inexplicable hole in the literature. I had previewed all the major CB textbooks, and they all shared the same problem. Every text had a chapter on subcultures and, in every one, subcultures were presented as demographic phenomena ascribed on the basis of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, or even age, that in various ways influenced people's purchasing and consumption. I dug into the journals. It was the same. No one in marketing had ever examined subcultures that existed *because of* people's consumption preferences and behaviours. It was a problem tailor-made for an ethnographic solution.

I took my epiphany to Jim, and it colonized our academic imaginations. The attraction was obvious. We had already committed ourselves to the concept of BVFD. All we needed to make it real was a subcultural context in which to fully engage with the ethnographer's art. We began to consider the possibilities. The first one that came to mind was surfers. Jim had grown up surfing in and around Redondo Beach, California. Surfers were clearly tribal or subcultural in ways that were exciting for marketing. They had their own language. They inspired music and movies. They innovated equipment and practices. They generated styles that drove the swimwear industry. They were fiercely territorial. The only problem was that we lived in Ames, Iowa, and the nearest surf break was over a thousand miles away in any direction. That made *in situ* research im-possible.

Then something else happened. Our colleague in Management, Brad Schrader, was working on a case study of Harley-Davidson, inspired by the audacious buyback of the company by its executives. And Brad had bought a Harley. Kaboom! We had our context. Not Harley-Davidson the company, but Harley-Davidson the subculture of consumption. Suddenly everything we had ever read or seen about bikers – from Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels* to Schwarzenegger's Terminator – stepped forward into vivid consciousness. It was exciting. It was exotic. It was researchable. We wrote a seed-money grant to cover the costs of a trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, sent a letter to the H-D public relations director, and got the invitation to interview key executives and pitch our research ideas. In the meantime, we made friends with motorcyclists. We visited Harley-Davidson dealerships and interviewed the proprietors and salespeople. I went as a tourist-observer to the Black Hills Rally in Sturgis, South Dakota, and Jim did the same at Bike Week in Daytona Beach. We learned to ride and bought cheap, used (non-Harley) motorcycles.

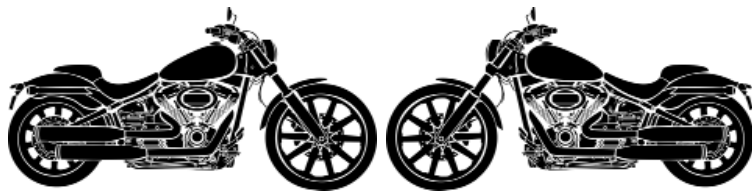
We agreed with H-D execs – in particular with Frank Cimermanic, who, as the person in charge of market research, championed us to the company – to carry out a one-year pilot study at our own expense and then, after that year, to return and report. What we didn't know – and wouldn't learn until that year was over – was that H-D had also, serendipitously and simultaneously, commissioned a market-segmentation study that was to be their most expensive study ever.

When H-D brought us back to report our findings, we found ourselves presenting in the same forum as Diagnostic Research International (DRI), the firm whose creative mastermind was Dennis Stefani, the father of singer/designer/actress Gwen, a consummate musician in his own right, and simply the most brilliant market researcher I have ever met. Our two studies had proceeded for a year with a

Chinese wall between us, and suddenly we were introduced to each other with the comparative scrutiny of our results as the daunting gauntlet we had to traverse. The stakes were high. DRI had been paid a lot of money for their insights, and their work was polished and professional. We were paid nothing, and our work was graced with a kind of homespun eggheadedness. The style and resource differences couldn't have been greater, but the real worry was that substantive contradictions between the two studies would be embarrassing for somebody. Really embarrassing.

There were no contradictions. The consensus at H-D and among us researchers was that the studies complemented each other in beautiful ways. Our study explained the overall sociological structure for the H-D cultural phenomenon, DRI drew out the psychographic variations among the ridership, and our work filled in the picture with granular, living detail. The research summit concluded with a meeting in which H-D offered Jim and me an annual retainer, access to the corporate motorcycle fleet, a discounted path to Harley ownership, and free use of our data for purposes of scholarship and publication. Over the course of several more years, we became ethnographers of consumer culture with an arguably unrivalled understanding of the growing and increasingly heterogeneous subculture that defined itself by its ownership and use of Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Many readers will be familiar with this story from our articles in *Journal of Consumer Research*³ and elsewhere.⁴

In the halls of the Harley-Davidson Motor Company, we were known as Jim & John or simply (because we had both moved on from ISU) as the Oregon Professors. Privately we referred to ourselves as BVFD with the morphologically inspired alter egos, Fred and Barney. The station bells were clanging. Bedrock was truly on fire.



Along the way – through what looked to us like a sweetheart deal between an H-D marketing manager and his former employer – an ad agency soon to be acquired by Bozell Worldwide was contracted to produce a parts and accessories catalogue for the Motor Company. The agency didn't know anything about bikers, but they knew an anthropologist that had consulted on their account for Jeep, newly a division of Daimler. The story we were told is that the agency called Grant McCracken and asked if he could help them understand the biker market. Grant replied that he could, after a great deal of research, but they would be better served to consult two ethnographers who already had the expertise they needed. He sent them our way, and they hired us for a consulting seminar.

That was the third major inflection point in our careers as consumer ethnographers.

After our presentation was over, executives from the agency took us aside and asked us to talk about the similarities between H-D and Jeep. Both had distinguished WWII heritages, and both were iconic American brands, imbued with mystiques of machismo and adventure. Was it possible, did we think, that Jeep owners also constituted a subculture of consumption? If so, then according to our research the marketing implications would be intoxicating.

'We don't know', was our answer, 'but we could find out'.

We began our investigation of Jeep owners much like we had earlier with bikers – relying on serendipity and guerrilla tactics. I stopped in at a Car Toys store where a Wrangler was parked on working days. The owner said sure, he would grant us an interview. I ambushed a young mother getting into a Cherokee in a supermarket parking lot, gave her my card, and asked if she would be willing to do an interview. She would be happy to, she said, as would her husband. From a handful of such interviews we learned some important lessons. For one thing, Jeep owners tended to be incredibly loyal. Also, they were practically evangelistic about spreading the gospel of Jeep. They were not, however, a subculture of consumption as Jim and I had defined it. They were too heterogeneous. They valued inclusivity over exclusivity. There was no unifying ethos that we could detect, other than devotion to the brand and a certain kinship with other owners.

We began to think about Jeep owners as a community demonstrating something between the tightly knit bonds of subculture and the ‘gossamer threads’ that united what Daniel Boorstin, in *The Americans*, called a consumption community. We called our Jeep owners a brand community. At that point, the term hadn’t been published yet by Al Muñoz and Tom O’Guinn, who turned out to be the Watson and Crick to our Rosalind Franklin. More on that in a bit.

We reported our early findings to the agency and arranged, at their expense, to conduct ethnographic fieldwork during the coming summer at Jeep Jamborees. Those were long-weekend get-togethers, operated independently of Jeep, with dozens of avid, Jeep-loyal, off-road enthusiasts. Our first Jamboree was in Ouray, Colorado, among the granite scarps, blue skies, evergreens, and golden aspens of the Rocky Mountains. In a rented Wrangler – the rental contract, which we ignored, said no off-road use! – we hit the trail, a long double-track over mountain and stream that required significant skill, traction, and ground clearance to traverse.

Because this is a memoir and not a stuffy academic paper or corporate report, I will relate what for Jim and me was a peak experience from that excursion. We had been driving all morning in stop-start fashion because of the time and spotting required for difficult stream crossings and other obstacles. In the idle times, we joined or struck up conversations with other participants. Our position in the ant-like procession was approximately in the middle. Once past the last major obstacle of the morning, the run-up to the scheduled lunch spot was relatively smooth going. The road skirted the top of a glacial cirque. At the bottom of the cirque, hundreds of feet below, was a perfect little lake the colour of indigo.

I said to Jim, who was driving at the time, ‘That lake is just crying out to be swum in.’

‘I will if you will...’ was his response.

Just then a road, less travelled than the one we were on, peeled off to the right and down into the cirque. We bounced down it to where the tracks ended in unbroken alpine tundra about a hundred yards from the lake. As Jim set the brake, I jumped out and started walking towards the lake, dropping my clothing piece by piece along the way. Jim followed suit a few paces behind. At the edge of the water, I stripped off my underwear and dove in. When I broke the surface again, I was gasping to replace the air the ice-cold water had driven from my lungs, and Jim was mid-dive. To say it was bracing would be an understated cliché. We scrambled out of the water as quickly as our numbing limbs would allow, retrieved our clothing, donning the items in reverse order of their removal, and drove back up to the main road. By then the entire Jamboree procession, barring the event official bringing up the rear, had passed us .

That person, driving a jacked-up Cherokee, said to us as we went by to assume our new place at the end of the line, ‘There’s been some interesting CB chatter about you boys.’

I said, ‘Yeah? What are they saying?’

He said, ‘Well, one fella comes on and he says, ‘Man, those guys got balls as big as a house!’ Then another guy comes on and says, ‘Not no more they don’t!’”

Our little lark was capped off at lunchtime by a woman that approached us and said, ‘You were the two guys skinny-dipping in the lake.’

‘Nah. What makes you think it was us?’ I asked.

She looked directly at me and said, ‘Black briefs. Telephoto lens.’

From the Jamborees we learned a great deal about how owners related to their Jeeps, to each other, and to the brand and the company. We also felt, first-hand, the kinds of transcendent experiences that strengthen those relationships. Again, we reported back to the agency. They responded with a compliment and a challenge. The compliment was that, in the phrase and concept of ‘peak experience’ we had handed them their ‘new imperative’ for the brand and subsequent campaigns. The challenge, which came from the Jeep corporate client, was, ‘It’s a good story. Where are the numbers?’

With that challenge came the opportunity and the funding to conduct quantitative research to test our ethnographic findings, something I would never do again. The methods and results are a matter of record in the *Journal of Marketing*⁵ and *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*.⁶ What the record doesn’t show is the soul-crushing burden of the review process when you mix ethnography and a quantitatively complex, multi-variate, quasi-experimental design. The *Journal of Marketing* assigned two completely separate review teams, and the task of satisfying both took over two years, during which time our colleagues, Muñiz and O’Guinn, scooped us on the introduction of brand community to the marketing canon. Oh well. It turned out to be a construct that’s big enough for all of us.

The published record also doesn’t reveal the practical impact of our work. The ethnographic findings were sufficiently compelling that Jeep decided to experiment with an event called Camp Jeep which, to this day, is a major annual marketing initiative. During the first two years it was also the context of our multi-method study. The strong quantitative confirmation sealed the company’s commitment. At the second Camp Jeep, we sought an audience with the executive director of Bozell, who had also attended. Over gin-and-tonics we asked for advice. We asked, was the research helpful? He assured us it was. He told us that a spinoff event, Jeep 101, had become a major driver of sales to first-time owners. We then asked him what he would advise if we wanted to get serious about the consulting side of things.

‘Two things’, he said. ‘First, you need to be a real company with a real name. ‘Jim and John’ doesn’t cut it. Second’, he said, ‘you need to double your rates. What you’ve given us is worth far more than we’re paying. Price conveys quality.’ Duh, we thought. We knew the principles. We taught the principles. We just hadn’t had the confidence to implement them for ourselves.

And that was inflection point number four.

We spent many hours, over many days, in brainstorming sessions trying out ideas for a business name. Most of them landed with a thud. Finally, inspired by a key category of findings from our biker research, I offered the name ‘Ethos’. We walked around it, prodded it, flipped it on its back, and both agreed that it was good. Thus began Ethos Market Research, with Jim as the CEO and me as the Chief Creative

Officer. We had a four-word mission statement: Have Fun, Make Money. Our work leading up to that moment, and our subsequent adventures, were some of the best times of our lives and the basis of a truly singular friendship.



To talk about our fifth inflection point, we need to go back to that fateful research summit with DRI and Harley-Davidson. Dennis Stefani's work had impressed us. Ours also, it turned out, had impressed him. One day, out of the clear blue sky, I got a call from his assistant. DRI was going to conduct an elaborate focus group for Nissan that would involve interactions with three de-badged vehicles – a Nissan Altima and two class competitors – and we were invited to attend and participate in the analysis, if we were so inclined. Jim was obligated elsewhere, but I was available.

The research was eye-opening. The amount of preparation, time, and money that went into a two-hour interaction with a dozen consumers was, to my naïve mind, boggling. Frankly, I never felt that my contribution to the analysis was especially meaningful, especially compared to that of the utterly dazzling Joe Grieco, who was by acclaim the most talented focus group moderator in the world. Joe travelled three hundred days a year, such was the demand for his premium-priced services, and his business card announced him, unabashedly, as *The Sultan of Consultin'*. But something in that collaboration had clicked. DRI began to write Ethos Market Research into projects for their automotive clients, including Nissan, Toyota, Isuzu, Chrysler, and General Motors or their respective ad agencies. Eventually, some of those clients began to contact us directly. We provided ethnographic insights for automotive design and marketing for several Nissan vehicles, including the 350Z and 370Z, Maxima, Altima, Quest, and Titan. We conducted the U.S. market-profiling research for the first Toyota Prius. Other jobs included research and consulting on the first Cadillac CTS, the first Chrysler 300, and the first Saturn SUV, the VUE. Thanks also to a referral from Dennis Stefani, Ethos conducted research for Yamaha R&D that inspired and provided the data for the article 'Consumption-Driven Market Emergence'.⁷



For about a decade, ending spectacularly with the onset of the 2008 recession and multiple cancelled contracts, Ethos Market Research operated successfully, augmenting our incomes and our scholarship. When that era came to an end, Jim and I both lost something crucial, but other doors opened. Jim founded Oregon State University's C2C (Close to the Customer) project, an endeavour that would outlive him and provide livelihoods and educational richness to many people. I started my

first novel, *Notes from the Lightning God*,⁸ with its anthropologist protagonist, and my first textbook, *Sustainable Marketing*.⁹ Disaffected with my job at the University of Portland, where I had been denied a promotion (despite being a popular teacher and, hands down, the most influential scholar in the business school – bitter much?), I left for greener pastures, full professorships, and generous research support in Finland and Switzerland.

Jim and I didn't write together again until, after many refusals on my part, he convinced me to join him and Beth DuFault in writing about ex-Mormons and the problems of reconstructing post-faith identities. By that time, the first subtle signs of Jim's insidious disease had started to manifest. "The Marketization of Religion"¹⁰ would be Jim's and my last research collaboration.



The final inflection point in my career included ethnography, but it was really about love.

Life in Finland, among other things, was hard on my marriage, which ended after about three years there. During that time, Beth DuFault and I had grown closer. Beth is a meticulous and inspired ethnographer with a degree in sociology from UCLA, and she had started a PhD program, where she continued her pursuits of sociology and ethnography. Her thesis-research in the storied neighbourhood of Watts, California, was bold and exciting. I found both her and her work fascinating, and she invited me onto her doctoral committee. Among our many discussions, we discovered a shared history with Neonatal Intensive Care Units – I as a parent and she as both a parent and a respiratory therapist – and a shared interest in the identity challenges of NICU parents. We conducted ethnographic research with NICU parents at hospitals in the U.S. and Finland. It also turned out to be an ethnography of romance. I had fallen into a kind of love I had fantasized about all my life, glimpsed for moments, but never fully experienced.

My passions for the natural environment, sustainability, and social justice had long ago soured me on the institutions of predatory capitalism, status signalling, and other soulless aspects of business academia, marketing, and consumer behaviour. Working with Beth in the NICU was another step away from that toxic bath and towards something more satisfying. We could and should, with all the tools at our disposal, set our sights on more meaningful goals than profit maximization.

Upon completing her PhD, Beth took a faculty position at SUNY in Albany, New York. Wanting nothing more than to be closer to her, I began looking for employment back on the American side of the Atlantic. I found it as a Canada Research Chair in Social Enterprise at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador. Studying social entrepreneurship and social enterprise was a new path for me – most of the research is done in management strategy and organizational behaviour – but it drew nicely on my expertise in sustainability and market emergence. My argument was pretty simple. We could use our knowledge of marketing and consumer culture to advance the cause of business that puts people, communities, and the planet ahead of the greed for money, power, and prestige.

As ethnographers, Beth and I are now living embedded in the community of our new research site in Newfoundland. It's a social enterprise called Fishing for Success, in the town of Petty Harbour, a charming village built around a protected fishery and inhabited since the sixteenth century. We share a little house, constructed in 1911, with a view of the harbour and the open Atlantic beyond. It's a short walk to our research site. Our ethnography focuses on the challenges and benefits of social enterprise, with framing in assemblage theory, identity, and a theorization of our own that combines the two.¹¹

Beth and I married in early 2020, as the Covid pandemic was firing its terrible opening salvos. Jim came to the wedding, supported by his loving wife, Kim, and his steadfast cousin, Paddy, without whom his Alzheimer's would have been unmanageable. But his smile was the same as always, and his gentle disposition was, if anything, gentler than ever. We used FaceTime on a few occasions to talk with him from Newfoundland, but his Alzheimer's was by then an impenetrable cloud around his cognition. In April 2022, Beth and I were driving a rented car from California to Oregon, intending to visit Jim, who had just been placed in a care facility in Eugene. When we called from the road to schedule the visit, Kim tearfully told us that he had passed away during the night. Beth and I were only two among the many people devastated by that news.

So, Jim, my dear friend, I dedicate this little memoir to you. Thank you for your years of undying friendship. Thank you for sharing a million adventures and for co-constructing careers that have touched more lives than we can probably ever know. Thank you for introducing me to the woman of my dreams and the love of my life. You and I travelled a long and fascinating road. What road remains to me, I vow to travel in love, and to love with an ethnographer's heart.

NOTES

1. Schouten and McAlexander, 'Positioning services.'
2. Schouten, 'Selves in transition.'
3. Schouten and McAlexander, 'Subcultures of consumption.'
4. Fournier et al., 'Building brand community'; Martin et al., 'Claiming the throttle.'
5. McAlexander et al., 'Building brand community.'
6. Schouten et al., 'Transcendent customer experience.'
7. Martin and Schouten, 'Consumption-driven market emergence.'
8. Schouten, *Notes from the Lightning God*. Published in 2009 in Lancashire, UK by BeWrite Books, this book went out of print with the untimely demise of the publisher. I will provide a free pdf of the book to anyone that requests it.
9. Martin and Schouten, *Sustainable Marketing*.
10. McAlexander et al., 'The marketization of religion.'
11. Schouten and DuFault, 'Social enterprise.'

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PHOTO-ESSAY

The Art Of Pedagogy

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A glimpse at the creation and desecration of educational art in Tigray, Ethiopia.



The Doctor Atakilty Primary and Middle School is located in the Tembien Region of Tigray in Northern Ethiopia. Atakilty, a medical doctor, was one of the important leaders and martyrs of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the movement that led to the end of Ethiopia's Mengistu regime and culminated in the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia under the leadership of Meles Zenawi in 1991.

In the 1990s, the school was established on the site where Dr Atakilty had been killed and since that time had become known as one of the best schools in the area, making it a school of choice for area parents and a desired workplace for teachers. Atakilty is memorialized in a statue that stands in the central courtyard of the school as well in paintings on the exterior walls of the school, in graduation cap and gown, as illustrated by the two photos that open this essay. This depiction in graduation cap and gown, unquestionably a testament to the symbolic value of education, is based on one of the most widely circulated photographs of Dr. Atakilty, which is itself a marker of the status accorded to educational achievement.

I had been to this rural school on a number of occasions in the 2000s while visiting with my husband, a relative of Dr. Atakilty, and had been moved by the students as well as the pedagogical artwork created at the school by both students and teachers. Then in January 2020, Christian Grewell and I led a group of thirteen NYU Abu-Dhabi students to the school. We were teaching an interactive media course, *Resourcefulness*,¹ and one goal of the week-long class trip was to document the tapestries that teachers had created as pedagogical tools. Many of these tapestries, painted and penned on cloth, were not only pedagogical, but also works of art in their own right.

This photo essay serves as an introduction to the school and its pedagogical artwork and is meant to inspire as well as provide a cautionary tale.²



Exterior Walls

The exterior walls of the Dr. Atakilty School were adorned with pedagogical imagery and words, as are many primary schools in Ethiopia. In the photo that opens the essay, one can see some of the botanical and science imagery that covered many walls. The photo, left, which also shows some of the students exiting a classroom, highlights Ethiopia's Ge'ez alphabet on its side wall. Below is an image from another wall of the human brain with the cerebrum, cerebellum, and brainstem labeled in Tigrinya, the local language.

Exterior walls with Ge'ez alphabet.

Brain, cerebrum, cerebellum, brain stem.



The Tapestries

Some tapestries hung in classrooms as the next image shows. The majority of the tapestries, however, were hung in a storeroom and then were borrowed by individual teachers when needed for a particular lesson. We spent days documenting the tapestries in the classrooms and storeroom and never ceased to be amazed.



Biological Sciences

Among the tapestries dedicated to the biological sciences, the human anatomy images were striking from an artistic as well as a pedagogical point of view. Had we really learned this much in primary and middle school?

The tapestries depicting the life cycle of an insect and insect morphology were also striking, as were the comparative depictions of plant and mammalian cell structures.

A detailed drawing of a microscope, a necessary tool for understanding cell structure, was also on hand, with its various parts labelled.



The ear, lungs, and heart, with structures labeled.



Plant cell structure.



Microscope.

Yet science was clearly not the only subject of importance. Beyond science there were charts related to the language arts, for instance, words in Tigrinya in their verb, noun, and adjective forms.

ግላ	ሰዎ	ቅፅል
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ
ሰላላ	ሰላላ	ሰላላ

Verb, noun, and adjective forms of common words.



Music note lengths with their English, American, and Tigrayan names.

There were also numerous charts about poetry, for instance, delineating rules of poetic structure and form. Poetry, a celebrated verbal art form with a long history in Tigray, was clearly valued at the school. When we arrived with the NYU Abu Dhabi students, some of the older Dr. Atakilty students read poetry that they had written as part of a welcoming ceremony.

In addition to poetry, music was also in evidence. Shown left is a tapestry of music note lengths with their English, American, and Tigrayan names.



Sports instruction was part of the curriculum as well. The storeroom in which the tapestries were hung was managed by the physical education instructor. He assured us that the borrowing and return of tapestries was properly accounted for in a ledger. He told us that his favorite tapestry was, in fact, the one that depicted a world standard soccer field.

IN THE END

The young students of the Dr. Atakilty School were clearly being educated, with the tapestries attesting to the efforts that were put in by the teachers, their original



creators, as well as the users of the tapestries. Desks, books, blackboards, and students' classroom activities were further indexes and demonstrations of the educational efforts.

At the time of our visit at the beginning of 2020, the school's teachers, administrators, as well as parents and other community members were in the midst of planning and fundraising for the building of a companion high school so that students could continue their studies while staying in the local community. Most of the Dr. Atakilty students discontinued school after the eighth grade because to attend ninth grade and beyond, they would have to rent a room in a town where there was a high school or travel extremely long distances each day to go to that school. We were committed to helping them develop that high school, and developed plans for creating a technology-oriented school on nearby land that had been donated by the community.

For the Tigray region in Ethiopia, however, 2020 was not an easy year. In addition to the challenges of COVID-19, and then a plague of locusts, in November of 2020 Tigray residents became the target of a genocidal war led by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces. Industries, hospitals, and schools were destroyed. Women and

girls were systematically and brutally raped. Crops were purposefully decimated and homes looted by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers. The Tembien region was a geographic focal point, especially in the early stages of the war, which lasted until the end of 2022 when a peace agreement between the Federal Government and the Tigray Regional Authorities was signed in Pretoria.³

While we had assumed that the Dr. Atakilty School had probably been adversely affected by the war, it was still a shock to receive photographs from the school director of what the classrooms actually looked like in 2023.



Classrooms no longer had roofs and the only thing left inside were bits of debris. The school buildings had, in fact, been used by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops as a base. Even the wood from the desks was gone, presumably used for firewood, with just the metal parts left, stacked in haphazard piles.

Nonetheless, by 2023 the school was once again in session. Before the war, about 800 students attended the school. When the school director contacted us in early summer of 2023 only about half of the students had returned. By the end of summer, the number of students was back up to around 700, with the return of students and new pupils in the beginners' classes. Classes were taught outdoors with pupils sitting on the ground.

The tapestries? We did not even ask. In a way, it seemed preposterous to even think about them when so much else was destroyed and so many lives were lost. Only time will tell if they will re-appear. But it is without question time to celebrate when education and art works are, in fact, what are created, valued, discussed and consumed.⁴

NOTES

1. <https://medium.com/resourcefulness>
2. Photographs were taken by the students and instructors of the NYU Abu-Dhabi class in a collective manner – cameras were traded off between hands and digital photos shared in a folder. It has become impossible to say who is the author of any one photo. The post-war photographs of the school were sent to us by the school director.
3. Byaruhanga. 'Ethiopia war in Tigray'.
4. Anonymous. 'Ethiopia's Tigray War'.

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SOUVENIR

The Perfumed Battlefield¹

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'She wanted to die', wrote Gustave Flaubert of Emma Bovary, 'but she also wanted to live in Paris'. The city invites such extremes of emotion. As New York and London acted as magnets for anyone anxious to succeed in business, Paris drew those who desired to express their feelings, either in art or in the way they lived. Among the most powerful of those impulses is love – intellectual, spiritual, carnal. And Paris, when it comes to that complex and elusive emotion, is internationally recognised as the world capital.

Reasons are not hard to find. Conquered by the Romans, colonised by Christianity, invaded by the English, inherited by the Bourbon kings, from whom it liberated itself in the Revolution of 1789, only to be swept up in the imperial ambitions of the Napoléons, then forced to endure two wars on its soil, as well as four years of German occupation, before being absorbed into the European Union, France has been a plaything of history. The experience created a culture of acceptance and acquiescence.

Some historians, not entirely as a compliment, called France 'the woman of Europe', and the label stuck. It may explain why, though Britain has John Bull and the United States, Uncle Sam, France is symbolized by a female, albeit in militant mode. Joan of Arc shares the role with revolutionary heroine Marianne, a bust of whom, based on Delacroix's 1830 *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (and traditionally modeled by the decade's most popular TV or movie star), has pride of place in every town hall.

The French pay lip service to this aggressive archetype, but as a peaceful, rural nation, not given to settling problems by force – 'Going to war without France', sneered an American general, 'is like going hunting without an accordion' – they preferred to prevail by the more feminine traits of intelligence, charm and cunning. Proficient diplomats, they made French the language of negotiation and compromise. Matters of state were settled behind the scenes, and, as often as not, in the bedroom, which became, for the French, 'a perfumed battlefield'.

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

After having lived in Australia, the United States, Ireland and Great Britain, moving to France proved disorienting for me, particularly since I married a French woman and fathered a child. Expecting to be quizzed on our plans, as would have been the case in an Anglo-Saxon family, I found my new in-laws surprisingly incurious. I soon learned why. A culture so persistently attacked instinctively retreats into itself. Privacy becomes the rule. Significantly, it was a Frenchman who wrote 'The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing,' a warning not to pry.

This approach recommended itself to elites. Among aristocrats, particularly in such nations as Russia, French – the *lingua franca* – became the language of sophisticated discourse, essential to a person of culture. Alice in *Alice Through the Looking Glass* is exhorted to 'speak in French when you can't think of the English for a thing- turn your toes out when you walk- And remember who you are!' Individuality manifested itself not overtly but in such intangible concepts as 'style'. Describing something as 'French' or '*à la français*' came to imply refinement: 'French cuffs' required cuff-links, 'French beans' needed special preparation.

'French' could also signify arrogance, a disrespect for form: 'French leave' and 'French exit' implied indifference to the etiquette of departure, and in apologising for vulgarity, one said 'Pardon my French'. Further down the list, dictionaries noted, somewhat diffidently, that 'French' could describe 'a kiss with open mouth and

insertion of the tongue' or, in later editions, 'oral stimulation of the penis or vulva'. Warnings that these were 'vulgar slang' didn't discourage their use, and 'French' was soon writ large throughout the sexual lexicon. Though they might be hazy on particulars, every adolescent had heard of 'Frenching', 'French kissing', even, conceivably, *le soixante-neuf*, and was acquainted with the 'French letter' – a condom in a paper packet. In darker corners, the relationship persisted. As flagellation was the 'English vice', syphilis was 'the French disease'.

Since French predominated in the terminology of cuisine and fashion, one would have expected the language of love to also be French; not only *soixante-neuf* but *foufoune* for vagina, *bite* [pronounced 'beet'] for an erect penis, *pipe* ['peep'] for fellatio and the now-antique *gamahuche* for all oral sex in general. But in his 1782 *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, his classic account of sexual duplicity and intrigue among the aristocracy, Pierre Choderlos de Laclos suggested a reason why these and similar words don't appear in the lexicon of erotica. 'As with every other science,' explains the cynical Valmont as he seduces an eager Cécile de Volange, 'the first principle is to make sure you call everything by its proper name. Now I think we might begin with one or two Latin terms...'

Latin was the language of medicine, so sexual terminology logically derived from Rome, including those 'Latin terms' – fellatio, cunnilingus, vagina, penis, sperm, vulva, coitus and their numerous derivatives. But Italy's attempts at more subtle distinctions ended there. The French may have missed out on mapping the taxonomy of sex but they caught up in its elucidation, categorizing love in its many forms, only a few of them defined by anatomy.

LOVE'S GARDENERS

French medieval writers were the first to distinguish between *amor honestus* (honest, i.e. physical love) and *fin amor* (refined or abstract love). The love of an abstraction, for example one's homeland, was not the same as love for a wife or husband, while neither resembled what Shakespeare in *Hamlet* called, in a pun on the most common slang term in English for a vagina, 'country matters'. The traditional marriage service, first set out in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, clarified the widening gap between the two by attempting to disguise the sexual nature of marriage as a metaphoric abstraction, 'instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church...and therefore not by any to be enterprised nor taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding'.

By employing metaphor and simile, the language of *fin amor*, renamed in the nineteenth century 'courtly love', allowed one to talk about love while appearing to speak of something else. Troubadours travelling the courts of Europe sang of their love for the Virgin when it was a more immediately available woman they had in mind. The language of flowers was equally effective. The twelfth century narrative poem *Roman de la Rose* depicted Love as a walled garden surrounded by dangers which the lover must defeat before he can enter. Intense feelings became less threatening if seen as aspects of the natural world. Seventeenth century French courtier Catherine de Rambouillet created an *aide memoire* called the *Carte de Tendre*. The map of an imaginary country called *Tendre* or Sweetness, its amorous geography included districts called New Friendship and Mutual Admiration, the villages of Pretty Verse and Love Letter, but also Indifference Mountain.

Not everyone was in sympathy with this use of nature. John Ruskin coined the term 'Pathetic Fallacy' to denigrate the manner in which such poets as Wordsworth used weather to mirror emotions. In fact, the use of parallels between nature and the emotions has a long and durable history. Shakespeare's Richard III praises a new dynasty for turning a 'winter of discontent' into 'glorious summer'. Expanding this train of thought, the French spoke of love at first sight as *un coup de foudre* – a clap of thunder. Silent cinema represented emotion with pounding surf and surrender with an opening flower, while Brigitte Bardot, in a notorious duet with then-lover Serge Gainsbourg, murmured 'You are the wave. I am the naked island' and he responded 'Like the undecided wave, I go – I go and I come'.

ONCE UPON A TIME

Sociologists Bruno Bettelheim and Joseph Campbell showed that fables, an extension of metaphor, could be more valuable than surveys in revealing the soul of a society. These apparently innocent tales had remarkable longevity, each generation adapting them to its own use.

Among the most durable is Beauty and the Beast. Beauty, a young woman, sacrifices herself to save her father, condemned to death for picking a rose from the realm of a monster. Against all odds, the Beast spares Beauty but imprisons her in his castle. She realizes that his appearance disguises a man who has been placed under a spell that may only be lifted by a woman who loves him as he is.

That it employs the language of flowers and the walled garden of the *Roman de la Rose* suggests the period and the culture in which it was composed. The first modern re-telling, that of Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve, dates from 1740 but the most famous, by Jeanne-Marie Prince de Beaumont, was written a century later, and shaped to serve a social purpose. At a time of arranged marriages, when young women were often urged to take older, richer partners rather than the impecunious boys they might have preferred, her version suggested that, with a little imagination, the new wife might discover a prince behind the paunch. And even if they did not, they could console themselves with the chateau, the servants, and a husband ready to satisfy (almost) all their needs.

Jean Cocteau's 1946 film further updated it for a post-war generation. The Beast is played by Cocteau's lover and protégé Jean Marais, while Josette Day as Belle already prefers her father to the young rowdies who court her. The Beast's estate becomes a Freudian version of the medieval realm of Love. Her entry, along a corridor lit by *flambeaux* held by living arms jutting from the walls, is effortless. She glides, her feet lubricated by the lure of incestuous sex, an effect Jacques Demy repeated in his film *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* to signify the devotion of Catherine Deneuve to her garage mechanic boyfriend, and Jane Birkin resurrected for TV appearances celebrating Serge Gainsbourg's songs, reminding audiences that the couple's life together replicated the myth.

NIL BY MOUTH

A joke circulated that, in a nightmare world, policemen would be German, car mechanics French and cooks and lovers English, while in Utopia the policemen would be English, car mechanics German and cooks and lovers French. Evidence is scant, however, that the French are as naturally gifted in the bedroom as Germans

are in the garage or Britons on the beat. Where they excel is in technique. As Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe put it in *My Fair Lady* ‘The French never care what they do, actually, as long as they *pronounce* it properly’. This imprecision gave the French an ambiguous reputation among countries with less evolved sexual practices. Not only did the French decline to use those robust ‘Latin terms’; their sexual methods were also unconventional. One gibe even combined this accusation with an attack on an imagined distaste for military confrontation: ‘The French they are a funny race/They fight with their feet and they fuck with their face’.

‘French kissing’ first appeared in English around 1923. Initially describing a kiss that employed both lips and tongue, it soon came to mean oral sex. When, in 1933, actress Mary Astor confided to her diary that taking an open carriage ride through New York’s Central Park with playwright George S. Kaufman permitted them to ‘pet and French right out in the open’, everyone got the picture. Parallel with this change, ‘making love’ ceased to mean flirting and came to mean having sex. Time also transformed the meaning of *baiser*. Once ‘kissing’, it now means fornicating. Today’s polite form is *embrasse*.

While there’s no evidence that the French invented cunnilingus, they soon recognized its affinity with the national culture and embraced it with enthusiasm. Not only was it, among sexual practices, the least phallicentric: in the way it deprecated vigor and exceptional physical attributes but valorized precision, concentration and attention to detail in the attenuation of pleasure, it took its place with those other elements of erotic expertise for which France became famous: what to say to a sexual partner and how to say it, how to dress (and undress), when, how and where to use perfume, the selection and wearing of lingerie – defined by one authority as ‘the artillery of the night’: these skills, taught to all courtesans, trickled down into the bedrooms of France, where they were perfected and refined.

THE BUSINESS OF SEX

The Revolution of 1789, in severing the French state from the Catholic Church, opened the way for a new appreciation of sex as recreation, transforming it, as George Bernard Shaw pithily observed, into ‘the opera of the poor’. Demolishing the barriers between professional and amateur further accelerated the acceptance of sexual variety. France under the Revolution legalized sodomy in 1790 and Napoleon decriminalized prostitution in 1804 – subject to certain restrictions which, significantly, were neither religious nor moral but legal and medical. A prostitute had to register with the police and pass regular examinations for sexually transmitted diseases. Anyone found to be infected could be imprisoned until cured. To eradicate pimping and the exploitation that went with it, men could own a brothel but a woman – the traditional *madame* – must be in charge. Clients paid her, and she in turn paid the wages, and provided food and lodging if women ‘lived in’.

The law also dictated discretion in the choice of premises. Shutters had to be solid, with no indication of what took place behind them. France never adopted the red lamp used in other countries to designate a brothel. Most were identified simply by their address; ‘*Le 122*’, for example, referred to 122 rue du Provence and Le Chabonais to the street on which that establishment stood. Others adopted the most bland of titles: At My Brother-in-Law’s or My Uncle’s Place.

By 1810, Paris alone had 180 *maisons de tolerance* or *maisons closes*, and within fifty years there were more than a thousand across the nation. With legality came

social acceptance. Guy de Maupassant's *The House of Madame Tellier*, published in 1885, is set in a busy port town, where Madame Tellier's brothel is a valued amenity, patronized by 'respectable tradesmen, and young men in government or some other employ' who 'went there every evening about eleven o'clock, just as they would go to the club'. Tongue in cheek, Maupassant, a *habitué* of Paris's *bordels* who died of syphilis contracted there, offers Mme Tellier and her establishment as examples of French good sense in matters of sex. 'The prejudice which is so violent and deeply rooted in large towns does not exist in the country places in Normandy. The peasant says 'It is a paying-business', and he sends his daughter to keep an establishment of this character just as he would send her to keep a girls' school'.

Any lingering prejudice against prostitution didn't extend to the upper echelons of government. The itinerary of every visiting head of state included 'an evening with the President of the Sénat'. The time was not wasted on speeches and toasts. Instead, visitors were delivered to Le Chabanais. A discreet building in the second *arrondissement*, convenient both to the Chambre des Députés and the Bibliotheque Nationale. The only hint that it housed the city's most gifted purveyors of pleasure was a sign on the restaurant opposite. 'What we serve', it said, 'is as good as what you get across the road'.

The syndicate of businessmen and aristocrats who operated Le Chabanais enjoyed decorating their home-from-home. They sometimes purchased entire rooms of furniture from exhibitions of foreign design and incorporated them into its decor, earning it the title 'The House of All Nations'. American expatriate Harry Crosby praised 'the Persian and the Russian and the Turkish and the Japanese and the Spanish rooms, and the bathroom with mirrored walls and mirrored ceilings, and the thirty harlots waiting in the salon'.

No effort was spared for the comfort of its clients. They even filtered its water supply so that no speck of grit might impair their pleasure. Among those enjoying these refinements was the future King Edward VII of Great Britain, for whom, because of his obesity, the management designed a 'love chair' that permitted easy access for oral and other forms of sex. It also created an ornate copper bath in which his favorite prostitute could splash in champagne while the prince and his cronies sat around, occasionally dipping out a glass.

The best brothels had good wine cellars and, in some cases, restaurants. That at the 122, called *Le Boeuf à la Ficelle*, was named for a dish of beef tenderloin simmered in bouillon, a speciality of the house, which gained something from being served by waitresses naked except for high-heeled pumps and a camellia in their hair. The 122's kitchen also offered an omelet, although not for consumption. Instead, in a popular fetish, it was carried from the kitchen to a bedroom and there slid, hot and sizzling, onto the naked flesh of a client, with what effect one can only imagine.

The superficial elegance of the *maisons toléré* hid a punishing regime. Women were expected to service at least four men a day. As the management deducted the cost of food and lodging from their earnings, most were in debt. Occasionally a client bought out his favorite, set her up in a shop, even married her, but in general their future was bleak. Beating or even mutilating a prostitute was considered a misdemeanour at most. Science confirmed their physical and intellectual inferiority. 'What the criminal is to men', asserted a textbook of the time, 'the prostitute is to women'. The same text also concluded that the skulls of prostitutes – and therefore their brains – were smaller than those of ordinary women. However attractive as sex objects, they had no more standing as sentient beings than a lap dog.

GRANDES HORIZONTALES

The liberality of the *belle époque* permitted a few remarkable women to rebrand themselves as *poules de luxe*, *courtisanes* or, more colloquially, *grandes horizontales*; ie, women who distinguish themselves on their backs. They had no need to work in brothels. Instead, ‘protectors’ took care of their needs. Men-about-Paris competed to share the latest beauties, just as they schemed to acquire the newest thoroughbred horse or most elegantly caparisoned carriage. Among these women, to maintain just the right degree of notoriety became an art. In René Clair’s witty period comedy *The Flame of New Orleans*, a *roué* from Europe is startled to see Marlene Dietrich plying her trade so far from her native Paris. Asked by a friend ‘Did you know her?’, he replies, ‘I didn’t *know* her exactly. But I know *stories about* her.’

Popular culture loved such people. Women in particular admired them. They demonstrated that beauty and intelligence could help one win in a man’s world. Verdi’s *La Traviata* was inspired by Marie Duplessis, who juggled half a dozen lovers. (She allocated one night a week to each. They collaborated to buy a bureau with enough drawers for each to have a change of clothes.) Among them was Alexandre Dumas *fils*, who wrote the novel *La Dame aux Camellias* on which the opera was based.

A few dramatists, such as Émile Augier, tried to present such women as evil and depraved. The heroine of his *Mariage d’Olympe* is weighed down by guilt, the husband and not the lover is the hero of the marital triangle drama *Gabrielle*, while in his libretto for Charles Gounod’s opera *Sapho*, the Greek poet isn’t a lesbian at all, but labeled as such by a jealous rival.

All these are forgotten today, while such celebrations of the self-indulgent society as Franz Lehár’s operetta *The Merry Widow* have never been off stage. In this joyously decadent romance, the libertine Count Danilo is recruited to lure back from Paris the richest woman in his principality who has moved there, with her fortune. Through a tortuous set of circumstances of the kind that only happen in bedroom farces, he mistakes her for a prostitute and spends the rest of the story repairing his gaffe.

Initially a flop, *The Merry Widow* took off when one of its locales was changed to Maxim’s, the Parisian restaurant famed for the beauty of the women who congregated there. The change transformed call girls into figures of glamour and Danilo from a cynical sensualist into a hero of love and the good life. The best-known version, Ernst Lubitsch’s 1934 film, starring real-life Lothario Maurice Chevalier, celebrates a culture where women have no last names and no relationship lasts more than a night. The lyrics of one of the show’s most popular tunes spell it out. ‘At Maxim’s once again/I swim in pink champagne/When people asks what bliss is/I simply answer; *This is!*’/Lolo, Dodo, JouJou/CloClo, Margot, FrouFrou!/Since surnames do not matter/I take the first to hand’. Maxim’s lived up to its legend. When the restaurant was sold in 1932, the new owners decided to instal air conditioning and better lighting. According to cultural historian Joseph Wechsberg, ‘when they pushed away the red plush banquettes, they exposed heaps of jewelry, gold coins and garters that had been lost in the long wild nights.’

THE FRENCH LOVER

Danilo was succeeded as the archetype of French seduction by Charles Boyer, one of the most popular international film and theatre actors between the wars. The sense

of loss conveyed in his murmuring baritone voice was the very essence of romance. Women longed to comfort him, men to become his friend.

One would expect Boyer in real life to be a *tombreur*; a playboy and serial seducer. A close collaborator insisted, however, that 'he disliked women, and never had a satisfactory relationship' with any. The contradiction puzzled a magazine writer of the 'thirties. 'It's crazy what havoc he can wreak on women's hearts! He receives boxes of chocolates by the crate; ties, scarves, cigarette cases, enough to set up a shop. He sends it all away, with a word so cold that he would discourage Messalina herself. He loves only solitude, to be alone with his books and paintings, and beautiful music of any kind'.

As embodied by Boyer, a lover was soulful, needy; no aggressor when it came to women but a supplicant, even a victim. In one of his most famous characterisations, as the criminal fugitive P  p   le Moko in *Algiers*, he is lured out of safety in the casbah of that city by Parisienne Hedy Lamarr, whose cool acquisitiveness bewitches him. To be reminded of Paris is, to P  p  , a literal torment, which makes her that much more desirable. She accepts his infatuation indifferently, as a right, which disturbs him even more.

'You're all silk, and you jingle when you walk', he murmurs. 'What did you do? Before the jewels?'

'I wanted them', she says simply, all need – an impulse both share. P  p   dies when he leaves the casbah to follow her. True to his self-destructive persona, Boyer married only once, and so loved his wife that, two days after her death, he killed himself.

IN THE EAR?

When it came to the scientific analysis of sexuality, the French, as in deciding its terminology, deferred to other nations, leaving it to Germans and Austrians to pioneer serious research. *Psychopathia Sexualis* by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, published in 1886, introduced the terms 'masochism', after the erotic writer and sensualist Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, author of *Venus in Furs*, and 'sadism', for the Marquis de Sade. Magnus Hirschfeld's Institut f  r Sexualwissenschaft in Berlin defined fetishism, while Sigmund Freud in Vienna pioneered an understanding of human behavior's sexual foundation. The torch then passed to the American Alfred Kinsey who, with a number of collaborators, compiled *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953).

Any French research was conducted by amateurs. Art historian Henri-Pierre Roch   systematically catalogued his busy and varied sex life, an episode of which became the basis of his best-selling novel *Jules et Jim*. Andr   Breton, poet, novelist and ideologue of surrealism, sought to analyse the sexual tastes and habits of his followers. The bemused manner in which he confronted the results says much about the nature of French sexuality behind the perceived of sophistication and romance.

Surrealism grew out of the First World War. Breton, working in a psychiatric hospital, noticed how some patients, despite having little education, invented elaborate fantasies to rationalize their experiences. One believed that trench warfare was a huge show, organized from behind the scenes, with fake explosions, and bodies supplied by mortuaries. From where did such ideas emerge? Breton intuited that our unconscious was a reservoir of creativity, tapped only at times of stress, or while dreaming, or in a hypnotic trance. He determined to explore this capacity by surveying the poets, painters and film-makers who made up the surrealist group.

Twelve sessions took place between 1928 and 1932, and primarily involved Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, Raymond Queneau, Jacques Prévert, Benjamin Péret, Pierre Unik, Luis Buñuel and Breton himself. Topics included sexual practice: how often, how much, with whom, in what locations (bed, bath, the open), dressed or naked; the sexual imagination – fantasies during sex and masturbation, pornography, sex talk, lingerie; female anatomy – the clitoris; the relative attractiveness of shaved vs. natural pubic hair etc. It wasn't until the ninth session that women took part and their input was negligible. Numerous girlfriends and models, not to mention such fellow travellers of the group as Gala Éluard, Meret Oppenheim, Jeanne Buñuel, Georgette Magritte, Maria Vassilieff, Nina Hamnett and Elsa Triolet, would surely have had something to say on the subject, but they weren't asked. For all its apparent enlightenment, surrealism remained, like so much else in the business of sex, a boys' club.

Some discussions were almost comically technical, such as this from Session 11 with Breton, Albert Valentin, Paul Éluard, Pierre Unik and Georges Sadoul:

Breton. 'Valentin, what do you think of the idea of masturbating and coming in a woman's ear?'

Valentin. 'I wouldn't dream of it!'

Éluard. 'I've already done it. It's very good...No, *not* very good.... It depends.'

Sadoul. 'I've never done it, but it appeals to me.'

Breton. 'It would only satisfy one side of the woman [ie, could only be done in one ear at a time] . These things aren't very well organized.'

Unik. 'The ear is made for the tongue, not for the cock.'

Sadoul (thoughtfully). 'What about in the nose?'

Breton instigated the discussions in the wake of having been thrown over by his lover Suzanne Muzard, inspiration for the eponymous main character of his one novel, *Nadja*. Why she might have found him inadequate was suggested in the first session, when Queneau posed the general question 'Do you always make love in the same way? If not, are the variations in order to increase your own pleasure or that of the woman?'

Péret, Prévert and Unik all agreed that the woman's pleasure was paramount. 'Like Péret', Unik said, 'I always ask the woman what she prefers.'

But Breton was astonished. 'I find that absolutely extraordinary, quite phenomenal. Talk about complications!'

AMERICANS BEHAVING BADLY

'When good Americans die', wrote Oscar Wilde, 'they go to Paris.' The first to visit *en masse* arrived after the First World War. Most fell into one of three categories; the very rich, the very poor, or those with something to hide.

The rich had been visiting for a century. They bought houses from which to embark on the Grand Tour, raced horses, collected art, and relaxed in its restaurants, clubs and brothels. Brides-to-be traditionally had their wedding dresses made in Paris by Poiret or Worth, assembled their *trousseaux* there, bought silver and porcelain, and acquired a French maid or cook. In the late nineteenth century it became fashionable to marry into aristocracy. Henry James and Edith Wharton amusingly and sometimes resignedly documented the annual invasion of heiresses, eager for a title.

The poor headed for Paris because, thanks to a devalued French franc, money lasted longer there than in any other civilized city. As Ernest Hemingway gloated in his first dispatch after arriving in 1921, one could live there for a year on a thousand dollars, and Scott Fitzgerald marvelled that a four-course meal, with wine, was available for the equivalent of eighteen *cents*.

The third group cut across the classes. Notwithstanding Wilde's dictum, many bad Americans also found a refuge in France. There was little one couldn't do there. Prostitution, homosexuality and inter-racial relationships were condoned, and drug use unrestricted. Nor did France forbid the publication and sale of pornography – providing it was written in a language other than French.

Some expatriates were 'remittance men', shunned by their families and paid to stay away. They joined the addicts, erotomanes, refugees, terrorists and criminals who basked in the French tradition of *laissez faire*. American humorist James Thurber, a journalist on the Riviera in 1925/6, wrote nostalgically that 'Nice, in that indolent winter, was full of knaves and rascals, adventurers and imposters, *pochards* and *indiscrets*, whose ingenious exploits, sometimes in full masquerade costume, sometimes in the nude, were easy and pleasant to report'.

Gertrude Stein and Natalie Clifford Barney were typical of monied Americans who found Paris a congenial place to live as both homosexuals and intellectuals, neither regarded as appropriate for women on the other side of the Atlantic. Lesbianism and cross-dressing flourished in such clubs as Le Monocle, which opened in Montparnasse in the nineteen-twenties and remained a social center for the richer end of the lesbian community until World War II. Male gays gravitated to Germany, since, as Christopher Isherwood put it, 'Berlin meant boys'.

World War I made narcotics a European commonplace. Cocaine, morphine and heroin could be bought at pharmacies (although aspirin, a synthetic, and therefore suspect, required a prescription.) The purses of many fashionable women contained a Pravaz, the preferred brand of hypodermic. (It was also available in silver, and inlaid with jewels, as an elegant gift.) Cannabis as resin (*hashish*) or mixed with tobacco (*kif*) was ubiquitous. Opium dissolved in alcohol as laudanum was the Prozac of the day, while the smokable variety was freely available at such *fumeries* or 'opium dens' as Drosso's.

Celebrities who might have been expected to set a good example to their compatriots often behaved worse than anyone. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald rioted through clubs and cabarets from Montmartre to Antibes, on one occasion kidnapping the musicians from a café and imprisoning them all night. Novelist Ford Madox Ford grew so weary of his home being trashed that he held his parties in one of the public dance halls known as *bals musettes*, preferring that less inhibited guests wreck its furniture rather than his own. The exploits of Harry Crosby and wife Caresse were legendary. They smoked opium at Drosso's and held nude sex parties in the Bois de Boulogne. Harry tossed live snakes among the dancers at the annual Quartzarts ball and on another occasion attended in nothing but red body paint and a necklace of dead pigeons.

Isadora Duncan led the emigré community in misbehaviour. A pioneer of modern dance, she partied, as she performed, in a minimum of clothing. Novelist Michel Georges-Michel described how, reclining on a couch, Roman fashion, she 'poured out champagne from an immense amphora of jade to all those who reached up with their cups. She let down her hair, loosened her clothing, and asked everybody to follow her example. 'It is as indecent to be dressed when the company is nude as to be sober when everybody is drunk'. Duncan died violently in 1927, yanked by the

neck onto a street in Nice as her trailing scarf caught in a wheel of the car rushing her to the bed of a new lover. She could not have wished for a better end.

All these people, as well as those Hemingway called 'ladies of all sexes,' met and mixed freely with tourists and the curious at such watering holes as the Café du Dôme in Montparnasse. *The New Yorker* celebrated its promiscuous variety: 'The Dôme blossoms like some impossible mushroom. Tables huddle together in a vast mélange and spill into the street, where the shifting mob laugh, whistle, gesticulate, consume vast quantities of aperitifs and liqueurs, and vociferously absolve themselves of America.'

The possibilities for profit in this influx were not lost on the brothel industry, in particular the proprietors of Montparnasse's Le Sphinx, which opened in 1931. Instead of the system of payment operating in the larger *bordels*, where clients purchased *jetons* from the management and used them to recompense the girls, admission to Le Sphinx could be bought at the door. Clients passed through a lobby decorated with gilded sphinxes and sarcophagi into a mirrored cabaret where a band played *le jazz hot* for dancing and a *bar Americain* served the cocktails the French didn't drink. One visitor compared it to the first-class lounge of a transatlantic liner – except that, strolling among the tables and pausing occasionally to chat, were a number of attractive young women nude except for high-heeled shoes. If one wished to accompany one of them upstairs and become better acquainted, the management spoke most languages and accepted all currencies.

FRIENDS WITH PRIVILEGES

One French word at least resisted the almost universal acceptance of 'Latin terms.' In 1925, Jean Galtier-Boissière, creator of the satirical periodical *Le Crapouillot*, wrote 'The upper classes have invented a new vice. All these blasé individuals no longer take great pleasure in doing what you think; the greater pleasure, for them, is watching each other do it. We call it "*La Partouze*"!'

'Group sex,' 'swinging' and 'orgy' had some currency, but nobody found a more elegant term for what one definition calls 'a party during which the participants (whose number generally exceeds four) practice the exchange of partners and engage in collective and simultaneous sexual activities.' The name was particularly applicable when such activities were pursued with special attention to the location, the rules of behavior and the choice of participants.

Serious *partousiers* distinguished between the semi-public sex of *échangiste* or *libertin* clubs, where people arrived as couples or individuals, without invitation, and required only the price of admission, and the more social *partouze*, where no money changed hands, participants generally knew one another or had been introduced by a member, and an agreed etiquette prevailed. For example, to have sex outside the circle with someone met there was frowned on: what took place in the *partouze* stayed there. Also, if couples participated, it was essential they discard any *bourgeois* prejudices with their clothes: for the period of the *partouze*, sex transcended religion, race, class and the bonds of marriage.

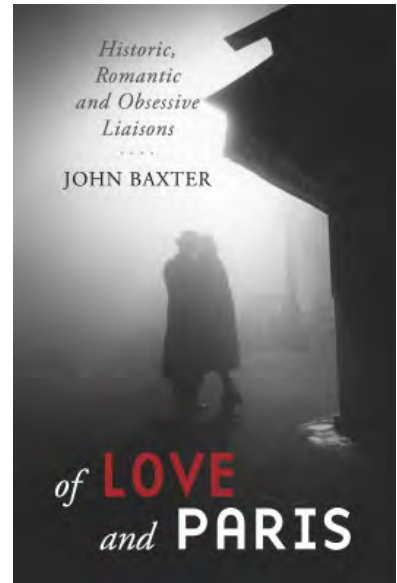
La partouze was not, any more than the connoisseurship of food, a French invention, but France can claim, as in that case, to have refined it, laid down rules for its pursuit, and written about it in a way that encourages other countries to explore and vary it according to local tastes and customs. As one of the most active *partousieuses* of recent times put it, surely sex is sufficiently serious to deserve at least the respect accorded a canvas by Picasso.

LOVE IN A TIME OF TOURISM

For all its public liberalism, modern France remains essentially conservative, committed to family, land and tradition. Its 'silent majority' recently forced the re-criminalization of prostitution, and scarcely a month passes in which some politician or celebrity is not driven from office by revelations of sexual indiscretion.

But the momentum of millenia can't be overcome in a generation, and romance remains one of France's most lucrative products, its traditions and practices not simply preserved but enhanced. On warm evenings, you will hear *La Vie en Rose*, if not the entire Edith Piaf repertoire, played by strolling musicians entertaining café clients from the Arc de Triomphe to Notre Dame. In autumn, enough dead leaves are left on the ground in the Jardins des Luxembourg for lovers to scuff through them hand in hand. Marriage is proposed during candle-lit suppers on a *bateau mouche*, at midnight on Pont Neuf, and, watched by benign gendarmes, at sunrise on the steps of Sacre Coeur, while, even in the chilliest of Februaries, on Pont Alexandre IV, diminutive Japanese brides in meringue-like clouds of white tulle, pose, blue with cold, next to grooms in tail-coats, to be photographed against the backdrop of Les Invalides.

Affairs continue to be consummated at the Meurice and the Ritz, their managements turning blind eyes to 'nieces', 'secretaries' or 'wards' sharing beds once occupied, equally illicitly, by Ernest Hemingway and Coco Chanel, while, in the Salle Liane de Pougy at the restaurant Laperouse, hands wander and buttons are undone on the red velvet banquettes below mirrors scratched by *filles de joie* assuring themselves the diamond they'd been given was real, even if the love professed was not. Nor has time eradicated the *frisson* still evoked by that nostalgic phrase 'I remember....once....in Paris...' Hostilities may have been temporarily suspended and calm may prevail on the perfumed battlefield, but the war goes on.



NOTES

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ESSAY

The Collector's Manifesto

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Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to voraciously acquire
And obsessively possess such singular possessions,
Or to passionately use these magnificent objects in a sea of creativity
And in the end, emotionally dispose of them.¹

In the 1980s, two young men started out on journeys that would ultimately change their lives – they started rock bands. For those of you who haven't undertaken such an arduous task, it is not for the faint of heart. In addition to managing a group of creative types (and, how should we say it, their debilitating habits), assembling a traditional rock band requires a lot of gear: guitars, basses, drums, keyboards, amps, effects, public address (PA) systems, microphones, stands, cables, etc. In fact, setting up and breaking down all the gear can often take as much time, if not more, as playing an actual gig. While each person in a band is expected to have their own equipment, due to varying economic backgrounds and levels of enthusiasm, some members typically contribute more to the group than others. This was the case with us. Not only did we each contribute more gear than our fellow bandmates, which incidentally tended to make us the *de facto* leaders of our respective bands, but this also meant that we often had to manage all the equipment given our anointed leadership roles. Although this can be quite a burden due to the amount of gear involved, it eventually led both of us to a deeper fascination with the various aspects that contributed to the music that we produced. We came to understand that in addition to the skills of each musician, each piece of equipment directly influenced the sounds that were created, and that different types of gear produced different types of sounds. This early revelation led us on life-long quests to not only acquire and possess these magical objects, but also to use them to produce their enchanting sounds while disposing of those that did not. In other words, we became musical gear collectors.²



UNPACKING 'COLLECTING'

Although much has been written on collecting in the marketing literature over the last thirty years,³ the theoretical foundation for most of the collecting scholarship can be traced to Belk's seminal book, *Collecting in a Consumer Society*. In this work, he defines collecting as 'the process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences.'⁴ Not only does this definition delineate the scope of collecting, but it does so in a way that corresponds directly with Belk's conceptualizations of materialism, sacred and profane, and extended self.⁵ While this approach makes for a compelling grand interpretive theory of consumer behaviour, it may do so at the expense of a full understanding of collecting. In other words, to weave all of these strands of thoughts together into a consistent whole, certain aspects that didn't fit well into the overall theory may have been excised (or defined away) in the name of eloquence versus explication.

To cut right to the chase, while we agree with most of Belk's definition of collecting, based on our personal experiences as life-long collectors,⁶ our direct associations with other like-minded collectors both physically and virtually,⁷ and close friends and family that work intimately with professional and internationally acclaimed musicians,⁸ we disagree with the idea that objects in collections are necessarily removed from ordinary use. The purpose of musical gear is to produce music (in the broad sense of the term). In our case, all the musical instruments and equipment in our collections are used as intended, though perhaps greater care is taken in their use. Even this isn't extraordinary, though, as most consumers often take greater care of some possessions such as a new car or expensive jewellery. Likewise, although the ever-increasing size of our collections usually limits the constant use of a particular object, it does not limit ordinary use. Even if we find creative uses for our gear (e.g., using guitar effects with synthesizers or vocals), the goal remains to make music. If anything, our collections have continued to grow in order to increase the number of sounds and types of music that can be created, not vice versa.

Part of the issue with the concept of 'use' lies in the fact that much of our understanding about collecting is predicated on early fine art collections.⁹ Before the rise in disposable income, only the wealthy could afford to purchase works of art. As a result, art was considered an object of the leisure class that was collected and displayed to distinguish those who did not have to work from those who did.¹⁰ From this cultural perspective, work was associated with use (i.e., a utilitarian function) and leisure was associated with non-use (i.e., non-utilitarian function). Thus, art was viewed as a symbol of one's wealth and leisure and beyond the everyday concerns of the working class. This conceptualization of art, which is considered by many as one of the oldest forms of collecting, is typically leveraged to support the idea of collections being removed from ordinary use.

Working from this cultural perspective, Belk emphasizes that all the things we collect are considered inessential, non-functional, luxury objects.¹¹ While this view of collecting may have been somewhat true of ancient collectors who saw their positions in life as being above proletarian concerns and who needed their possessions to reflect these roles, the rise of more democratic societies and higher standards of living now means that collections are not necessarily viewed in such haughty terms. In fact, some modern collectors may even relish the idea that their collections directly challenge the dominant logic of such conceptualizations by maintaining that their collections are essential, functional, and necessary to

their particular way of life. While Belk seems to reject this perspective as merely a way of justifying collecting in a society that now values work over leisure, this position privileges the older perspective and dismisses alternative understandings of collecting. That is, rather than simply being a means to achieve more satisfying work for the modern collector, collecting may actually be a way for them to express their creative and artistic potential that transcends both work and leisure.¹²

Before we move on, it is important to further interrogate art collections in relation to the concept of use as the above discussion begs the following questions: Is there no 'use' for art? If there is a 'use' for art, what is it? Some would argue that to ask such questions is vulgar, but we would contend that it's equally vulgar to say that art is useless. Unless you are willing to concede to this latter statement, then you must explain, at the very least, the 'ordinary' use of art from which it is removed. You might argue that this is a bit of rhetorical sophistry and that art isn't 'used' in a traditional sense, but we would assert that since this term is centrally featured in the accepted definition of collecting (of which art is a part), these questions still demand answers. Isn't art being displayed in a museum, gallery, or home its ordinary use? Most people would agree that it is not extraordinary to see a painting in any of these settings. Likewise, what would it mean for art to be removed from this type of ordinary use? While you could certainly crate up priceless works of art and place them in permanent storage, most people, even those who lack a deeper appreciation of art, would consider this a travesty. We would also contend that this is not how typical art collectors approach their collections. Consequently, while most people might balk at applying the word 'use' to art collections, they would also agree that art is not useless and that purchasing, displaying, or viewing art is not an extraordinary endeavour (though buying certain artwork could certainly be an expensive one that would exclude a lot of collectors).

We concede that there are some people who identify themselves as 'collectors' who buy material items to store (e.g., it's not uncommon to run across collectors on the internet forums who claim that they have all their musical equipment locked in a vault). This type of language is usually considered hyperbole (i.e., how many people have vaults in their homes?), and these types of people are often viewed unfavourably in their respective collecting communities. While it's true that most material collections, especially very large ones, must be stored to some degree, if storage is the sole use and purpose of the collector, these people (especially in the world of musical gear) are often considered poseurs (who probably can't even play the instruments), investors (who have simply commoditized the objects), or hoarders (who have a psychological illness), but not true collectors.

Certainly, some collectibles are removed from what is considered ordinary use (e.g., cancelled stamps or vintage coins), but in the process of becoming collectibles, they may develop a new usage (e.g., aesthetic, historical, anthropological, or archaeological). That is, we propose that not using something for its intended or ordinary use does not mean it is not being used. For example, while empty beer cans may not be refilled, the intended use has likely shifted from beverage storage to brand art. We would argue that the display of beer cans is a form of use in which the collectors are extracting aesthetic value from the objects in their collections. In fact, from an actor-network theory perspective, what constitutes 'ordinary usage' (or its opposite) is not very clear.¹³ That is, rather than an object having a singular meaning and use, an object's meaning and usage are determined by its associations with other objects. This collection of objects, as well as its prescribed meaning and usage, is often referred to as an assemblage, or more specifically, a consumption

constellation.¹⁴ In the case of stamps and coins, the meaning and use of these items may change depending on whether they are in circulation or in a collection. To say that one is the ordinary use of the object and the other is not is to assert a fixed meaning to the object that doesn't sync with more current theories of consumption.

In addition, like the concept of 'ordinary use', the concept of 'inessential object' is a loaded term. If the collection was inessential to the collector, it is unlikely that it would even constitute a collection. The fact that collectors have invested a considerable amount of time and energy into their collections means that they are important to them at a deeper and more fundamental level.¹⁵ If we simply apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs to collecting,¹⁶ while we may not be able to physically consume art or music or use them as weapons to defend our safety, this doesn't mean they do not fulfill higher-order needs or they are inessential to our psychical well-being. As modes of communication and meaning-making, art and music may fulfil social needs (e.g., interactive art exhibits and dance clubs continue to grow in popularity), self-esteem (e.g., some people find great joy in developing their artistic and musical knowledge and skills), or even self-actualization (e.g., there are many examples of art and music producing transcendent, flow-like experiences). On a personal level, although we could certainly survive without our musical gear collections, it would likely be a miserable existence given that this is where our talents lie and we would certainly miss the enjoyment, both individually and socially, that comes with making music. As our collections have grown, so have our knowledge and skills, and we have achieved a level of satisfaction and fulfilment that has not been possible in other aspects of our lives.

Based on the above discussion and our personal histories as collectors, we propose an expanded understanding of collecting. Namely, that all collections have some type of (ordinary) use, and that removing the objects of a collection from their (ordinary) use reduces their value to the collection. Although some collections may develop an alternative use (e.g., stamps and coins), we contend that in many cases, collections are used for their original, intended, and ordinary use. For example, tool collections are often used to make/repair things, watch collections are used to tell the time, and motorcycle collections are used to cruise around on, and of course, look cool. (On a more personal level, one of our colleagues has a vintage Indian Motorcycle collection, and he rides a different one to campus every day. Likewise, another colleague has a huge model train collection, part of which he sets up and runs in his university office.) At the same time, we concede that use does not have to be physical but could be intellectual, emotional, or even spiritual (e.g., a family member has a collection of rosaries from around the world, and she uses a different one every day). Likewise, while art may not be used like a tool, it is typically used to generate some type of effect on the viewer. In fact, the degree of effect that the art produces may be one of the primary factors that distinguishes the quality of the artwork. This is evident in reviews of art exhibits, books, and films by the world's leading critics.

In many cases, especially with collections of 'mechanical' objects (e.g., guitar amplifiers, vintage motorcycles, and model trains), if the objects are not used, they will often develop functional problems. Likewise, if the objects are left long enough, they will typically fall into disrepair and not function at all. Thus, to keep some collections in optimal condition, the objects must be used. (For example, a sales listing for a guitar amplifier, vintage motorcycle, or model train that is inoperable due to a long period of neglect will typically attract less attention and fetch a lower price than one that is fully operable and in perfect (viz. usable) working condition.)

Where ordinary use is reduced, it is often done to extend the use-life of the item, especially in cases where replacement parts are no longer available (e.g., certain vintage synthesizers). Thus, a balance is often struck between heavy and light use to maintain the functionality of the collection.



COLLECTING AS CONSUMPTION

According to Belk, ‘collecting is consumption writ large.’¹⁷ That is, collecting encompasses and exemplifies the dynamic forces of consumption in ways that far outstrip ordinary consumer behaviour. For Belk, consumption involves four main activities: acquisition, possession, use, and disposition. Most textbook definitions of consumption, though, only articulate three activities: acquisition, use, and disposition,¹⁸ since possession is more relevant to goods than it is to other types of offerings such as services, experiences, ideas, and people. For example, whereas you may possess a car, plane, or boat, most people would say that you do not possess a taxi ride, an airline flight, or a luxury cruise. Within these events, you may occupy a space, but you don’t possess it (especially in terms of ownership) and you have limited rights regarding what you can do with the space. This is even more true if we consider the consumption of experiences, ideas, and people. Thus, while some forms of consumption may involve possession, others do not.

If we compare Belk’s definition of collecting to both his own definition of consumption and the textbook definitions, we can see that collecting is actually consumption writ small (or at most medium), as it leaves out what many consider the most important parts of the consumption process – namely, use and disposition. Most people would agree that more time is typically spent using an offering (be it good, service, experience, etc.) than acquiring it. Likewise, disposition has taken on greater importance in our quest to create more sustainable societies, and the

disposal of a collection can often be a much more emotionally charged process than its acquisition. While we agree that acquisition and possession (especially regarding material objects) play a significant role in collecting, given our experiences as life-long collectors and interactions with other collectors, we believe that use and disposition also play a major, if not a more significant, role in collecting, and that it is impossible to truly understand this important phenomenon without them.

Based on our position that use plays a significant role in collecting, we are obligated to explore what it means to actually ‘use’ a collection. We contend that the use of items from a collection is not casual, but special – though we are not arguing that they are limited to special occasions. By special, we mean that objects in a collection are selected for use not only based on what they mean, but also for what they can

do.¹⁹ That is, collecting typically involves the deliberate selection of an item(s) based on the collector's knowledge, emotions, and memories associated with particular item(s). This, in turn, directly impacts how, why, when, and where the object(s) is(are) used. Likewise, the use of items in a collection is a very intimate experience because each object typically produces a different effect. Most collectors have a very detailed understanding of each item in their collections and know specifically how each object functions. As a result, the choice of which object to use is usually based on the situation at hand and the desired consequences of the interaction. The use of an object can also be very passionate as the collector and the object often 'become one' during use. In this case, the object isn't simply an extension of the self, but instead, becomes a conduit of the person's hopes and desires. In this sense, use of the object allows collectors to fully realize a longed-for outcome that they could not achieve on their own. In other words, the meaning of both the self and the collection are co-created through innovative and imaginative use.

Like many similar gear collectors, our initial (and even subsequent) choices of musical gear were directly influenced by the bands and musicians we admired. We soon realized that we needed certain types of guitars, amps, effects, etc. if we wanted to emulate the sounds that we heard on our favourite recordings. This quest usually meant acquiring more gear as we soon realized the subtle effects each piece had on the overall sound and our desire to get as close as possible to the tones heard on the songs.²⁰ In fact, to reproduce different songs requires different gear, so this only adds to the size of the collection.

At the same time, making music is a very complicated process, and simply possessing the appropriate gear is not enough. How the equipment is used (e.g., musicianship, signal chains, recording techniques, etc.) directly influences the sounds that are produced. Enormous amounts of time are spent perfecting one's playing style and realizing the various sounds that can be achieved from each piece of gear. While it is true that some types of equipment have a greater effect on the overall sound than others, it's typically the combined use of very specific pieces of gear that ultimately produces the desired results. When you finally achieve the result, it often produces a transcendent experience of sheer bliss that takes you beyond both yourself and the equipment.

Personally, both of our gear collections have grown to the point that many of the objects are stored (i.e., not used) for relatively long periods of time. Like a rotating stock, different guitars, keyboards, and amps are removed from storage to achieve a particular sound and then replaced by other objects as the need arises. At the same time, there is always gear that is not in storage (much to the chagrin of our partners). Favourite pieces (e.g., classic electric guitars like a Fender Stratocaster and Gibson Les Paul) often never get stored, while other esoteric pieces (e.g., an electric sitar) are usually only taken out for special occasions (though often to the oohs and aahs of others). In fact, taking a piece of gear out of storage and using it after a long hiatus can sometimes bring the same feelings of joy and happiness as the original acquisition (versus the boredom that can creep in with familiar pieces). Since music is a creative art, alternating items and using them in unique ways spurs our creativity and allows us to appreciate our collections from a whole new perspective.

Turning to the importance of disposition, while it is true that many collectors develop such a strong bond with the objects in their collections that they wouldn't ever sell a single piece, many people will sell objects to perfect their collection (i.e., by acquiring better quality items and/or to manage the boundaries of the collection).²¹ From our own experience, given that the primary purpose of our collections is to

provide us with the largest and most desirable musical palette (which can only be realized through use), we often dispose of equipment that does not provide the particular sounds we desire or limits our music-making capabilities. Likewise, we also dispose of items from our collections in order to acquire new gear (and new sounds) as our musical tastes evolve. Just like people, collections are not static entities that stand apart from people's lives but often grow and change as the collector grows and changes.

Regarding the demographic profiles of collectors, for those with limited resources, selling less desirable, and less used, objects in their collections is typically the only way they can afford to expand or refine their collections. This may come with some regret later as their economic resources increase (as it did when one of the authors, who as a poor graduate student sold his rarely used, though highly sought after, 1962 Fender Jaguar electric guitar), but it may also come with delight since the funds may allow them to purchase a more desirable, and frequently used object (the sale of the Jaguar allowed the above author, who is a huge Beatles fan, to acquire a 1963 Vox AC30 amplifier).

Even for those collectors who do not face resource constraints, the eventual realization that 'you can't take it with you' means that they must think about the future of the collection and its ultimate disposition. In this case, disposition is not only a part of collecting, but also an inescapable part. Some may attempt to defer this decision by stating that they are 'taking the objects to the grave', but unless they have their own personal pyramid (or very large tomb), they know the collection is eventually going to disintegrate (as separate items) and spread to the four winds. For many collectors, demographic factors also tend to play a part in the ultimate disposition of the collection. As one ages, it becomes harder to muster the energy to manage a large collection both in terms of rotating stock and regular maintenance. Likewise, changing physical conditions (e.g., arthritis) may mean that the collection can no longer be used as intended, so its value diminishes. As collectors downsize their homes, spatial constraints often cause them to retain the primary and most valuable pieces of their collections and dispose of the secondary and least valuable pieces (with value here encompassing more than simply monetary and exchange value but also use value). Personally, as we have aged, we have had to consider all these issues and the future dispositions of our collections. While we have achieved great satisfaction from our collections, these concerns induce a feeling of sadness that is every much as powerful as the exhilaration that was felt when acquiring the objects in our collections. As with the circle of life, there is a 'circle of collecting' that cannot be fully understood without considering the entire process.

DECOLLECTING

Much has been written recently about how consumers, especially those that embrace liquid consumption,²² are moving away from collecting and ridding themselves of material possessions.²³ While this theoretically makes for the perfect global proletariat who faces no work constraints (be it home, family, friends, religion, etc.) and can take up a variety of jobs anywhere in the world at a moment's notice, it is hard to believe that an activity that affects a third of humanity can be so easily displaced by such contemporary cultural trends. (Though there is at least the insinuation that collectors will eventually fall in line with the new world order and the digital forces of production once they have been re-educated and re-programmed.) Part of



our humble, if not cautious, response to these recent trends in consumption theory is that this literature, like Belk's original definition, conflates collecting and materialism. While it may be true that many of the things that people collect are material objects (though collecting is not restricted to physical things), the importance that is attached to them might not be for the things themselves (e.g., to touch, fondle, or caress), but for the experiences that the things engender (e.g., the emotions that they summon, the memories that they evoke, the conversations that they generate, etc.). This has nothing to do with whether the collection is material, but with the purpose of the collection. Rather than claiming that many consumers are now engaged in decollecting, it may be that some collections are simply becoming more liquid (e.g., travel destinations and sex partners) and less solid (e.g., guitars and watches) rather than completely disappearing, since people still desire the unique experiences that only collections can provide.

Once again, if we consider 'use' a fundamental aspect of collecting, then the objects in a collection (be they liquid or solid) are usually perceived more as a means to an end rather than an end in themselves. For if simply acquiring and possessing a set of non-identical

physical objects is the goal of collecting, then any set of objects would do. But as we know from both our personal experiences and our professional understanding of the collecting literature, this is not the case. Consumers are very selective about the (virtual or physical) objects they collect and invest a considerable amount of themselves in their collections.²⁴ Only objects that are personally relevant and touch a person on a deeper level are considered worthy to be collected. These objects attain a special status in a person's life, but as noted above, it is typically due to what they allow a person to achieve rather than simply what they are. Likewise, objects in a collection will be readily disposed of if they fail to achieve the desired experiences (or produce the magical effects) that are expected from the collection.

At the same time, we would argue that there are differences between liquid and solid collections that cannot be (at least fully) replicated in either. While some have argued that certain experiences can be had independent of the material objects for which they are associated (e.g., reading an electronic book is the same as reading a digital book),²⁵ we argue that some cannot (e.g., playing a physical instrument is not the same as playing a virtual instrument in GarageBand, driving an actual sports car is not equivalent to driving a virtual car in Grand Theft Auto, and perceiving works of art at the Louvre is very different from viewing them online). In fact, research shows that digital goods are often valued less than physical goods, and that when there is a digital or physical option, consumers will choose the physical item when it evokes a deeper connection.²⁶

More recent research attempts to challenge this idea by arguing that some digital possessions can become highly prized, even over physical possessions, and that differences in perceptions (between virtual and physical objects) are due to misalignments in affordances, or the 'action possibilities' that objects present in

relation to a human subject.²⁷ This concept suggests, though, that no matter what type of object it is (digital or physical), it is the use (i.e., the action possibilities) rather than the possession of the object that ultimately determines its value. Once again, we would argue that how an object is used (as well as the effects that it produces) differs depending on the type of object (digital or physical). Likewise, while some assert that the choice is not either/or, but a mix of separate liquid (digital) and solid (physical) items,²⁸ we argue that with collectibles, the two are often fused together. For example, you cannot separate the guitar (solid-material) from the sound that it produces when it is played (liquid-experiential). Thus, while much is made of these binary differences in the recent literature, it might be that their relationship is significantly more complicated, and that the two are often integrated in the objects of a collection.



COLLECTING AND MATERIALISM

As noted throughout the essay, much of our understanding (and we would argue, misunderstanding) of collecting is based on the purported connection between collecting and materialism. Materialism is often defined in terms of the importance that is placed on the possessions in one's life.²⁹ In addition, it is argued that people who are materialistic place a greater emphasis on having over doing or being and view the acquisition and possession of objects as a primary source of happiness and success.³⁰ However, most of the research on this topic has found that materialism is negatively related to well-being and that people who are identified as materialists are significantly more unhappy (and by implication less successful) than those who do not exhibit materialistic traits.³¹ Because collectors (of physical objects) often place great importance on the items in their collection (sometimes to the point that their collections overshadow other important aspects of their lives) and find satisfaction in collecting, they are typically considered materialistic and are often considered in a negative light.

There are three main issues that we would like to raise concerning this proposed connection between materialism and collecting. First, as recent research has pointed out, not all possessions that are important to consumers are material objects.³² Although this has certainly been the case even before the advent of digital technology (e.g., regarding the collection of travel destinations, The Grand Tour of European cities was both a cultural requirement and mark of distinction for the upper-class for centuries³³), the increase in digital possessions suggests that highly-prized non-material possessions are on the rise and may actually overtake the importance of material possessions in the future. In fact, we do not have to look very far afield to find those who highly covet the number and type of journal articles

they publish and base both their happiness and sense of success on such possessions. Once again, the importance of collections may be due less to what they are (be it material or virtual) and more to what they allow us to achieve.

Second, by conflating materialism with collecting, it forces one to conceptualize collecting in terms of acquisition and possession while leaving out use and disposition. Even when it is suggested that materialism may not be a monolithic concept and that different types of materialism might exist (e.g., terminal materialism versus instrumental materialism),³⁴ they are often dismissed as being difficult to operationalize or producing secondary effects not associated with the primary use of the objects (e.g., achievement, mastery, status).³⁵ Even when it is conceded that collecting may have some positive effects on consumers,³⁶ the stigma of materialism hangs over this activity like a pall. In fact, this stigma not only implies personal shortcomings (e.g., mental illness – especially in terms of obsessive, compulsive, and addictive behaviours), it now implies one's lack of concern for the external environment (e.g., collecting material possessions contributes to climate change through incessant production and pollution). We are led to believe, almost shamefully, that the only way to save both ourselves and the planet is to stop one of the most repugnant forms of materialism: collecting!

Third, as Holt argues, materialism may have nothing to do with the importance that people place on objects but may instead explain how people consume objects.³⁷ He maintains that materialists perceive value as inhering in objects, whereas non-materialists perceive value as inhering in experiences or other people. As a result, materialists consume objects primarily through integrating and classifying practices, and non-materialists consume objects through experiential and playful practices. If we accept Holt's definition, then labelling collectors as fundamentally and categorically materialistic is somewhat problematic. While some collectors place value in the objects themselves (though even non-materialists would have to affirm the value, both monetary and otherwise, of owning a Picasso painting), other collectors (and we would dare say most) find value in the experiences they gain from their possessions and the ability to share these experiences with others. In this case, the majority of collectors would have to be considered non-materialists. Even Holt, though, acknowledges that materialistic and non-materialistic consumption are hard to separate, and that while material objects can be consumed primarily in a non-materialistic way, non-material objects can be consumed primarily in a materialistic way. Because these latter practices are more subtle, non-materialistic consumers can derive the same benefits as materialistic consumers (e.g., basing one's self-worth on the number and type of journal publications versus the number and type of guitars) without the related condemnation. The real question is what is to be gained by affixing the materialist label on collectors other than to stigmatize them (or to weave various theories together). Holt would contend that it allows us to explore their particular way of consuming, but one could argue that this can still be done even without this particular label.

WRAPPING UP THE COLLECTION

As collectors, we can't help but still feel the stigma attached to our beloved pastime. (Much soul searching went into whether we should even reveal this part of ourselves in a journal publication. The academic gaze can be particularly piercing and unforgiving.) Our trepidation is felt even more intensely now that we know that we



are not only being judged personally, but that we are also being held in contempt (at least by some) for contributing to the destruction of the planet. In retrospect, we believe that much of the criticism of collecting is due to the way it has been conceptualized (and confounded) in the literature. Based on our own experiences as collectors, we must admit to putting considerable time and effort, not to mention cold hard cash, into our collections over the years. At the same time, our collections have brought us much joy and pleasure. Simply labelling our collecting activities as materialistic, obsessive-compulsive, or serious leisure does not do them justice. In fact, we would argue that these labels simply reinforce old binary ways of thinking. For us, collecting falls somewhere between work and leisure, necessity and luxury, material and virtual, and production and consumption. Like Aristotle's golden mean,³⁸ collecting isn't simply the average of the opposing concepts; rather, it exceeds both pairings and produces something greater than the sum of their parts. That is, collecting cannot be reduced to either side of the binary, but instead, constitutes an activity that flourishes in the spaces between (and in an Aristotelian sense, beyond) these extremes.³⁹ Collectors intuitively understand and passionately revel in these spaces. And as the immortal bard once sort of said, if musical gear collections be the food of love, play on.⁴⁰

NOTES

1. Paraphrase of Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.
2. We thought long and hard how to label our collections. We decided not to use the expression 'music collection' because most

consumers associate it with music media collections (e.g., albums, CDs, MP3s, etc.). We also decided not to use the label 'musical instrument collections' because

- our collections contain more than just instruments. Although 'gear' is a somewhat generic term, it is an *in vivo* expression that is used extensively in the world of musicians and the dominant term in the United States (e.g., see <https://www.thegearpage.net>). We are aware that other terms (e.g., 'kit') are used in different parts of the world.
3. See Lee et al., 'Consumer collecting behavior' and Ijams Spaid, 'Exploring consumer collecting behavior' for comprehensive reviews.
 4. Belk, *Collecting*, 67.
 5. Belk, 'Materialism'; Belk et al., 'Sacred and profane'; Belk, 'Extended self'.
 6. Our personal collections include numerous guitars, basses, keyboards, amplifiers, and effects as well as ancillary materials to connect and maintain all the devices.
 7. As noted above, musicians and collectors like to share their experiences and knowledge on various forums such as <https://gearspace.com/>, <https://www.lespaulforum.com>, <https://www.tdpri.com>, and <https://modwiggler.com>.
 8. For example, the second author is life-long friends with a guitar tech who has worked with various musicians such as Brad Paisley, Taylor Swift, and Zac Brown.
 9. Belk, *Collecting*.
 10. Veblen, *Leisure Class*.
 11. Belk, *Collecting*.
 12. We also disagree with the presumption that all collectors are dissatisfied with or unfulfilled in their work. For example, Andy Warhol was both a successful artist and an avid collector. As with Rembrandt, another celebrated artist and notable collector, their collections likely provided inspiration for, rather than escape from, their work.
 13. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.
 14. See Lanier and Rader, 'Tone quest'; Slater, 'Ambiguous goods'; Woodward and Greasley, 'Personal collections'.
 15. Muensterberger (1994), *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*.
 16. Maslow, 'Theory of motivation'.
 17. Belk, *Collecting*, 1.
 18. For example, see Hoyer et al., *Consumer Behavior* and Mothersbaugh et al., *Consumer Behavior*.
 19. Levy, 'Symbols for sale'.
 20. Lanier and Rader, 'Tone quest'.
 21. Belk, *Collecting*.
 22. Bardhi and Eckhardt, 'Liquid consumption'.
 23. Arcuri and Veludo-de-Oliveira, 'Crossing of physical boundaries'.
 24. Csikszentmihályi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*.
 25. Arcuri and Veludo-de-Oliveira, 'Crossing of physical boundaries'.
 26. Atasoy and Morewedge, 'Digital goods'.
 27. Mardon et al., 'Digital possessions'.
 28. Rosenberg et al., 'Liquid and solid consumption'.
 29. Belk, 'Materialism'.
 30. Belk, *Collecting*.
 31. Richins and Dawson, 'Materialism and its measurement'.
 32. Mardon et al., 'Digital possessions'.
 33. Chaney, 'Evolution of the Grand Tour'.
 34. Csikszentmihályi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*.
 35. Belk, *Collecting*; Richins and Dawson, 'Materialism and its measurement'.
 36. Belk, *Collecting*.
 37. Holt, 'How consumers consume'.
 38. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.
 39. Lanier and Rader, 'Deconstructing symbolic consumption'.
 40. Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*.

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ESSAY

Cut And Paste

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Skin and ink combine to paint a pretty picture of luxury.

There was a sudden absolute silence in the room, each person arrested in what he was doing, standing motionless in a kind of shocked, uneasy surprise. They were staring at the tattooed picture. It was still there, the colours as bright as ever. Somebody said, 'My God, but it is!' 'His early manner, yes?' 'It is fantastic, fantastic!' 'And look, it is signed!'

—Roald Dahl, *Skin*


They were windows looking in upon fiery reality. Here, gathered on one wall, were all the finest scenes in the universe; the man was a walking treasure gallery. This wasn't the work of a cheap carnival tattoo man with three colours and whisky on his breath. This was the accomplishment of a living genius, vibrant, clear, and beautiful.

—Ray Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man*

We don't often think about tattoos as luxurious. Those tattooed sailors and criminals of lore don't exactly call luxury to mind. It wasn't luxury that drew crowds to see tattooed ladies in sideshows. Neither does that tattoo you got on holiday in Magaluf feel so luxurious in the sober light of day. But there is something captivating, something enchanting about tattoos that holds the possibility of making them seem luxurious. I remember seeing Roald Dahl's *Skin* on *Tales of the Unexpected* sometime in the 1970s. Those half-hour episodes always left me feeling a bit unnerved. *Skin* was no exception. Based on an original short story published in *The New Yorker* in 1952, *Skin* told the story of a destitute former tattoo studio owner who reveals his tattooed back in an art gallery. The tattoo is the work of a now-famous painter being exhibited in the gallery. Though the penniless man is ageing, his skin dirty and wrinkled, the tattoo remains a work of artistic brilliance and beauty. The association with the artist leads various customers in the gallery to bid for the artwork, thereby offering the man a promise of escape from his financial difficulties. Dahl manages to figure tattoos as something clandestine and mysterious but with potential financial value. Though in true Dahl style, realising that value may require the premature detachment of the owner's skin from his body.

Another tale of tattoos I came across around the same time also left an indelible mark on my psyche. A late-night television screening of Rod Steiger's turn in the *Illustrated Man* absolutely messed with my head. DON'T. DON'T. DON'T DARE. DON'T DARE STARE. DON'T DARE STARE AT THE MAN. THE ILLUSTRATED MAN. Ray Bradbury's novel was published in 1951 and the movie appeared some 18 years later. Bradbury, the master of science fiction, uses Carl, a wandering ex-carnival worker, as a framing device. Once more, tattoos feature prominently. It is through Carl's many tattoos that the various short stories in the collection are loosed. The tattooist in this case is not a famous artist, but an old crone from the future and, while the source of the tattoos remains important, the thing that sets these tattoos apart is that they possess supernatural powers. Carl exposes his tattoos to a stranger he meets on the road and in the process reveals that the illustrations come alive at night, each unfolding its own narrative of the future. Mayhem ensues.

In both these works of fiction tattooing is rendered as something of a magical process. In each case, the placement of tattoo ink under the skin is able to transform.

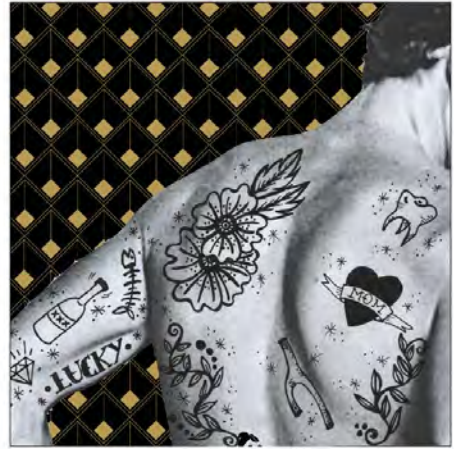


This transformation is not just a conversion of the body from undecorated to decorated, but a transfiguration of the person, of identity. Dahl's character metamorphoses from a decrepit old man into a work of art with considerable monetary value. Bradbury's carnival worker becomes a vessel for stories from the future. The artists responsible for the tattoos possess a great deal of skill and knowledge and are able to create incredible works of art, not run-of-the-mill ink. The tattoos become intertwined with and inseparable from the stories that circulate around them. In these ways a variety of different worlds are brought into co-existence. Effectively we are presented with a collage of circumstances and ideas that raises the denigrated art of tattoo up beyond its normal stature. Tattooing becomes luxurious in the sense that it connects with wonderful associations and possibilities.

In this paper we recall some of our own memories through the use of brief fictive vignettes. These vignettes hint at the ability of the tattoo process to enchant and beguile. They are fictive in that they emerge from our lived experience of tattoo but are not necessarily faithful re-presentations of those experiences. Rather they seek to imperfectly capture the quintessence of our experiences in the world of tattoo, an admixture of thoughts and sensations that point to the power of the art form. This fictive writing works to draw the reader into a contract with us, the authors, with the writing, the journal and so forth, encouraging flights of interpretation, developing empathy, and opening up the possibility for an understanding of tattoo as luxury.

We also draw upon our experience in the world of digital collage to bring together, within a series of art objects, the world of tattoo and the world of luxury. Taken from the French word *coller*, meaning 'to stick on', collage denotes a process of artistic assemblage made popular by the Cubist stylings of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. It was Braque's pioneering 1912 work *Fruit Dish and Glass* that set the scene for an art form that continues to bring different elements of our world into odd, sometimes tension-filled and transformative aggregations. But collage is not just another art form. Its *modus operandi* of cut and paste, of sticking things together that don't necessarily belong together, also represents a model of liberatory research through the arts, making it ideal for a publishing venue such as *JCB*. Collage pastes visual and other elements from multiple sources together within a single frame. In this process the individual elements may retain a sense of their singular symbolism while also creating something of a new, unconnected unified experience.¹ As such, collages are able to embrace subaltern modes of knowing. Further, the combination of unrelated worlds within a single work further encourages endlessly multiplying double readings of each constituent element.²

Both our personal stories and the collages incorporate a process of transubstantiation, deconstructing and reconstituting cultural artefacts and meanings, and hopefully opening up further possibilities in terms of narrativisation. Our stories, for the most part, sit side by side. Sometimes they touch on similar themes and sometimes they diverge. The collaborative collages included here build upon advertising images from the world of luxury fashion. They are framed as Polaroids, a staple of fashion industry castings, and coloured in black and white with gold accents. The tattoos in these images appear incongruous with their surroundings and yet, somehow, they also fit in and add an additional charge. A frisson of excitement. A certain *je ne sais quoi*.



TOWARDS LUXURY

I really wanted a tattoo. A poly pocket album filled with designs. I chose a tribal dragon. Ah, the '90s. Lucio helped me decide on placement. My back. I yearned for the 'mark of difference' but wanted to be able to hide it if necessary. The stencil was applied. I sat in a chair with my back to Lucio. He let me know he was going to start. Beyond that I have no memory.

School days. Wallpapered books and afternoons spent furtively drawing designs with a pen. Designs that migrated gradually from copybooks to arms and hands. Shirt sleeves rolled up to expose the skin. The scribbles of an amateur but somehow transfixing. Fascinating. Perhaps these were a premonition of what was to come. Ephemeral experiments. Perhaps they were nothing of the sort.

We argue here that beyond the margins of Bradbury's and Dahl's fiction it may still be possible to understand the tattoo process as luxurious. But calling something a luxury these days is fraught with difficulties. Although the social imaginary of luxury has been carefully constituted in terms of an aesthetic logic and craftsmanship, in recent years how we think about luxury has changed significantly. Major luxury conglomerates chase strategies previously associated with the *hoi polloi* of the mass market – cobbling together elaborate management processes with a focus on shorter product lifespans and mass-market advertising.³ The result – that most confused and reviled of neologisms – *masstige*.

These issues notwithstanding, the concept of luxury does tend to be mobilised in diverse ways across a range of discourses. While many commentators are focused on the objects themselves that may be considered luxurious, others underline the symbolic function of luxury and its ability to structure our relationships with space and time.⁴ It is against this backdrop that we propose an alternative perspective on luxury scaffolded by Alfred Gell's *technology of enchantment*.⁵ Indeed, we argue that tattooing can move into the luxury register⁶ as a result of several factors that include, but are not limited to, the technical prowess of skilled tattoo artists and the transfer

of a spark of that prowess to clients. For, through artistry we can sometimes see magic in something belonging to the domain of the 'real'.⁷

Using technology in his sculptural creations, Donald Judd is an example of a modern artist for whom technology was a means of production and, above all, of inspiration. The apparent simplicity of his pieces raises discussions about the nature of his work, without, however, failing to delight and enthral audiences and critics who are transfixed by the challenges offered to the solidity and weight of traditional sculptures.⁸ It is true too that some consumption practices demand specialised knowledge on the part of consumers. Making decisions on what to buy, or on what makes something worthwhile, is sometimes complex. At other times we are influenced by codes for 'appropriate' consumption. Because not everyone can make successful decisions and because we don't all have access to the codes, these objects or patterns of consumption can become rarefied and thus luxurious. Other characteristics directly evoke the tattoo universe and its related processes of consumption. These might include semiotic virtuosity and its interconnection with body, person and identity. Hence our proposal here is that tattoo and luxury are like two worlds brought together in collage, revealing in their combination elements that belong both to imaginaries of tattoo and luxury.


THE DEMOCRATISATION OF A TROUBLESOME ART FORM

I thought it was beautiful to carry designs on my body. I thought it was daring. I thought it was a sign that I could do with my body whatever I wanted. I couldn't even see the ink on my back. I couldn't see the ink on my back that made me visible. I couldn't see the ink on my back that made me a target. I couldn't see the ink on my back that stole my ability to narrate myself. And yet the ink on my back opened up new storylines. I was just beginning to learn this.

I have always believed that tattoos are comprised of ink and words. There are words that chronicle a rather dubious history. There are words that proclaim self-mutilation. Words that rehearse long-held ideas about regret and acquired taste. There are words between artist and client in search of a resolution. Words that others use to paint their own picture of us. There are words that we choose ourselves to communicate our own reality. And of course, there is ink.

In the West tattoos have long marked out some kind of deviance from the social norm.⁹ However, since the 1980s the troublesome world of tattooing has been undergoing a revolution of sorts, referred to elsewhere as the *Tattoo Renaissance*.¹⁰ The effects of this revolution have been many and varied and have much to do with the co-optation and commodification of culture. Ultimately, this renaissance witnessed the commingling of a number of worlds in such a way as to have significantly altered mainstream perceptions of tattoos and to impact dramatically upon the tattoo market.

During the 1980s tattoo aficionados pursued 'authentic' tattoo styles and designs from traditional cultures so as to add a degree of ethno-historical significance to their work.¹¹ This was also a time when many classically trained artists began to see tattooing as a legitimate artistic pursuit and one through which they might more easily forge a career.¹² Soon, the art world began to accept tattoo art and artists into its domain. For example, the American Museum of Natural History famously held its *Body Art: Marks of Identity* exhibition in 1999. Meanwhile, representations of



tattoo within mainstream media also served to solidify the idea that tattooing was becoming more acceptable. Globally successful television programmes such as *Miami Ink* and *L.A. Ink* depicted a practice where consumption choices were predicated on substantial artistic merit and deep-seated personal meanings. Moreover, these programmes painted a picture of a society that was positively welcoming of tattoos and tattooed people. Ultimately, then, a variety of cultural institutions were able to construct a new imaginary of tattooing, infiltrating the mainstream, firmly establishing tattoo within the suburban middle-classes, but cutting across age, class, and ethnic boundaries.¹³

The result has been a democratisation of tattoo such that the market has opened up significantly. According to the market research firm IBISWorld, the tattoo industry generates an estimated US\$1.6 billion in revenue, and tattooing is the sixth fastest growing American industry with 21,000 tattoo studios in the US, a number that grows by one each day.¹⁴ During this time there has also emerged a high-end sector within the tattoo market. Tattoo styles have increasingly become a matter of individual choice and custom design, and tattoo collectors often seek out the most prestigious artists who can deliver beautifully unique pieces.¹⁵ Tattoos with such a high degree of artistic merit naturally command significant economic value as a commercial investment, just as Roald Dahl suggested. In other words, such tattoos begin to acquire associations with luxury. Contributing to these luxury associations are collaborations between top artists and mainstream luxury brands – for example, Brooklyn tattoo artist Scott Campbell has worked with *Berluti* shoes and Swiss tattooist Maxime Büchi has designed for *Hublot* watches.

BEYOND AESTHETICISM

There was regret. There was shame. Until an encounter with another tattoo artist. Henrique had rare magical powers. Henrique conjured designs that captivated. Potent designs. He helped me understand too the great power that exists in decorating your own body. You become a little magical yourself. A creature with the ability to enchant. To shock. To attract and repel. Most magical of all, to become yourself.

The skill of the tattoo artist is the ability to transfigure. The process begins with a person. The person becomes a work of art. A living, breathing work of art. A misshapen canvas. A canvas in perpetual motion. Transformed into a work of art with a life-force. The skill of the tattoo artist is the ability to fashion for you a new skin. A new identity. You are irretrievably changed. And yet you haven't changed at all.

The Western culture-bounded and commoditised view of tattooing is one of designs as finished entities. We have tattoos on our skin, but we pay little heed to how they got there. Gell subverts this view by outlining the *invariant processual contour* of tattoo where the entire process is partitioned into three equally important stages: wounding, healing, and the realisation of the mark.¹⁶ This holistic process of tattooing, and the craftsmanship and technical prowess required to bring it to fruition, renders tattoo remarkable and edges it closer to the luxury register. The process pushes production and consumption together into immediate and painful proximity, thus leaving a mark that is more than just some ink on the surface of the skin. This mark is a fold that creates an interstitial space, a doubling of the skin such that distinctions between inside and outside are erased.¹⁷ As a consequence the

tattoo consumer can become bedazzled by what Gell calls the *halo-effect*.¹⁸ Valued objects present themselves to us surrounded by a kind of resistance from which their value derives. The resistance that creates and sustains the consumer's desire for tattooing, and to which Gell refers, concerns the difficulty that consumers have in embracing the coming into being of the tattoo through a technical process that transcends their understanding and, therefore, ends up being considered magical.

Gell appreciates that the various arts – e.g. sculpture, painting, poetry, music, etc. – are components of an often-unrecognised technical system that he calls the *technology of enchantment*.¹⁹ This term describes the power of technical processes to fascinate those unfamiliar with them such that they see the world in an enchanted form. As a jumping off point, Gell's work on the anthropology of art draws attention to the limits of the aesthetic approach. Art objects are not the only objects valued aesthetically. As Gell himself contends, there are beautiful horses and beautiful sunsets. However, art objects are the only ones *beautifully made* or *made beautiful* and so they embody the technical processes that produce them and that are capable of enchanting us. Simply put, the process by which objects come into being is the source of their magical power. This process consists of the radical transubstantiation of materials through a technical procedure considered extraordinary in some cases, and whose astonishing nature is made manifest in the audience. The artist is considered by the audience as someone who is endowed with magical powers. In other words, the artist is in control of techniques that are ingenious and that form a pathway between a set of given elements and a desired end goal. Moreover, the potency of the artist is considered to live on through the artwork which possesses *secondary agency*.²⁰ In this sense, art objects, including tattoos, somehow store and prolong the range of their creators' powers.

A prominent point in Gell's thinking, which corroborates our thesis on the production of luxury and the luxuriousness of tattoos, is the position that the human propensity to pursue results that are difficult to obtain through technical means is not limited to human subsistence. Rather, it is also connected to the imaginative and playful dimensions of human nature. In this way, there is little difference 'between



the pursuit of material rewards through technical activity, and the equally 'technical' pursuit of a wide variety of other goals, which are not material but symbolic or expressive.²¹

THE MAGICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE LUXURY TATTOO

I once inhabited a skin with the gift of invisibility. Just another bourgeois woman. Neither white nor black. Grey. Add tattoos and my skin has transformed. It has solidified in sometimes troublesome ways. I am read multifariously. An exotic object. A whore. An addict. A rebel without a cause. A monstrosity. I curse myself for choosing it. I love myself for choosing it. I am made visible. I am a colourful Latina woman. Living in between. In a skin that is mine. In a skin that no longer belongs to me alone. Privatepublic.

Luxury tends to be associated with exclusivity, tradition, craftsmanship, and prestige. Current market practices, however, serve to commodify many luxury goods such that they appear to have been stripped of their majesty. In contrast, within the world of tattoo there has been an opposite movement. While the tattoo has undoubtedly been mainstreamed it retains an allure through its long-held associations with deviancy. Further, subjected to a magical process of enchantment the tattoo may have become luxurious. As described by Dion and Arnould, the operation of magic incorporates the structuring influence of similarity and contiguity in such a way as to denote contact with transcendent forces.²² We may therefore be able to infer the luxury of tattoos from:

1. the transubstantiation of materials under the skin, as inks are mobilised by the tattooist to create an artistic artefact, to re-constitute the body itself as a living, breathing work of art, and to render all of this as something that approaches identity.²³ In this way, virtuosity is connected to the technical ability to be able to achieve such ends and the imagination to be able to conjure them up;²⁴
2. accompanying sensual configurations and cultural meanings, as the senses incorporate the intermingling of bodies, materials and discourses, produce affective responses and atmospheres, and connect to cultural meanings;²⁵
3. requisite specialised knowledge, since working on the body requires the dexterity to deal with peculiarities of the tattooing process. In addition to being *au fait* with the medical dimensions of tattooing, the tattooist must be a talented artist, capable of decorating the unique and complex surface of each body, and practiced in interpretation and rhetoric, practically realising the ideas of customers and helping to put them at ease;²⁶
4. the artification and democratisation of tattoo through the years;²⁷
5. possibilities for narrativisation in the form of social landscape narratives, narratives of the self and narratives of the body, that allow those with tattoos to locate themselves in the social world, to construct personalised symbolic portraits, and to reclaim the body;²⁸ and,
6. the rarity of good tattoos made possible only through access to skilled artists whose agency becomes embedded in those tattoos, thus raising concerns about authenticity, restricted access and the potential to be touched by a certain aura of implicit knowledge.²⁹

Therefore, the connections between tattoo and luxury have infiltrated the social imaginary. That is, images, stories and myths currently abound that govern the relationship between luxury and tattoo consumers with themselves, with other consumers, and ultimately with the world. Assumptions made about an artist's technical excellence and specialised knowledge are capable of producing tattoos that are considered to be luxury objects by those who bear them and by others who come into contact with them. Such considerations do depend on a client's sociocultural capital, which goes beyond financial capability and the desire to get tattooed. Tattoo collectors seem to be most able to identify and grasp the mastery of an artist due to their immersion in the scene.³⁰ Many collectors actively study the tattoo universe, getting to know artists, their preferred styles and their techniques. Some even become artists themselves. These clients have no difficulty narrativising their tattoos as luxury goods; *su misura* pieces of art brought into being by skilled professionals.

Also, social media, and particularly Instagram, have enabled potential clients to get to know the work of artists around the world, thereby democratising knowledge. For artists Instagram becomes a means of sharing their newest and best work. Indeed, it seems that the number of followers an artist has on Instagram has become a new kind of cultural code to 'appropriate' consumption. Further, online photo-sharing platforms enable clients both to communicate their aesthetic sensibilities and the work of great artists to others. The ability to delight (and/or disgust) spectators provides clients with the opportunity to produce tattoo narratives, some of which are clearly identified as descriptions of a singular, tailor-made object that involves larger processes of self-transformation.


There exists a possibility for self-determination in the production of paradoxical narratives about a mainstream consumer good that can be understood as luxurious. By narrating the stories organised around the acquisition and use of tattoos, people are able to construct meanings that go beyond those traditionally related to the universes of tattoo and luxury. We can also describe ourselves narratively as consumers of luxury goods, even when, contextually, we could never be.

NOTES

1. Vaughan, 'Pieced together'.
2. Brockelman, *Frame and the Mirror*.
3. Chailan, 'Art as a means'.
4. Dion and Arnould, 'Retail luxury strategy'.
5. Gell, 'The technology of enchantment'.
6. Appadurai, 'Commodities'.
7. Gell, 'The technology of enchantment'.
8. Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology, *Donald Judd*.
9. Patterson, 'Tattoo: Marketplace icon'.
10. Rubin, 'Tattoo renaissance'.
11. DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription*.
12. Irwin, 'Legitimizing the first tattoo'.
13. Kjeldgaard and Bengtsson, 'Consuming the fashion tattoo'.
14. CompareCamp, *Tattoos Statistics: 2020/2021*
15. Bengtsson et al., 'Prisoners in paradise'.
16. Gell, *Wrapping in Images*.
17. Gell, *Wrapping in Images*.
18. Gell, 'The technology of enchantment'.
19. Gell, 'The technology of enchantment'.
20. Gell, *Art and Agency*.
21. Gell, 'Technology and magic'.
22. Dion and Arnould, 'Retail luxury strategy'.
23. Blanchard, 'Post-bourgeois tattoo'.
24. Derlon and Jeudy-Ballini, 'The theory of enchantment'.
25. Armitage and Roberts, 'The spirit of luxury'.
26. Hardy, 'Tattooing as a medium'.
27. Kosut, 'The artification of tattoo'.
28. Kosut, 'Tattoo narratives'.
29. Siorat, *Painful Aesthetics*.
30. de Oliveira and Ayrosa, 'O colecionador de tatuagens'.

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VIDEO-ESSAY

Wonders Of Waste: Upcycling And Creative Deconsumption

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Our film explores the upcycling consumer movement, the people attempting to restore the balance between production, consumption, and waste by repurposing waste to promote alternative and more sustainable lifestyles.

FOREWORD

In July of this year tourists poured to pose with the thermometer at Furnace Creek Visitor Centre, Death Valley – some even wearing fur coats as a joke. Thumbs up for 55° Celsius and code red – the dinosaurs and their asteroid.¹ Against the smouldering backdrop of global deterioration, and escalating consumer ignorance, production is set to intensify further – plastic production alone is estimated at 590 million metric tonnes for 2050, a 30% rise on current grossness² – mind-melting numbers. Our negative impact on the health of the planet is substantial: the hole in the ozone layer alone will not be prepared until 2060,³ never mind the many other environmental catastrophes associated with the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is proposed as a new geological epoch, characterised by the negative impact humans have on Earth's geological and biological health.⁴ Sometimes referred to as the Great Acceleration, Britain's industrial revolution is considered the catalyst. 1946 nuclear testing marks another evolution, carbon dioxide emissions, global warming, ocean acidification, habitat destruction, species extinction and widespread natural resources depletion are further evidence of the significant changes occurring to the environment. The Anthropocene emphasises the unsustainability of resource depletion and the trajectory towards the implosion of biodiversity – the complete annihilation of human life – unless drastic changes to human behaviour occur immediately.

Despite heavy media coverage of cyclically performed global summits dedicated to the crisis, earnest enforcements or transformations are complacent, if not entirely action absent – performances in ode, rather than in mode. The logical, rational and scientific warnings did not rally the desired attention. The global warming shock tactics didn't work, the recent upgrade to global boiling still too bubbly and mild a metaphor to shake sensible convictions. What the 1970 Earth Day recycling symbol represented and the reality of practice, or lack thereof, materialises as a complete con, an illusion with deepening consequences. Still today commercial intermediaries – corrupt marketers – brazenly green wash,⁵ divert progress, suppress science, mask environmental concerns, and denigrate the seriousness of biodiversity collapse. Another problem is that often messages concerning the health of the planet promote the practice of consumer sacrifice, whereas messages that champion active, embodied and creative practices could stand a better chance of engaging audiences because of their uplifting experiential properties, and thus could translate into greater purposive positive action. The current messages in their various shapes and forms aren't grabbing the audience.

Demos claims the bombardment of rational visuals, graphs, diagrams, numbers, detach people from the realities of the Anthropocene – a kind of death by rational data, and are part of the larger problem.⁶ Like Ulmer's emotionally charged photographic essay approach to the Anthropocene,⁷ we believe lively visual narratives can better evoke attention among diverse audiences, and should be, where possible, incorporated when representing environmentally concerned research. The issue of emotional disengagement is serious, so serious that Moore, claims we are living an apocalyptic ontology⁸ – given that we design primarily text-based education experiences despite the ocularcentric nature of society and the




multitude of exciting visual cultures in which people live. Environmental messages, which are now messages of urgency, must be shaped better to fit modern media receptors, be more vibrant. Scientific communicators can no longer rely on text and theory for charge but must instead engage audiences via narratives and multi-media structures. This film project developed with the underlying communication philosophy of attempting to align intentions and outcomes; to move the audience to an understanding, to action.

Upcycling is the practice of utilising waste objects or material and repurposing them, transforming them, to create an object of greater value with enhanced meaning attached. While recycled material utilised in production tends to denote products of lesser value or compromised functionality, upcycling implies an elevation in value, functionality, purpose or symbolism. The term ‘upcycling’ increases in application in industrialized manufacturing, science and engineering, and also mainstream commercial producers and individual consumers. Fast-fashion brands have begun to utilise upcycling by welcoming the donation of raw material – a shallow and cynical patchwork marketing tactic attempting to portray an environmentally concerned image – corporations interested in ‘repairing the world’, ‘closing the loop’ and other empty slogans, although industry progress is promised.⁹ It is the consumer practice of upcycling that is most interesting to us. It holds much optimism – and is considered a potential stepping stone towards more sustainable futures.¹⁰ A thriving global movement of active upcyclists continues to grow, persisting in their efforts to help the Earth by promoting deconsumption via the utilisation of waste.

Consumer movements can be powerful, they can shape global perspectives, inspire changes to cultural practices, shuffle skewed systems and alter the ideologies supporting the justification of certain kinds of consumption.¹¹ The upcycling movement not only attempts to change the practices of buying and consuming, but also aims to disrupt the ideology of consumerism by encouraging people to explore alternative lifestyles.¹² Upcycling arrives with the active energy of the DIY movement,¹³ and promotes a similar skill set, but is imbued with greater ideological substance and environmental urgency, like dumpster diving, minimalism, freeganism and other emerging alternative deconsumption ideologies¹⁴ – but with artistic flair, playfulness, and creativity. Upcycling has been popularised on social media platforms like Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, emphasising the ease of visual access to upcycling and why more visual representation of active embodied environmental work is required in society and in education – not just mediated experiences. What begins as repurposing, mending the broken, tinkering the trash – playing with rubbish – can inspire an ideological shift, a transformation, a reidentification of what’s considered waste and consumer sloth – an important step in restoring the balance between production, consumption and waste.

There is value in reframing the many escalating existential issues of consumer society as a childishness problem.¹⁵ It is not difficult to observe the ways the sticky fingers of the market (communication technology, cyber leisure, and digital toys) cultivate people to occupy increasingly immature, fantasy-based, and disorientated mental states. Young consumers’ minds are being corrupted for diligent progression towards adult hyper-consumption and diverted from active environmental citizenship and deconsumption lifestyles. The lack of human energy directed towards addressing the Anthropocene should be far more distressing. Media theorists,¹⁶ folktales,¹⁷ and even comic book writers¹⁸ long warn of the social paralyses induced by entertaining technology, of being intellectually and morally zapped by the dazzle of the market! The hyperconnectivity of contemporary culture demands unyielding



responses to stimuli while pertinent existential indicators are ignored, the links between consumption and environmental health are missed and the possibility of appropriate action doused by constant presence bleed.¹⁹ The marketer hijacked simulations of play – software thinking – redesigns brain architecture to accept available options rather than imagine creative solutions, as well as diminishing our physical capabilities and overall health. Creative play deprivation present serious risks for human health:²⁰ detachment from nature and life, little curiosity, limited imagination, escapist fantasies, delusions and addiction – all of which prevalent in busy society.²¹ Now seems like the paralyzing inward-looking time between before total collapse – nothingness – but could there be light in the bottomless bin of escalating human childishness?

The main benefit of our childishness is plasticity, which stimulates creativity and playful problem solving. The vitalizing properties of play, as being related to an energy of life, resilience, and confidence of self, are well documented:²² locomotive and embodied play, essential for cardiovascular fitness, strength, balance, and fine motor control; object play teaches us about physics, engineering, action, perspective, and economics; and fantasy play develops the working memory, imagination, flexibility, and improvisation. Upcycling promotes and facilitates access to a variety of these creative play forms essential for human development. The passionate upcycling participants featured in the film emphasise the importance of redirecting the focus of play to embrace material circularity in society, to enthuse embodied problem solving with a creative and playful spirit, and expose the potential for alternative modes of consumption. The aim moving forward should be to enhance human creativity and curiosity, and nurture the ability to imagine alternative ways of being via playful creative environmental engagements, like, but not limited to, upcycling, which could help promote more resilient lifestyles.

Active playful transformations offer opportunities to reinscribe objects with amplified value and meanings. Following the upcycling process people can experience a heightened sense of accomplishment due to the elevated amounts of psychic energy invested, physical-material interaction and motor skill required to craft a repurposed piece. The practice of upcycling goes beyond typical consumer self-work projects,²³ as the creativity enacted aims to inspire transformations of self and society, upcycling's underlying ideology goes beyond consumer indulgence. The societal value lies not so much in the individual upcycled pieces but the diffusion of the practice, which could go on to inspire the urgent ideological transformations required in society; from comfort to sustainability, from consumer sacrifice to creative play, from waste to reusable units. While cynics may claim upcycling is the mere moving of rubbish, narcissistic nonsense, or middle-class arts and crafts, the transformations that occur (to self and materials) plant the seeds of change through reskilling and reclassification – an environmental realignment – the creative building blocks of the future.

Our film features a range of upcyclists, their individual creative practices and perspectives, and how their deconsumption ideologies diffuse in the marketplace to promote upcycling as an attractive deconsumption practice – one that holds potential to facilitate multiple transformations in society through creative forms of play. Interviews with individual hobby enthusiasts, upcycling workshop organisers, small upcycling furniture shop owners and luxury upcycling designers illuminate the eclectic nature of the upcycling consumer movement. The film showcases several upcycling projects, inclusive of vivid visual examples, playful projects, and creative ideas, drawn from Irish and international contexts.

THE SHOW

While it is always a tightrope designing combinations of words and film, to not detract from the potential of the film medium any longer and not overlap on contextual content, now seems like an appropriate time to direct readers attention, energy, to the film *Wonders of Waste* (18 min.), which is followed by author reflections on the creative research processes that underpinned its production.

The film can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/170595105>




FILM MAKER REFLECTIONS

Both authors appreciate the opportunity provided by the *JCB* to upcycle this film project, to expand its audience, hopefully extend its impact – and ultimately elevate its potential meaning. The film project was economical and multi-purpose: video interviews contributed to the second author's (GOR hereon) PhD research data set; a creative outlet for the lead author (SOS hereon) trying to develop his filmmaking skills; a submission for the Association for Consumer Research Film Festival, Berlin, 2016; a visual support for our teaching, and a lively resource for other educators to utilise when exploring sustainable consumption in classroom contexts. The film has been thus far been impactful in teaching environments, some students have earnestly explored alternative consumption lifestyles, others have pursued post-graduate research in sustainable consumption, however the ability of the film to engage diverse students and generate in-class discussion on issues of sustainability, which has been most valuable.

Because avant-garde journals, such as the *JCB*, are increasingly showcasing film and visual work, as advocates of visual representation, in an attempt to increase the appreciation and application of visual consumer research we share some of the operations that supported the film's creation. What worked and what didn't. We believe increased transparency around the methods and tactics utilised in art-based research will enhance accessibility and encourage more creativity to be adopted in research and education settings.

GOR adopted 'the woman with the movie camera' and interviewer role; SOS adopted an analytical and director/editor/narrator role. SOS had created one clumsy consumer research film prior, and several since; neither had professional training



and film making was relatively new to both authors: This speaks to the accessibility of the form; film should be considered for adoption by more marketing and consumer researchers attempting to represent behaviour and vivify consumer experiences.


Adhering to guidelines for good interpretive research, GOR conducted the video interviews in the natural settings in which participants were comfortable discussing their upcycling ideologies. Participants were purposively sampled and chosen specifically to explore the range of upcyclist ideology and provide a holistic view of the expanding movement. Semi-structured long interviews were recorded using a GoPro video camera with an in-built microphone on a tripod; each interview lasted between 2-3 hours. While we welcome raw and 'grainy' feels to video footage, a GoPro would not be the first choice of video camera for conducting documentary work, particular given the colouring, lighting, and especially sound issues that had to be addressed in post-work. Many unnatural enhancements were made to participants voices to minimise background noise and maximise vocal clarity. However, in this instance the GoPro served its function of documenting the perspectives and providing ample data for analysis and interpretation.

Following the interviews some supporting B-roll footage was recorded, which included walk-around recording in workshops and the relevant thrift, furniture, and retail stores. These opportunities provided essential access to the tools, techniques, materials, artefacts, products and to illuminate the general atmosphere supporting the various upcyclists processes, projects, and spaces. It also gave participants the necessary opportunities to discuss and elaborate on individual pieces, expand on their processes, clarify their consumption ideologies and direct the research in ways unanticipated by researchers.

Each interview was transcribed with rough timestamping and analysed by both authors using the constant comparison method. No film narrative boundary was constructed prior to filming, and the project materialised as a visual grounded theory research approach²⁴ – focused but open. Prior to interview analysis the plan was to simply make a film about upcycling. Video data was subjected to the established coding practices and procedures typical of interpretive consumer research. As analysis developed it was clear that the film narrative could capture the atmosphere and ethos of the upcycling movement while maintaining the voice of each individual participant and magnifying their creative deconsumption ideologies. The aim was to illuminate the micro (play) and macro (work) consumption contexts of upcycling consumption

Once the strongest themes were identified in the data, data incidents received a 'narrative code' – detailing where data incidents would appear in the film, how it fits with the overall narrative, what it can illuminate emotionally or scientifically, or how it could work to engage audiences. Each individual 2-3 hour video interview was edited to its barebones – transformed into a mini-film of about 10 minutes comprised of what might make the final cut – and from there footage from each individual mini-film could be cut and placed among the developing *Wonders of Waste* narrative. It was advantageous to manage the separate mini-film interviews – it reduced unnecessary complexity of dealing with long and large files. iMovie software was used to construct the film (and mini-films) due to its accessibility and user-friendly design.

Similarly, B-roll footage for all locations were compiled into a 10 minute mini-film, which could be drawn from when necessary to offset the potential overuse of talking-heads, provide some contextualisation on upcycling processes, or enhance overall empathic access. It was also an objective of the project to illuminate the



globality of the practice and ensure many international upcycling context were showcased in the film. As such, B-roll and supporting footage of upcycling in action were sourced from international upcyclists, who enthusiastically shared footage or granted permission to use available online footage to contribute to the academic accessibility of upcycling and visual sophistication the film. The intention was to be multi-vocal, multi-visual, multi-modal – universally accessible – to showcase the vivacious globality of this particular evolving creative deconsumption practice. The authors too got in on the fun and engaged in numerous upcycling projects during the research to enhance their understandings of the upcycling process and the emotional experience of the practice; a bulky bench and dainty desk appear in the film's credits.

A narrator script was written and edited in a back and forth manner after different takes of recording to ensure it flowed with a more natural beat of speech. The voice over was regrettably recorded through the iMac speaker in an echoey office, not ideal for narration work and it caused many issues in editing; good quality microphones are cheap and can add much heightened resonance to films. This film was a great learning experience which catapulted us to explore other research film narrative styles and visual techniques.

Once the scientific aspects and more rational elements were embedded in the narrative the more subjective operations of layering the narrative with emotional resonance was required – enhancing engagement via imagining the audience experience – how people would consume the film. It was a priority to showcase the participants and frame all editing enhancements around their perspectives and activities. The visual-emotional narrative was constructed and framed through the use of minimal cuts, paced timing between interviews, blended transitions between scenes, colour adjustments, sound adjustments, and the musical score added. Generally, we believe footage should be kept as raw and as natural as possible, while not being visually/aurally unpleasant to the audience.

The musical score framed much of the emotional resonance of the film. Reggae was chosen to support the scientific narrative due to the combinations of positivity and lament – suffering and optimism – indicative of reggae music. It was used as a device to emphasise the struggles all humans face, and the opportunity to approach them with positivity and optimism but commitment – essentially reggae music captured the tone of the dilemmas emerging in the interview data. All music was incorporated in the film under fair usage licensing for educational content. Relying on open source music, while may be playing by the strictest of rules, can limit the emotional pitch, empathic identification, or other exciting associations that can be made in academic films, and thus ultimately, limits the potential accessibility of research representations to non-academic audiences – the opposite of what is required to close the gap. However, all decisions on the supporting resonance structures and devices for scientific film narratives should be decided on a project-by-project bases.

The apprentice like progression from individual upcyclist to luxury brand utilised in the film provided both a logical academic structure for communication and enhanced opportunities for emotional access to the upcycling movement. It allowed the audience, although in a mediated way, to in participate in the journey – one that ends with a focus on nurturing the youth, preserving the future – a device to emphasise the cyclical nature of the upcycling practice further and a reminder that deconsumption ideologies must be actively practiced, not just believed in! The vivid visual examples of upcycling in action and finished pieces are intentionally dangled

in front of the audience – to coax – tantalise – entice people to upcycle – to get in on the fantasy and fun – to transform what they see – and how they consume.

NOTES

1. The tourist trap thermometer is slightly more exaggerative than reality. The scientifically managed meteorologist thermometer in the valley however only actually reached 53.9 Celsius, and July 16th 2023 was *only* the 6th ever hottest day accurately recorded on Earth. See: 'Death Valley' and Masters and Henson, 'The scorching summer.'
2. See 'Plastic consumption.'
3. Some repairs are scheduled for 2040 and 2045, see Beament, 'Ozone layer to recover.'
4. Crutzen, 'The "Anthropocene".'
5. de Freitas Netto et al., 'Concepts and forms.'
6. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene*.
7. Ulmer, 'Refocusing the anthropogenic gaze.'
8. Moore, 'Zombie processes and dead technology.'
9. See Conlon. 'Zara clothes.'
10. See O'Sullivan. 'Is upcycling the answer.'
11. Kozinets and Handelman, 'Adversaries of consumption.'
12. Wilson, 'When creative consumers go green.'
13. Wolf and McQuitty, 'Understanding the do-it-yourself consumer.'
14. Bylok, 'Intricacies of modern consumption.'
15. Oliver and Belk, 'Consumer childishness.'
16. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*.
17. Grimm and Grimm, 'The children of Hameln.'
18. See Robert Crumb's reflection on Zap Comix see Borelli, 'R. Crumb reflects.'
19. Gottschalk, 'Click to disable.'
20. Brown, 'Consequences of play deprivation.'
21. Sullivan, 'Busyness.'
22. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*.
23. Leigh et al., 'The consumer quest.'
24. Konecki, 'Visual grounded theory.'

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POEM

Reverie

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REVERIE

i remember

butane candles,
enameled aluminum
sleek and almond,
set in ceramic holders
orange as flame
on a misplaced sofa table
as if on an altar,
with porcelain nuns
on doilies, skating,
fishing, sledding,
stroking tennis balls
beneath a set
of heavy rainswept
streetscapes,
iridescent raised prints,
Utrillo on flaked bakelite,
across from a sectional,
black fabric, sculpted,
flecked with tinsel,
the living room gauzy
with secondhand smoke.

i recall

a blazing autumn
country road,
the photo warmly backlit
by a low-watt bulb
behind an angled frame
that rests atop
a massive TV console,
a road i wandered
whether tube was on or off,
snug in faux-dirondack
plaid pile rocker,
drawn through trees
to some imagined lake
or riverbank,
until the awful clank and whoosh,
the cycling struggle of
an old space heater,
chased me from the trail,
and I awoke,
bare feet rooted
on the rough rag rug.



i recollect

a custom kitchen table,
big as a runway
in brown formica,
ringed with siblings,
being scolded
for my boardinghouse reach,
my mother's misadventure
in remodeling -
con-tact™ paper
peeling from the walls -
offset by hanging
curios and kitsch,
black trivets and a sign
announcing who was
in the dog house,
eponymous pups
queued up for shaming,
aftermarket hooks and
hounds accommodating
new arrivals, and the tang
of chicken dumplings.

i resurrect

grey metal latticework,
top bunk bottom,
wire ceiling of demotion
newly merited by growth spurt,
the glorious ascension
of my younger, lighter brother
ringing in my ears and marvel
at the years it felt
more like a kennel
than a canopy,
the panel-papered
walls and corners
less like a cabin
than a crate,
card table chair
preserved the crease
of folded dress pants
aside a swollen dresser
and cramped day bed,
sliding glass-doored book case
my window on the world.



i recover

the white shadow
on the wall,
a framed silhouette,
the ghostly kindergarten
profile that supervised
my youth.
collegiate pennants
flank the spectre,
exhorting wayward boys
to glory,
and horseshoe brackets
bear my bow and quiver.
a crucifix,
simple, black,
solitary, small,
a drying palm frond
tucked inside its hanger
looms above a dresser.
in the dark
a poorly tuned transistor
whispers rock and ball scores.

i retrieve

a backyard image,
willow branches
just a lucky jump
from the garage roof,
a backboard with a duct-taped x
to mark the sweet spot
and a rim set
too close to the ground,
a power line challenging the jumper,
driveway cracks disrupting dribble,
the landscape baked into our styles,
hooping with my brother
through four seasons,
garage door left open
by parental edict to
prevent assisted slams
and hip-checked boarding,
where we would taste
the shill of victory,
the irony of defeat,
and savor awesome presence.

RECALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Worlds Imagined

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jcb

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WORLDS IMAGINED: A CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS¹

...worlds that will not keep.....
...worlds experienced by the few...
...portals into the deep...
...roads (not) taken old and new...

...dystopias that creep...
...fictions we should heed...
...utopias that cannot be...
...lost pasts and potential futures...

*For more information on this special curation of JCB, contact
Astrid Van den Bossche (astrid.vandenbossche@kcl.ac.uk).*



NOTES

1. Image generated by DreamStudio with Stable Diffusion XL 1.0.

PHOTOSHOOT MEMOIR

Creating Utopia In The Rubble

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jeb

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Jeffrey City, Wyoming, once home to over 6,000 residents, now sits as a ghost town of 30 (or 20 or 50, depending on whom you ask) dozens of miles from anywhere.

A thriving uranium mining town until the early 1980s, the uranium markets crashed and the town's population left with the jobs. In the process, leaving behind an almost brand-new school, apartments, homes, and businesses for largely only the wind to enjoy. Almost 40 years later, the handful of residents who remain depend upon visits to towns over 60 miles away for groceries and other necessities.

Extraction promises prosperity for a time, but the story always repeats itself and ghost towns remain. In this ongoing photography and interview project, what I'm interested in is how some dedicated consumers take the abandoned promises of a boom town and create their own utopias in the rubble.

Of these dedicated is this artist who moved to the ghost town to convert an old gas station into a pottery studio. This is Byron, the Mad Potter of Jeffrey City. In this collection of photos, I visited Byron on an October morning.

While Byron doesn't necessarily love it here, there aren't a lot of other places he can afford to go. His hometown has become unaffordable due to remote workers buying up the property, and while lonesome, Jeffrey City does allow him to do whatever he likes. Good or bad, he's here to stay.

When I first met Byron, almost a decade ago, he would fill his days with alcohol and if you bought one of his signature 'shot' glasses – a small ceramic shot glass that he shot with his pistol before firing the clay – he'd offer to fill it with pure vodka.

Or, one memorable time, vodka with powdered lemonade. This was at 10 a.m., and it tasted exactly like vodka with bits of powder floating in it. I somehow have not been able to find the recipe in *The Bartender's Black Book*.

Memories during those times were hard to make and access. Even though I would sit and visit for hours each time, even though I had given him a ride 50 miles to take him to his mother's house, Byron wouldn't remember who I was, and if he did, it would take the whole visit. For years, the routine was to drink until passing out, and then wake and repeat. This meant sleeping in the bar across the highway, it meant passing out with his studio wide open, and it meant not really caring what happened. But then, all of that changed when Floyd the dog entered the picture.

Soon after he got Floyd, Byron stumbled over the dog while drunk and got pretty banged up. So bad, in fact, it kept him from drinking for a bit. While recuperating, he realized he didn't want anything to happen to Floyd – mainly, the dog could easily wander into the highway that was out the front door if Byron passed out.

And so, with that bit of love in this ghost town, Byron quit drinking. And now, six years on, when I go to Jeffrey City, Byron greets me by name as soon as I get out of my truck. He remembers people we've talked about, and his warmth permeates the studio like a second kiln.

Byron calls this photo of him and Floyd, 'My Lifesaver', and I've given him a copy that hangs in his studio. To me, it emphasizes how a ghost town can promise so much liberatory experience, yet, at its heart, people still need someone or something to care about. And this has borne out time and time again in my interviews with other residents.

ON PHOTOGRAPHY

There is something about the vastness of Wyoming spaces that can make you feel insignificant. When chasing that feeling to its limits, the line between love and obsession is blurred.



Photography for me is ultimately about absences and presence. On the one hand, these are meditations on the relationship between humans and their surroundings. Specifically, the public lands that we in the West tend to take for granted. These spaces are often in the popular imagination felt to be open, and thereby absent. When we look at maps, we see nothing to indicate there is any 'there' there. The absence of roads, of markings, triggers the imagination into best guesses – what could be there connecting the places that are so far between?

Like so many, I feel overwhelmingly drawn to these spaces on maps, the blank, absent, big empty spaces. This can be a dangerous thought though, as gaps in maps are the constructs of conquerors. What does it mean to go to a space, to find out what place it has been before? There doesn't exist any space that hasn't been a place to someone at some time. Or, as is often the case where extractive industries have flourished, spaces that once contained multitudes. What remains of their presence, and can I still feel it – and if I cannot, what does that say about my own chances at remaining anywhere?

Am I gaining knowledge of a place, or am I changing a place? There are no easy answers to these questions for me.

There is another layer to this meditation, that you cannot see. Beyond grappling with how we leave marks on land and how land leaves marks on us, my exploration of absence and presence is a record of my journey through vision loss.

My own visual field and visual acuity has degraded over the decade-plus. As a graduate student, I was diagnosed with Stargardt's Disease, a kind of macular degeneration. The disease works slowly to remove my ability to see everything at first glance. It starts simple enough, just a few insignificant specks. A simple want of light or color. From there they subtly grow, as specks become spots in the central vision – where once there was presence, now there is absence. The brain is not idle during this process, though, and it tries to connect and overcome. Oftentimes, the result is straight lines turned swirled. It takes the information it receives and tries connecting the healthy retinal cells with one another, all the while filling in the absent spaces with best guesses. To see clearly, I must look at things from the side, or I must stare, and I must wait. It is a constant rumination on the world, just trying to see.

And such is the nature of a photograph. It is, if nothing else, a way of staring. We stare on and on forever, in hopes of feeling a presence. I hope my photos are an enduring record of staring into insignificance to find significance, of balancing the absence and the presence in equal measure.



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