This book examines the biological underpinnings of religion. We can only experience, the book argues, what our bodies allow us to experience. As a consequence, religious thought and feeling are heavily influenced by our sensory organs, emotional programs, sexual sensibilities, and the neural structure of our brains. Studying “spirituality in the flesh” opens up new and exciting agendas for understanding the nature and value of human religiosity. This exploration of embodied spirituality establishes middle ground between the explanations of religion typically made by either scientists or humanists. The book takes most scientific interpreters to task for failing to understand the inherently cultural aspects of embodied experience, even as he chides most religion scholars for ignoring new knowledge about the biological substrates of human thought and behavior. Each chapter takes up a different facet of embodied experience and shows the ways it helps us understand just how and why humans reconstruct their worlds in religious ways. Emotional programs such as fear or wonder, altered consciousness, sexuality, pain, and spatial orientation to the environment provide critical categories that are used to interpret selected episodes in American religious history. Topics as diverse as apocalypticism, nature religion, Native American peyotism, and the sexual experimentalism found in 19th-century communal societies illustrate how the study of spirituality in the flesh enriches our appreciation of religion.

Introduction

Torben Grodal

in Embodied Visions: Evolution, Emotion, Culture and Film
This chapter advocates an embodied approach to studying the film experience because mind and body is a functional totality, and it argues that film studies and other fields within the humanities would benefit greatly by cooperating with the sciences, especially evolutionary studies and cognitive and neurological science. It describes an approach called bioculturalism that combines scientific research on the embodied human mind with cultural analysis; it further discusses why the neglect of the biological aspects of humans has led to problematic research in film studies and the humanities in general, and some of the reasons that the humanities have been hostile to science and to Darwinism. It discusses how central features of films are molded by emotions and cognitive structures that evolved in prehistoric Pleistocene hunter-gatherer societies, and demonstrates why those social constructionist descriptions of films that take language and discourse as their models miss how basic aspects of the film experience take place in nonlinguistic perceptual, emotional, and muscular parts of the embodied brain. It finally provides an overview of the content of the book.

Incarnate Experience
RICHARD KEARNEY and KASCHA SEMONOVITCH

in Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality
Published in print: 2011 Published Online: September 2011
DOI: 10.5422/fordham/9780823234615.003.0008

This chapter deals with different kinds of experiences that pertain to corporeality. It distinguishes between “embodied experience” and “incarnate experience” where the latter includes visitations of the vertical or transcendent. This distinction between embodied and incarnate experience is not to advocate any kind of dualism; rather, it is an attempt to be attentive to modes of givenness that are mutually informing but phenomenologically distinct. Unlike embodied experiences, which are “acquired” or “provoked,” incarnate experiences indicate the overtaking of self by a divine Stranger. With detailed histories from three exemplary mystics — Saint Teresa of Avila, Rūzbihān Baqī, and Rabbi Dov Baer — this chapter presents evidence of the multisensory manifestation of the sacred Other, arguing that mystical sensibility must be understood to include an extra “sense” of balance, harmony, and discernment in addition to the standard five senses.
Texture - A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading

Peter Stockwell

This book represents the latest advances in cognitive poetics. It builds feeling and embodied experience on to the insights into meaningfulness that the cognitive approach to literature has achieved in recent years. Taking key familiar concepts such as characterisation, tone, empathy, and identification, the book aims to describe the natural experience of literary reading in a thorough and principled way. It draws on stylistics, psycholinguistics, critical theory and neurology to explore the nature of reading verbal art. The aim is a new cognitive aesthetics of literature for its readers.

Situated approaches to musical experience

Christoph Seibert

In Music and Consciousness 2: Worlds, Practices, Modalities

Informed by a review of recent attempts in cognitive science to overcome head-bound conceptions of the mind, this chapter investigates the contribution of ‘situated’ approaches to understanding music and consciousness, focusing on musical experience. It develops a systematic framework for discriminating between situated approaches, and based on this framework and an analysis of specific scenarios discusses the ways in which musical experience may be conceptualized as ‘situated’, elucidating the implications and explanatory potential of different approaches. Finally, there is a consideration of the framework’s value as a research tool for the analysis of situated aspects of musical practices. The aim is to advance an understanding of music and consciousness by contributing to conceptual clarity and by enriching the relationship between theoretical considerations and observation of musical practice.
Pollution Comes Home and Gets Personal
Rebecca Gasior Altman, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Julia Green Brody, Ruthann A. Rudel, Phil Brown, and Mara Averick

in Contested Illnesses: Citizens, Science, and Health Social Movements

This chapter shifts the focus to embodied experiences and examines Cape Cod residents' discovery of and response to pollution exposures inside their homes and bodies. Science—not just the direct experience of environmental problems—shapes participants' embodied health experiences. Until recently, most work on environmental pollution has focused on measuring chemicals in air, water, and soil. However, advances in exposure assessment science have led to the analysis of more intimate spaces in people's homes and body tissues. The chapter highlights how science influences people's discovery and understanding of environmental health threats. It also suggests future opportunities for social scientists to expand their examination of contested illnesses by characterizing how exposure experiences vary and are mediated by environmental science.

Acquaintance in an Experience of Perception-cum-Action
David Woodruff Smith

in Acquaintance: New Essays

In everyday perception, we experience a direct acquaintance with things in our surroundings, say, as I see this tennis ball before me. In everyday action, we also experience a direct acquaintance with things, as I grasp and pick up and hit this ball. Moreover, perception and action form a unified phenomenal intentional experience, as I consciously see-and-grasp-and-hit this particular ball. An experience of seeing-and-acting with regard to a particular object is a form of direct acquaintance, a paradigm of what Husserl called ‘intuition’. The phenomenology of perception-cum-action leads into the ontology of direct acquaintance. The structure of this form of embodied intentional experience cuts between internalist and externalist models of perception (and volition in action), clarifies embodiment and activity, and obviates
disjunctivist models of perception, while avoiding reducing consciousness in acquaintance to a physical transmission of physical information, say, between my brain, my body, and this ball.

Epilogue
Valentina Napolitano

in Migration, Mujercitas, and Medicine Men: Living in Urban Mexico
Published in print: 2002 Published Online: May 2012
Item type: chapter
Publisher: University of California Press
DOI: 10.1525/california/9780520233188.003.0008

This chapter focuses on the political narrative of identity, language representations, and embodied experience in Mexico. It discusses the relation between modernity and urbanization in Mexico and suggests that modernity has also been a hegemonic national project of normative citizenship. It argues that the move to commodify medicine, pluralize health choices, and the turn to natural and alternative medicine translates through this low-income neighborhood as an interpretative struggle between faith and scientific knowledge.

Ageing in the ancestral homeland: ethno-biographical reflections on return migration in later life
Anastasia Christou (ed.)

in Return migration in later life: International perspectives
Published in print: 2013 Published Online: January 2014
Item type: chapter
Publisher: Policy Press
DOI: 10.1332/policypress/9781447301226.003.0009

This chapter explores first and second generation Greek-Danish migration and relocation to the ancestral homeland in relation to issues of ageing and belonging. Through ethnographic and life story narratives the chapter examines participant portrayals in how they mediate meaning of diasporic longing and belonging in later life. The chapter addresses imaginative and tangible connections between (return) migration, the boundaries of the nation-state and the identities that are forged in the process of mobility and relocation, as the ageing process becomes a part of migrant diasporic life. Interrogating migration narratives over the life course, the chapter scrutinises the emotionally embodied context of ageing and migrancy, by focusing on narrative accounts of belonging and displacement, and reveals how emotions, attachments and pragmatic concerns shape later life mobilities.
Conclusion
Jeffrey A. Summit

in Singing God's Words: The Performance of Biblical Chant in Contemporary Judaism

While this book focuses on the meaning of reading Torah, it is ultimately a book about spiritual experience in contemporary American Jewish communities. Through the performance of biblical chant, these Jews place themselves in relationship to Jewish history, assert their connection to the Jewish people, claim a central role in community and celebrate life passages with family and friends. As they read Torah, they lay claim to, embody and perform what they understand to be authentic tradition. Finally, I consider how the act of Torah reading is a complex site of cultural and religious performance, simultaneously embodying conflicting concepts. It is both a symbol of continuity and modernity, of conservatism and liberalism and a site of elitism and democratization.

Spaces between, Still (Inter)Acting
Sharon Irish

in Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between

The conclusion discusses Lacy's recent projects and interests, as well as her continuing emphasis on the interconnectedness of things—the relationship between the mind and body, body and space, and the reconfiguring of social spaces therein. Beginning from her own body—white, female—Lacy's political commentary and critiques eventually expanded not only to cross-cultural, multiracial boundaries, but also the physical spaces that bind them. There is, after all, a constant connection between the mind and body—one cannot take form without the other—and in this respect the themes of network and exchange so prominent in Lacy's life continue to challenge representation and explore new embodied experiences. Art situates us in the spaces between physical and emotional relationships, challenging us to make sense of these new experiences and act upon them in a way that can change the world for the better.
This chapter reviews recent research on analogy and explains how humans’ capacity for analogical thought shapes the production and comprehension of music. The chapter includes an introduction to Lawrence Barsalou’s perceptual symbol systems theory, which is used to explain how embodied experience informs analogical thought, especially that associated with music. Analogical reference, an idea adapted from Peirce’s concept of iconicity, is introduced, leading to a systematic definition of the sonic analogs for dynamic processes that provide the foundation for musical grammar. The chapter also explores how meaning can be constructed through sequences of musical sound.

Chapters in this volume reflect, to one degree or another, eight critical aspects of contemporary research attempting to understand the etiologic processes that heighten risk or resilience factors for substance use disorders: (1) a focus on systemic frameworks for understanding developmental process, (2) the heterogeneity of developmental pathways, (3) the role of genes and epigenetic–experience transactions, (4) risk cumulative/cascade models of the effects of exposure to adverse childhood experiences, (5) negotiating developmental transitional periods, (6) neurobiological embodiment of adverse childhood experiences, (7) links between alcohol use disorder and tobacco addictive behaviors, and (8) longitudinal studies and data analysis within and between studies.