Objectification and Standardization

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS

Ritual Studies Monograph Series

Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern
Series Editors

❧

Absent Ritual
Exploring the Ambivalence and Dynamics of Ritual
Edited by Paul Post & Martin Hoondert

Asian Ritual Systems
Syncretisms and Ruptures
Edited by Pamela J. Stewart & Andrew Strathern

Contesting Rituals
Islam and Practices of Identity-Making
Pamela J. Stewart & Andrew Strathern

Deference Revisited
Andean Ritual in the Plurinational State
Into A. Goudsmit

Diaspora, Disasters, and the Cosmos
Rituals and Images
Pamela J. Stewart & Andrew Strathern

Dreams, Madness, and Fairy Tales in New Britain
Andrew Lattas

Embodying Modernity and Post-Modernity
Ritual, Praxis, and Social Change in Melanesia
Edited by Sandra C. Bamford

Exchange and Sacrifice
Edited by Pamela J. Stewart & Andrew Strathern

Fragments from Forests and Libraries
Essays by Valerio Valeri
Janet Hoskins & Valerio Valeri

Haunted Pacific
Anthropologists Investigate Spectral Apparitions across Oceania
Edited by Roger Ivar Lohmann

Ignition Stories
Indigenous Fire Ecology in the Indo-Australian Monsoon Zone
Cynthia Fowler

Objectification and Standardization
On the Limits and Effects of Ritually Fixing and Measuring Life
Tord Larsen, Michael Blim, Theodore M. Porter,
Kalpana Ram, Nigel Rapport

Pictures Making Beliefs
A Cognitive Technological Model for Ritual Efficacy
Camille Wingo

Religion, Anthropology, and Cognitive Science
Edited by Harvey Whitehouse & James Laidlaw

Religious and Ritual Change
Cosmologies and Histories
Pamela J. Stewart & Andrew Strathern

Resisting State Iconoclasm Among the Loma of Guinea
Christian Kordt Højbjerg

The Compass of Life
Sundanese Lifecycle Rituals and the Status of
Muslim Women in Indonesia
Linda Lentz

The Severed Snake
Matrilineages, Making Place, and a Melanesian Christianity
in Southeast Solomon Islands
Michael W. Scott

The Sign of the Witch
Modernity and the Pagan Revival
David Waldron

The Third Bagre
A Myth Revisited
Jack Goody & S.W.D.K. Gandah

Weaving through Islam in Senegal
Laura L. Cochrane

Xhosa Beer Drinking Rituals
Power, Practice and Performance in the
South African Rural Periphery
Patrick A. McAllister

Objectification and Standardization

On the Limits and Effects of Ritually Fixing and Measuring Life

Edited by

Tord Larsen
Michael Blim
Theodore M. Porter
Kalpana Ram
Nigel Rapport

Carolina Academic Press
Durham, North Carolina

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Larsen, Tord, editor. | Blim, Michael, editor. | Porter, Theodore M., 1953- editor. | Ram, Kalpana, editor. | Rapport, Nigel, 1956- editor.
Title: Objectification and standardization : on the limits and effects of ritually fixing and measuring life / [edited] by Tord Larsen, Michael Blim, Theodore M. Porter, Kalpana Ram, Nigel Rapport.
Description: Durham, North Carolina : Carolina Academic Press, LLC, [2020]
| Includes bibliographical references.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020055954 (print) | LCCN 2020055955 (ebook) | ISBN 9781531018955 (paperback) | ISBN 9781531018962 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Objectification (Social psychology) | Standardization. | Ritualization. | Measurement--Social aspects.
Classification: LCC HM1033 .O265 2020 (print) | LCC HM1033 (ebook) | DDC
305.3--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020055954
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020055955

Carolina Academic Press

700 Kent Street
Durham, North Carolina 27701
Telephone (919) 489-7486
Fax (919) 493-5668
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America.

Contents

Series Editors' Preface

Knowledge Formations, Epistemology, and Cultural Meanings

*Andrew J. Strathern & Pamela J. Stewart (Strathern)**

This is a massive work with deep implications for anthropology and philosophy alike. It carries two major poles of meanings. One is the disjunction between individual experience and forms of cultural expression or specialist collective knowledge. The other is the increasing levels of abstraction and moves away from experience in hyper-realms such as monetary theories and the financialization of relationships. Ritual comes into this field of meanings because the field is constructed in the form of ritualized processes, imposing structure or order over the complexities of experience, moving thought into abstractions and generalizations, often flattening meanings by a quantified level of abstraction such as is displayed in statistical representations. The various chapters describe this process of flattening in technical terms, often, however, with quietly critical philosophical undertones. Nigel Rapport, for example, emphasizes the human, immediate, and variable qualities in interactions as exemplified in the life of the artist Stanley Spencer.

The major theme of the book, expanded across multiple contexts, relates to the systematization of knowledge forms through quantification and abstraction. Ritual holds the process together because ritualization is an instrument by which measurements of entities and relations are achieved. Such ritual relations may be put to the service of a national census, or the representations

of bird song, or in compressed linguistic formulae, or medical statistics on insanity, or the fetishism of monetary relations and financial derivatives.

This is a rich, expansive theme, boldly traversing different domains of thought. Reading through these studies, it occurred to us that they carry an affinity with Max Weber's concept of the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy. This version of the iron cage appears in the recent construction of rules of some Universities in relation to problems posed by the Coronavirus Pandemic. University Buildings have been placed in lock-down for months at a time. Only limited and quite impractical time slots have been allowed for academics to enter their own offices and collect vital unique teaching and research materials. Restrictive rules are invented and invoked to impede access for categories of people who are highly active in research and have previously had unfettered access to buildings Obscure priorities have been invented. Powers of a previously unknown kind have been put into the hands of Deans and Chairs of Departments and other place holders within the hierarchies of University structures. Individual cases have been ignored in favor of mass categories of entitlement and disenfranchisement, and customary rights have been trampled on, all in the name of the virus. There has been a systematic production of what may be called 'institutional persons.' Further, the technology of remote teaching has correspondingly flattened interpersonal communication in the classroom. Where will it all end? Where did it come from? This lively book would imply that all this is already inscribed in a culture of institutional persons produced by quantitative generalizations that has come to dominate public culture, in the service of producing social roles in which there is no enlightened scope for individuals.

This process cuts deepest when it privileges the institution above the individual and imposes the value of things on people in a prefabricated way. At one level, then, this process (akin to 'modernization') merely grows from the general trends in society. At another level it raises deep ethical concerns about directions of change in our lives, in which the 'reasonable' can easily trip over into the 'unreasonable' when it is pushed too hard and takes over. The descriptive ethnographies in this remarkable and ground-breaking book draw attention to such concerns, vividly present in numerous chapters in the volume.

Thought-provoking and timely, this book calls out for a wide reading and a mindful reception in the linked worlds of anthropology and philosophy.

Note

* Pamela J. Stewart (Strathern) and Andrew J. Strathern are a wife-and-husband research

team who are based in the Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh, and co-direct the Cromie Burn Research Unit. They are frequently invited international lecturers and have worked with a number of museums to assist them with their collections. Stewart and Strathern have published over 50 books, over 80 prefaces to influential books, over 200 articles, book chapters, and essays on their research in the Pacific (mainly Papua New Guinea, primarily the Mount Hagen, Duna, and Wiru areas) and the South-West Pacific region, (e.g., Samoa, Cook Islands, and Fiji); Asia (mainly Taiwan, and also including Mainland China and Inner Mongolia, and Japan); Europe (primarily Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and the European Union countries in general); and New Zealand and Australia. One of their strengths is that, unlike some others working in Mount Hagen among the Hagen people, they learned the language, Melpa, and used it to understand the lives of the local people. Their most recent co-authored books include *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); *Kinship in Action: Self and Group* (Prentice Hall, 2011); *Peace-Making and the Imagination: Papua New Guinea Perspectives* (University of Queensland Press with Penguin Australia, 2011); *Ritual: Key Concepts in Religion* (Bloomsbury Academic Publications, 2014); *Working in the Field: Anthropological Experiences Across the World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); *Breaking the Frames: Anthropological Conundrums* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); *Sacred Revenge in Oceania* (Cambridge University Press, 2019); *Sustainability, Conservation, and Creativity: Ethnographic Learning from Small-scale Practices*. (Routledge Publishing, 2019); and *Language and Culture in Dialogue* (Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2019). Their recent co-edited books include *Research Companion to Anthropology* (Routledge Publishing, 2016, originally published in 2015); *Exchange and Sacrifice* (Carolina Academic Press, 2008) and *Religious and Ritual Change: Cosmologies and Histories* (Carolina Academic Press, 2009), along with the updated and revised Chinese version (Taipei, Taiwan: Linking Publishing, 2010). Stewart and Strathern's current research includes the topics of Eco-Cosmological Landscapes; Ritual Studies; Political Peace-making; Comparative Anthropological Studies of Disasters and Climatic Change; Language, Culture and Cognitive Science; and Scottish and Irish Studies. For many years they served as Associate Editor and General Editor (respectively) for the *Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania* book series and they are Co-Series Editors for the *Anthropology and Cultural History in Asia and the Indo-Pacific* book series. They also currently serve as Co-Editors of four further book series: *Ritual Studies*, *Medical Anthropology*, *European Anthropology*, and *Disaster Anthropology*, and they are the long-standing Co-Editors of the *Journal of Ritual Studies* (on Facebook: at facebook.com/ritualstudies). Their webpages, listing publications and other scholarly activities, are: http://www.pitt.edu/~strather/ and http://www.StewartStrathern.pitt.edu/.

List of Contributors

Petter Almklov ~ Professor of Sociology and Political Science, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

Michael Blim ~ Professor of Anthropology, City University of New York

Charles L. Briggs ~ Professor of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley

Lorenzo Cañás Bottos ~ Professor of Social Anthropology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

Rosemary J. Coombe ~ Canada Research Chair in Law, Communication and Culture, York University

Alexandra Hui ~ Associate Professor of History, Mississippi State University

Eugenia Kisin ~ Assistant Professor of Art and Society, New York University

Tord Larsen ~ Professor of Social Anthropology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

Kenneth R. Olwig ~ Emeritus Professor of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Alnarp

Tanja Plasil ~ PhD candidate, Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

Theodore M. Porter ~ Professor of History, University of California, Los Angeles

Kalpana Ram ~ Visiting Professor of Anthropology, Australian National University

Nigel Rapport ~ Professor of Anthropological and Philosophical Studies, University of St Andrews

Emil A. Royrvik ~ Professor of Sociology and Political Science, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

Jens Røyrvik ~ Senior Researcher, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

Tian Sørhaug ~ Professor of Sociology and Human Geography, Oslo University

Gro Ulset ~ Researcher, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim

Acknowledgment

The research contained in this book derives from the research project, based at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (Trondheim), 'The Cultural Logic of Facts and Figures: Objectification, Measurement and Standardization as Social Processes' (https://www.ntnu.edu/sosant/cuff). The project was generously funded by the Norwegian Research Council through the SAMKUL programme, with the PI being Professor Tord Larsen.

Introduction

Tord Larsen, Michael Blim, Theodore M. Porter,
Kalpana Ram & Nigel Rapport

The Book's Themes

'Objectification' or 'entification' — the symbolical making of things, and the way those things are differentiated, classified, hierarchicalized — has long been a focus of social science. The 'purity' of fixing and measuring human life, and the 'danger' experienced when the limits of any such schema are made apparent against the complexities, contrarieties and flux of the real, is well-trodden ground. This book offers a number of significant variations on this theme.

The book explores the precise social processes whereby domains of sensory and social practice become transformed into objects of thought and imagination, held at a kind of ritual distance in a way that enables new forms of manipulation by human subjects. It provides cautionary tales concerning the effects and limits of standardising programmes in economics, social policy, population models, and academic social science. It examines a range of projects that have been enabled by objectification: from the constitution and manipulation of people in collectivities known as nations, races and ethnicities, to projects of care for the insane and children at risk, to scientific and medical projects of understanding nature and assimilating the body to a natural object that can be cared for through similar technologies. Objectification and standardization are subjected to empirical study from the perspectives of history, economics, anthropology, cultural studies and phenomenology.

The term 'objectification' as used in this book borrows from multiple genealogies. Marx's critique of capitalism encourages us to query the status of commodities as objects rather than as the result of our own social arrangements; existential and feminist critiques of objectification claim a denial of the humanity of the other. These variously shape the critical edge of the project of this volume. A postmodern shift of attention to the generative power of such objectification (Foucault, Baudrillard), as with the structuralist foci that preceded the postmodern (Levi-Strauss, Mary Douglas), also find echoes in our attention to the very varied kinds of modern projects enabled by objectification and standardisation, including the work done by indigenous communities as they both utilise and find themselves corralled by typifications of cultural heritage. Moreover, the volume exceeds the usual focus on resistance as the dominant way of understanding the placing of limits on the generative capacities of objectification. The detailed case studies show how professionals who work in objectified and standardised realms—medicine, social work, the mass media—create spaces for others: to mourn their dead and dying in intensive care units; to allow families at risk or unemployed people to cope with the rigid rule-bound domains of social welfare. Other case-studies show how artists, painters and musicians create a central place for affective entanglements of love amid objectifying and standardizing discourses, providing glimpses of radically different ways of being-in-the-world. And again, case-studies demonstrate the impossibility of rationalising and standardising grids to deliver the reality they aim to capture for purposes of knowledge and manipulation. Taken together, the book is a testimony to creativity, both of objectification as a kind of ritual process, and of the various people who inhabit and exceed the limits of such ultimately ambiguous discursive practices.

Modes of objectification—different ways of producing thinghood, and thing-like entities like categories and classes—are part of the cultural infrastructure of any society. While all epochs and all cultures manifest dominant modes of objectification, some eras more than others display a passion for quantification. The 20th and the present centuries might be described as being in the grip of a will to quantify unparalleled since the first institutionalisation of the statistical and the census. Quantification, measurement, standardization, and the rise of a culture of indicators, are not simply ways of organizing pregiven entities, but are performative and generative technologies: kinds of ritual. They create institutional objects, causing a relationship between statistical systems and modes of governance, between numerical representation and regimes of control and dominance. Not only are numbers a form of representation (as well as forms of narrativity and visualization), but quantification, measurement

and standardization give rise to forms of subjectivity and carry with them a range of normativities. How do people experience this contemporary fetish for objectifying and standardizing?

Social and cultural formations may be distinguished by their dominant modes of producing objecthood. We have a rich vocabulary from previous attempts to describe the historical shifts and changes, concepts including: 'commodification', 'reification', 'fetishization', 'simulation', 'rhizomes' and 'assemblages'. The chapters in this volume bring out the ambiguities and also the politics and aesthetics of the above epistemic impositions and discursive shifts. The overall work of the volume is to identify a number of contemporary modes of objectification, measurement and standardization to see how they constitute a cultural logic and the ways and extents to which they shape the main dimensions of social life. While acknowledging the large role processes of such 'rationalization' play in contemporary life the book also takes note of significant phenomena which defy them.

An Overview of the Book

The book is divided into four sections whose groupings of chapters bring into focus what are seen to be key versions or domains of objectification and standardisation in social life, and significant responses to them. In 'Objectification, standardisation and monetization', the subsuming of economic behaviour under one bracing banner of 'rationality and freedom of choice' is examined. The 'mathematicization' of a theory of finance and the extensive use of quantitative models rationalized investment decisions that in turn moved trillions of dollars around the world economy. This has created in everyday experience the sensation that money has 'magical' powers that can be celebrated at casinos, lotteries, and other get-rich-quick schemes. Notwithstanding, economic theorists have stuck to models that do not explain the economic crisis of 2008 nor exhibit the predictive power necessary to avoid the calamities of world economic crisis.

Next is 'Standardisation and the professions'. The chapters in this section address problems and paradoxes of social and medical classification in relation to contemporary social and medical policies, quantification, the role and rule of 'key indicators', and the audit society. In 'Standardisation, the sensory and the aesthetic', the emphasis lies rather on the limits of objectification and standardisation by focusing on re-enchantment and re-personalization: the re-emergence of particularity and singularity which erupt through the grids of

standardization and measurement. The chapters range broadly in subject matter, covering topics such as the making of music and painting, culinary tradition, the appreciation of bird song, and the provision of person-centred care.

Finally, 'Objectification and identity politics' explores the commodification of collective identities. Originally a purely relational concept, 'identity' has been objectified or substantivized and even endowed with agency or causal efficacy: it legitimates behaviour, explains a course of events, is drawn upon to justify our actions. It may even be conceived as a fund of assets which can be diminished or replenished. Chapters focus in particular on formations of nationality and ethnicity.

In sum, grounded in empirical case-studies the book addresses a number of key themes in contemporary social life and the ways in which those themes have been addressed to date in social science: the history of objectification and standardization; the effects of objectification and standardization, both creative and deleterious, their ambiguous value; the rituality of objectification and standardization—their normative 'purity'—and the powerful 'dangers' deriving from their pollution; the phenomenology of objectification and standardization as temporal experiences: the coping with, inhabiting, ironizing and departing from regimes of rules, norms and standards; and finally, transcending objectification and standardization: a re-personalising, re-enchanting, sacralising and individuating of the world.

The Book's Argumentational Course

The book opens by examining the challenge posed by the economic crisis that began in 2008, to the faith that had come to be placed on a mathematicized theory of finance and on quantitative models. While trillions of dollars were moved around the world economy on this basis, they did not prevent calamities. Some economists are now choosing to explore more historical, narrative-based understandings of the current world economy while finding it difficult to escape the high structuralist logic of their model-built worldview. The belle époque of a generation of increased financial flows and speculation has created in everyday experience the sensation that money has 'magical' and ritual powers that can be celebrated at casinos, lotteries, and other get-rich-quick schemes. Money, in other words, released from its connection with economic movements in the material world, becomes a sign of itself, and thus a fetish. These are the concerns of the chapters in Part I.

In 'Ritual Repetition, Uncertainty, and the Search for an Explanation of the 2008 Crash, Or How Economists Are Doing History', Michael Blim argues that the 2008+ world economic crisis is acquiring a history, and compelling New Keynesian economists to experiment with explanations that undertake historical analysis. Though history found its way into explanatory economic accounts before World War II, postwar economists have typically privileged structural models that incorporate time as a series of moments subject to mathematical prediction and analysis. New Keynesian economists currently lead the struggle in their field to locate the 2008 crisis in history, but emerge with mixed results. Their recent work illustrates the difficulties economists experience in escaping the limits of 'event analysis' normative for their field.

In 'Sacralizing finance, sacrificing society', Emil Røyrvik argues that modern finance succeeds in detaching money from normal operations of economies, and creating worlds in which it can be traded and wagered as a thing in itself. After discussing the rise and fall of the so-called "Eurovegas" casino project outside Madrid, Spain, Røyrvik turns to the metaphorical value of casinos in representing the new "magical" spaces where mass participation in strictly money economies occurs is discussed.

In 'Falling in the shadow of relations? Money and the fetishism of relations; belief, speculation and modes of decision-making', Tian Sørhaug offers a meditation on financialization. He develops the Marxian concept of commodity fetishism, contrasting the rationalities of the household (saving), the firm (investment) and the neoliberal corporation (speculation). Grounded in guessing about the future, and guessing how competitors guess about the future, speculation substitutes empirical knowledge with a search for epiphanies and revelations. According to a speculative view of the world, we must believe in something before we can perceive it, and speculators peddle in beliefs and visions, sometimes employing magical techniques to bring them forth. This is part of what Sørhaug calls 'the cultural logic of financialization' and which he sees pervading a number of contemporary phenomena including conceptual art, reality TV, virtual reality, mindfulness and transformative leadership. Contrary to the dominant theories of disenchantment and secularization, Sørhaug argues that speculation keeps a sense of the sacred alive: that the realm of the sacred may even be expanding.

* * *

The chapters in Part II address problems and paradoxes of social and medical classification. They demonstrate how classificatory standards and forms of quantification can make or undo social and scientific entities. The chapters

involve experts — more specifically, medical and social professionals — who have been charged to provide guidance to individuals whose neediness has been ascertained and classified. The focus is on the experts themselves, to whom falls the task of sorting out who requires medical or social attention from professionals, and taking action. A central issue is the effort to secure professional status. Professional standing presumes the competence and integrity to transcend the routines of the assembly line and to adapt general principles to the peculiarities of individual cases. At the same time, professional work is reined in by codes and principles. Classification and quantification, providing a basis for consistent, orderly assessments and interventions, can be valuable and even necessary in professional life: even professionals find it convenient to assume the validity of basic categories. Psychiatrists must often distinguish the healthy from the mentally ill. Officials engaged in providing unemployment services are perhaps less inclined to naturalize the categories they deal with, but their work entails distinguishing employable individuals from those who lack the capacity to work. They may be untroubled by the problem that some patients or clients seem to fall in a gray area. The more interesting and troublesome problem is that assignment to a category is often inseparable from intervention. Since classification has consequences, individuals facing a determination of medical or social needs will typically have a preference among possible options. Doctors, social workers, and journalists do not simply fabricate the things they study, but neither do they simply record what is plain to see. By recording, measuring, and classifying, they redefine the objects of their attention.

In 'Asylum-Age Numbers: The Hopeless Push to Census the Insane', Theodore M. Porter returns to the nineteenth-century asylums that were created to cure insanity and at first reported a great preponderance of cures, but the numbers of institutionalized patients soon skyrocketed. In this context censuses of insanity were soon viewed as essential tools to get beyond the asylums and to understand the disease in relation to its causes. Two of these, deteriorating heredity and the unnatural demands of civilization, received particular attention. Doctors and officials put more and more stress on the idea that altered habits of breeding might bring this scourge under control. Both for the sake of effective intervention and to plan for the future, it appeared important to be able to census the insane. For this they appealed to new tools of standardization and registration, notably index cards, deployed by a locally trusted labor force in information management. Yet the project of enumeration faced a formidable obstacle: insanity was a legal category as much as a medical one, and could not even be diagnosed apart from relations to families and communities.

In 'Paper trails and procedures in child welfare services: A cultural logic in a professional context', Petter Almklov, Jens Røyrvik and Gro Ulset explore how standardization, objectification and measurement have changed professional practice. The chapter investigates how these developments manifest themselves in child welfare services in Norway. It discusses increasing standardization and objectification in case-work processes, how this influences practice and the controversies and dilemmas this development produces. The argument centres on the motivations for caseworkers for using and embracing the new systems. The chapter shows how standardized systems solve context-specific problems for the case-workers, focusing on three forms of context-specific reasoning given by informants: 1) reasons for standardization connected to being regarded as professional and scientific; 2) reasons connected to demonstrating control and order; 3) reasons regarding reducing the personal involvement of case-workers. These highlight that a standardizing and objectifying 'cultural logic' is not necessarily an external force that brutally invades a discipline or profession; it can, instead, also be actively appropriated. Finally, the chapter reflects on the dynamics between these global phenomena and local reasoning. When inspecting the context-specific reasons—how a standardized way of working seems to fix problems that are local—it can be seen that the reasoning reflects an underlying ideology of professionalism, and of control based on standardization, objectification and quantification in the services and their surroundings.

In 'The Mutating Mediatization of Pandemics', Charles Briggs examines three moments in the making of pandemics. He initially focuses on how US public health and Homeland Security officials, researchers, politicians, and journalists learned to use 'crisis and emergency risk communication' principles disseminated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He argues that in simulated outbreaks, health and journalism professionals rehearsed a pandemic biomediatization process for standardizing pandemic objects that was first performed at scale in making the 2009 H1N1 ('Swine Flu') pandemic. Rather than depicting a consolidated episteme, Briggs analyzes the biomediatization of a more virulent influenza virus, H3N2, during the 2017–2018 flu season as demonstrating its mutability. Although President Donald Trump's administration failed to embody 'crisis and emergency risk communication', journalists and scientists became more visible participants in pandemic biomediatization.

While this volume was going to press, the COVID-19 pandemic raised the stakes for this analysis. The SARS-CoV-2 virus is a quintessential embodiment of what Briggs refers to as communicability, being a highly infectious, rapidly

spreading pathogen that is engendering a global proliferation of pandemic discourses, including an 'infodemic' of 'conspiracy theories'. Briggs outlines Trump's systematic departures from 'crisis and emergency risk communication' tenets to make two points. First, health and journalist professionals' adumbration of Trump's violations are reinscribing the idea that politicians *should* form part of a standardized process for creating, objectifying, and quantifying pandemics. Second, by claiming the power to direct US governmental COVID-19 responses and simultaneously initially discounting claims of COVID-19's pandemic objectivity, publicly disagreeing with leading virologists, discrediting official numbers, and refusing to use the bodily symbol of pandemic prevention (the face mask), Trump exposed the precarity of the logic that underlines pandemic biomediatization: the idea that a perfect, transparent, 'evidence-based' matching of the circulation of pathogens and discourse is possible.

* * *

In Part III, the chapters consider the relations between practices and policies of standardisation on the one hand and sensory experience and aesthetic expression on the other. The question is asked: What is the relation—historical, experiential, epistemological, practical, political—between a regime that would ritually incorporate, classify and process according to standard, objectifying and normative mechanisms and the life that is lived 'within' this regime? The chapters explore, in terms of their respective case material, the possibilities of transcendence of the standardising regime, the dangers of entanglement with it, the necessities of accommodation to it, and the opportunities for confrontation with it.

In different ways, the chapters explore how perception and sensation have encountered significant projects of modernity such as nation-building, and the rationalising discourses that have come to characterise bureaucracy and academic disciplines alike. The chapters reveal how domains of sensory practice, both discursive and non-discursive, have kept alive a range of affects, meanings, and bodily understandings that exceed the reach of modern standardisation and objectification. These emerge in various expressions described here, such as aesthetic predispositions to understand bird sound as music, or to practise music and art as unique forms of love, or ways in which food may be turned into collective identities but still retain its irreducible concreteness as the flavours of one's earliest meals.

In 'From grandmother's kitchen to festivals and professional chef: The standardization and ritualization of Arab food in Argentina', Lorenzo Cañás Bottos and Tanja Plasil examine the invention and construction of the Argentine nation,

and how this was based on explicit future-oriented, ideological projects concerning descriptions and norms. There was a 'recipe' for Argentine-ness whereby the state, its policies and offices sought to integrate, homogenise and fashion its citizens. As part of this process, Argentine discourses led to an attempt to standardise Middle-Eastern, 'Arab', food, the policy being that such standardisation might serve as a point on the road to immigrants becoming standard Argentine citizens. The 'Levantine' response, however, it is argued by the chapter, was to maintain distinctive foodways that distinguished them from other Argentines and also distinguished among themselves, as members of various, formerly Middle-Eastern, nations, ethnicities and religions. Food was a fundamental medium and form of expression by which identities maintained themselves in non-Argentine and non-standardised ways; through the 'packaging', 'grinding', 'blending' and 'mixing' of aspects of traditional culinary cuisines, Argentine immigrants can be seen to have adapted to the realities of the Argentine nation state. A final irony, however, that the chapter charts is that the immigrants' anti-standardisation manoeuvres have also led them to standardise themselves and others, as members of particular ethnic collectivities: Syrian, Lebanese, Jewish, and so on.

In 'The magic of "mudrās" and performance as "loving play": The limits placed on intellectualism and rationalizing reforms by the performing arts of India', Kalpana Ram explores the projects of reforming Indian aesthetics that originated in the late nineteenth century. Her focus is on the intellectuals who formed the new class of 'experts' in arts institutions established by the new nation state immediately after independence in 1947. The chapter explores the gap between the assumptions embedded in the modernising discourses of these intellectuals, and the actual practice of music and dance performances. While drawing on the body of work on postcolonial modernity in India, Ram diverges from an exclusive preoccupation with the state as an impersonal force of governmentality that is able to simultaneously construct both a 'developmental' modernity and a frozen ritualised 'tradition'. Engaging instead with the different kinds of intellectuals who actually implement both development and arts reform as distinct projects, Ram describes their attempts to grapple with affects of dissonance, incoherence and anxiety over the inability to bring together their 'theory' with the 'practice' of the musicians they seek to reform. She describes the historical fractures of colonial and postcolonial class formations which have created these incoherencies and placed them out of reach of an intellectual resolution. As a result, the reforms designed to 'fix' what experts perceived as the irregularities of performance by introducing notation and shoring up the authority of textual traditions, have remained largely where they began—in the realm of 'theory'.

Meanwhile, the original lineages of musicians and dance teachers survive to provide a very different way of understanding 'practice' and offer a rich language of love to describe what they do. Immersion in the 'gestalt' in Indian aesthetics is exerting its own effects on middle class men and women, teaching the more perceptive among them to start revising some of the basic assumptions from a borrowed language—such as the notion that Indian music is composed of discrete 'notes'. Using their insights and her own, Ram contributes to developing a phenomenologically more adequate language of aesthetics. She locates ornamentation as primary to several features of Indian aesthetics that resist standardisation—the values of improvisation, of showing care and love for others and for the self through ornamentation, and a certain holism which means that even the most basic building block of music is a phrase, not an isolated note.

In 'Enumeration and generalization, and knowing through love: The case of Stanley Spencer's artistry', Nigel Rapport begins with the assertions made by nineteenth-century proto-ethnographer, novelist and Member of Parliament, Edward Lytton Bulwer, that there is an indiscriminateness to enumeration that obviates necessary depths of analytical understanding. Not all countable phenomena are equally significant or fundamental. Equally, there is an indiscriminateness to enumeration that would reduce individuality to generalized schemata. Life is individual: enumeration and generalization (objectification and standardisation) corrupt this truth, and are inadequate to account for human nature and its individual expression.

The case for these claims is made through a reading of the life and art of the British painter and diarist Stanley Spencer (1891–1959). His art, his writings on his art, and the public reception of that art, serve as a case study by which is illuminated the personal impacts that enumeration and generalization may have upon an individual life—and how an individual might counter that impact. The Spencer case-study is supplemented by a number of other reflections—by another painter, a social theorist, a translator, a novelist and a poet—that share a concern that a social regime of classification and collectivization (of enumeration and generalization) can be a domineering and even coercive one. How might the individual and his or her artistry exist here? How might individuality of thought and expression find space here, and how might a human capacity for thought and expression—his or her individual bodily identity—be safeguarded? The chapter concludes with an explication of Spencer's understanding of a 'loving engagement' with the world and how this might offer insights into the epistemological problem (social-scientific and political alike) of doing justice to the particular case.

In 'From "wuh wuh" to "hoo-hoo" and the rituals of representing bird song, 1885–1925', Alexandra Hui traces processes of standardisation in scientific enquiry into the construction of nature as an object of enquiry, but directs our attention to the important processes of culturally and historically shaped styles of perception that precede and shape the process of standardisation itself. Focusing on sound as a sensory domain, the chapter traces the emergence of three key perceptual domains that shape the ways in which scientists in Europe and America listen to nature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first is the predisposition to listen to bird sound as music. With this predisposition enter a number of specific assumptions about music itself: that music is composed of perfect intervals as with classical western music, and that diversity is to be understood in an evolutionary framework leading to such perfection. The second inflection point in the arc of shifting perceptual frameworks was the introduction of a hybrid form of notation in the 1920s. This new graphic method further standardized and universalized bird sound representation by liberating it from the Western tuning system and its aesthetic baggage, to better capture sliding tones and sound texture. This new graphic method also, its developer and users claimed, made the comparison of individuals easier. This new method facilitated and reinforced a statistical turn in the study of animal behavior and anticipated the growth of bioacoustics of the next decade (further facilitated by the use of phonograph recording and sonographic analysis in the 1930s). The final case study examines the field notebooks of a devoted birder over two decades. Tracing his shifting efforts to capture and convey the sounds of specific species, the ritualistic nature of *field notebook listening* is demonstrated. Further, the role of this practice in the crystallization of a new, if individual, perceptual framework can be seen. In the long term, bioacousticians continue to question the exclusive reliance on visual data to represent individuals' aural experiences, and the sensory practices relied upon to provide an inter-sensory domain of interpretation.

* * *

Finally, the chapters in Part IV urge that the reification (or 'entification') of 'identity' stands out as one of the most visible forms of objectification, and the three chapters in this concluding section explore some of the paradoxes that accompany efforts to objectify the self. In some cases, social units are objectified from the outside, as it were—colonialism being the prime example. Colonialism began in the period of early capitalism, an historical rupture which brought about the era of the commodity and the age of the modern fact. Consequently, the objectification of culture which came with colonialism

included types of fact-making which made societies governable. It identified the cultural 'stuff' which was subsequently commodified and branded as emblematic of a social identity: the colonial form of fact-making turned the region into something that could be imagined as packaged, knowable and governable.

Nowadays, indigenous and non-indigenous groups can be seen to use similar rhetoric to one another when they formulate the nature of their cultural estates. Making one's culture explicit, or 'legible' has been a strategy employed when 'the empire talks back'. But recently, making one's culture explicit has also become a matter of some urgency for the former 'metropolis' which strives to define 'European values' (and national values) in the wake of large-scale immigration. Such efforts are in part rooted in the premises on which nation building was based in the 19th and 20th centuries when nations also had to be built from 'the inside'.

In 'Archives and Cultural Legibility: Objects and Subjects of Neoliberal Heritage Technologies', Rosemary Coombe and Eugenia Kisin describe the 'mechanics' of identity politics under neoliberalism, which turns cultural inventories into resources and cultural capital. It is shown that cultural heritage is increasingly the subject of new forms of governance put into place through the auspices of national and international law and policy, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and an increasingly organized, globally networked indigenist movement. Simultaneously, by virtue of the way the techniques of governmentality make people more reflexive about their identities, values and traditions, it also makes them more assertive of their cultural rights. 'Culture' is increasingly harnessed as a resource, embraced as a form of social capital, the basis for enterprise development, and the source of creative differences from which commodified goods and services may be developed. It is also the case that the means for locating, gauging, measuring, displaying, and mobilizing culture are increasingly standardized through law and policy; governmental interventions for siting and valuing 'community' cultural difference are accomplished through a remarkable standardization of technologies through which 'identity resources' are made legible. Under the assemblages of neoliberal power, notwithstanding, communities bear themselves distinctive new forms of agency in making their cultures calculable. Through the ways in which indigenous peoples have deployed heritage technologies, they have turned demands for legibility into new configurations of political legitimacy that exceed those afforded by the modern liberal state, making their own norms of governance more legible to themselves as means of projecting legitimacy. If neoliberalism encourages possessive relationships with relation to cultural

goods, it also spurs community consideration of the kinds of legibility that enable and limit local agency.

In 'Space, Territory and the Ritualized Reification and Standardized Measure of Nation and Nature: The Case of a Swedish Children's Story, Konrad Lorenz and "Super" Nationalism', Kenneth Olwig shows how the objectification, standardization and measurement of social and geographical units can be turned into diabolic forms of thoughts, which advocate the exclusion (and even extermination) of outsiders. In particular, aspects of the ideological construction of Sweden are discussed, showing how the 'symbolic' instruments of nation-making such as literary motifs transformed into Nazi notions of race at the hands of the founder of ethology, Konrad Lorenz. In 1902 Sweden's National Teacher's Association commissioned Selma Lagerlöf, a Nobel Prize-winning author and former teacher, to write a geography book for use in schools. In 1906 and 1907 she published the result in two installments as Nils Holgersson's wonderful journey through Sweden. At the time of this commission massive emigration by Sweden's impoverished lower classes to America was taking place, and there was a felt need in to encourage young Swedes to develop a common shared identity with Sweden and remain in the country. (The plot of the story is that a flock of anthropomorphized wild geese, with Nils on his tame goose trailing behind, fly from the southern tip of Sweden to the country's northernmost reaches where the flock has its nesting home, imprinted from birth, and then back again. In this way Lagerlöf successfully communicates 'the unity of differences' inside Sweden's territory, which can be seen as one of the defining elements in the concept of nation.)

The interest in nature and natural landmarks was inspired by a newly awoken national patriotism. For the older patriotism, Sweden's greatness was to be found mainly in its proud history, studded with military victories. The new national enthusiasm was characterized by a biologically influenced conception of the nation in which nature provided distinctive elements. The moors, forests, and other natural wonders became national symbols with a deeper significance than that of the heroes and warrior-kings of the past. Such abstractions—an organic fantasy creating imagined communities—are, however, easily manipulatable: Lorenz takes Lagerlöf's symbolic depiction to be realistic. He reduces human conduct by assimilating it to animal behavior: since hybridization of species seems to impair adaptive qualities, he draws the conclusion that the interbreeding of human 'races' has similar detrimental effects. Modes of thought similar to Lorenz's are, moreover, gaining increasing contemporary popularity through the concept of 'rewilding' the landscape, and eliminating 'invasive' species. There is a long-standing affinity between

certain strands of ecological thought and the racist idealization of the Nordic, and that affinity is becoming more pronounced today when anti-foreign immigrant sentiments are very much in the air in Europe.

Lastly, in '"First I turn myself into an object; then I turn myself into a work of art": Objectifying and ritualizing contemporary life', Tord Larsen examines how contemporary forms of objectification pose threats to cherished distinctions. The spheres of value of Kant and Weber, which clearly distinguish between science, morality and art, are being challenged. This implies a concomitant reduction of the autonomy of morality; eroded by naturalism, it threatens to make 'the naturalistic fallacy' (G. E. Moore) an obsolete notion. In addition, the understanding of action as an originary realization of freedom is being challenged by algorithmic decision-making and contemporary forms of self-objectification. Finally, existing theories of meaning which see polysemy, fuzziness, vagueness and family resemblance as the *sine qua non* conditions of meaning and signification, are increasingly being replaced by monosemy and new rules of synonymy which make meanings univocal rather than open to interpretation. There is an emerging tendency to replace 'use' by 'mention' in our communicative interaction—a widely used but contested distinction in analytic philosophy. A case in point is the upsurge of defining existing practices as 'heritage'. Acting 'authentically', in Hannah Arendt's sense, is increasingly being replaced by 'acting according to a script'.

The chapter argues that communicative practices of the 'mention' and script-reading are related to ritualism, while the tendency to replace polysemy by monosemy can perhaps be seen as a secular theory of incarnation (the dogma of incarnation has had several secular successors in the 20th century, best exemplified by various 20th century totalitarianisms). Forms of identity politics go through 'objectifying' and 'aestheticizing' phases, contributing to the remaking of contemporary society as 'spectacle'; in some cases at least there is an intimate connection between the objectifying strategies of modernity and the aestheticizing tendencies of postmodernity.

* * *

To sum up this introduction might be to say that one of the key emphases of the volume is the continuing significance of ritual in modern social life. As a contribution to the field of ritual studies, this diverse collection of studies highlights two interwoven themes: the growing influence of objectification and standardization in life; but then the resistances to, and refusals of, this trend. Ritual here appears in two guises, interestingly distinct, even contrary, further evidencing what has long been known of ritual's fecundity and flexibility: its

capability of being 'put to work' to a diversity, even contrariety, of ends. First, ritual is evidenced as a kind of handmaiden to the theme of objectification, creating or supporting objectification. Objectification, it is argued, is to be appreciated as a modality of the ritualized fixing of the world, of managing its fluidity and ambiguity. Ritual is performative, illocutionary and perlocutionary. But then there is also the (inevitable) disjunction between objectification and the complex realities of action and experience. No symbolic construction of the world—however much it exaggerates clear-cut distinctions between categories and classes of objects and relations, of people and exchanges, in the name of purity and tradition—can obviate the actual fuzziness, flux and capaciousness of the world. Reality resists objectification, and here too ritual plays its part. The institutionalization of objectification leads to tensions, oppositions, that also express themselves ritualistically. There is the rite that collectively reverses, breaking with hegemonic governmentalities and providing participants with a distinct sense of time, history and bodily coherence. There is the private rite that personally empowers. There is the rite that effects the transcendence whereby, for its participants, a symbolic construction is resisted and the world is actualized in its complex, inchoate truth.