From the Chair,
A Half-Hearted Manifesto for a
Cultural Sociology of Pornography
Nicola Beisel, Northwestern

When I was 21 years old I stood up at a meeting of the Bowdoin College Women's Association and announced that our organization should support the feminist anti-pornography movement. I believed Susan Griffin's (and later Catharine MacKinnon's) claims that pornography leads to violence against women, that pornography teaches lies about women and sexuality, and that ultimately pornography helped reproduce women's subordinate social status. Joan Tronto, then assistant professor of government, replied that I should not so quickly dispense with the First Amendment.

Ten years later, while finishing a dissertation on Anthony Comstock, our nation's most notorious censor, I was absolutely convinced that Tronto was right. Comstock interested me because he made birth control illegal, not because of his anti-pornography crusade. But Comstock used anti-obscenity laws, and his position as Postal Inspector, to harass and arrest not only pornographers, but persons who distributed information about contraception, those who argued that women were sexually and economically enslaved by marriage, the publishers of Walt Whitman's poetry, and art dealers who sold reproductions of Salon nudes. Comstock claimed that he protected women from degradation and children from depravity. Comstock showed me what could happen when the state censors, namely, in the course of eliminating the sexual materials I disliked, censors could make it illegal to advocate positions that I believed were crucial for changing women's subordinate social status. An agent of the state, I decided, was unlikely to act in accord with my feminist

Also in this issue. . .

The Depths of Shallow Culture
Joshua Gamson, Yale [1]

When the founding of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse was announced, *The New York Times*, in an article entitled "A Dissertation on Mr. Ed?," could not resist inviting David Letterman's writers to make fun. Among the "Top 10 topics or classes for an academic research center for the study of popular culture" proposed by Letterman's crew were "Slaughter to Steubing: The Collected Works of Gavin McLeod" (he of *Mary Tyler Moore* and *Love Boat*), "Greatest Mind of the 20th Century: Einstein or Trebek" (a reference to Alex, host of *Jeopardy*), and "Fonz Appreciation" (*Happy Days* as enlightenment) (Mifflin 1997, p. E1). Although a legitimacy crisis for scholars of popular culture is unpleasant, the criticism need not deter dedicated scholars. The Center, declares the Newhouse School's dean, will "study television entertainment programs with the same care and passion as musicologists study Mozart and Ellington, or professors of English study Melville and Pynchon" (Mifflin 1997, p. E1). But the question nags: *Isn't the study of popular culture ridiculous?*

The Social Construction of an Art
Market: Asylum Art and the
Politics of Authenticity
Anne Bowler, Univ. of Delaware

Outsider art is a somewhat broad term applied to the artistic products of a variety of self-taught artists, including naives, visionaries, patients in mental hospitals and, more recently prisoners. While a more precise definition remains the subject of some debate, use of term is generally reserved for the work of artists with little or no formal training, in particular, socially marginal individuals who, for various reasons and without prior instruction, begin to paint, sculpt, or draw; artists thus presumed to be both "outside" the influence of the established art world and "outside" mainstream society. My recent research has examined one category of outsider art, the art of the asylum patient or, as it is more widely termed, the art of the insane.[1]

politics. In short, I switched sides. My aversion to censorship increased that spring with the arrest of a Cincinnati art museum curator who displayed Mapplethorpe's photographs. Fresh out of graduate school I vowed to fire my own salvo in the sex wars, believing that my knowledge of Comstock positioned me to write a uniquely compelling critique of MacKinnon and her followers.

Now I'm almost 40, and it still isn't written. And this column isn't it. The non-existence of said article is not wholly explained by procrastination, nor by cowardice in the face of MacKinnon's sometimes vicious response to her critics. Rather, and the reason I am telling you this, is that I struggle with pornography as a political issue from my position as a cultural sociologist. It is easy to be a first amendment absolutist, and when push comes to shove I am one. Reams of articles support this position; one need merely cite them and the Constitution, and one is off the hook. Except for one problem: I think culture matters.

What does it mean to say that culture matters when discussing pornography? It means we should at least consider the feminist anti-pornography position that cultural objects shape cognition. Anti-censorship arguments tend to resort to the claim that pornography is harmless, that much of it is just pictures of people having sex (I agree), that few take depictions of rape, sadism, and bestiality in some pornography seriously, so therefore pornography does not become a model for thinking about or acting in the world (I wonder). Studies of the effects of pornography usually focus on either attitudes or arousal, and while such studies tend to show that depictions of violence (not sex) lead to violence, these studies also tend to ignore the sociologically interesting questions. As cultural sociologists we specialize in analyzing how cultural objects are perceived and responded to by various audiences. Following Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984), we could study how people read and use pornography in various social contexts. This would be an improvement over studies of penile erection, and of works by cultural critics who read and interpret the pornography with no reference to its audiences. To take a suggestion from Zerubavel's (1998) "Cognitive Manifesto," sociologists of culture could study "cognitive socialization" to sexual and pornographic images, and examine how people assign meaning to some sexual depictions and ignore others. (Of course since cognitive socialization to sexual categories presumably involves research on minors, both ethics and human subjects review boards might preclude this possibility). And finally, there is fascinating work to be done on the relationship between images and text, namely how captions shape our understanding of what's in a picture. How culture matters is an empirical question. Sexuality is a burgeoning field in sociology, and cultural sociologists could make important contributions to it.

That's the manifesto. So what's the "half-hearted" part? I doubt the research findings will change my position on censorship. In the end, Comstock and Jesse Helms have taught me well. I believe (and hope) that the ACLU is likely to hold sway in court cases about censorship. In my fantasies about where our field is going I image cultural sociologists making an impact on public policy debates. Culture matters, but in the end I doubt enough to change the essential quesion, namely, which is more harmful, pornography or censorship?

But I've changed my mind on this topic before. If you have comments or reactions, I'd like to hear them (nbeisel@nwu.edu). Who knows, maybe that article will finally get written.

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Gamson: The Depths of Shallow Culture, continued

Disdain for such attempts to treat "popular arts" to the same sorts of aesthetic and literary analyses as "high arts," with its combination of anti-intellectual populism and shocked elitism, is nothing new (Brantlinger 1985; Ross 1989). Critics of scholarship on popular culture, however, as they try to defend against a leveling of all forms of culture—against the erasure of the distinction between *Moby Dick* and *Love Boat*—are quick to dismiss the possibility that forms of culture produced for mass consumption may in fact have their own dynamics of cultural depth. Shallow cultural forms, they mostly maintain, are indicators of a shallow populace, filled with people whose tastes require not much more challenge than that provided by Aaron Spelling. As numerous scholars have shown, of course, these kinds of criticisms are part and parcel of status-group struggles to delineate "high" from "low" culture, and to make "high" coincide with "mine" and "low" with "yours" (DiMaggio 1991; Levine 1988). That something deemed frivolous in one historical period (Shakespeare and opera are the most famous examples) can be deemed momentous in another does not help the argument that depth and popularity are incompatible.

Yet if there is something dubious in these "aren't they silly" criticisms, there is also something sloppy in the defense. While critics would rather scoff at the possibility that popular culture has depth, defenders tend to avoid the possibility that popular culture, especially commercially-mediated popular culture, is distinctive in its superficiality. The field of culture studies, including the sociology of culture, has yet to come firmly to grips with the ways in which "shallow" culture—culture produced without considerations of cognitive complexity or emotional profundity, and not per

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ceived by many of those encountering it as consequential—can be deep. The dominant attempts to do so themselves encourage eye-rolling dismissal: reading beneath the surface for hidden meanings, breathing depth into what seem to most of those engaged with them to be paper-thin cultural forms.

The challenge, then, is to step out of these two reductions while using their insights, to refuse the suggestion that shallow cultural forms are necessarily indicative of superficial participants while also refusing the suggestion that beneath such forms are gold mines of subtext. Advocating a modest definition of "shallow culture" based in both production practices and the perceptions of users, I want to consider the ways in which culture which is admittedly superficial can have deep social significance *without* being deeply felt, *without* requiring the internalization or even perception of deep meanings, whether or not they are there.

Between Subtexts and Stupidity

Back in the days when Madonna ruled the world, culturally speaking, many academics began to wonder about her in print. She was, after all, a recognizable icon of apparent centrality to consumers worldwide, having penetrated practically any market with radio or MTV. She seemed to have an endless capacity to get attention, to "remake" herself, to get people, especially young women, to make themselves over in her image, to "push the envelope," and so forth. Her cultural power was irrefutable. And so, in books like *The Madonna Connection*, *Desperately Seeking Madonna*, and *Madonnarama*, scholars set about trying to figure out what she, as text or symbol or sign system, *meant*.

Cathy Schwichtenberg, for example, found Madonna to be "involved in a bloodless war" on "the field of sexual representation." Madonna, with her "polymorphous, gender-blending menage," her "shifting persona and stylistically seductive aesthetic," and her use of "simulation strategically in ways that challenge the stable notion of gender as the edifice of sexual difference," was a warrior for "postmodern feminism." "Madonna bares the devices of femininity," Schwichtenberg argued, "thereby asserting that femininity is a device." She then "fissures this destabilized sex identity further by means of splitting and displacement to advance a prodigious sexual plurality." Thus she offers a postmodern political realignment.

Pee-wee's Playhouse, Paul Rubens' goofy, bright, campy, double-entendre-filled, early 1990s Saturday morning "children's" program, was subjected to similar clever readings, revealing similarly hidden, subversive texts beneath their surface. Film scholar Constance Penley saw in the show "a new, postmodernist stage of camp subjectivity, one distinguished by a capacity for zipping through sexual roles that is as fast and unremarkable as zapping through the channels" (Penley 1993, p. 137). Penley's colleague Ian Balfour argued that the *Playhouse* worked to "unsettle culturally codified notions of masculine and feminine, indeed to twist them around" (Balfour 1993, pp. 145-6).

Maybe. Or perhaps *Pee-wee's Playhouse* was just about silly fun with weenie jokes and dress-up and screeching whenever the weekly "secret word" was spoken. Maybe Pee-wee unsettles viewers' notions of heterosexual masculinity: in my favorite scene, analyzed smartly by Penley, Pee-wee weds a bowl of fruit salad after another character suggests that "If you love it so much why don't you marry it?" Perhaps it's just very funny to marry inanimate objects. Maybe Madonna embodies ideological contradictions and postmodern feminist potentials, or maybe she is just another piece of hollow culture—S/M-lite, TV-kinky entertainment.

Subtextual readings are often smart and insightful, and certainly a piece of culture can be simultaneously shallow and deep. But the assertion that depth is written into the text, and that a dexterous analyst can pull the rabbit out of the hat, has been and should be challenged. For one thing, music videos, commercial children's television, sitcoms, game shows, horror flicks, and the like—the typical subjects of subtextual readings of popular culture—are produced in an environment that works against the kind of multiple-layered geology in which deep messages are encoded beneath the surface. They are produced, both consciously and inadvertently, to be two-dimensional. As Todd Gitlin has shown of prime-time television, for instance, executives and producers aiming to reduce business uncertainty wind up pushing towards the unoriginal, the recombinant, the derivative, mostly copying whatever seemed to work last week. "Organizational rationality," Gitlin suggests, "has to discipline creativity" (Gitlin 1985, p. 46). This can certainly be said of more than just television; it's safe to say that most commercially produced popular culture is designed to be formulaic and unchallenging. That does not preclude the possibility of challenging meanings underneath it all, and subtextual analysis has certainly pointed out all kinds of interesting candidates. But if those sneering at academic study of popular culture are tapping into anything worthwhile, it is the insight that popular culture, for better or for worse, is produced in ways that push it much more towards the fatuous than other forms of culture. Perhaps diving head first into shallow water is indeed a bit misguided.

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Even if one is agnostic about the existence of subtexts, or even if one embraces their existence, there is rarely evidence that viewers see these complicated meanings in popular culture, let alone internalize them. (Hence the dodging, although understandable, reliance of subtextual analyses on Freud, Lacan, and other theorists of unconscious processes.) For one thing, they often see other meanings entirely (Lewis 1991; Seiter et al. 1989). In some of the most famous examples, Moroccan Jewish immigrants, Jews from Los Angeles, kibbutznik Jews, Israeli Arabs, and Russian Jewish immigrants all saw very different programs when they watched *Dallas* (Liebes and Katz 1995), and Australian Aboriginal children turned television programs about black Americans into shows about Australian Aboriginals (Hodge and Tripp 1986). Even adolescent viewers of Madonna's videos differed "dramatically in how they interpreted the...

videos and [disagreed] about even the most fundamental story elements" (Brown and Schulze 1990, p. 94). Moreover, many of these interpretations take place in the midst of rather "light" and playful relationships to culture, with little sign of deep emotional attachment to its contents. As others have pointed out over the last decade (Fiske 1987; Lewis 1991; Morley 1989), at least for sociologists in search of some empirical justification for locating depth *within* the texts, the word of a brilliant analyst may not be enough. If the bulk of the audiences for and users of popular culture are to be taken seriously, we must consider the distinct probability that, when it comes to shallow-looking forms of culture, there may be no there there.

On the other hand, those who would suppress any serious analysis of popular culture dismiss the users and receivers of culture in their own way. Running with the idea that there is nothing there but surface, they tend to see popular culture as an index of the superficial desires, even stupidity, of audiences. In its more sympathetic version, the claim is that audiences do not desire the challenge of depth and complexity, for decent reasons: they are tired from work and in need of escape; they have learned to accept least-common-denominator fare as their only option; taken seriously, the real world is complicated and dreary enough, and they just want to have fun. In its less sympathetic version, the claim is that mass audiences do not have what it takes to sustain complex, deep, analytical culture: either they are not smart enough for anything more than simple, sensational culture, or they are patsies of entertainment industries taking the easiest route to profits, force-fed on Twinkie-nutritious culture.

Consider these suggestions, part of a series of "leading indicators" of the "dumbing down" of American culture (Washburn and Thornton 1996). We live in a "debased intellectual climate," Barbara Grizzuti Harrison asserts, which "obliges one to do nothing but be the passive recipient of factoids," and "packaged wisdom, not too stressful on the brain"; "in a world of terrifying complexity we keep the furniture of our minds tidy, light, disposable, ready for the next change of fashion, the season's trend" (Washburn and Thornton 1996, p. 30). American popular culture, William A. Henry writes, is ruled by entertainment, which

> promises to make you feel better, to help you forget your troubles, to liberate you from having to think. Even when entertainment touches deep feelings, it does so as a gesture of reassurance, a combination of sentiment and sloganeering. This is what most people say they want, and the market lets them have it without anyone in a position of intellectual or social leadership telling them that they should ask more of themselves—and might benefit thereby (Washburn and Thornton 1996, p. 31).

In this familiar refrain, the industries of popular culture provide weary, passive publics with reassuring, thoughtless fare, gradually turning their environment—and the publics themselves—dumb and dumber.

Yet even if one is agnostic about the lack of substance in

popular culture, or even if one embraces the notion that there's no there there, these guardians of the intellectual environment are notably uninterested in considering the question of what audiences for and users of popular culture *do* with culture other than simply sit there and get stupider. Plenty of research has provided cumulative evidence that viewers are not simple suckers, but are active, and to a certain degree critical, in their encounters with commercially mediated pop culture (Fiske 1987; Lewis 1991; Seiter et al. 1989). For sociologists looking for ways to interpret popular culture, the allegation of superficial audiences, either manipulated or freely choosing the shallow over the deep, is not a helpful explanatory tool.

The Uses of "Shallow Culture"

How, then, to proceed without these problematic reductions? A first step, I think, is to take more care in constituting the object of study, "shallow culture," without relying on external aesthetic criteria. What happens if we consider popular culture from the point of view of its participants and its producers? That is, what happens when we accept as "superficial" only that which both participants and producers themselves see as such? While such a definition leaves out much of what might look and feel shallow to many of us, it takes into account several key recognitions: that cultural boundaries (such as shallow versus deep) are themselves cultural constructions, that many cultural participants see depth where others do not, and that many producers of commercial culture explicitly and rationally avoid challenge and depth.

By setting aside the cases where culture that might be deemed superficial by some becomes psychologically deep to others—that is, when participants relate to the cultural materials as personally significant and transformative—we are also faced with a fresher puzzle, one suppressed by the dumbing-down and super-subtext approaches. *How and why are people, not necessarily shallow or pathetic, engaged with and by culture they themselves see as shallow?* (By "see as shallow" here we might mean two slightly different things, with different implications for analysis: first, that participants do not, and know that they do not, internalize messages or meanings; and second, that participants self-consciously maintain a distance from the texts, and do not "take them seriously.") Understanding the uses of shallow culture within this framework can help us analyze cultural depth and superficiality without assuming either the deep integration of subtexts into psyches or mindless consumption by shallow minds. "At least some of the time," as Ann Swidler has pointed out, "culture may have powerful effects when it is on the 'outside,' not deeply internalized or even deeply meaningful" (Swidler 1995, p. 31). Much can be gained from grappling with the ways culture can be powerful and influential without being deeply held.

At this point there are not many places to turn for empirically-based insight, since very little research has taken participants' perceptions of superficiality as a starting point. Buried, however, in much of the work on cultural participation are some clues to deep uses of shallow culture. As a

start, I want to resuscitate attention to two major sorts of uses: *lateral connection* and *play*. Each, I want to argue, works more easily when the cultural stuff being mobilized is experienced as superficial rather than deep.

Lateral uses of culture seem quite plain and commonsensical: culture becomes a "social glue." One way this happens has been noted for some time by those working within the much-maligned "uses and gratifications" approach (Katz et al. 1973): the "water cooler" use of culture, in which culture is used to connect people who are otherwise not terribly well-connected for whatever reasons—because they are not in close geographical proximity or do not share a common background or social status. Many celebrity-watchers, for instance, report that they pay close attention to entertainment news not because of some deep concern or admiration for stars, or any fantasy of knowing these media figures, but so that they can participate in a common culture of talk, usually at work (Gamson 1994). This kind of use, especially within established subcultures, extends beyond the water cooler, as popular culture is often also put to use in the service of collective-identity building. In gay and lesbian subcultures, for instance, programs such as *Dallas* and, more recently, *Xena: Warrior Princess* (at bars in San Francisco and New York fans "jeer, cheer, and bring the house down" while "munching sandwiches and drinking beer or espresso" during *Xena* showings [Federico 1997]) have become the centerpiece of collective viewings in bars (Gamson 1998b). While they assert that these programs exhibit gay-camp sensibilities or lesbian subtexts, participants in these events, I suspect, are much more interested in the experience of collective consumption, the reassertion and celebration of identity ties, than in any perceived deep substance of the programs. In these lateral social uses of culture, superficiality can actually be advantageous rather than problematic. It provides a sort of leveling, inclusive, anyone-can-use-it tool under conditions of social diversity; the reviled "least common denominator" character of much television culture, from this angle, is actually a plus for people looking for just such a common denominator to use in their everyday lives.

A second sort of lateral use is more complex: codes that govern social relationships are "seen through" as manufactured or superficial yet continue to be put to use as necessary communications. Swidler cites Theodore Caplow's study of Christmas gift giving, for instance, to point out that although very few people "believe" in giving the gifts, and readily criticize the commercialization of the holiday, they nonetheless give them, since doing so "signals the relative importance with which she or he holds" the recipient. Swidler expands on this usefully:

> When florists and confectioners try to increase their business by announcing National Secretaries' Week, few are presumably moved by deep belief in the principles that lie behind the announcement. But if every newspaper in the country is for weeks blanketed with advertisements implying that bosses who appreciate their secre-

taries will give them flowers and take them out to lunch, both secretaries and their employers may be, at the least, uncomfortable about what signals their actions will send (Swidler 1995, p. 33).

Here, although superficiality is not required for the communication to work, neither is depth of belief a requirement. The lateral use of the code—which is not in itself exactly lateral, of course, having been created, often by groups positioned to pursue their own interests by manipulating cultural codes—is what becomes crucial, regardless of the perceived meaningfulness or level of internalization. This is a great convenience for those using such cultural codes for commercial purposes; as long as the code is widespread, it need not be imbibed in order to have the desired impact.

Playful uses of culture also make lemonade out of the lemons of superficial culture. By now, analysts have noted quite a bit of self-conscious, jokey distancing from popular culture by many engaged participants in its consumption—whether consuming TV programs (Liebes and Katz 1989), celebrity gossip (Gamson 1994), or tabloid accounts of the royal family (Billig 1992). Viewers joke that a character's death must mean a contract negotiation, for example, or gossip about stars and princesses while fully acknowledging that they neither care much about them nor accept much of what they're encountering as "real."

At least two significant phenomena might be hiding in the playful use of culture, in which participants quite consciously reject the "seriousness" of that which engages them. One simply puts an adaptive twist on the status-marker uses of culture often found in studies of high-culture consumption (Bourdieu 1984; Halle 1993): a skeptical, "seeing-through," joking relationship to popular culture is used to mark sophistication, to distinguish the user from the (more "vulgar") people who are duped into thinking it's real or meaningful. The status uses of culture are portable, and acknowledging the superficiality of culture—an engaged demonstration that there is nothing there but surface—becomes an opportunity to distinguish oneself from the riff-raff (Gamson 1998a).

Play amidst superficial culture, however, may also at times be a means of carrying on deeper work. If we take play as "free activity standing quite self-consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious'" (Huizinga 1956), and deep play as rendering "ordinary, everyday experience comprehensible by presenting it in terms of acts and objects which have had their practical consequences reduced... to the level of sheer appearances" (Geertz 1973, p. 443), we can begin to see why. My own work on celebrity watchers found, for example, among many participants actively consuming celebrity materials, both freewheeling gossip and much skeptical, pleasurable talk about the practices of image-management; similarly, Michael Billig's work on discussions of the royal family revealed a cynical tone, much joshing, and "an almost complete absence of uncritical deference," as images were exposed as images and the exposure became "part of the show." Through such playful, engrossed-but-unserious talk about royals and stars—who are placed outside "ordi-

(Gamson, continued)

nary" life as "not serious"–a whole range of more serious issues seem to be brought into comprehensible, and unthreatening, view: the strained relationship between hierarchy and egalitarianism, for instance, or the difficult everyday experiences of image-management, of self-as-show (Billig 1992; Gamson 1994). Popular culture is here deployed for engagement with issues of deep concern, but in a manner safe from consequence. Only a form perceived as shallow, emptied of grave consequences, can serve this oblique, yet socially significant, application. Superficial culture, here again, is meaningful not because it contains deeper subtexts but exactly because it does not, and not because it reveals its users as shallow dolts, but exactly because it allows them to find in superficiality an indirect route to seriousness.

Notes

[1]Thanks to Ann Swidler for commentary on the ideas contained in this essay

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Bowler: The Social Construction of an Art Market, continued

Twenty years ago, the significance of asylum art for sociological analysis might have appeared idiosyncratic. Recent developments suggest otherwise. Exhibition tours of the Prinzhorn Collection of the Art of the Mentally Ill in Europe (1980-81) and the United States (1984-85) merited extensive coverage by art critics in both specialized journals and the popular press. "Parallel Visions," a 1992 exhibition tour sponsored by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, juxtaposed the work of some thirty-four outsider artists (approximately one-half with a history of psychiatric incarceration) with the work of forty professional artists influenced by outsider art. Like the Prinzhorn Collection exhibition, "Parallel Visions" became the subject of reviews in forums ranging from *Art in America* to *The New York Times.* Addi-

tionally, both exhibitions were accompanied by elegant exhibition catalogs featuring, alongside the usual reproduction of works, essays by recognized experts, a move suggesting the claim to an established area of specialization.

Taken together, the exhibition tours of the Prinzhorn Collection and "Parallel Visions" may constitute a signal event in the reception of works traditionally the purview of the medical expert, occasional devotee, or private collector. Recent interest in the art of the insane, properly speaking, belongs to the more general surge of interest in outsider art that began to surface in the 1980s. Yet even within this more general trend, asylum art occupies a position of considerable significance. Amidst the proliferation of gallery exhibits, the one-man exhibition of Swiss artist Adolf Wölfli, a critically acclaimed "outsider genius" who produced all of his work as an inmate in a Bern psychiatric clinic, is important as a departure from the standard presentation of asylum artists in anonymous groups. Asylum artists like Wölfli, Martin Ramírez and Johann Hauser occupy prominent positions in the canon of outsider "masters" and "superstars") that has emerged. Scholarly interest has produced the first comprehensive survey of asylum art, *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane* (MacGregor 1989). Dealers report sharp rises in sales. Collectors pay five- and six-figures for works once considered largely unmarketable. As one *Wall Street Journal* reporter observed, the art of the insane has emerged as a "major art trend of the 1990s" (Wells 1992). What does sociology contribute to our understanding of this?

The "Career" of the Art of the Insane

The "career"[2] of the art of the insane, elsewhere referred to as the "discovery" of asylum art or the movement from category of artifact to art, originates in the European hospital collections of psychiatric art that began to be gathered in the later nineteenth century. The most famous remains that of German psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn at the Heidelberg Psychiatric Clinic where, by 1921, some five thousand works of drawing, painting, and sculpture had been amassed. Equally if not more important was the publication in 1922 of Prinzhorn's classic study of patient art, *Bildernei der Geisteskranken*.

Several factors distinguished *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* and its author from previous studies of patient art. A degree in art history preceded Prinzhorn's turn to medicine and psychiatry. Throughout the volume, he speaks with authority on a wide variety of art, including the work of artists of his own day, and draws on scholarship in fields ranging from psychiatry and art history to philosophy. Although Prinzhorn avoided using the word "art" (*Kunst*), adopting the more neutral term *Bildernei* or "image-making," he appears to have done so, at least in part, strategically: "It sets up a distinction between one class of created objects and another very similar which is dismissed..." (1972: 1). The fact that the volume contained no less than 187 reproductions is noteworthy by itself. But it is Prinzhorn's identification of ten "masters," for whom he combined biographical and clinical information with detailed descriptions of specific works, that remains most distinctive. In a passage devoted to the sculpture of Carl Genzel, for example, Prinzhorn writes of the "compelling execution" of a carving, comparing the emotion it evokes among viewers to the work of *Der Blaue Reiter* artist Franz Marc.

The comparison of Genzel with a representative of what was considered in certain artistic and intellectual circles to be the most advanced of the day – a comparison repeated throughout the book with different artists – was not incidental. As Collection curator Inge Jadi notes, materials chosen for inclusion were pre-selected in a very specific way. In a letter soliciting contributions from institutions, Prinzhorn requested works "that do not merely reproduce prototypes or remembrances from times when they were healthy, but rather are the expression of personal experience during illness. In a particularly telling line he asks potential donors to look for "outstanding isolated achievements" and is known to have rejected or withheld weaker images.[3]

By all accounts, the publication of Prinzhorn's book constituted a critical moment in the "discovery" of the art of the insane, provoking enthusiastic responses from artists ranging from Dadaist Sophie Tauber and Expressionist painter Paul Klee to the Surrealist artists André Breton, Hans Bellmer, Max Ernst and Paul Eluard. Jean Dubuffet later declared, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* "had an enormous influence on modern art."[4]

The influence to which Dubuffet refers can be measured by the emergence in this period of a set of practices intended to integrate the art of the asylum patient into the various institutional settings of established art: gallery exhibitions, collections by established artists, and publications in specialized journals. Among the early gallery exhibitions, a 1928 show at the Paris Galerie Vavin was "said to have been attended by all of Montparnasse" (MacGregor 1989: 281). Breton, who drew explicit connections between insanity and creativity in the first Manifesto of Surrealism (1924), is thought to have begun his collection of psychotic art during this period. Similarly, Eluard included works by asylum artists in his collection of contemporary and tribal art. The most prominent collection by far, of course, remains that of Dubuffet, the *Collection de l'Art Brut*, a significant portion of which is comprised by the art of the insane.

Among the earliest publications by an artist on asylum art, an article by Expressionist painter Alfred Kubin, appearing in the journal *Das Kunstblatt*, recorded the impressions of his visit to the Heidelberg Collection in 1922. On a painting by "schizophrenic master," Franz Pohl, he wrote: "Unquestionably a gift of genuis..."[5] As early as 1912, Klee had declared the importance of asylum art for the development of modern art, a conviction apparently strengthened by the images reproduced in *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* which he compared favorably with his own work (Klee 1964: 266; 1962: 183). For the Surrealists, as art historian Roger Cardinal (1992: 101) has observed, the psychotic artist constituted the "paradigm of the creative subject," a position

Breton set out most systematically in a 1953 essay where he invoked several of Prinzhorn's "masters" as examples of the new model of art (1953: 225).[6]

The "Institution" of Art in Modern Society

To what can we attribute this response? My research identifies three factors. First, an epistemological shift in the definition of insanity and mental functioning more generally, a shift which functioned to revitalize the purported connection between insanity and creativity popularized in Romanticism. Second, an aesthetic shift centering on the rejection of traditional modes of representation, a shift that directly informed modern artists' fascination not only with asylum art but primitive art and the art of children. Third, a social-institutional shift involving twentieth-century avant-garde artists' appropriation of the art of the insane as a device in their attack on modern society and the modern institution of art. The significance of this third factor, briefly described below, lies in the degree to which it illuminates the specifically *social* bases of the career of asylum art, a determinant typically ignored in art-historical accounts. This factor, as I show, not only demonstrates the contribution of the sociological approach to this topic but sheds light on central aspects of the contemporary market for the art of the insane.

A central point of agreement in otherwise competing definitions and theories of the early-twentieth century avant-garde lies in the recognition of the degree to which artists constructed their aesthetic philosophies around a protest against modern bourgeois society. Historically, this protest arises out of the decline of traditional systems of patronage, the rise of a commercial, capitalist market, and institutional differentiation of art from other social spheres. In practice, as Wolff (1981: 11) observes, these changes meant the "separation of the artist from any clear social group or class, as the older system of patronage was overtaken by the dealer-critic system, which left the artist in a precarious market." Like their Romantic counterparts, to the avant-garde artist, bourgeois values subordinate the imagination to reason and threaten to destroy the creative capacity of the individual. But the "rational" organization of bourgeois society, particularly after the onset of the first World War, appeared increasingly like madness to many artists and writers. In this context, the asylum artist functions as a principle of inversion. It is modern society, not the "madman" nor the artist derided for painting like a madman, which is insane. As Gilman (1985: 229) has incisively observed, the asylum artist becomes a "device, used in much the same way as other exotics have been traditionally used to present a critique of society."

As research by Bürger (1984), Huyssen (1986) and Williams (1989) has demonstrated, the avant-garde protest against bourgeois society extended to the modern *institution* of art: not simply established artistic norms and values but the institutional framework for the production, distribution, and reception of art in modern society. In practice, this meant a rebellion against the material conditions of a commercial, capitalist market: the commodification of art,

the intermediary figure of the dealer-critic, and the bourgeois consumption of aesthetic-cultural products for purposes of social mobility. In this context, asylum art becomes an effective weapon against prevailing artistic conventions. Goldwater (1986: 219), for example, cites Dada artists exultation of the art of the insane as proof that no acquired technique or training is necessary for artistic creation. A 1919 exhibition organized by Max Ernst and Johannes Baargeld is illustrative in this manner. Visitors to the exhibition viewed works by Erst, Baargeld, Arp, Klee and others displayed next to the art of children and folk painters, African sculpture, found objects and works by psychotics (Cardinal 1992: 104). According to Cardinal, the exhibit had been organized as a deliberate provocation against an exhibition of more conventional contemporary art shown in the same building.

The art of the insane thus appears as a part of a field of social debased objects (the "primitive," the scatalogical, the perverse) cultivated for shock value. By itself, this can be placed within the larger tradition of nineteenth century Bohemia. But the attraction of asylum art lies in something more than its capacity to shock. The avant-garde, as Gilman (1985: 228) notes, constructs a "mythopoesis of mental illness" transforming insanity into an aesthetic doctrine. The schizophrenic artist creates without regard for the established criteria of the gallery, museum, or academy – uncontaminated by the conventions or trends of the market. The isolating effects of madness and the sequestered space of the asylum thus appear as a guarantee of the art of the insane as a pure, spontaneous manifestation of the imagination.

The Politics of Appropriation and the Ideology of Authenticity

The art of the insane is constructed as an aesthetic category through a set of discourses and practices which turn on the question of authenticity: the art of the asylum patient is valorized as an "authentic art" through which the "inauthentic" character of bourgeois society and the modern institution of art is revealed. Free of exterior influence and the contaminating effects of the market, the asylum artist cast an aura of authenticity on an avant-garde whose own self-proclaimed "outsider" status became increasingly difficult to sustain as one vanguardist gesture after another was absorbed into the modernist canon. Only insanity, as Breton (1953: 227) declared, provides a guarantee of authenticity, "les garants de l'authenticité totale qui fait défaut partout ailleurs et dont nous sommes de jour en jour plus altérés."

Asylum art thus enters the domain of art on a paradox: it gains entrance to the "inside" on the condition that it remain marginal or, in other words, retain its "outsider" status.

This mode of appropriation has had distinct effects for the contemporary reception of asylum art, the most of notable of which may be the consistency with which the work of art is displaced from view. Because the question of authenticity hinges, ultimately, on the social condition of the artist, biography supersedes the aesthetic analysis to which conventional artists are submitted.[7] A survey of critical re-

sponses to the European and American tours of the Prinzhorn Collection, for example, documents reviewers' preoccupation with psychiatric background (Perin 1994). Objecting to the juxtaposition of works by "outsiders" and "insiders" in "Parallel Visions," one reviewer states:

> Looking at the show, you didn't get a feeling for just how strange the outsiders are, how far they diverge psychologically and biographically from the conventional model of the professional artist. Everything looked like art in about the same way (Johnson 1993: 88).

Preoccupation with biography is not peculiar to critics. As New York dealer Randall Morris reports, "When I speak to audiences, if I talk about surface tension, or even say that the artist can paint, I lose them. If I talk about how strange the artist is, they love me. The stranger the human being, the more they like it."[8]

The extent to which the work of art enters critical discourse is marked by a proliferation of terms largely absent from the description and assessment of conventional artists, a difference deriving, in large part, from the attempt to discern signs of psychopathology in the work. It is not, however, the dispassionate language of the clinician nor the academic terminology of the art historian/critic but rather a vocabulary of the exotic and sensational. Characterizing the Prinzhorn exhibition as "a haunting treasure trove of 'mad' art," for example, one prominent critic issues a "warning to the viewer" about the "terror of unanswerable riddles" (Ashbery 1985: 61-3). Similarly, "Parallel Visions" is described as a "troubling" and "mysterious" "crazyquilt" (DeCarlo and Dintenfass 1992: 35).

Attempts to provide a single, comprehensive explanation for the current surge of interest in asylum art (and outsider art, more generally) have been largely unsuccessful. According to one expert, the recent popularity of outsider art constitutes a reaction against a "postmodernism dedicated to dismantling Romanticist myths that informed modernism" (Cubbs 1994: 83-4). At the same time, a prominent critic characterizes the interest in marginal art as part of a postmodern fetishization of "incoherence" and "nostalgia" (Kuspit 1991: 135-466). Less dramatically (and more convincingly), interviews with dealers, critics and buyers indicate the influence of a art market without clear direction, lower prices than that commanded by established, conventional artists and the search for an "innocent," uncontrived art (DeCarlo and Dintenfass 1992; Wells 1992).

If the element of social protest so central to the early-twentieth century avant-garde no longer obtains, a trace of vanguardism nevertheless remains. Expertise and ownership appear to confer a particular status: entry into the cutting edge of marginality. As art critic Donald Kuspit (1991: 134) has wryly observed: appropriation "garners sociopolitical credit for its 'discovery' of and 'responsibility' to the 'lesser' art, almost as though bringing alien art into the fold were a civic service."

My research identifies a trend with two implications in the contemporary market for asylum art. The stakes on authenticity have risen as a consequence of the attempt by experts and collectors to redefine the "art of the insane" in the context of changing psychiatric practices. The de-institutionalization of the mentally ill, the development of new psychotropic drugs, and the creation of art therapy programs within hospitals have led several prominent experts to argue that "true" asylum art is now largely a thing of the past. According to MacGregor (1990:12), "most images made by [the mentally ill], especially now that treatment involves the use of anti-psychotic and mood altering drugs, and the procedures of art therapy, [are] simply amateur art; mediocre, cliché-ridden and dull." Similar judgments have been voiced by art historian Roger Cardinal (1979: 39) and prominent collector Sam Farber (1990: 7). The use of psychotropic drugs, according to Michel Thévoz, curator of the *Collection de l'Art Brut*, has had a "fatal impact on artistic creativity within the clinical context," wherein "patients have moved from a condition of exaltation and possession to one of drugged stupor" (1994: 67-8).

The effect of this process of redefinition is to create a rarefied market for a limited field of "authentic" works. Although Prinzhorn initiated application of the term "master" to distinguish a set group of artists within the Collection, the function of this application was to provide a point of comparison between asylum and established artists – in other words, to insert the artistic production of the insane into the discourse on art. Use of the term "master" by the contemporary expert, in contrast, has a distinctly "gatekeeping" effect: to construct a basis upon which to demarcate the "authentic" from the "inauthentic" work. Two implications arise from this, the first of which is the notable trend of rising prices for works by "authentic" asylum artists. Paintings by Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930), for example, now regularly sell for $30,000. A drawing by Martin Ramírez (1885-1960) recently sold for a record $180,000 (Wells 1992: A1, A14.) The second implication, one less obvious, lies in the development of a system of tiers by which works are judged on the basis of artist biography. The idea of a "high outsider art"[9] versus "low" might strike one as a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron, an absurdity. But then, as any but the most casual bystander might observe, such contradiction is nothing new in the history of art.

Notes

[2] I am taking the concept of the "career" of the work of art from Zolberg's (1992) influential analysis of primitive art.

[3] Prinzhorn quoted in Jadi (1984:2).

[4] Dubuffet quoted in MacGregor (1989: 292).

[5] Kubin quoted in MacGregor (1989: 236).

[6] Questions of direct influence remain the subject of contestation. See Bowler (1997: 23) for an overview of this debate.

[7] I am not suggesting that biography does not play an important role in the career of established or conventional artists. The attempt by various art historians to "read" Picasso's work through his life is but one case in point. My point here is to highlight the absence of critical analysis to which works by conventional artists are subjected.

[8] Morris quoted in DeCarlo and Dintenfass (1992: 38).

[9] I am taking the idea of a "high outsider art" from the analysis of primitive art by Errington (1994).

(Bowler, continued)

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On Moral Panics: A Reply to Beisel and Donovan
Erich Goode, SUNY Stony Brook and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, Hebrew Univ.

The authors of *Moral Panics*, Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, enjoy spirited, constructive criticism; in fact, we have engaged in it with one another's work (Ben-Yehuda, 1990; Goode, 1991). In contrast, criticism based on ignorance and confusion is likely to generate bafflement and irritation rather than a hearty spirit of synergy.

Unfortunately, Beisel and Donovan's "problems" with the notion of moral panics (1998) are not firmly grounded in fact and logic; inevitably, their comments are unproductive. Let's look at a few of their misinformed claims. (We ignore the fact that they misspelled Ben-Yehuda's name.) We offer only the following.

First of all, the moral panics concept is not a "theory," as the authors charge. This misunderstanding is absolutely crucial; it is a confusion that runs throughout their critique. The moral panic falls into what Herbert Blumer (1969) calls a "sensitizing concept." There is no explanation to the concept at all; explanations inhere in the various theories that

account for the explosion of moral panics. (That is, the elite-engineered, grass roots, and interest-group theories we discussed in detail.) It makes about as much sense to refer to the moral panics concept as a theory as it does to refer to social class, gender, social interaction, religion, deviance, or social mobility as "theories." The moral panics concept has a conceptual and theoretical *foundation*, of course, which is part symbolic interactionism and part constructionism. If Beisel and Donovan wish to bring down those theoretical edifices, they ought to be clear about their goal.

Second, Beisel and Donovan state that we claim that the 19th century Women's Christian Temperance Union and, by extension, attempts to institute national alcohol prohibition, was a moral panic. We did not. In fact, we make a clear distinction between moral panics and moral crusades, and state that the WCTU and the pro-prohibitionists make up a moral crusade, not a moral panic. Moral crusades do *not*, by definition, include the element of disproportionality.

(That is, it may or may not exist in the moral crusade, but it is not one of its defining elements.) Since disproportionality is the very point of the criticism they are making in that paragraph, again, its force evaporates when exposed to the fresh air of fact. We stated quite clearly that the moral crusade concept (not theory) is an intellectual prelude or *ancestor* of the moral panic (1994, pp.13-16), not the thing itself. (Are birds the same thing as dinosaurs? We think not.)

Third, again, we did *not* say that the anti-abortion (or "pro-life") movement is a moral panic. What we *actually* said was that *if* the fetus is to be regarded as a full-fledged human being, the anti-abortion movement *cannot* be seen as a moral panic (pp.47-48), since abortion *does* result in the loss of human life. (If the fetus is seen as unwanted tissue, that is another matter.) In other words, we state almost exactly the opposite of what Beisel and Donovan *said* we said.

Fourth, in response to Beisel and Donovan's (and Waddington's) point that sociologists are "more likely to attribute the term 'moral panic' to groups and movements we do not like," may we state that one moral panic we discussed, the anti-nuclear movement, is one that the senior author has wholeheartedly supported, to the point of protesting, marching, and petitioning (Goode, 1992, pp.403-404). Such are the complexities of social life.

Fifth, by arguing that some moral panics center around children does locate one source of concern and heated emotion, but it does not explain the *content* or *target* of the panic, nor does it explain its *timing* (Ben-Yehuda, 1986). Why, for instance, satanic ritual abuse? Why an intense, heated fear of a nonexistent threat? And why does it erupt among some segments of the population, in some areas of the country (and in certain countries), and at a particular time (Victor, 1993)? Are Beisel and Donovan truly uninterested in these questions? Are *all* concerns about children equally grounded in fact and reason? To locate a vulnerable social category is not the same as understanding why one set of concerns becomes dominant rather than another.

Sixth, contrary to what Beisel and Donovan claim, we do not *dwell* on threats to children. Drug abuse cuts across the age spectrum and is most characteristic of young adults; a high proportion of accused witches were middle aged to elderly women; and with the case of the Canudos of Brazil, children were among the folk devils, not the threatened population, and, as we explained, were obliterated brutally. Did Beisel and Donovan miss all this? Other moral panics that are often analyzed as classic instances of the genre: the Stalinist purges, McCarthyism in the 1950s, and virulent antisemitism, in which children figure practically not at all.

Seventh, the authors take the virtual disappearance of collective behavior "theory" in the study of social movements as an indication that moral panics "theory" has no value in that area. As the senior author so carefully points out in *Collective Behavior* (1992, pp.399-404), social movements form a continuum, not an undifferentiated, monolithic unity. Some are remarkably collective behavior-like, that is, they burst on the scene, they are relatively leader-less, the goals members have are unclear, emotions run high, and then, just as swiftly, they dissipate. Others are remarkably organized, hierarchical, goal-oriented, and stable. As the senior author explained in detail in that book (pp.416-429), resource mobilization is not the only deer in the forest, it does not account for all aspects of social movement behavior, nor does it account for all social movements. A bit more knowledge of social movements would have saved the authors from making such misinformed statements as the ones they made in their commentary.

Eighth, it is hard to know what to make of Beisel and Donovan's charge that the moral panics concept "diminishes" the power of conservatives and "slights" the role that culture plays in "reproducing" the existing hierarchy. Our intention in exploring moral panics is precisely the opposite. There are few instances in the history of humanity in which the fear of a supposed threat and the persecution of persons supposedly responsible for that threat underscores the subaltern status of women more than the Renaissance witchcraze. Current rates of incarceration of African-Americans on drug charges, so much harsher for crack possession than for the possession of powdered cocaine, are generated by a moral panic which, in turn, is fueled by cultural definitions that sustain hierarchies. Moral panics are *about* attempts to use notions of right and wrong to establish dominance. (Though they need not always be recognized as such by contending parties, and the supposed rationality that observers tend to see in much human behavior is more often a construct than a concrete reality.) It's curious how Beisel and Donovan got things so completely turned around.

In short, Beisel and Donovan's comments on the moral panics concept generally, and our treatment of it specifically, are misinformed. Their critical comments are unproductive, and their attempt to extirpate the notion by root and branch from the sociological literature must be judged a failure.

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Reply to Goode and Ben-Yehuda
Nicola Beisel and Brian Donovan, Northwestern

Before the main point of our piece "The Problem with Moral Panics" gets lost in this exchange, let us restate it: the field of moral politics is an area crying out for careful work by cultural sociologists. As we said before, good theories of moral reform demonstrate the power and importance of cultural explanations. An adequate sociology of moral reform movements, and of the public expression of moral concern, is attentive to the content of such movements, the historical context in which they occur, and the agency of actors: it is, in short, good sociology. Our piece discussed the reasons why we have found "moral panic" an inadequate approach to understanding moral issues and politics. We did not set out to write a review of Goode and Ben-Yehuda's book (never mind their oeuvre). Rather, we took (and take) issue with "moral panics" as a description of responses to social problems, and with the theoretical assumptions that inhere in the concept. These problems do not evaporate once we agree that people writing about moral panics are using a "sensitizing concept" instead of articulating a theory. In their response, Goode and Ben-Yehuda reassert the very distinctions that make moral panic research problematic: panic/crusade, and proportionality/disproportionality.

The theoretical foundation of the moral panic concept is a holdover from early crowd theories that make wrongheaded assumptions about why and how people act collectively. These theories typically foreground social-psychological and social stress and neglect human rationality and agency, and historical context. Thus, Goode and Ben-Yehuda write that moral panics are a response to a perceived threat, and that the "sentiment generated or stirred up by this threat can be referred to as a kind of fever; it can be characterized by heightened emotion, fear, dread, anxiety, hostility, and a strong feeling of righteousness" (1994, p. 31). To explain the timing of such outbreaks, moral panic theorists, including Goode and Ben-Yehuda, cite social strain: "moral panics arise in troubled times, during which a serious threat is sensed to the interests or values of the society as a whole or to segments of a society" (1994, p. 32). Goode and Ben-Yehuda's moral panic "concept," with its reliance on contagion and strains, resurrects 1950s collective behavior theory, with all its attendant assumptions about human motivation and agency. We disagree with those assumptions.

The entire enterprise of moral panic research *rests* on how sociologists judge the rationality of the response given the size of the threat. As Goode and Ben-Yehuda note, "the concept of the moral panic rests on disproportionality" (their italics). Goode and Ben-Yehuda spend much effort in their 1994 book justifying claims about when a response is "proportional." We do not find these justifications satisfactory. Take, for example, the issue of "experts." Goode and Ben-Yehuda assert that because "experts claim that the risk of contamination from nuclear power plants is

minuscule, a proposition that the overwhelming majority of the public refuses to accept" that the "facts of the case presumably support a pro-industry (that is, a "conservative") position, and the exaggerated or disproportionate fears of the public (that is, the "panic") support an anti-industry or "liberal" position" (1994, p. 50). But expertise is socially constructed, movements and countermovements offer competing experts, and the interesting question is why claims and claimants become credible. Useful research would examine why public understandings of nuclear power changed, not whether the anti-nuclear movement is a moral panic. We would point to Gamson and Modigliani's 1989 article, "Nuclear Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power" as a useful approach to understanding the anti-nuclear movement. Lumping the movement into a group called "moral panics" is not.

We stand by our observation that moral panic research slights the power and rationality of conservative social movements. To label something a "panic" is largely an act of dismissal. Goode's support of the anti-nuclear movement (which fits one but not all of their criteria for a "panic," see p. 131-132 of their book), does not negate what we claim is a trend of the scholarship. The political moment of moral panic theorizing occurs when the scholar sets up the scale of proportionality, when s/he decides that Threat X is worthy of Response Y. Scholars of moral panics tend to select cases wherein the panicked are rural right-wingers. As James Jasper notes, "the literature on moral panics has grown rapidly in recent years, as the newly rejuvenated Christian right in the United States has promoted censorship in the arts and education and concerns over sex, drugs, and other activities" (1997, p. 438). If members of the Christian right populated the ranks of sociology, we would expect to hear about an entirely new set of panics: Take Back the Night rallies and welfare reform protests.

In our earlier piece we contrasted the flawed collective behavior and moral panic approaches to resource mobilization theory, which assumes that collective actors are rational. We never asserted that resource mobilization explains all, or all aspects of, social movements. More useful for our work have been culture-sensitive concepts and explanations found in works such as Morris and Mueller's *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* and Johnson and Klandermans's *Social Movements and Culture*. These volumes do not exhaust the ways to analyze social movements, but they are attentive to human agency and do not dismiss protesters' claims as products of contagion.

In their book Goode and Ben-Yehuda do indeed distinguish "moral crusades" from "moral panics," although it is not clear why a given phenomenon falls in one or the other camp. They argue that a moral crusade is "not *necessarily* a moral panic" (GB p. 19), and in a moral panic

Culture

Porterfield, Nolan. *Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax, 1867-1948*. Baltimore, MD: University of Illinois Press. Porterfield gives us a clear and detailed picture of the folklorist, Alan Lomax, who, while working for the Library of Congress in the 1930s, was responsible for preserving much of the world of Southern popular music that was largely untouched by commercial influences while working. Lomax's most notable find was Huddie "Leadbelly" Leadbetter, the profoundly original performer. In addition, Porterfield reveals Lomax's condescending chauvinism, song doctoring, and attempts to profit from Leadbelly and other performers.

Ahlquist, Karen. *Democracy at the Opera: Music, Theater and Culture in New York City*. Baltimore, MD: University of Illinois Press. Ahlquist provides a detailed account of opera in New York City in the decades when it was a widely enjoyed popular entertainment and before it was captured as 'fine art' by the nouveau riche founders of the Metropolitan Opera Company.

Becker, Penny Edgell and Nancy L. Eisland, editors. *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press. The authors provide a rich harvest of contemporary religious experience in contexts ranging from gay bars to mega churches.

Four from Cornell University Press

Harzig, Christiane, editor. *Peasant Maids - City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America*. In a truly intercultural project, a team of historians follows several groups of peasant women from rural Germany, Ireland, Sweden, and Poland to urban Chicago. The authors show how their lives changed and how they eased the urbanization process creating vibrant public spheres for ethnic expression.

Paperno, Irina. *Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevky's Russia*. Using a wide variety of documentary sources, Paperno describes the search for the meaning of suicide in late nine-

teenth century Russia. Durkheim anyone?

Lahusen, Thomas. *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin's Russia*. Lahusen found that the prize-winning Stalinist era novelist, Vasilii Azhaev, had left an extensive personal archive integrating his personal history and the struggles over his writing with the political history of his time. This book shows in stark detail how the Soviet effort to integrate literature and life, utopia and reality failed so spectacularly.

Emberley, Julia V. *The Cultural Politics of Fur*. Emberley traces the history of fur as a symbol of wealth and sexuality from early modern times to the present. This suggests that the fight against fur is not so much about protecting animals as it is a battle of gendered power and submission.

Princeton University Press' Nine

Houde, Anne. *Sex, Color, and Mate Choice in Guppies*. If you've ever had the critters, you know its about dress and dance styles.

Garelik, Rhonda K. *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the Fin de Siecle*. You connect the dots. A very good book about the auto-construction of the dandy and literary aesthete in the late nineteenth century, their peculiarly charged relationship with women, and parallel developments a century later in the likes of the dandy formerly known as Prince, Madonna, Jacques Derrida, and Jacqueline Onassis.

Sternhell, Zeev. *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*. Sternhell shows that the socialist project of the early Zionists served as a rhetorical device for legitimizing the formation of a Jewish national state. According to Sternhell, the founders of the state understood that socialism and the other universalistic ideologies like liberalism were incompatible with cultural and territorial nationalism.

Borneman, John. *Settling Accounts: Violence, Justice, and Accountability in Postsocialist Europe*. Borneman finds

that in those formerly socialist European countries where some form of retributive justice has been enacted, there has been less recourse to collective retributive violence.

Hyde, Alan. *Bodies of Law*. In his study of the human body as it is revealed in legal codes, Hyde show that the asserted boundaries of gender and race are constructed for changing political purposes rather then being part of natural law.

Reeves, Eileen. *Painting the Heavens: Art and Science in the Age of Galileo*. The naturalism of many leading painters of the seventeenth century lead them to follow the new scientific discoveries that often got them into trouble with the Christian church. For example, their realistic rendering of the pocked-marked moon was an anathema to religious leaders who had understood a smooth incandescent moon as a representation of the Virgin Mary's Immaculate conception.

Fineberg, Jonathan. *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist*. Many of the leading modernist painters collected children's art and this work often found its way into the works of painters ranging from Matisse and Klee to Miro and Pollock.

Ross, Steven J. *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America*. Many films made between 1907 and 1930 challenged the dominant political ideas of the day, and filmmakers repeatedly clashed with censors, Wall Street investors, and federal agencies over the images audiences would be allowed to see. The increasingly lavish studio productions shifted popular attention away from issues of class and industrial exploitation to the pleasures of the emerging "classless" consumer society.

Garon, Sheldon. *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life*. To an extent inconceivable to most Westerners, state directives about the family, welfare, and sex lives are embraced by Japanese citizens. In five case studies he shows how average citizens have cooperated with governmental officials

in the areas of welfare, prostitution, household savings, and controlling "religious cults."

Five Resource Works from Haworth Press

Cooper, R. Lee and Wayne S. *Haney. Rock Music in American Popular Culture II: More Rock 'n Roll Resources.* Songs are collected and described by subjects such as cars, cigarettes, marriage, answer songs, doo-wop harmony, sex, and science fiction.

Plasketes, George. *Images of Elvis Presley in American Culture, 1977-1997.* The book explores the continuing fascination with the king over the past twenty years.

Bryant, Wayne M. *Bisexual Characters in Film: From Anais to Zee.* Bryant looks at the contribution of bisexuals to movie making and the tensions over the depiction of non-heterosexual relationships on the screen.

Stevens, Norman D., editor. *Postcards in the Library: Invaluable Visual Resources.* The authors list and explore archives of postcards, and they also include articles developing the arguments for preserving this form of "ephemera," problems of preservation, and collection organization. Why don't they scan them so we all can have a look?

Sullivan, Larry E., editor. *Pioneers, Passionate Ladies, and Private Eyes.* This work provides a world of information about dime novels, series books, and paperbacks, with a focus on their authors, the publishing industry, and the legal climate in which they flourished.

Four from Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Edelstein, Alex. *Total Propaganda: From Mass Culture to Popular Culture.* Edelstein argues that propaganda that was once the tool of the privileged few is now propagated by the widest possible range of interests about an increasingly wide range of specific topics.

Webster, James G. and Patricia F. Phalen. *The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model.* These authors argue against the prevailing POMO notion of a discriminating au-

dience imbedded in the work of pop culturalists and suggest why the classical notion of a single dependant mass audience is still appropriate.

McCombs, Maxwell, Donald L. Shaw and David Weaver, editors. *Communication and Democracy: Exploring the Intellectual Frontiers in Agenda-Setting Theory.* This is a very useful update of the first two editors' classic observation that the media do not so much inform and persuade as they set the agendas of public discourse.

Vanderford, Marsha, and David H. Smith. *The Silicone Breast Implant Story: Communication and Uncertainty.* This study shows the interrelationships between public information and private decisions by tracing the trajectory of the health controversy over silicone breast implants.

Four from Duke University Press

Handler, Richard and Eric Gable. *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg.* A first rate case study of the fabrication of authenticity.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, editor. *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction.* Sedgwick gets the award for "Best Title of the Issue." Like much in the fictional world it explores, it congers multiple images. The authors explore the queer worlds of taste including dance, wizardry, exorcism, flogging, Zionist desire, and Internet sexuality as seen in the works of many, including Toni Morrison, T.H. White, William James, and Virginia Woolf.

Kintz, Linda. *Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions that Matter in Right-Wing America.* Kintz focuses on the books and videotapes that are created for right-wing Christians and tries to get at why so many women are attracted to what is often seen as an antiwoman perspective. She finds the answer in the systematic cultivation of the emotions.

Azoulay, Katya Gibel. *Black, Jewish, and Interracial: It's Not the Color of Your Skin, but the Race of Your Kin, and Other Myths of Identity.* Based on her own experience as well as historical accounts, Azoulay challenges deeply ingrained assumptions about identity and explores the construction

of complementary racial identities.

Harper Collins' Six

Pells, Richard. *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II.* While we tried to Americanize Europe following World War 2, Pells argues, the Europeans have successfully retained their identity and adopted only selectively from American commercial culture. But note the word is "Europeans European national identities have melded and the U.S. continues to coopt from them. Pells ends by asserting that the trend is toward the globalization of Western culture.

Risen, Jim and Judy Thomas. *Wrath of Angels: The Inside Story of America's Abortion Wars.* The interesting bit is on why the Catholic Church refused to become the primary sponsoring force in the movement, surrendering the role to the Fundamentalist Christian Right.

Cullen, Jim. *Born in the U.S.A.: Bruce Springsteen and the American Tradition.* A natural for American Studies courses, Cullen argues that the import of the Boss is not in his concert performances or record sales but as heir of the tradition of Whitman, Lincoln, Steinbeck, and King.

Gordon, W. Terrence. *Marshall McLuhan: Escape into Understanding.* This is an "authorized biography" so don't expect to learn that "the medium is the message" was coined after a session with a psychic, but it is good to get beyond the cliches and into McLuhan's unique way of thinking.

Taylor, Gary. *Cultural Selection: Why Some Achievements Withstand the Test of Time - and Others Don't.* Misusing analogies to classical genetics, Taylor argues the unremarkable, that culture is always grounded in those memories of the past that fit with the needs of the dominant interests of the present.

Diamond, Jared. *Why is Sex Fun? The Evolution of Human Sexuality.* Diamond doesn't get to the fun part. Arguing from evolutionary genetics, he concludes that it is the incessant sexual arousal that marks us as human.

Four on constructing memory from Harvard University Press

Rhea, Joseph Tilden. *Race Pride and the American Identity.* In this extremely well researched and written book Rhea makes a detailed and insightful analysis of the ways in which the collective memory of/for Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans has been constructed in the recent struggles over the National Park Service monuments to Wounded Knee, the Custer Battlefield, the internment of Japanese Americans, the Alamo, and the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Site. Rhea shows that the Park Service which, for most of its history, had accented Anglo hegemony has, in over the past two decades, been moved to celebrate the struggles of minorities for a place in American society pretty much in the terms set by each of the minorities.

Herf, Jeffrey. *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanies.* Based on studies in the archives of Cold War Eastern and Western Germany, Herf shows the quite different ways that the two regimes came to terms with the legacy of Nazi Germany in general and the Holocaust in particular.

Cross, Gary. *Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood.* The author reads the endless array of twentieth century action toys and fashion dolls as exemplifying what adults want for themselves and for their children.

Marling, Karal Ann. *Graceland: Going Home with Elvis.* For its take on Elvis, the Harvard University Press has turned to Karal Marling for a gushing personal view of the King's rise, death, and funeral. Here, unlike the earlier books in this sub-genera of Elvis works, Marling has substituted numerous sketches for the usual set of pictures.

Fully Fifteen from the University of California Press

Boyarin, Daniel. *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man.* Analyzing ancient and modern text, Boyarin shows that the Jewish model of masculinity is quite different from the aggressively dominant male of Christendom. He finds rabbis, studi-

ous, family-oriented men as the prime object of female desire and community respect.

Illouz, Eva. *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism.* Illouz finds that the experience of true love is deeply imbedded in the experience of consumer capitalism.

Calavita, Kitty, Henry N. Pontell, and Robert H. Tillman. *Big Money Crime: Fraud and Politics in the Savings and Loan Crisis.* Based on numerous interviews and recently declassified documents, the authors show the deliberately fraudulent actions and political collusion (not innocent policy errors) that made for the theft of $500 million dollars from American taxpayers in the savings and loan debacle.

Davis, Susan G. *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience.* Davis provides a detailed reading of Sea World, the most elaborate nature theme park. She finds an increasing integration of advertising, entertainment, and education, in effect, the merchandising of compassion.

Hardacre, Helen. *Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan.* Hardacre uses the Japanese religious ritual for aborted fetuses to explore the nature of power relations in intercourse, contraception, and abortion.

Schwartz, Vanessa R. *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siecle Paris.* Schwartz describes the emergence of what she calls mass culture in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century: boulevards, the mass press, public display of corpses at the morgue, wax museums, panoramas, and early film.

Bonnell, Victoria E. *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin.* Bonnell reproduces 100 of the political posters of Soviet-era Russia that were created to shape Soviet sensibilities.

Ramaswamy, Sumathi. *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891-1970.* The movement for Tamil language revival and separatism are described by focusing on discourses of love, labor, and lifeways.

Ward, Brian. *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations.* Rather than seeing r&b and soul music as a reflection of heightened black consciousness, Ward shows that the music, the broadcasting, and recording industries were directly linked and an essential element of the civil rights struggle.

DeVeaux, Scott. *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History.* Nicely complementing Ward's book, DeVeau details the role that the bebop movement in jazz played in heightening black consciousness and paving the way for the civil rights movement.

Ullman, Sharon. *Sex Seen: The Emergence of Modern Sexuality in America.* Focusing on Sacramento, California, Ullman shows how the current ideas about gender roles, prostitution, divorce, and sexuality generally emerged and were tested in the court cases surrounding early movies, vaudeville, and popular magazines.

Mackenzie, Angus. *Secrets: The CIA's War at Home.* Based on fifteen years of investigative work, Mackenzie shows the CIA's systematic efforts to suppress and censor information.

Hass, Kristin Ann. *Mourning for America: Dog Tags, American Memory, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.* Grounding her analysis in the American funerary traditions, Hass shows the importance of material symbols from the dog-tags of dead soldiers to the Viet Nam War Memorial in the changing collective memory about the Viet Nam War.

Griffith, R. Marie. *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission.* With findings that are delightfully counter-intuitive, Griffith shows important connections between right-wing evangelical Christian women and feminists to whom they so often seem opposed.

Lehan, Richard. *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History.* The European city is read against the decline of feudalism and the rise of empire; the American city against the wilderness and then the in-creasingly fragmented megalopolis.

(Beisel and Donovan, continued)

"concern and fear are not *strictly* a product of the magnitude of the threat" (p. 20) (italics theirs). Furthermore, they assert that a moral crusade is created by "moral entrepreneurs," in their words, "no entrepreneur, no crusade," (p. 20) while "at some point moral panics generate..."moral entrepreneurs"" (p. 28). We regret our earlier misrepresentation of their argument, but believe our confusion is warrented. Moral reform movements, like all social movements, require leaders who frame issues to appeal to potential members and the public for support. The important question, which is addressed in framing approaches to social movements, is how frames work in given historical contexts (see Snow et al 1986). To understand moral reform movements as created by moral agitators ignores the interests and grievances of potential supporters.

In response to Goode and Ben-Yehuda's fifth and sixth points: we never argued that they dwell on threats to children. What we pointed out was that virtually all of the instances of moral panics they cite concern threats to children. Indeed their work, like that of other moral panic researchers, would be more satisfying if they gave more thought to why kids figure so prominently in many moral panics. By pointing out that moral reform movements often invoke threats to children we did not presume to explain the content, target, or timing of all moral reform movements. As we've said before, an adequate explanation of a moral reform movement provides careful consideration of the movement's content and historical context. Blaming such movements on "troubled times," and the spread of moral claims on social contagion, does neither.

We agree that the power to establish right and wrong is an important means by which groups establish dominance. Our disagreement is with how Goode and Ben-Yehuda propose to study this process. Goode and Ben-Yehuda maintain that their moral panic approach explains 250 years of women being burned as witches in four European countries, as well as the contemporary drug incarceration rates of African-Americans. We assert that they failed to provide adequate sociological and historical explanations of these events, and that the political prescriptions that follow from the moral panics approach are equally wanting.

ASA Annual Meeting Update

The annual meeting of the American Sociologcal Association will beheld on August 21-25, 1998 in San Francisco, CA. This year, "Culture Day" is Monday, August 24. Michael Schudson has arranged for several exciting panels.

Joshua Gamson is organizing a session on *Audiences*, with papers exploring both the definition of social audiences as well as the role of the audiences in cultural production.

Karen Cerulo is organizing a session on *The Future of Identity Studies*. Papers will suggest new sites and theoretical frames for the analysis of identity.

Sarah Corse and Sharon Hays are organizing *Hierarchies of Culture*, a session addressing the social processes that create hierarchies, the forms they take, and their impact on embeddedness in larger systems of social relations.

Magali Larson is organizing a session on *PoliticalCulture*. Papers will focus on empirical studies of political culture with a special emphasis on the ways in which ordinary citizens make sense of the political domain.

Lynette Spillman is organizing *Territory and Meanings*, with papers exploring the cultural processes and political consequences of ways of imagining territory.

Members may also find a special ASA teaching workshop of interest. Vera Zohlberg is organizing Art Worlds: *Teaching Sociology of Culture and the Arts*. Howard S. Becker will present the approach he has developed over the years. Panelists Jeffrey Goldfarb, Larry Gross, Bruce Jackson, and Raymonde Moulin will discuss and comment on Becker's ideas.

Roundtable sessions will be held immediately before the section business meeting. Robert Dunn has organized a bevy of exciting topics for the day. This year, several of the section networks also will gather at designated roundtables. Check your program for the various activities the network organizers have planned.

The section's business meeting and reception will round out the day.

Submitting to *Culture*

Interested in submitting an essay, a critique, or a commentary to *Culture*? The editor considers submissions year round. Send your work to:

Karen A. Cerulo
343 Spruce Avenue
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The editor is happy to discuss any ideas prior to submission.

Articles as well as comments and announcements must be submitted in three forms.

1) Hard copy version of the work.
2) 3.5 floppy disk version of the work readable in Microsoft Word -- *IBM versions only!*
3) 3.5 floppy disk version of the work in Rich Text Format or Text Only format.

Email attachments are sometimes accepted in lieu of computer disks. Contact the editor for relevant information (cerulo@rci.rutgers.edu).