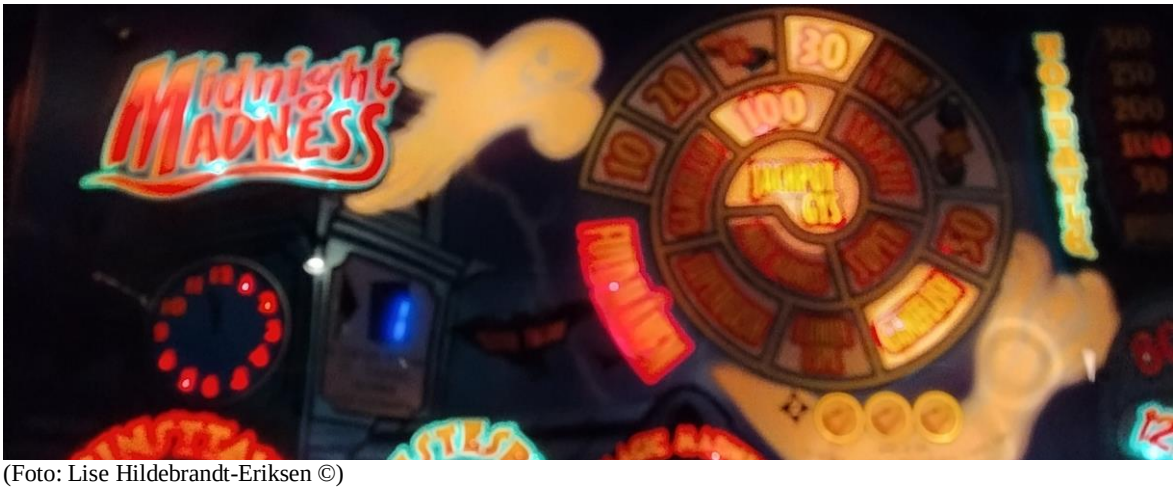
“There are no ‘ludomaniacs’ ”

An ethnography of gambling with gambling machines



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Ph.D. Thesis

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“Hildebrandt-Eriksen is clearly a gifted ethnographer: her detailed descriptions of daily life in Danish machine gambling halls are compelling, sensitive and nuanced. The originality and verve of her analyses are thought-provoking, and her preparedness to be bold in her conclusions and to challenge conventional wisdom about her subject matter is also laudable.

The discussion of money, consumption and social exclusion is one of the most significant themes of the thesis. […] the author develops a fresh perspective on the complex, variable and social nature of gambling and its place in wider human relations and in society in general. This is the real strength of the thesis, and represents a significant and original contribution to knowledge”.

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Preface

I want to thank all those of you who opened your hearts and minds, homes and gambling halls for me to observe, to pose questions and to be part of your world for a while. I am indebted to each of you for this hospitality and the knowledge you have shared with me to use in my work.

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A meeting at the addiction treatment and research centre Ringgården in Middelfart, Per Nielsen, Steffen Røjskjær and Michael Jørsel supported the idea of a genuine ethnographic approach to the project. At Norsk Tipping in Lillehammar I talked to sociologist Ian McMillen about the sociology and anthropology of gambling. In a study trip to Spain I discussed analytical and methodological matters in addiction research with anthropologist Gabrielle Leflaive, Universidad Complutense Madrid; and with addiction psychologist Angels Goñzalez-Ibáñez at Hospital De Mataro. I want to thank all of you for taking time to engage.

Other anthropologists have contributed with invaluable insights and experi-ences. I want to thank Trine Dalsgaard for advice on methodology and field work strategy; Jens Seeberg for reminding me of Robert Murphy's work on stigma and liminality and for inviting me to a discussion on the subject; and to Karen Møller Jensen for constructive reading, analytical comments and encouragements. Kåre Jansbøl shared coffee and some tricks at the start; and at the end Merete Kjær Petersen offered a discussion of the entire thesis based on her thorough reading of it.

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English summary

In this thesis, I explore the subject of 'Ludomania' by asking, with Ian Hacking in mind: what makes it possible in contemporary Danish consumer society to become a 'ludomaniac'? The thesis is an anthropological account of the embodied experience of machine gambling – currently believed by the scientific community and treatment professionals to be the most addictive gambling product on the market – in residential areas in suburban Århus, Denmark. I present ethnographic descriptions, which show that the attraction towards gambling halls is in more than one way an adaptation to a particular situation in a human's life in a contemporary western consumer society.

In my analysis I firstly argue that one of the conditions for the reproduction of 'ludomania' is the experience of the gambling hall as a lived-in environment, where the material environment is humanised an a *liminal* and *intersubjective* place and process. Secondly I argue that the easy access to chance adventures with the gambling machines generates a perception of opportunity of financial gain and dreams and *hope* about a better future on the part of the person who participates in the game.

I also discuss chance adventures in the gambling hall as an existential striving for personal autonomy and human community in a context of relative poverty, lack of opportunity and stresses of work and family life. Thirdly I argue that the 'ludomania' category is reproduced *interactively* as a specific disease category with *stigmatizing* effects. Furthermore I explore the processes that may lead to an over involvement in gambling with gambling machines with self-destructive repercussions.

Dansk resume

I denne afhandling undersøger jeg 'ludomani' ved at spørge med filosoffen Ian Hacking in mente: hvad gør det muligt i samtidens danske forbrugersamfund at blive 'ludoman'? Afhandlingen er en antropologisk fremstilling af den kropslige erfaring med maskinspil – for tiden anset af det videnskabelige samfund og behandlere for at være det mest afhængighedsskabende spil på markedet – i beboelsesområder i Århus forstæder. Jeg præsenterer etnografiske beskrivelser som viser at tiltrækningen til spillehallen I mere end én forstand er en tilpasning til en bestemt situation i et menneskes liv i et samtidigt vestligt forbrugersamfund.

I min analyse argumenterer jeg for det første for, at én af betingelserne for reproduktionen af 'ludomani' er erfaringen med spillehallen som et slags beboet sted, hvor det materielle miljø bliver menneskeliggjort i et *liminalt* sted og en liminal og *intersubjektiv* proces. For det andet argumenterer jeg for at den nemme adgang til at tage chancer og opleve en form for frihed og spænding i legen med spillemaskinerne generere en opfattelse af muligheder for finansiel vinding og drømme og *håb* om en bedre fremtid.

Endvidere diskuterer jeg adgangen til chancer som en eksistentiel drivkraft for personlig autonomi, og menneskeligt fællesskab i en kontekst af relativ fattigdom, manglende muligheder og stress erfaringer i arbejds- og familieliv. For det tredje argumenterer jeg for at 'ludomania' kategorien genskabes *interaktivt* som en specifik videnskategori med *stigmatiserende* effekt. Endvidere undersøger jeg den proces der leder til overinvolvering i spil med spillemaskiner med selvdestruktive følger.

Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

'You can just go down to the
the gambling hall and
see what happens'.[1]
Steen

Prelude

'Into the dream hall',[2] a male member of the group of clients in a treatment centre for 'ludomania'[3] whispered, as he shook his head imperceptibly. The man was a forty-year-old bank employee, who had run up 'several million kroner'[4] worth of debt by gambling. He wanted to stop gambling as he was in serious danger of jeopardizing his marriage, as well as his position as a trusted employee. He described his current situation as one of having 'sailed into an iceberg.' However, this despairing statement contrasted with his eagerness

[1] *Man kunne jo også lige gå ned i spillehallen og se hvad der sker*.

[2] *Ind i drømmehallen.*

[3] *Ludomani* is the widely used Danish label for pathological gambling, from *ludo* denoting 'play' plus *mani*, a mental disturbance which the individual cannot control. The word *ludomani* was introduced into public debates in 1993 by Micheal Jørsel, director of the Center for Ludomani, a treatment centre. The term has acquired both status and use in public debates both as a label for deviance and as the name for those of its clients who engage in gambling.

[4] Danish unit of currency.

to participate in a discussion of what 'gambling does to people.' When other participants talked about their experiences with gambling, his body shifted from its somewhat sunken and sad-looking posture to an upright, alert position, with glowing eyes and colourful cheekbones. What struck me on this occasion was his love for the 'dream hall' even while he was simultaneously struggling to detach himself and his fellow clients from it. Mary, whom I met in a different treatment centre, also used gambling machines, as well as many other games for money. She said that 'It's the dream of a having a lot of money that drives me.' Customers in the gambling hall sometimes said 'Today I may be lucky', even though the chance of instant riches in the gambling hall was very small. But the dream was alive, and people expended a lot in terms of both time and money in search of it.

The people who have informed this research had been or were very close to gambling machines in the gambling hall. Through this closeness they experienced the drama of games on the screen of the gambling machine, symbols on the fast turning wheels, sounds changing every two seconds, human contact, feelings of betrayal, frustration and anger, and occasional sensations of thrill and joy when they hit the jackpot and received a handful of coins in the pay-out tray.

This anthropological study concerns itself with gambling habits and the experience of gambling machine gambling as a form of consumption in contemporary Denmark. My informants are people who are drawn to playing with gambling machines and who bring their biographies – spoken as well as unspoken – into the gambling hall, where they invest in the hope for a transformation of their lives. However, this is an investment with an extremely uncertain and unpredictable outcome in the interplay between biography on the one hand and the physical, social and symbolic universe of the gambling hall on the other. The latter is a place where the optimism and excitement of chance exist side by side with fear and anger, as well as with experiences of an unpredictable return on one's investments, resulting in extraordinarily sensational experiences. In the rest of this thesis, I refer to the 'dream hall' as the centre point in my analysis of the different aspects of the dream and the experiences that motivate it. The thesis contributes to the anthropology of hope and offers reflections on gambling as a form of ritual, as well as knowledge about the actual lives of those who attend gambling halls.

The primary context[5] of the theme addressed in the thesis is the diagnosis of 'ludomania,' that is the categorisation of gambling as a 'problem,' and a pathology which was invoked in Denmark at the same time as the liberalisation of the gambling market in the 1990s. Internationally the diagnosis[6] suggests that gambling belongs to a category of behavioural diseases and is also a disease of the will reflected in addictive behaviour, with its inability to control impulses (Valverde 1998; Peele 2000; Peele 2003; Valverde 2007). 'Ludomania' could be said to be an example of moral deviance undergoing medicalisation (Lloyd 2002). Because of this historical and social process, whole sectors of populations worldwide are being singled out in a process of stigmatisation. In Denmark people who gamble take part in their own labelling as 'ludomaniacs' and are thus themselves involved in the knowledge production of a form of deviance (Foucault 1984a; Foucault 1984b; Hacking 1998; Hacking 1999; Hacking 2004). The thesis explores how the category interacts with the gambling experience in relation to other important contexts of consumer society, relative poverty and everyday life including biography.

The historical process of 'ludomania' in Denmark

The historical and social process of 'ludomania' in contemporary Danish society is being played out as part of the general development of an individualized, liberal consumer society (Bauman 1998), and of a therapeutic society (Steffen 1997), as well as the global development of the gambling market (McMillen 1996; McMillen 2003). It has also been argued that neoliberal societies have entered into a historical situation in which the category of 'citizen' has been replaced by that of 'consumer' (Clarke, Newman et al. 2007). Reforms of the public services in the United Kingdom and Denmark have embodied a specific vision of modernity which emphasises individual choice and responsibility in all spheres of life (ibid.: 126). Thus, the consumer has become a central figure in contemporary consumer society. According to John Clarke and his co-authors, one of the challenges

[5] I use 'context' throughout in a broad sense referring to 'a generalised set of connections thought in some way to be construed as relevant to the object or event under study' (cited in: Roy Dilley (Ed.) (1999): 'The problem of context', Berghahn Books, p. 4.

[6] The American Psychiatric Association has recognised pathological gambling since 1980, and it has been included in the WHO International Classification of Diseases.

for researchers in this historical situation is to look for practices by which people submit, protest, resist or participate with enthusiasm in a process in which they either fail to 'know their place' or sometimes remain overly attached to it (ibid.: 142). Such a perspective on the social sees it as a 'contested terrain in its own right, subjected to multiple and conflicting attempts at 'mapping' places, positions, relations, and differences' (ibid.). Government institutions (ibid.) initiate some of these mappings, and in this thesis, 'ludomania' may be seen in this light. From this perspective, the gambling hall can be regarded as a mirror of consumer society, where individuals who have 'free will' are seen as making 'free choices' at their convenience, as in other spheres of society. However, in taking a closer look at the gambling hall I became aware that the people I met there were dealing with the 'ludomania' category both creatively and as a form of stigma.

Liberalisation and invention of pathology

In a royal decree dated 6 October 1753, gambling was prohibited 'out of Love and Fatherly Solicitude for Our dear and loyal Subjects, and in order to deprive the Weak amongst them, the opportunity to waste that, which they have earned'[7] (Skatteministeriet 2001). Since this decree was issued in 1753, legal forms of gambling have been taxed and the proceeds continue to be channelled into charity. The intention, as formulated in national policies, of the liberalisation of gambling, which has run parallel to the increased taxation and regulation of the Danish gambling market, is two-fold: to provide resources for sports and charitable purposes, and to prevent 'ludomania' (Finansministeriet 1999). Thus a 2000 law states that one percent of the profit on gambling machines must be used for the treatment of and research into 'ludomania' (Skatteministeriet 2006). The turnover on gambling machines in gambling halls and bars/cafés was approximately 1.260 million kroner in 2002 and 1.645 kroner in 2003 (Spillemyndigheden 2004: 11). The turnover on gambling machines is taxed at forty percent (Skatteministeriet 2002: §23).

A few large companies who run gambling halls throughout the country (Spillemyndigheden 2004 293: 12) dominate the gambling machine market. One of these is Dansk Automatspil, a subsidiary of the gambling business Danske Spil, in which the state holds a majority share of eighty percent, in effect making Dansk Automatspil a state-incorporated business (Skatteministeriet 2001: 190-191). After 2001, the national gambling

[7] *'af særdeles Kjærlighed og Faderlig Omhu for Vore kjære og troe Undersaatter, og for at betage de skrøbelige iblandt dem, saadan Anledning til at forøde det, de have erhvervet'*

authority – Spillemyndigheden – has regulated all legal gambling.[8] The main responsibility of Spillemyndigheden is monitoring of the gambling market, carried out by an electronic system by which each gambling machine is linked to a central information system in Spillemyndigheden. Spillemyndigheden also issues permits to establish gambling halls, and it draws the one percent revenue for 'ludomania' treatment and research, which are administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Danish Innovation and Research Agency. This research project, was funded by the 'Ludomania'[9] research programme (Forskningsprogrammer 2003).

The liberalisation of gambling coincided with the establishment of the treatment institution for pathological gambling, the Center for Ludomani, in 1993, as well as with the increased media attention given to 'ludomania' as a social problem in Denmark. Since then the moral perception of gambling in Denmark has continued to undergo a change from being seen as an illicit activity to gambling as an ordinary, everyday commodity that is legally sanctioned in today's consumer society. Yet gambling continues to cast shadows, with different names like 'ludomania' and addiction as official medical terms for what is seen as pathological gambling resulting in the moral and financial problems that gambling may create for those who engage in it as well as those closest to them. A report from Ringgården, a private alcohol treatment institution from which the Center for Ludomani was established, suggested that 50,000 people in Denmark would qualify as 'ludomaniacs', a number derived from a variety of national studies throughout the world (Røjskjær and Nielsen 1999). However, a national survey published in 2005 concludes that 5,000 Danes fulfil the official criteria of 'ludomania' (Bonke and Borregaard 2006).

Thus, the historical process of pathologising gambling is underpinned by official definitions of disease[10] categories and by statistical measure. This is not unique to

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[8] Spillemyndigheden was established as a section under the Ministry of Taxation.

[9] 'Ludomania' is defined by the research programme as an 'excessive compulsory gambling desire' in accordance with international standard of the classification of pathological gambling.

[10] Throughout I use the term 'disease' as referring to a scientifically based knowledge or professional category in contrast to lay or informant categories of illness (se for instance: Eisenberg, L. (1976). "Disease and illness." Culture Medicine and Psychiatry **1**(1): 9-23. Kleinman, A. (1980). Patients and healers in the context of culture, University of California Press. Young, A. (1982). "The anthropologies of illness and sickness." Annual Review of Anthropology **11**: 257-85.

gambling, but seen throughout Western Europe where deviance and illness was made manageable through statistical laws based on epistemological measures during the 1900's (Hacking 1990). In being pointed out by official institutions such as World Health Organisation according to scientifically based classifications and enumerating by census making deviance becomes managble and renders deviant subpopulations more controllable (Becker 1963: 4; Hacking 1990: 1-10; Jenkins 2000: 10). It is central to these scholars that labelling processes occur in an interactionist order in society. This means that categories such as a diagnosis of 'ludomania' do not happen automatically but as a result of humans relating to each other and their environment, including knowledge categories. Throughout I will address how the 'ludomania' category is reproduced interactively in the gambling hall.

It is an established assumption that gambling machines create more problem gambling than any other money game because they encourage repeated play (Reith 2003: 11). Clients undergoing treatment for 'ludomania' are primarily gambling with gambling machine (Griffiths 2005; Bonke and Borregaard 2006), and gambling machine gambling has been found to be significantly more difficult for the player to control than other money games (Røjskjær and Nielsen 1999: 60).

In Denmark, there are legal gambling machines in six larger casinos in the main cities. There are also gambling machines in restaurants or bars where only three machines per site are allowed. However, the emergence of smaller casinos[11] in kiosks, gas stations and shopping malls has introduced gambling machines into everyday life in Denmark. Throughout the thesis, I refer to these small casinos as gambling halls. There is very little data to document the historical development of the gambling machine market in Denmark prior to 2004, when Spillemyndigheden issued its first review of the implementation of the 2002 law on gambling machines in Denmark. In a report on this law, Spillemyndigheden concluded that more legal gambling machines had been established since 2002, but that this may well be due to the legalisation of formerly illegal gambling machines (Spillemyndigheden 2004). Thus, the number of legal gambling machines increased from 14,500 to 19,300 between December 2002 and August 2004.

There is no government policy setting an upper limit for the number of gambling machines, but Spillemyndigheden generally issues more permits than are actually taken up. Throughout the country, many local municipalities have protested against the

[11] *Spillehaller*

increasing number of gambling halls that have been established since the implementation of the 2000 law. Such protests, however, are only successful if they go against existing local plans or if gambling businesses propose to site a gambling hall near schools or similar places. The legal establishing of gambling halls in kiosks and shopping malls close to residential areas is thus a new phenomenon in Denmark. Most of the research material for this research has been gathered in gambling halls in suburban Århus, the second largest city in Denmark.

The paradox that remains in the contemporary historical situation of gambling machines in Denmark is that gambling has been increasingly normalised by means of its liberalisation, while simultaneously some of the gambling population have been marked out as deviants requiring treatment for 'ludomania.' Thus the 'ludomania' category in a sense ensures that a tight grip is kept on this part of the population. The ambition of this thesis is to provide an understanding of why some people gamble on gambling machines and to show that the gambling hall is a place of play, fantasy, chance-taking, money, moods and companionships – that is, of relationships, acts and attitudes which are not deviant in themselves, but part of every life in one way or another. The fact that people who play with gambling machines are categorised as deviant is, however, something special.

Despite the habit of gambling being categorised as a form of deviance, the gambling hall had become a matter of convenience in the everyday lives[12] of everyone I spoke to who used one. People might explain their habit as due to 'monsters in the brain' or 'gambling devils', powerful agents beyond their control. When those who were trying to give up gambling complained that 'There's a gambling hall on every street corner,' and that 'They ought to be in special places', they were expressing ambivalence about what they experienced as the massive intrusion of a commodity into their everyday lives, as when they had 'to pass the gambling hall when I go shopping.' As a consequence, some moved to the outskirts of the city where there were not as yet any gambling halls. The set-

[12] Even though 'everyday life' has gained an important scholarly status, I do not use it as an analytical category in this thesis but rather as a shorthand for a research orientation towards a background condition of particular events. See Gullestad, M. (1991a). "The transformation of the Norwegian notion of everyday life." American Ethnologist **18**(3): 480-499.

ting up of gambling halls in residential areas meant that they became used as informal meeting places where there were no alternatives.

Changing the language of gambling

In the USA gambling has undergone several cycles back and forth between prohibition and legalisation, reflecting shifting attitudes and the ambivalence towards gambling (Rose 2003). This ambivalence is also present in Denmark. An entirely new situation has arisen in that the liberalisation of gambling in Denmark has turned it into an everyday commodity offered in kiosks and shopping malls throughout the country, a situation that has not received unqualified universal support. Many have complained that gambling machines are 'dangerous' and might lead to 'addiction.'

The danger of gambling is in fact incorporated in the Danish noun for the activity, *hasardspil*, from the two nouns 'hazard' and 'play'. It is given the following definition in the Danish Dictionary, *Nudansk Ordbog*: a game, for example games of card or dice, based on chance. *Hasard* is defined as 1: outcome based on chance, 2: risk. As can be seen from these definitions of gambling it has several etymological dimensions, namely risk, play, entertainment and competition. However, while *hasard* (hazard) is no longer used in the marketing of gambling products, *spil* (play) has become the preferred noun in all forms of legal gambling in Denmark. Hence the risky and hazardous connotations have been removed from the daily language of gambling, which has thus been given a more innocent etymology.

Consumer society and consumption ritual

According to one of the leading sociologists of gambling, Jan McMillen, gambling has become a global business, as well as one of the world's most rapidly expanding consumer activities (McMillen 2003: 49-51). Gambling scholars have noted that one of the consequences of the globalization of the gambling market is a strong tendency towards the standardization of products and consumer behaviour (ibid.). According to McMillen one of the research challenges in this historical situation is to produce research that creates a better understanding of the worldwide attraction of gambling, despite the fact that most gamblers inevitably lose money in the process (ibid.: 62).

One way of approaching this challenge anthropologically is to view gambling as a local ritual of consumption. In their book *The World of Goods*, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood see consumption as a means of social integration (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 24). Consumption creates meaning in the sense of marking friendships when guests are invited for meals or celebrations and when it is used to show off one's social status as a consumer to other people (ibid.: 24 ff). Because goods are used in consumption to create clear and visible judgements in the fluid process of classifying persons and events, consumption can be defined as a ritual activity (ibid.: 45). From this perspective goods are part of a live information system where income is crucial because it provides access to a social system (ibid.: xiv, 63). Consequently, income below a certain level may exclude people from participating in social life. More recently Daniel Miller has argued that daily provisioning is performed as a devotional and sacrificial rite where thrift and excess both play a central part in meeting the central goals in life in terms of creating and/or reproducing real or imagined human relationships (Miller 1998).

Robert D. Herman has noted that 'Commercialized gambling offers to many people efficient means of enhanced self-esteem and gratification in a culture in which satisfactions are increasingly likely to be found in enterprises of consumption rather than production' (Herman 1967: 104). He also recognised the ritual nature of gambling as serving the goal of social integration (ibid.: 99ff). In his groundbreaking work on interaction ritual, Goffman likewise analysed gambling as a focussed gathering in which encounters create subjective experiences of tenseness and euphoria through the process of gambling (Goffman 1961). He also showed how gambling can be seen as an activity through which a problematic situation can be resolved. As such gambling is an extraordinary niche in social life where fateful situations undergo a subtle transformation (Goffman 1969: 110, 125). Games of chance are passive in the sense that the only thing the player can do is wait for the outcome (ibid.: 111). However, the temporality of the game requires the commitment of the player, a devotion to the process, which in itself is an action involving some freedom of choice and self-determination (ibid.: 117). In this niche or transit of gambling, the individual, 'instead of awaiting fatefulness meets it at the door' and grasps opportunity (ibid.: 125). Ritualistic strategies in gambling are an adaptation to the risky nature of gambling based on a belief in luck as a kind of divination where the fear of losing, the thrill of the

excitement and confident hope constitute the bases of the subjective experience of play (ibid.: 128, 151, 146).

Hence gambling may be seen as a way not only of searching for a brief moment of instant luck but of maintaining a hold on life, resolving problems and insisting on having a purpose in life. Gambling in the gambling hall does not provide those who engage in it with an income that may serve as a means of social integration, but as a ritual process, it may serve as a means of sustaining the optimistic hope of social participation and inclusion.

Being poor in a consumer society

Another aspect, which is important to add, is that at least half of my informants were on welfare payments and therefore they could be regarded as relatively poor. If society is no longer dominated by the work ethic but rather by an ethic of consumption, as Zygmunt Bauman argues (Bauman 1998: 26ff), then it becomes clear that being poor in a consumer society places people in a particular position as marginal and vulnerable consumers. This makes it relevant to inquire into empirical observations of the experience of poverty, to ask the question of what are the implications of consumer ethics for everyday human life for those who are poor.

If we approach the question on Bauman's terms, we can begin to explore what it means to be a person in a consumer society. According to Bauman, to be a person – that is, an individual with a positive sense of self – requires daily visits to the market place in order to uphold one's sense of self (ibid.). According to Bauman it is the market place that sets the frame for the 'good life' in which the individual is invited, impelled and seduced to exercise his or her 'free will' in order to make 'free choices'. In this scene of consumption, individuals share the comfortable togetherness of an almost ritualistic 'worship of choice', yet are left alone in being exposed to temptation and attraction (ibid.: 26, 30). Hence, consumption is also compulsion standing against free will to choose (ibid.). In the area between free choice and will on the one hand and temptation on the other, a certain temporality of consumption is at stake. It is a temporality in which an ideal of the instant satisfaction of desires directed at the here and now exist side by side with a promise and hope of satisfaction directed at the future. Hence, 'The excitement of the new and unprecedented sensation is the name of the consumer game' (ibid.: 25). The need for the individual

to be constantly alert and on the spot when opportunity arrives requires the use of rules of thumb which are anchored in feelings of trust and safety (ibid.: 32).

According to Bauman the poor consumer – often an unemployed person – stands in a particular relationship to consumption. The poor consumer is a person who is excluded from what passes as 'normal life' by not being able to fulfil his or her role as a consumer because he or she cannot practice the free will or choice: 'This results in a fall of self-esteem; feelings of shame or feelings of guilt. Poverty also means being excluded from whatever passes in a given society for a "happy life", not taking "what life has to offer". This results in resentment and aggravation, which spill out in the form of violent acts, self-deprecation, or both' (ibid.: 37). The experience of poverty therefore consists not only of a lack of money, but also of a lack of the possibility to catch the many opportunities and experiencing the social degradation of being shut off from a feast in which others are taking part. Hence, the temporality of consumption for the poor becomes one of boredom (ibid: 39). Being subject to a 'sense of insufficiency' is to experience stigma and humiliation, in a situation in which there is the double pressure of increasing relative deprivation, reinforced by unregulated economic growth (ibid.: 39). This bleak picture painted by Bauman makes it relevant to inquire into the meaning of poverty in Danish society and its implications for the way my informants approached the gambling hall; I shall try to do this in my thesis.

In his work on marketing gambling through advertising, Per Binde writes that the expansion of the gambling market creates dreams and hopes for those who might experience a need for a transformation of their lives by means other than ordinary wage earning (Binde 2007b). When I compare this with my informants' situations, it is clear that they were attracted to the gambling hall on these grounds. As already mentioned a large number of my informants were unemployed and marginalised and lived in relative poverty. I shall return to this in my analysis of the transformation of money in the gambling hall and of biography in relation to the gambling hall.

An anthropology of gambling

The historical process and context of 'ludomania' is one thing: the anthropological context in which I see it is another.[13] In gambling research, gambling in general, and gambling machine gambling in particular, is associated with *problem-* or *addictive gambling*, and as such, it is a subject dominated by the psychological sciences, with the focus on individual behaviour and problems of human's lack of control over their impulses.[14] In anthropology, gambling is approached as human expression or practice located in social and cultural processes. Despite the impact on anthropology of Clifford Geertz's article on the Balinese cockfight, where he analyses a cockfight event as a mirror of the social matrix and status concerns (Geertz 1993 (1973)), gambling has largely been ignored in anthropology since. This situation is now changing. This thesis forms part of a body of anthropological literature on contemporary gambling which I will briefly introduce here and in the section on gambling as a religious or spiritual practice.

In his book, *Gambling Life*, Thomas M. Malaby examines Cretan gambling in the context of everyday life (Malaby 2003). His informants are businessmen who meet around gambling tables in the local coffee houses, where they play different kinds of games. Malaby sees his informants as social actors involved in gambling as a way of confronting the unpredictable forces of life such as illness, mortality, business, and relations in the local community and nation state (ibid.: 7). Hence he approaches gambling as a window to the world of uncertainty in order to build a comprehensive anthropology of how 'particular ways of accounting for unanticipated individual events are themselves impli-

[13] My approach has been influenced by leading gambling sociologist Ian McMillen who, in a conference on gambling and prevention of gambling problems at Norsk Tipping, Lillehammer, Norway 17-09-2004, proposed that the following matters of importance to understanding gambling problems be undertaken: the gambling product, its devices and how it influences gambling behaviour; the machine-player interface; and player's life world and what matters to them.

[14] Some examples of scientific journals where gambling is treated as a 'problem', 'addictive' and 'pathological' include *Substance Use and Misuse*, *Journal of Gambling Studies*, *eCommunity-International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, *Addiction*, *Addictive Behaviours* and *International Gambling Studies*.

See also addiction psychologist Mark Griffiths, who has used ethnographic methods to build a psychological framework of understanding for machine gambling: Griffiths, M. (1995). Adolescent Gambling, Routledge., Griffiths, M. (2005). "The biopsychosocial approach to addiction." Psyke & Logos **26**(1): 9-26. A review article on pathological gambling that documents a genuine interest from the field of biomedicine and statistical screening is Raylu, N. and P. S. T. Oei (2002). "Pathological gambling: a comprehensive review." Clinical psychology review **22**: 1-53.

cated in positions of power, practice, and knowledge' (ibid.: 8). He situates his analysis within a context of modernity in which actors are seen as producing and reproducing the social systems of which they are a part (ibid.: 79). Malaby's project is thus one of exploring how gamblers make sense of unforeseen events in the process of the game and how they relate these understandings to other aspects of the flow of social life (ibid.). Hence Malaby's analysis of gambling differs from Geertz's, in describing gambling in relation to the processual nature of ongoing everyday life, rather than being a mirror of a somewhat static social matrix.

There are important similarities as well as differences between Malaby's and my own work. Like Malaby I include an analysis of gambling in relation to everyday life and reflections on gambling as a mirror of social tendencies, and like Malaby I am concerned with the way my informants deal with the environment of chance. However, rather than seeing my informants as performers of a social action, through an analysis of tropes and gestures in what Malaby calls the 'poetics of risk taking' in an uncertain environment (Malaby 2003: 21-24), I have approached the field as a place and process inhabited by humans with particular embodied social experiences. Hence, my work is descriptive of particular ways of being and of how the gambling hall and the gambling machines act on the human body. Whereas Malaby explicitly renounces the use of biography and informants' narrative reflections on the grounds of protecting his informants' identities and as a consequence of his emphasis on social action (ibid.: 21-22), I have included both biography and narrative. My analysis of gambling in relation to everyday life involves an exploration of how key areas in life like relative poverty, lack of opportunity, marginality, illness and stresses at work and in the family interact with the gambling hall to construct a specific embodied experience. This thesis may therefore be seen as a phenomenological contribution to gambling studies in which I approach gamblers as humans participating in an opportunity to improve their lives, despite the cruel fact that in the gambling hall the odds are against them. Despite the differences between Malaby's and my own work, Malaby includes some observations on gambling that has destructive results for gamblers, and I will therefore discuss his findings in the light of my own work in the concluding chapter.

Kåre Jansbøl's analysis of the Danish gambling environment is based on an analytical model in which gamblers are seen as actors who act within frames of social conventions amongst gamblers and structural conditions given by legislation, administration

and the supply of gambling (Jansbøl 2005: 4-9). Jansbøl studied a private and a public gambling club, a casino, a bingo club, and a gambling machine hall. Unlike Malaby's and my own work, Jansbøl's does not include an analysis of gambling in relation to everyday life, since his primary concern is the interplay between actors (gamblers), the state and the market (ibid.: 12). Like Malaby, Jansbøl focuses on how gamblers deal with chance, or rather unpredictability. However, Jansbøl's concern is more on the structural constraints of gambling as a regulated and administered product of entertainment that is sold to consumers (ibid.: 194). Hence, the game must profit the provider at the expense of the consumer, despite the fact that it is marketed to give the consumer the idea that they can win money through his or her gambling (ibid.). When these conflicting frames are working together with the fundamentally dual character of gambling as both play and work, and as both serious and non-serious, then some players, according to Jansbøl, become mystified because they cannot discriminate between gambling as play and not play, between gambling as commodity and as entertainment (ibid.: 202). Thus in Jansbøl's analysis, problem gambling, or what is termed 'ludomania' in Denmark, is partly caused by the construction of gambling as a commodity, and partly by some consumers' misunderstanding of this construction (ibid.). According to Jansbøl's observations, in the gambling machine hall, his informants believed that they would eventually receive a cash win corresponding to the Repayment Percentage if only they played long enough (ibid.: 45). Even though Jansbøl is critical of the way some gamblers are 'psychologised' as having a problem of self control (ibid.: 103), he still seems to discriminate between consumers who are able to see through the structural constraints that they are up against and those who are not.

As already mentioned, I explore the embodied experience of gambling with gambling machines emphasising gambling in relation to matters of everyday life. But even though my approach differs from Jansbøl's, my contribution can be seen as an expansion of his observations in the gambling hall that customers were acting as if there was fair play and that they were waiting for a cash return on their stakes. However, given my phenomenological approach, I do not interpret people who gamble self-destructively with gambling machines as somehow mystified, but rather as humans situated in an embodied experience of consumption and in everyday life in which they use gambling as a means to hand to strike a balance between acting on their situation and being acted upon. Nonetheless, I share Jansbøl's critique of the psychologising of individual gamblers and their lack of self-

control. Consequently, my analysis emphasizes that gambling in the gambling hall, with its self-destructive repercussions, must be analysed as intersubjective processes in the context of biography and everyday life.

When I embarked upon my fieldwork, I could not help being affected by the darkness of the gambling hall, its seclusion and its paraphernalia of music, colours and symbols. Likewise, I could not help being affected by the lives of people in gambling halls and treatment centres, who became my informants and with whom I developed a kind of short-lived friendship. When I walked the streets in Copenhagen with Irene after a therapy session, it felt like a most natural gesture to put my arms around her shoulders when she burst into tears as we passed a place of which she harboured an extremely traumatic memory from her childhood. This kind of approach to the field might be seen as a methodological strategy of participation for observing, with the ulterior motive of generating inside information. However, to participate bodily in situations that my informants were involved in was rather a creative technique that helped me grasp the sense of what it was like to be human in a certain context (Jackson 1983: 340). I took this stand hoping that my work would remain consonant with the experience of those whose ground I shared throughout the period of research. I explore how key areas of life – relative poverty, lack of opportunity, marginality, illness and stress in work and family life – interact with the gambling experience with the aim of answering the main question: what makes it possible to become a 'ludomaniac' in contemporary Danish consumer society?

My analytical approach to the gambling hall is that it is a *practiced place* (de Certeau 1988) and a *heterotopia* (Foucault 1986). This means that my understanding of 'ludomania' is partly based on an analysis of 'ludomania' as an interactive category in the sense that the label itself generates meaning and experience. There is, however, more to the experience of the gambling hall as a practiced place than the meaning of the 'ludomania' category. The aim of my work is also to provide an understanding of the gambling hall and involvement in gambling in the context of my informants as relatively poor consumers in contemporary Denmark. When Anne, Jang, Quasim, Tom and many others' own imagery was combined with the unpredictability and entertainment features of the gambling environment, they established a particular relationship with time and hope as a vehicle of their dream or their hope of a transformation of their lives. Hence, my informants' gambling involvement was an engagement that pertained to materialistic as well as non-materialistic

ends. Geertz distinguished between two types of gambling, namely *deep play* pertaining to a high-status groups involved in gambling for money for status reasons, and with high emotional involvement; and the *shallow play*, pertaining to a of low-status group concerned with gambling for utilitarian purposes only (Geertz 1993 (1973)). In the concluding chapter I will discuss Geertz's distinction in the light of my own work.

Hope and intersubjectivity

It has been argued that gambling serves as an outlet for individuals who are seeking opportunity and pecuniary success in the face of a lack of opportunities in their everyday lives, and that hope serves an important emotional need in the gambling process (Bloch 1951: 218). However, despite the deviant process of 'ludomania', and despite having a gambling habit, in my view my informants were not so different from other people. As Pierre Bourdieu points out, we are all humans who are part of a game, where we strive towards making the best of our lives (Bourdieu 2000: 153). It is, however, also a game with uncertainty or delay in terms of the return on one's investments (Bourdieu 1972: 5ff). The difference between most of those I met and talked to and everybody else was perhaps only that they knew painfully that they were or had been ensnared by the gambling hall. But they might not differ in their choice of action from a share dealer I happened to meet outside the context of my fieldwork, who confessed to me that he might be addicted to his trade. The difference between him and my informants was that they talked about sitting in the darkness, hidden from accusing gazes and demanding situations, absorbed in play and perhaps in pleasant company with fellow customers, whereas my friend was engaged in a socially acknowledged occupation.

Gassan Hage distinguishes between the subjectivity of *hope* and 'societal hope'. The subjectivity of hope is a propensity to anticipate the future, whereas 'societal hope' is the capacity societies have for the generation of social opportunities (Hage 2003). In this thesis, I approach this existential dimension of hope by exploring it in relation to gambling. I opened this introductory chapter with a metaphor of the gambling hall as a 'dream hall' provided by a client in a treatment setting. In the rest of this thesis, I will use this metaphor as an indication of informants' hopes for a better life for themselves, how

hope was manifested, and how it inspired the gambling process. This process was at once one of investing, playing and hoping in an environment of chance and uncertainty, or perhaps more precisely unpredictability. Thus hope was a particular kind of operation of the present directed at the future (Bourdieu 2000: 208). This had consequences for the experience of temporality in the gambling hall. The experience of the gambling hall as a place with a somewhat timeless atmosphere, and yet also as a place that could change money into time and into strange symbols, somehow underlined the ritual nature of the gambling process. This irony of the gambling hall as a place that somehow suspends time as a fixed point in everyday life, in which customers' practice with control and mastery over the gambling machine, was something that I came to see as a curious paradox of the gambling process.

I came to see my informants as being driven by an existential necessity to retain a sense of control over life and an insistence on being able to inhabit the world, a sense of belonging. Hope, however, was also a human necessity, in which people invested their stakes in what Bourdieu calls *illusio* (Bourdieu 2000). Bourdieu's concept of *illusio* has three dimensions. *Illusio* is a way of being occupied with the world or participation in the game of life (Bourdieu 2000: 135). Hence *illusio* is investment in what is uncertainty, yet which offers complete opportunity and possibility (ibid.: 213). Participation in the game is characterised by a struggle to maintain a position in the world, since withdrawal ultimately leads to social death (ibid.: 151). This is a struggle in which the game imposes its norms unconditionally on the player, who has no choice but to struggle to retain his or her position by taking part (ibid.: 153). My analysis is inspired by Bourdieu's concept of *illusio* as a metaphor for the human struggle of being in a world of uncertainty. However, my main interest in this concept is in the phenomenology of hope as a manifestation of some kind of agency in a generative process. Therefore I also draw on two anthropologies of hope which have contributed to this discussion. One is Galina Lindquist's discussion of hope, and in particular her interpretation of emotion and sensation in the process of conjuring up hope (Lindquist 2006). The other is Vincent Crapanzano's phenomenology of hope as an agency of waiting and taking refuge in relation to an unknown future (Crapanzano 2003). The 'dream hall' refers not only to a kind of daydream of a better future but also to a dream about a state of the here and now – a kind of unreal reality, namely playing which

is hard to be wrenched out of because it is fun to play. As much as hope may lead to a kind of paralysis (Crapanzano 2003: 18ff), it may also be a state of optimism, joy and fun.

Ironic though it may seem for the individual who uses gambling to retain a sense of control over life, gambling may require a letting go of control in the moment of play. Goffman argues that the individual establishes a particular relationship to time in the process of playing (Goffman 1969: 198). When one gambles, one must expose oneself to time, when seconds, minutes and hours are ticking away outside one's control (ibid.: 199). The abandonment of control is necessary in this giving oneself up to fate and as such, it is also an index of the seriousness of the action, when the here and now is inundated by events in the action of gambling (ibid.). The seriousness of the action is partly due to the player's insistence on luck in terms of financial reward. Henry Lesieur has pointed out that gambling becomes ritualized when the gambler, in chasing his losses, establishes a firm relationship with the idea that luck will reverse his past experiences of loss (Lesieur 1977: 9). The gambler knows from experience that games have their ups and downs and that, if the gambler keeps gambling, an upward turn will eventually occur (ibid.). In this process, hope plays a central role in maintaining the gambler's optimism (ibid.: 21-22); and the gambler develops a range of ritualistic skills, hunches, superstitions, and strategies to enhance his luck (ibid.: 27-33). The problem is, however, that chases are short term, and that in the long term the gambler loses more than he or she gains in chasing (ibid.: 1, 10). This problem of financial loss is aggravated by the poverty of the gambler, combined with his or her lack of fortune (ibid.: 14).

I suggest that the particular relationship that people had with luck was manifested and practised as a particular kind of temporality in the gambling process, that was operated by a vague hope that established their unspoken desire, not only for instant financial gain, but also for the hope of an overall change or improvement to their lives. It was not a very well-formulated kind of hope, but rather the grasping of an available opportunity – to focus on luck – to invest in an insistence in being part of the world of consumers, of belonging in a community and of being a worthy citizen. Descriptions and analytical reflections of the individuals' engagements in this task form the vital ethnographic content of the thesis.

As already indicated, I did not see my informants as pathological gamblers, but rather as humans who were using the gambling hall as a way of relating to themselves,

to others and to the world. Hence the gambling hall may be seen as a place that offers an opportunity for individuals to experience themselves intersubjectively – that is, as persons relating to others and to the world at large – in an environment with the scope for experimentation and play. In phenomenological philosophy, experiences with others humans or indeterminate others are essential for the experience of being a person who relates to the world and to the world of other persons (Zahavi 2001). Our individual world is not a private world but a world in which we constantly make our way by making use of entities like, for instance tools and persons, which bear a reference to others in the world. Hence the perception of the other precedes the actual encounter with the other, although subjectivity cannot be reduced to the concrete encounter (ibid.: 155-157). One vital aspect of intersubjectivity is that it may be said to have an inner dimension, that is, a volitional structure related to the senses, and an outer dimension related to the visual and the tactile (ibid.: 161). Thus the body may be seen as having a subject-object status in itself. In Dan Zahavi's reading of phenomenology, it follows that human beings are in a way strangers to themselves and therefore open towards others and capable of understanding others the same way (ibid.). The assumptions that Zahavi infers from his examination of intersubjectivity in the phenomenological tradition is that it is present in pre- or extra-linguistic forms such as emotions, drives or body-awareness. That it is not an objective structure in the world, but a relationship between subjects that needs to be approached from the perspective of subjects; and finally that intersubjectivity only comes about in relationships between human subjects who are related to the world (ibid.: 166). Hope is a way of relating to the world, and in a secular setting hope may perhaps be seen as a kind of substitute for praying. In fact, gambling has been seen as having ancient roots in religious practice and in divination as a way of relating to the realm of divinity.

Gambling as a religious/spiritual practice

If hope as practised in the gambling hall may be approached as a kind of worship of luck and chance, then this may not be a coincidence. Gambling has always been seen as a way for humans to try and reconcile themselves to the powers of the unknown or the divine powers of the universe (David 1962). Danish and Norwegian scholars report that gambling was an ancient practice of divination in the Nordic countries (Lundstrøm 1977; Larsen and Damm 1988; Michaelsen 1993; Ebbesen 1997).

Lately Per Binde's mapping of the gambling world shows that indigenous practices of gambling for money or other valuables have been widespread, though not universal (Binde 2005b). Kathryn Gabriel's analysis of aspects of gambling in the Bible, in Native American mythology and in the Puranas mythology of India, leads her to the conclusion that gambling is a metaphor for seeking spiritual help and revitalization (Gabriel 2003). Binde makes a similar kind of argument in his illuminating article on how religion and gambling relate to one another. He demonstrates that there is ample ethnographic evidence that gambling in a wide variety of societies is associated with religious practices and mythology (Binde 2007a). According to both Binde and Gabriel, gamblers in indigenous cultures prayed to deities, saints, and spirits for success, and in mythology gambling is often linked to episodes that describe the creation of the world (Gabriel 2003: 335; Binde 2007a: 147). Hence pre-modern gambling can be seen as a way in which humans reconcile themselves to a notion of the power of gods (Gabriel 2003: passim; Binde 2007a: 147-48).

Some scholars have suggested that modern gambling, seen as a commodification of chance, is a form of divination (Reith 1999: 14-17, 78, 89; Holbraad 2007). In fact the earliest gambling machines invited people to discover their future by means of a spinning pointer, a card dispenser or some kind of animated figure (Costa 1988: 21). Gabriel argues that modern gaming boards do not in principle differ from ancient gaming boards and that the individual who gambles may begin to feel all-powerful and all-knowing – an alarm at excessive behaviour which is also seen in ancient mythologies – in an addictive state of being (Gabriel 2003: 344-345). Roger Caillois suggested that the game of chance – *alea* (a latin term for dice rolling) – 'signifies and reveals the favour of destiny' (Caillois 2001 [1958]: 17). Thus the commodification of chance may be seen as a modern form of worshipping luck, in which the individual buys hope 'for greater peace of mind and relief

from economic difficulties and worries for the future' (Binde 2007a: 149). Binde's analysis of how people interpret gambling advertising leads him to the assumption that the jackpot win inspires reflections on luck, fate, blessings, and the possibility of a higher justice (Binde 2007a: 150). Hence luck is something inherently mystical, giving rise to vague intuitions and thoughts about how it is gained and lost (ibid: 151). To buy a lottery ticket is essentially to buy a hope of some drastic and successful change to one's future by means of a combination of luck and chance. In religious terms, this is a form of grace that, in Binde's view, may be said to provide a transcendental experience.

Gambling as a secular ritual

Although the dream of instant wealth is an important drive in gambling machine gambling, there may also be a mystical dimension and attraction, encompassing altered states of consciousness and dissociation, which may be seen as a kind of meditation, or as a way of clearing one's mind of thought in order to reach a blank state. Thus, gambling machine gambling and gambling halls may be places that are partly used as a convenience store for one's mental health (Binde 2007a: 151). Binde's argument that gambling is a secular worship of the unknown, mystery, fate and destiny, is particularly relevant for this thesis. I therefore join his argument with my own that that the gambling hall is practiced as a ritual place and process. Hence, the theory of ritual and play occupies a central part in the following discussion of the gambling process and of 'ludomania' in the gambling hall.

In adopting this analytical approach, I rely first of all on Victor Turner's concept of the ritual process as a basic framework for the understanding of the gambling hall as being practiced as a *liminal* place and process and liminal state of mind; but also for an understanding of the gambling hall as being practiced as *communitas*, as a community of equals in a liminal process and being (Turner 1967; Turner 1977; Turner 1984; Turner 1995 [1969]; Turner 1996). In his expansion of his model of ritual in modern secular settings, Turner emphasised the experiential level of altered states of mind, such as 'flow', in *liminoid* settings, where different kinds of play are performed (Turner 1996). Anthropologists like Bruce Kapferer and Sally Falk Moore have also contributed to this branch of the theory of secular ritual, with its reflexive and transformative capacities for those who par-

ticipate (Kapferer 1977; Moore and Myerhoff 1977). New insights into such approaches to ritual have been provided in a recent book, *Ritual in its own Right*, edited by Dona Handelman, where the inner volitional dynamics and functions of rituals are addressed (Handelman and Lindquist 2004). I have drawn on these insights of ritual in my discussion of the gambling hall as a limnoid and liminal place that offers customers an opportunity to step back from their ordinary everyday lives and in some way to reflect on those lives. I also complement these approaches to ritual with Michael Jackson's existential anthropology (Jackson 1998; Jackson 2005). Jackson argues that what he terms 'mundane rituals' serve as a supplement to real action as a means of transforming our experience of the world, that it is a 'primitive' mode of action playing on the emotions (Jackson 2005: 95). As an extension of this discussion of the gambling hall being practiced as a liminal place and process, I include a discussion of liminality in relation to the biographies (Crapanzano 1984; Ochs and Capps 1996; Jackson 1998) of my informants, many of whom experience exclusion from mainstream consumer society. In some circumstances, where individuals have no or limited possibilities of acting on their situations, ritual action may become an end itself, a kind of obsession (ibid.: 106). I discuss this question in relation to my analysis of the 'dream hall' in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Chapter outline

In this introductory chapter, I have implied that my analysis of 'ludomania' and of the 'dream hall' will be approached at three levels. Firstly, I see the gambling hall as a perceived and lived-in environment (Ingold 2000). Secondly, I see the gambling hall as an existential process of recognition, belonging and striving for fairness in relationships (Jackson 1995; Jackson 1998; Zahavi 2001; Jackson 2005). Thirdly, I explore how 'ludomania' as a government classification interacts with the gambling experience. My analysis thus pursues an argument that 'ludomania' is an interactive phenomenon produced and reproduced in the intersubjective environment of the gambling hall, where it generates stigma, pathologising, opportunity, relatedness and hope, played out as dialogical processes between people and the material, social and symbolic environment.

In everyday life, the gambling hall enjoyed the status of a practised place of play and leisure, however serious and work-like it might be seen as by those using it. The gambling hall was somehow a sphere separate from everyday life, and yet it had entered everyday life as a common product of consumption. As such the gambling hall was a continuous process of beginning, becoming, termination and sensational experiences, as well as shifting or polarised temporalities. The term 'the dream hall' seemed to encompass all of this, and I shall use it throughout in this way, as a condensation of my argument.

Each chapter in this thesis, except Chapter 2 on the fieldwork, pin points variations in the character of the 'dream hall.' Chapter 3 focuses on the transformation, which players are hoping for in terms of financial gain in the context of their position as relaitive poor consumers. The categorisation and transformation of money in everyday life is a process, in which people subscribe different meanings to money according to its origins, purpose and destiny (Parry and Bloch 1989; Zelizer 1994). In terms of gambling and everyday life, this was a process and a means of attaining the dream. It was a dream that the money invested would be transformed into a fortune, or of being able to buy the present that would allow access to a party, or perhaps a day dream of an eternal holiday on a tropical island, away from the pressures of everyday life. It was an investment with an extremely uncertain outcome, and yet players continued their pursuit of gambling, driven as they were by their insistence on being part of the game (Bourdieu 1972) and being part of the world (Jackson 1995; Jackson 1998). For the player who said: 'Someone has to win,' luck was never out of reach.

Developing the argument of Chapter 3 on the transformation of money in relation to the gambling hall, Chapter 4 examines how hope kept the player going in a somewhat painful but also passionate liminoid process which they found difficult to disengage from (Bateson 1972 [1955]; Turner 1996), despite their own expectations of being free humans (Jackson 1998). In this chapter, I include biographical narratives as context for the analysis of the gambling hall as a liminal place and process in people's lives. It is about the experience of being in a space or a gap in one's life, waiting for the big win in order to be able to move ahead. It is about being like Turner's neophytes – participants in rituals – who are betwixt-and-between, engaged in a ritually dynamic process of play (Turner 1967; Handelman and Lindquist 2004), of currently having 'lost the plot' in one's life, indicating the importance of biography (Jackson 1983; Crapanzano 1984; Ochs and

Capps 1996) in the use of the gambling hall. Furthermore I discuss the the effect of the diagnosis of 'ludomania' in relation to Ian Hacking's concept of *interactive kinds* and Kirsten Hastrup's notion of *weakness of the will* in relation to my informants' categories of pathology in gambling.

Chapter 5 takes a closer look at community in the gambling hall. It is, however, a strange community of daydreams, like a heterotopia in Foucault's sense or a non-place in Augé's sense (Foucault 1986; Augé 1995). Yet it is a community that appears to bring about human relationships carrying specific values. No one was obliged to talk, help or do anything except gamble, yet everyone was equal, and anyone could be that potential and special friend that one might need at this point of time. It was a *communitas* of equal liminals (Turner 1977) - 'ludomaniacs.' In this chapter, the gambling hall is described as a place of entertainment in which goal-oriented action and use of skill in gambling took place within a frame of inter-subjective action (Goffman 1961; Goffman 1963a; Goffman 1974; Geertz 1993 (1973); Jackson 1998). However, in the context of the 'ludomania' label that was reproduced in the gambling hall it was also a pathologising process and community.

In Chapter 6, I continue my discussion of 'ludomania' as an intersubjective process in the light of contemporary analyses of *animism* - the humanising of the gambling machine in the gambling process. In this chapter, it becomes clear that it was not only the quest for inclusion in a community, or the ideal freedom of the refuge aspect of the gambling hall, which motivated people to gamble. It was also an almost bodily attraction towards the jackpot, in the sense that the dream became an activity between two actors – the player and the gambling machine, as an intersubjective process between human and machine (Ihde 1979; Scheibe and Erwin 1979; Barley 1988; Downey 1998).

Chapter Two

The fieldwork

Fieldwork locations

I carried out fieldwork for this thesis between September 2004 and December 2005. A part of the ethnographic material was generated from participant observation in gambling halls in Århus and in cafés where I arranged to meet people for interviews, but also sometimes in their home. In addition to this, I attended treatment sessions for 'ludomaniacs' in Odense, Copenhagen and Århus in order to learn about the phenomenon and to recruit clients for interviews. I also undertook an interview with special consultant Jan Madsen in Spillemyndigheden after having acquired some observational data from gambling halls.

Århus is the second largest city in Denmark, with 237,551 inhabitants. Being my hometown and the city in which I currently live, the scenery was familiar to me. The narrow and winding streets in the old part of the city, with its old market town buildings and dwelling houses, coexist with larger, postmodern glass and concrete blocks: an international art museum, a music hall and business and residential buildings. Recently stores like bakeries, clothes shops and electronic equipment stores have given way to legal gambling halls with names such as Monte Carlo, Pit Stop and Las Vegas, which I passed every day on my bicycle trips around the city.

Despite the familiarity of this city scene, I only knew about gambling machines from what others had talked about when they referred to the one armed bandits in the amusement park Tivoli Friheden; and in Vanggård Centret, a former dress factory that also housed a large bingo hall, as it does to this day. I soon discovered, however, that today the arms are gone and have been replaced with buttons, and that now electronic gambling machines seem to be 'on every street corner', as many people complained. When I re-

quested a list of places with gambling machines in Århus from Spillemyndigheden, I was able to locate a few in middle- or upper middle-class districts, only to discover on closer inspection that they were in fact located closer to a shopping centre and residential area inhabited mainly by low-income families. Electronic gambling machine gambling is now being supplied alongside other daily provisions. In many kiosks, gambling machines have now replaced food items.

Although I defined 'the gambling hall' to which I refer throughout the thesis as my object of analysis, my fieldwork was undertaken in different gambling halls and spheres of everyday life. I experienced 'ludomania' and gambling with gambling machines from positions such as customer, 'ludomaniac,' client, parent and spouse. If there is such a thing as multi-sited fieldwork in the sense that a phenomenon is examined by entering several sites in order to understand all its manifestations, as Marcus claims (Marcus 1995), then this research might be included in that category. But as Tjørnhøj-Thomsen has argued, the myth of the field as single-sited seems to have overshadowed the multi-contextual condition of all fieldwork (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999: 38). In any case, the principal aim of my fieldwork was to gather data about the gambling hall and 'ludomania' from as wide a spectrum of the lives of my informants as I could possibly enter.

Practical and ethical approaches to people and places

'Are you doing fieldwork tomorrow?'[15] was a common question for myself and my colleagues in the Department of Anthropology. This everyday question, 'Are you going on fieldwork tomorrow?' meant 'Are you going to your locality to practice participant observation or to conduct interviews?' We were conscious of our discipline as a 'field science' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 5). In practice, though, the cyclical process of working with theory, research material and text production (Spradley 1980: 29; Wadel 1991) means that 'the field' is both a methodology and a location in the sense that the field is constructed in the process of doing research in relation to particular locations. My aim was to understand the gambling hall and 'ludomania' within the wider contexts of everyday life. This implied

[15] *Skal du på feltarbejde i morgen?*

an approach to the field in which I entered different situations in everyday life, rather than framing my research around a specific location (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 32).

I chose an approach to the field where I could position myself as a researcher with as clear intentions as possible, whilst at the same time using my human ability to be a kind of friend, in the sense of being respectful and empathetic in every situation in which I encountered people, first and foremost as an ethical rule of conduct, but also as a means of establishing rapport with the people with whom I talked. This meant that I was willing to go a long way in talking about subjects that might matter more to a particular person in a particular situation than the research questions that I had brought along with me. If Anne were in distress over a telephone call from the social office, then I would talk it over with her. Likewise, if Jabir felt like unloading years of frustration over his marginalised position as a single father on welfare payments, then I would listen rather than insist on pursuing my own agenda about the perception of the design of gambling machines. By being a listener in many situations, I gained privileged access to information about my informants' lives as they manifested themselves at the time. This information became part of my research material along with the more formal interviews that I sometimes recorded on a tape recorder when I interviewed people in their homes or in an office in the Center for Ludomani.

In public places, I scribbled information in a notebook during conversations or immediately after returning to my office or home after field trips. I recorded a total of twenty-nine open-ended interviews. I interviewed six women and nine men from treatment centres on the topics of specific gambling events, the attractions of gambling machines, daily life, social background, money and the 'ludomania' category. In addition to these interviews I recorded informal conversations, as well as arranged interviews with customers in the gambling halls around similar topics. Interviews with clients from treatment centres were conducted at the end of 2004 and in spring 2005 after attending treatment sessions. Six individuals from treatment centres were interviewed more than once from November 2004 to December 2005:[16] Anne was interviewed six times, Bo four times, and Mary, Lene and Jabir twice each.

[16] In Appendix 1, I provide some personal details of those informants I mention by name (pseudonym) in the thesis.

As regards ethics, it seems easy enough to state that one has followed the rules of conduct according to, for example, the American Anthropological Association or the ethical rules of the social sciences in Denmark and the Danish Data Protection Agency.[17] Practising ethics in fieldwork was, however, a matter not only of preserving the anonymity of individuals, but also of balancing the professional aims of crossing cultural boundaries and respecting the individual's borders of intimacy. Being on field location is not only a matter of applying the appropriate method, but also of balancing professional ambition with ethical standards. When ethics are a concern, as they should always be in fieldwork, they can hardly be separated from method. When I graduated in 1990 from the same institute in which this research was carried out, there were no courses in field methods and ethics. Fortunately, this has changed. When I presented my research agenda at a so-called lunch seminar, many of the staff at the institute provided helpful suggestions on how to balance ethical requirements with methodology.

It was there and in informal conversations with colleagues on the matter that I realised that there were many different opinions on the matter of ethics. Some colleagues had no problem with an 'undercover' approach combined with a 'personal standard of ethics,' since, as they said, it was 'in many ways the only way that we anthropologists can carry out our research', while other colleagues were more inclined towards a more formal ethical code in which permission is asked to enter field locations. In carrying out my own work, I soon learned that fieldwork may contain ethical dilemmas which cannot be anticipated prior to the fieldwork, but must be dealt with in the moment they occur.

Ethics, as I came to experience it during my time in the field, meant more than obeying rules regarding the preservation of individuals' anonymity, of informing relevant persons and authorities in the field and maintaining ethical standards of behaviour. Ethics was a process of balancing my professional ambition and opportunity with both a formal and practical approach in each specific situation (Steffen 1996: 43-55; Coggeshall 2004:145-151). In the rest of this chapter I provide evidence of methodological and ethical approaches to specific situations as I encountered them.

[17] My research was registered in Datatilsynet (the Danish Data Protection Agency) with the following number: J.nr. 2004-41-4465

Relaxing the border controls

The starting point of and perspective for this research was gambling with gambling machines in the gambling hall: the technology, the disease label, the sensations of gambling, and the exchanges between players in the gambling hall, the supply of gambling machines, and the manifestation and experience of the legal rules of gambling in the gambling hall.

A research field is not something that the ethnographer can grasp as a tidy, structured and well-bounded unit of investigation: rather it is incoherent, and the object is often ambiguous. In my case, gambling with gambling machines took place in specific locations, and these places were, so to say, bounded and easily identified. However, the notion of harmful gambling or 'ludomania' implies the idea that there is a well-defined boundary between what may be called harmless gambling and harmful gambling or between harmless and harmful ways of gambling. This in turn leads to a distinction between different kinds of gamblers: the pathological gambler, the problem gambler or, in the Danish terminology; the 'ludomaniac'. But such emic distinctions dissolve once the fieldwork begins and different types of gambling and gamblers are shown to be anything but distinct entities. In addition to this, with regard to the problem of harmful gambling, the harm might just as well be considered to reside in the gambling machine. If the problem has something to do with the machine, we might have to discriminate between harmless and harmful gambling machines.

In their applied research on the handling of patients in a treatment centre who are suffering from alcoholic liver disease John Law and his colleague Vicky Singleton could not find the 'typical trajectories' they had committed themselves to identifying (Law 2003: 3). There did not seem to be a consistent way of mapping the health-care system because the system was itself incoherent. This was partly due to the ambiguous nature of the category 'liver disease', partly because the health system practiced different approaches to patient's trajectories (ibid.: 9). Law remarks that 'our instinct was to ask reality to adjust itself so that indeed it could be properly mapped' (ibid.: 4). Law's conclusion was that sometimes things are vague and can only be known vaguely because the object is of a fluid nature rather than well bounded (ibid.: 5). I too found myself moving around in a field that discursively presented itself as coherent and well-bounded, but in practice it was replete with ambiguity and vagueness. I will comment briefly on this below.

A systematic reading of all the Danish newspaper articles in the database Infomedia on the keyword 'ludomania' from 01-08-2003 to 31-08-2004 showed that as a category 'ludomania' was used synonymously with gambling, and especially with gambling machines. In talking to researchers at Ringgården – primarily an institution for alcohol treatment – that also carries out research into the treatment of 'ludomania,' I discovered that researchers felt compelled to direct their research towards the disease category of 'ludomnia' in their fund-raising. In this kind of process, in which my own research is also a part, the category becomes a convention as much as an instrument (Kuhn 1996). I also learned that the Center for Ludomani did not use the diagnostic testing of clients in the process of admission to treatment but instead let the clients themselves define their problems. The self-labelling process apparently took place prior to the person seeking help, and it was most often close family members who were active in the process. As Michael Jørsel, the manager of the Center for Ludomani told me, 'If they themselves think that they have a problem, it serves as our definition of the problem'.

During interviews and participant observation in gambling halls and in the treatment centres, I discovered that people perceived and used the label 'ludomania' in a variety of ways in order to communicate messages in different situations. People understood 'ludomania' to be a serious addiction, 'ludomaniac' to be the designation of anyone who went into a gambling hall. During fieldwork, I was not concerned with categorizing my informants according to disease measurements of 'ludomania'.[18] Instead I relied on their views of the problematic aspects of gambling and used their concerns to direct my observations of gambling activities in order to arrive at some understanding of 'ludomania' and of gambling with gambling machines as a cultural phenomena.

Participant observation in gambling halls

Staying in the field implies getting nosy about people's affairs and looking over their shoulders (Wolcott 1995: 101-121). Observing people who are absorbed in passionate gambling in the gambling hall involved somehow stepping over a line of intimacy, almost resembling what I imagine it would be like to observe people eating in a restaurant. Most

[18] In Chapter 4, I discuss the diagnostic category of 'ludomania' in more detail.

customers did not like to be watched over their shoulder unless they explicitly asked for company, but when I gambled a little with the machines, I felt more trusted by other customers as someone to share knowledge with. My spending from three to five hours in the gambling hall on each regular visit and at different hours made customers familiar with my presence. My experience was that observation became more productive, as well as more ethical, when I engaged in gambling life like other customers. Wadel schematises four basic roles in participant observation, namely participation in activities and conversations, as well as observation of conversations and activities, while Spradley refers to high and low levels of participation (Spradley 1980: 58-62; Wadel 1991). By being present in gambling halls, I was able to alternate between all these roles when situations presented themselves. This, of course, implied a great deal of sensitivity to situations, which I needed to adjust when I wanted to obtain rapport with people.

In order to acquire a balanced picture of life in gambling halls, I chose to frequent five different gambling halls on a regular basis, as well as making random visits to whichever gambling hall suited me on my daily journeys around the city of Århus. I chose three in the city centre and two in suburban residential areas where the gambling hall was placed in shopping arcades. One of them was in a neighbourhood with a dense immigrant population, which I chose in order to obtain a more balanced sample of informants than the one I had obtained in treatment centres, where I had only met two people of immigrant background.[19] The other suburban gambling hall was chosen because it belonged to Lone and Anne, whom I met on several occasions in their home and once in a cafe. One of the gambling places in the city centre was a café where I could be comfortably seated whilst writing up field notes from other gambling halls and observing customers attending the gambling machines in front of me. In the third gambling hall in the city centre I met with

[19] I have chosen to approach the sample of informants as people who gamble in Danish consumer society rather than 'female gamblers', 'immigrant gamblers' or 'male gamblers', that is, as citizens and consumers who share the characteristics of relative poverty and varieties of social exclusion. I have tried to pinpoint some variations in the way individual customers act in the gambling hall that may have a bearing on either gender or ethnic background. However, I have not found evidence of neither gendered gambling. Neither have I found evidence of significant varieties I gambling due to ethnic background. This does not mean that I dismiss that gender and ethnicity may play an important role in gambling styles, consumption preferences and motivations. In observing customers in the gambling hall I have tried to direct my attention to gender differences, though without finding anything obvious, except that there are more men than women in the gambling hall. I also found that men tended to include more gambling machines in their gambling sessions than women and therefore spend more money in the gambling hall than women who gamble. However, I came across important exceptions from this stereotypical picture of gendered spending. I have tried to mirror these concerns in my choice of cases throughout the thesis.

some long-term regular customers, as this gambling hall had been established over ten years before I undertook my research. I visited three of these gambling halls from three to five hours on a weekly basis over a period of four months and the rest at irregular intervals during the thirteen months that I undertook fieldwork.

The main reason I chose a range of gambling halls instead of concentrating on one in particular was that, if I had chosen a single gambling hall, I would have felt obliged to take the position of a regular customer and thus be obliged to gamble with more of my wages than I cared to. By being a regular visitor, staying between two and five hours each time customers became used to me, and they accepted my presence. I chose to obtain permission from the manager to observe and talk to customers. A manager in one of the city centre gambling halls did not want to give her permission to do research in the gambling hall, but said that I was welcome as a customer and free to talk to any customer if they had no objection. In the other gambling halls managers had explicitly given their permission, and in one they agreed to put a notice on the wall informing customers that I was undertaking a study of customers' gambling motives and experiences. In approaching each individual I encountered, I always presented myself and explained my intensions. As long as I respected individual demarcated borders of intimacy I felt I was safe. But in order to know the borders, I had to approach them. A stern look or a remark like 'I don't like people looking over my shoulder'[20] would make me withdraw a few metres from a person who was gambling.

However, when I first arrived in the gambling hall in the immigrant neighbourhood where I met Nadim and Jabir, some of the other customers said that they suspected me of being a police agent, despite my having told them that I was a researcher from the University. When I showed them my business card, they said that it might be a fake. I have good reason to believe that my presence influenced life in this particular gambling hall because the manager told me that it was used as a site for selling drugs and fencing stolen goods. I was also asked by some customers there from time to time how long my fieldwork would last, but I had no reason to believe that people did not believe in my intentions, and everyone was quite helpful in answering my questions.

Thus my research was undertaken in a variety of locations. I was a customer, a researcher, a non-gambling visitor, sometimes inspecting gambling machines as I had

[20] *Jeg kan ikke lide at blive kigget over skuldrene*

seen other customers do in order to determine whether to gamble on a particular machine or not. I tried to fit in to whatever position was available according to the social fabric and the physical layout of the hall. Gambling halls often had a corner where people met up, almost like by a village pond. The gambling hall might have a café table and chairs where those who liked to act as friendly observers might be seated. Imitating them was easy enough, perhaps with a coffee in hand, chatting or 'reading' a paper while observing and getting up occasionally to throw some coins in a gambling machine.

A few of those persons who became part of descriptions of situations in the gambling hall were ones I never talked to but had privileged access to observe on that basis. But there were also people whom I saw once or on several occasions and who volunteered to be interviewed in the adjourning horse-racing café[21] or whom I talked to while they gambled. There was Bodil, who said that she was a 'ludomaniac', and Hans, who complained about all the money he lost. Both of them provided me with information on their lives and their perceptions of gambling machines when I met them in the gambling hall. I came particularly close to Nadim, who gambled heavily, when he allowed me to follow his intense gambling sessions for hours on several occasions. Hazim and Ghanim also volunteered to talk to me, despite being much occupied with gambling. Jabir, whom I only saw once in the gambling hall, invited me to his home and told me a great many things about his life and gambling, as did Habib, whom I interviewed twice in his home and once in a department store cafe. Curiously enough, both Jabir and Habib were happy to use me as an opportunity to escape from the gambling hall on what I felt they took as a date.

On one of the first occasions I saw Nadim in the gambling hall, he approached me with this question: 'I want a new girlfriend, would you be the one?' After refusing his generous offer, he then asked, 'Will you come over to my place for a coffee?' Although he perfectly understood that I was a researcher, he persistently addressed me with flirtatious remarks and romantic suggestions, seeing me as the object of a new love affair. 'Remember, this is my work', I replied to his invitation to coffee, as he smiled flirtatiously back at me: 'If you come to my place, I'll make you work.' As I saw it, 'coffee' in his place was out of the question. I did, however, manage to establish a friendly relation-

[21] Most of the gambling halls were part of an establishment with two departments – those with only gambling machines, and those with other forms of gambling, like electronic horse races, lotteries and sports games.

ship with him in the gambling hall to the benefit of my research. Nadim proved to gamble more heavily than any of the other customers I came to know, and I was therefore very determined to succeed in connecting with him. He allowed me to observe his gambling activities closely and answered most of the questions I asked in the process. I believe that this relationship was only possible because we managed to establish a reciprocal relationship where he benefited from my interest in his current situation and I benefited from his generosity of friendship. However, this was only made possible because we established mutual respect for borders of intimacy that were not to be crossed if the relationship was to work for the benefit of both of us. My contact with Nadim turned my attention towards the importance of community and interpersonal exchange in the gambling hall, a matter I attend to in Chapter 5 of the thesis.

Thus participating in social life in the gambling halls was rewarding in several ways: it served as a means of my integration into the gambling hall, as well as giving access to customers' knowledge of gambling machines and how to gamble with them. Equally importantly, it provided access to biographical material so that I gained knowledge of customer's lives beyond the gambling hall. However, not everyone in the gambling hall was interested in informing my research, presumably because they did not want to share what they considered matters of a private and personal nature with someone from a public institution whom they felt might be keeping their 'ludomania' behaviour under surveillance. As an example, I never witnessed the kind of irregular behaviour where people smash a gambling machine with a chair, which managers of gambling halls had told me sometimes happened. There may even be reasons to suspect that my presence had a preventive effect on such events. However, I was sometimes offered perfume at such a cheap price that I assumed it must have been stolen. Through my keen interest in the human aspects of who my informants were and what they were going through at that time in their lives, I seem to have gained access to detailed accounts of biographical material that is not easily accessed in public places.

When I generalise from the gambling halls that I incorporated in my fieldwork to 'the gambling hall' in the other chapters of the thesis, this is to underline the gambling hall as the analytical object. Another vital reason is to secure the confidentiality of each place and each person who provided hospitality and friendship in my process of fieldwork.

Participant observation in treatment centres

From the beginning of my research I was determined to describe life in the gambling halls. However, after a few visits to some gambling halls I felt that I might face problems in getting to know anyone there. I was not only interested in people as gamblers and their involvement with the gambling halls; I was also interested in how their human everyday lives related to the gambling hall. Another problem I faced was that 'ludomania' had become not only a disease label for pathological gambling, but also a kind of mental banner dominating and judging the involvement with gambling of people who might not be interested in having the label of 'ludomania' attached to them. From visits to gambling halls early on in my research, I observed how shy people were in the gambling halls. I sensed that gambling with gambling machines was a very private matter and I was concerned about the negative and stigmatising effect of the ludomania label. I assumed, perhaps wrongly so, that these would restrict access to informants in the gambling hall. I therefore decided to contact the Center for Ludomani in Odense and Århus and the Frederiksberg Centeret in Copenhagen in order to recruit individuals for interviews.

The Center for Ludomani offers cognitive therapy to people who report an unwanted gambling habit. The Frederiksberg Centeret is a treatment centre that offers Minnesota-based therapy[22] for a wide spectrum of addictions, including gambling.[23] In both places the therapist invited me to present myself and my aims to clients in the therapy groups and to let them decide whether they wanted me to sit with them during sessions. To clients in therapy I presented my research as being intended to produce knowledge about the motivations for gambling, as well as knowledge about gambling halls. I explained that I assumed that participation in the treatment sessions might produce knowledge for my thesis and that I was interested in contacts for interviews. I assured the clients that I would treat information from the treatment sessions and interviews confidentially. In the Center for Ludomani I was allowed to scribble in a notebook during sessions, whereas in the Frederiksberg Centeret they preferred that I wait until after the sessions. I sat through three

[22] The so-called Minnesota Model is a treatment programme for alcoholism and other addictions developed in USA in the 1940s. It is based on the twelve-step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous where addiction is characterised as a disease. In Denmark there are several Minnesota-inspired treatment centres that offer treatment to 'ludomaniacs'.

[23] Both treatment centres are private institutions that fund their 'ludomania' treatment from the same public funding as my own research.

sessions in two different 'support groups' under the leadership of a therapist in the Center for Ludomani in Århus for people who had been through at least one week of treatment at the Centre in Odense. There were different approaches to my participation in the two treatment settings according to the therapist's frame of reference, which I will account for in the following section.

In the Center for Ludomani in Odense, I sat through seven days of treatment with a group of ten persons. The sessions lasted six hours a day, including the lunch break in which I also participated. However, I did not stay at the centre after the treatment sessions because the therapist said that he wanted his clients to have time off without anybody else than their fellow clients. When I asked clients, however, they had no objections to me staying in the centre in the evenings, but I respected the therapist's wish and his rationale. My role in the Center for Ludomani was unofficially defined as neither therapist nor client, but as a 'fly on the wall', as the therapist said to me. The sessions in the Center for Ludomani provided information on motivations generated by a systematic examination by the therapist of situations in which clients had an urge to gamble. But more importantly it provided me with informants with whom I undertook my own interviews.

In the Frederiksberg Centeret I participated in four group treatment sessions which lasted three hours each. In one group session in the Frederiksberg Centeret, the clients discussed my presence because one of the clients was reluctant to accept it. The matter was settled by another client in the group who simply classified me as a 'ludomaniac' because I attended gambling halls. 'As a 'ludomaniac' you have a right to be here, Lise', he said. Clients in treatment groups were generally very curious about my research and did the best they could to inform it.

Participation in a therapy group is naturally a sensitive matter since the therapist, as a representative of the institution, must frame the session accordingly. One of the therapists in the Center for Ludomani in Odense expressed great concern over this matter prior to my attending his therapy-group session as he was worried that I might interfere in the session. I assured him that not only was I used to this position of passive observation, but I was also quite comfortable with it as long as everyone else present was too. My performance in this group was restricted to participating in the twice daily ritual when everyone, including the therapists, would say something about how they felt about the session, their whereabouts the previous evening, and what they intended to do after the session

ended. The therapist assured me that 'This will give you a face – turn you into a person in the eyes of clients'.[24] At the end of the session, everybody said that they had come to see me as 'part of the group' and they all volunteered for interviews with me.

The therapist was of course right that my presence was sensitive. Therapists sometimes became uneasy when clients asked me to exchange information on gambling experiences because I told them that I was using gambling as a strategy to obtain knowledge for my research. In the 'support group' – post-therapy counselling sessions – people sometimes talked about recent gambling experiences, and I would try to engage in the dialogue. Therapists used the term 'dry gaming'[25] to refer to gambling talk, meaning that it served as a substitute for the real thing, and they said that 'It will light the gambling passion in them'.[26] Some therapists also called it 'irresponsible talk'.[27] This kind of participation, of course, could not be initiated by myself. On the other hand, I could not resist the temptation to engage in this kind of conversation when the opportunity occurred. When it did, I would keep the conversation going while maintaining eye contact with the therapist in order to desist if he or she gave a sign to do so. Participants in the therapy group in the Frederiksberg Centeret expressed concern regarding my participation in gambling. They felt that it was irresponsible of me to use that kind of research strategy and were appalled that I had to use my own money for the purpose. These clients touchingly realised the dilemmas that an ethnographer might be faced with in fieldwork.

One day in this same therapy group, my fieldwork dilemmas and the feelings of strains that I felt in many situations about positioning myself in the field were mirrored in the clients' moving attempts to help me. They wanted me to give up gambling as a research strategy because they felt it was too dangerous and might light a passion for gambling in me. From their point of view, the light version of gambling that I practised was not an option. I was therefore faced with a dilemma about my research role when the therapist suggested I either test my addiction or give up my research role. I had not fully realised and understood the universal approach to participants as 'addicted humans' in the institutional framework of this Centre, which was similar to the approach to clients in Alcohol-

[24] *Det vil give dig et ansigt – gøre dig til en person i klienternes øjne*

[25] *Tørspil*

[26] *Det vil tænde deres spillelidenskab*

[27] *Uansvarlig snak*

ics' Anonymous, where every person is an 'alcoholic' (Steffen 1996: 101). I felt that I had arrived at a dead end with this either/or solution. However, the uneasiness of the situation in fact turned out to be productive in a conversation that I had with the therapist during a break, where we settled for a solution in which I abstained from engaging in talking about gambling experiences. Personally, I had reached a point of exhaustion in my fieldwork from having to position myself in a variety of contexts – a point of 'empathic overload' also described by other anthropologists (Beckerleg and Hundt 2004; Hume and Mulcock 2004). I therefore refused the therapist's kind offer of individual consultations and diagnostic testing, although they might have revealed more interesting ethnographic information about 'ludomania'.

Participation in treatment sessions gave me access to interviews with fourteen clients. I met with these people in their homes, in cafés and on one occasion in my own home. Among the people I interviewed several times were Bo, Anne, Lene and Lone. I met with Anne six times and Bo four times for several hours at a time, and I interviewed Lene three times. Anne also referred me to her close friend Lone, whom I saw three times. In the Frederiksberg Centeret, Irene and Jørgen volunteered to be interviewed after the treatment sessions, and I met once with each of them in Copenhagen. Among informants in treatment, the distribution of the sexes was eleven men and five women between the ages of thirty and sixty-two. With two exceptions, there were no clients in any of the groups with whom I participated who had origins in countries other than Denmark.[28]

[28] I was able to pin down two possible reasons why persons of Middle East background did not attend 'ludomania' treatment. One was that they might not be familiar with treatment options; another was that they might have wanted to hide their gambling problem because it was considered bad to gamble and shameful to have lost one's grip on the financial affairs of one's household money.

Reflections on participant observation in multiple settings

My ethnographic material consists of intensive observations of gambling halls and interviews and conversations with clients from treatments centres and gambling halls. An equal number of informants in treatment centres (16) and in gambling halls (17) became part of my ethnographic material. With a few exceptions, everyone reported that they felt they had a gambling problem. The few who did not have financial problems because of gambling felt that they were facing a problem of spending too much time in the gambling hall and consequently felt that they were missing in terms of their roles as parents and/or spouses. Everyone I spoke to were gambling machine players, and most of them provided the biographical information with which I was able to perceive their gambling experiences in an everyday context.

The way I see my informants is that half of those from the gambling halls were marginalised from the majority population by virtue of being unemployed and having an immigrant background. They were gambling for social reasons, as well as pursuing financial luck, and most of them were gambling intensely. The other half were employed workers who gambled intensely and who might be considered by those close to them to have a gambling problem in terms of spending too much time and money in the gambling hall. The group of informants from treatment centres was comprised of eight on welfare payments and eight who were currently employed. Except for two individuals, there was no one with an immigrant background in the treatment settings.

Participant observation not only involves taking on different roles, it is also about adapting to an environment, which requires a willingness to experiment with such roles. As ethnographers we are not at liberty to choose our positions and perspectives, but depend on what others are willing to share with us (Hastrup 1992: 78). Some of the methodology literature I refer to in this section schematises field strategies rather than describing the nature of field relations. They are a technical description of how to perform a genre rather than a discussion or characterisation of the nature of field relations as lived experience. I have offered evidence that doing participant observation by definition means inhabiting awkward social spaces that may be both uncomfortable and contradictory by nature (Hume and Mulcock 2004: xi). The awkwardness and the at times uncomfortable roles and

positions are none the less sources of information from which important ethnographic data may be generated (Kleinman and Copp 1993; Hume and Mulcock 2004).

As already mentioned, the only place where my participation became a subject of debate was in the Minnesota-inspired treatment centre – the Frederiksberg Centret. Unlike Steffen, who did fieldwork in a similar setting, where she was asked to share her own biography (Steffen 1996: 50ff), my offer to share my own gambling story was rejected by one of the therapists because I refused to declare a wish to stop gambling as part of my research strategy. Where Steffen was invited and required to become involved in therapeutic work as part of her research role, I was asked *either* give up my research role and become a client who was prepared to admit that she had a gambling problem, *or* to participate as a researcher and refrain from talking about her own gambling experiences. In Alcoholics' Anonymous, closed meetings are generally restricted to people who consider themselves to be alcoholics, and participation therefore requires an honest wish to stop drinking (Steffen 1997: 101). Retrospectively it became clear to me that my offer to share my gambling stories with the other clients without explicitly declaring my wish to stop gambling was deemed a dead end.

The somewhat schizophrenic situation in having to split oneself as both participant and observer at the same time is a condition of ethnographic fieldwork. And it is a situation in which I, like Steffen, came to understand that we cannot always expect others to understand and respect our double approach to the field because others are most likely situated in circumstances in which people are approached as 'wholes' (Steffen 1996: 51).

The ethnography and writing it

The aim of my fieldwork was to produce a written account of my fieldwork based on my field notes, but also, and perhaps just as importantly, based on the unwritten experience of bodily experienced data. Ottenberg calls such notes 'headnotes' (Ottenberg 1990), which are based on memories that may be recalled in the writing process, though 'body notes' might be a better term. Such 'body notes' played an important role in recalling specific sensations and incidents in the processing of writing field notes, as well as in the analysis and writing of the thesis. Hence my account is in fact a working up, step by step (Emerson,

Fretz et al. 1995: 169-210), of four sets of research material: interviews with people from treatment centres; observations of biographical and gambling narratives from treatment centres; interviews with customers from gambling halls and observations of situations in gambling halls; and the embodied experience.

The aim of making 'the dream hall' visible through an ethnography involved portraying what appeared to my senses, as well as what was understood during the time I spent in field locations (Maanen 1988: 3). This was a selective process of constructing one or more narratives in an integrated process of writing field notes (Emerson, Fretz et al. 1995). It began with jotting things down in Danish as fully as possible in a field diary. In the process of writing, selections from these jottings were turned into more elaborate field notes written in English. And, in the process of transposing field notes into ethnographic text, detailed descriptions of particular events, persons' conduct, sounds, machine designs etc. then became the sources of thematic narratives by means of reading and coding these texts (Emerson, Fretz et al. 1995: 170ff.).

Most of the people I talked to and whose gambling behaviour I observed reflected many of the problems that clients from treatment centres had presented to me. The people I encountered in the gambling halls were people who, from my perspective, gambled intensely in terms of the money, time and energy that they invested in the gambling hall, and many of them told me about some of what they found to be the problematic aspects of gambling with gambling machines. Some of the individuals who are mentioned in the thesis, such as Leif and Christa, were people who played a vital part in socialising in the gambling hall through their emphatic behaviour towards other customers, but I never saw them gambling intensely.

Many people like Leif and Christa who used the gambling hall as a kind of informal meeting place without doing a lot of gambling with the gambling machines, but rather by becoming involved with others were present. I have tried not to judge or evaluate those individuals who have contributed to this research on the grounds of the diagnostic criteria of 'ludomania', but prefer to see them as humans who were going through a particular time and place in their lives when gambling plays a large though not dominant part.

Chapter Three

Gambling as a transformation of money

'I've transformed my money
a thousand times'[29]
(Steen)

Introduction

In writing and reading through my field notes, it struck me as odd that the people who had talked to me continually expressed a disinterest in money at the same time as they were or had been deeply involved with chance- taking with money in the gambling hall. In my field notes, I see people articulating money as a 'dead thing', and I read claims like 'I never had a relationship with money' and of one being 'indifferent' or 'cold' about money. 'No wonder', I reasoned to myself at first, 'that these people let go of their money so easily if they have no ingrained idea about the value of money'. But of course matters were not that simple. Furthermore, money was not just money in quantitative terms. There were different

[29] *Jeg har transformeret mine penge tusind gange*

kinds of money, depending on what situation and circumstances they appeared in; and furthermore, different kinds of money had specific qualities attached to them.

Thus my informants' concern with money in the gambling hall, as well as in everyday life, was fraught with paradoxes, ambiguities, contrasting meanings and consequently conflicting emotions. Some of their frustrations might have been due to belonging to a low-income stratum. In any case they were experiencing relative poverty (Bonke et.al. 2005; Montesino 2005; Hohnen 2007). I also sensed the experience of a conflict in values about having and not having money. On the one hand, individualistic consumption, and gambling in particular, was rejected. On the other hand, the desire to take part in consumption as a way of being a person in friendships, a mother who can buy her child a Christmas present, a young man who can provide silver earrings for his girlfriend's birthday or go on a charter holiday with his friends was partly seen as a measure of success in being. The idea of obtaining money for consumption in a non-utilitarian way was seen both as a welcome opportunity and as a blow against the values of thrift, the work ethic and being a responsible person in the role of a parent, for example. Problems in making ends meet on a daily basis, feelings of social degradation for having to wait for welfare payments that were not always paid punctually or paid at deferred intervals and needing or being encouraged to having one's economy managed by others than oneself were troubling to almost everyone I spoke with. But it might also have worked as incentive to take chances with money as a way of aspiring to or dreaming of a transformation of the material foundation of one's life.

In this chapter I explore the morality and meaning of money (Parry and Bloch 1989; Toren 1989; Belk and Wallendorf 1990; Zelizer 1994) in both everyday life and the gambling hall. I will describe the morality and meaning of money in relation to the gambling hall as a transformation of the meaning of money in the gambling process. I will then go on to relate these observations to the ritual use of money as a means of the transformation of the individual (Douglas 1966; Belk and Wallendorf 1990; Miller 1998).

Being poor in a welfare state and consumer society

A therapist in one of the treatment centres regretted to me that the clients were 'preoccupied' with money: 'I am trying to get them to talk about other matters in life than money, but they keep coming back to talking about money all the time; money-money-money.' To me it was little wonder that the clients had their minds on money. After all, they did not seem to have any, or at least very little compared to middle-class people, since most of them were on some kind of welfare transfer or employed in low-wage jobs, besides having lost a lot in gambling. When I listened to clients talking and to customers in the gambling hall, they phrased their money concerns in a different manner. They repeatedly said that they had 'many worries about money' and that they did not 'have money' for anything other than bare necessities, and sometimes not even that. Most of the people I interviewed, but not everyone I observed in the gambling hall, was in varying degrees financially vulnerable, and they were a minority in Danish consumer society, being dominated by expectations of affluence and middle-class standards of consumption. They were all experiencing relative poverty (Erhvervsråd 2007).[30]

In 2005 the Danish National Institute for Social Research [31] published a report on what characterised consumer roles and consumption strategies among financially vulnerable families in Denmark, Norway and Sweden (Bonke et.al. 2005). Among these families, Jens Bonke and his collaborators found that people had 'a planned and tight economy, and they have no ability to save up' (ibid.:11). The most problematic areas for financially vulnerable families were holidays, leisure and clothing, and families experienced a lack of capacity to make their children meet the standard of majority, middle-class levels of consumption (ibid.: 12). Bonke et al. stress that the social consequences of the idea of 'free choice' have become especially important in light of growing individualisation and the regulation of the welfare state on a market basis: 'What appears to happen is that Scandinavian citizens with limited financial resources experience limited access to consumption and choice in consumption, both in terms of being a neglected consumer segment, and because their patterns of consumption are to a large extent incompatible with dominant norms of consumption and patterns of consumption' (ibid.: 14, my translation).

[30] Using measures of the OECD, which are also used by the Danish Ministry of Finance, the number of relatively poor people in Denmark rose from 211,000 in 1993 to 260,000 in 2004.

[31] *Socialforskningsinstituttet*

Furthermore, financially vulnerable families seek consumption as a means of social inclusion, but because of their marginal position these families find that their integration with the majority population is in effect not an option available to them (ibid.).

Norma Montesino analysed poor citizens' so-called luxury consumption, such as cell phones and McDonalds food, as a means of fighting the stigmatization that follows the experience of being socially excluded from mainstream society where consumption is a means of social participation (Montesino 2005). For social workers, poor people's luxury consumption was seen as irrational consumption and interpreted as a knowledge deficiency (ibid.: 245ff). However, Montesino found that poor people's consumption patterns represented a striving to be 'good' consumers in a postmodern society where consumer roles had to a large extent replaced the notion of citizenship in the welfare state (ibid.). According to my own observations, people were in fact creatively engaged in manipulating their everyday choices, despite their relative poverty.

One of those who experienced relative poverty was Habib, who had migrated from Morocco twenty years earlier. When I met Habib in the gambling hall, he took the opportunity to get away from it by agreeing to be interviewed in his council flat. Like some others with a second country origin whom I met and talked to, Habib was poor. He was also divorced and the father of a son of whom he had joint custody. He had limited educational background. He had been mentally ill for some years, living on welfare payments, and he described to me how lonely he had been during that time, suffering from a lack of social support because of a poor social network. When I met Habib he was working in a subsidised employment position – a repair place. He found the work useful and delighted in repairing all sort of electric equipment. Yet he described a feeling of degradation from being offered only subsidised jobs. He had a long history of what he called 'forced labour', being obliged to work for his welfare benefits in private firms in what he considered to be very poor conditions, and having to fight with the social office to get his transport costs funded.

Despite his situation, he was trying to save up money for his son's clothes and excursions with his school class by saving on food for himself, because he insisted on his son's participation in social life. Habib said he did not like the gambling hall much, but since it was an opportunity to socialize he went there occasionally, but he never gambled for a lot of money, he said. He also told me that he did not understand why the other cus-

tomers were so eager to gamble, since most of them were unemployed and therefore had very little money. His ten-year-old son came home while I was talking to Habib, who engaged in a warm conversation with his son about the upcoming winter excursion that the son was supposed to take part in with his school class, provided Habib managed to raise the 2,000 kroner he needed for the trip. The purchase of a home computer had been postponed till some unknown time after this trip.

Another picture of a life with similar aspects of relative poverty appeared when I paid a visit to Lone. Her friend Anne was there too because she had spent the night there with her ten-year-old son, who was a playmate of Lone's son. They had all been out on an evening and night trip to the city, where they had enjoyed a free open air concert. When I asked them if they had enjoyed the trip, they said they liked the music, but there were two events that had taken away some of the pleasure of their outing to the city centre. One event was that the Seven Eleven shop in the city square had not been willing to give them cash, as the ordinary supermarkets did, for the empty bottles which their sons had collected in order to earn some pocket money. 'That really outraged me', Anne said. The other event was a violent altercation between two passengers on the bus on which they had travelled back to Lone's place in the suburban apartment block. Anne said she had been shattered by the episode, and she regretted that the children had been exposed to it. It had 'overshadowed an otherwise pleasurable evening', she said. However, they were pleased that their sons had got along well and enjoyed playing together. They told me they were broke and welcomed the meal I had brought, which we enjoyed while the children were running around begging for some money to go shopping for a particular toy, this being this week's offer in Netto, the low budget supermarket in the mall where there was also a gambling hall. Lone handed out 5 kroner to the children and invited them to spend it on a 'special offer' bag of chips that was on sale in Netto. Lone served coffee after the meal, and her brother turned up with a pile of video games for the children. After saying goodbye to Anne and Lone, I took the opportunity to go to the mall to see if I could see their sons. In Netto I spotted Anne's son, who, before heading for the special offer chips, was examining closely the toy he had wished to buy.

Several months after this event, I met Anne outside the gambling hall with a handful of shopping bags. She was sad because she had just received a notification of her invalidity pension, but she was still the Anne I had gotten to know as a person who cher-

ished friendship and community. She told me with a sparkle that she had been shopping for Christmas presents for her friends and their children because she insisted that 'they must feel Christmas'. Hence, Anne was very dedicated to her friends, many of whom were lone mothers, with whom she arranged small trips, sports events and trips to a bingo club. She was also very concerned to help her friends out financially if they needed it. When we got inside the gambling hall, she put down the shopping bags and drew out a chocolate heart with a deep red wrapping to show what she had bought for one of her friends. She had managed to keep all presents around 50 kroner each, she told me. 'But that is still expensive when I have to buy many' she said.

Poverty showed in different ways. Some were so poor that I assumed it to be the reason why they abstained from inviting me to their home for interviews. The second time I visited Anne, her dining table had been taken out of her living room, leaving an empty space. The table was in fact a used garden table, which had collapsed since my last visit, she told me. Anne could not afford another table at this time, just as she could not afford to see a dentist. This had been a problem for several years. When Anne smiled, it became evident that the remaining teeth in the upper part of her mouth were in a very poor condition. Anne, Lone and Habib may have been the poorest of my informants. But due to the stigma of being poor, I could not always ask people frankly and had to remain with the impressions and the insights they allowed me into their economic situations.

Gambling and social class

According to Reith, it is well documented that there is a high participation of the poor in gambling and that this participation increases in times of unemployment in effect making gambling a form of regressive taxation (Reith 1999: 100). The first national survey on gambling in Denmark confirms the observation of high participation in pathological gambling in low-income groups, and those with little educational background (Bonke and Borregaard 2006). In a study from USA, Oregon, Daniel Brown et.al. suggest that the most impoverished tend to prefer instant games where the player is rewarded instantly after the bet has been made (Brown, Kaldenberg et al. 1992: 163). In a study among working class women in England Emma Casey has shown that participation in lottery gambling is a way of 'making the best' of one's marginal position as a poor consumer (Casey 2003). Gambling provides these women with a sense of doing something about their situation, which is

otherwise strained by their social position. They bought the hope of improving their daily household budget and thus explained their gambling as 'responsible' (ibid: 250). Cases of Scandinavian welfare research have shown that people who live with relative poverty are faced with particular challenges in managing their money on an everyday basis.

The importance and meanings of cash in hand

Striving to be good consumers can be viewed as a process in which people in relative poverty carry out considerable work in order to obtain money, shop for special offers and pay bills, and it is also a process in which cash in hand is seen as vital for the experience of control with money (Hohnen 2006; Hohnen 2007). In her study, Pernille Hohnen found that the main difference between low-income families and middle-class families was that the former had to divide their money according to needs, whereas middle-class families had more scope for impulsive spending (Hohnen 2007: 755). Hohnen found that her informants dealt with the practical matters of money by dividing up their money for different purposes, creating buying tactics like buying and storing up food for a whole month, making lists, reflecting over items in the supermarket and buying prepaid telephone cards (ibid.: 756). Another strategy was to avoid electronic money because it was harder to control than cash in hand, which people found more easy to categorise (ibid: 757). The experience of the necessity of cash in hand for the purpose of earmarking it for specific purchases made poor people extra financially vulnerable when certain kinds of welfare allowances were paid at odd times of the month or when they were not paid punctually. Therefore, poor people experienced a multitude of categories of the origin of their money, as well as having to differentiate them for different purposes. A confusion of categories of money in the sense of what sources of money should be spent on what purposes was therefore inevitable. Consequently poor people experienced their ability to pay not only as 'a question of how *much money* they had but also of *which* money can be used and when' (Hohnen 2007: 750).

Thus the differentiation and timing of money become not only practical means of dealing with little money in everyday life, they are also instruments that mirrored what Hohnen calls a 'migration of economic problems into the moral field,' where people

rarely feel that any of their purchases were fully legitimate (ibid.: 761). This was experienced as a lack of freedom of choice and a feeling of never making the right choices and constantly questioning one's purchases. Hohnen observed that poor people – especially women, because as mothers they prioritise children's consumption to a greater extent than fathers – experienced moral dilemmas in handling money on an everyday basis, unlike better off middle-class people, who did not have to divide up their money to the same extent (Hohnen 2007: 761). This was a situation in which poor consumers were left with a very limited space of legitimacy as consumers (ibid.: 763). Relating Hohnen and Montesani's finding to this research, we then see that what the therapist called clients' 'preoccupation' with money may be understood as a constant anxiety not only about making ends meet in daily life, but also about their moral capacities as consumers and persons in society – a matter I will return to in the following.

It was my impression that money as 'cash in hand' mattered a lot to everyone that I talked to. One manager of a gambling hall told me that he believed that one of the attractions of the gambling hall was that customers were experiencing cash in their hands all the time. But it was also my impression that money was experienced in different ways. Anne and Bent said that they withdrew from family gatherings, while others said that they refrained from going on trips with friends and on other social occasions because they did not want to 'lose face' by turning up without what they considered to be an appropriate gift for hosts or pocket money for the occasion. This indicated that money had that kind of exchange value, which could buy entry into the world of consumption and make someone feel like a successful person. Hans and Tobias confessed to me in the gambling hall that, 'When we have a lot of money we think we're the bee's knees'.[32] And Mary had stated that one of her reasons for gambling was that when she won a lot of money in gambling, 'I become really self-assured'.

In Hohnen and Montesino's work, we saw how people who experienced relative poverty dealt with matters through practical ways of categorizing, planning and differentiating their purchases in order to counter the experience of social exclusion and stigmatization from mainstream consumer society. If we accept the assumptions that people who are poor are vulnerable because their situation is uncertain, and that consumption is a

[32] *Når vi har en masse penge så tror vi, at vi er nogle helvedes karle.*

means of social inclusion, then spending might be viewed as a ritual process of transformation. The questions are what is transformed, how and by what means.

Money and spending as ritual

Viewing consumption as a ritual for upholding or transforming social status was first brought up by Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood in their book, *The world of Goods* (Douglas and Isherwood 1979), in which they argue that consumption has ritual elements that serve as a means of social integration and of upholding or transforming social status. Goods, they argue, are information systems that tell something about individuals and groups and therefore may buy admission into groups and classes.

The ritual element of consumption may be observed in the various ways it serves social integration. Goods bought for special occasions, like visits, dinners and celebrations, are means of sustaining friendships and communities. The giving of goods as presents on social occasions enters into a system of reciprocal relations characterised by mutual obligations between the giver and the receiver (ibid.: 24, 43-44). Humans may also relate to one another in ritual consumption when the same level of consumption is sought, as, for instance, in beer drinking and in keeping up with one's neighbours in buying household technology (ibid.: 90). Thus goods set up visible public definitions, and it is this capacity that makes consumption a ritual because it helps in transforming or sustaining the social status of individuals (ibid.: 43).

In speaking to every single person in this exploration of 'ludomania' as well as in observing everyday consumption in some situations, I became aware of how important consumption was to one's feeling of being part of the game of life in which one participated or sought to become an equal partner. In this striving for participation as a consumer in a consumer society, money was not only a means but also a symbol of participation and prestige – a substance that held the power to transform one's life. And in gambling in particular, money became a symbol of and means of luck as a desired object linked to the future – a daydream or hope of a change of status, situation and position in life.

Enjoying the prestige of having money was demonstrated to me one evening when Mary and I went out for a few drinks and a movie, which in the end we did not see. I

bought us some drinks, which we sipped slowly while talking for a brief while, seated in fine leather chairs in a bar located inside a large shopping and entertainment centre that Mary had chosen for this occasion. Mary ordered and paid for the second drink without asking me whether I wanted more. This was despite the fact that she was always short of money, having been recently employed in a low-wage job. She was also heavily burdened with private gambling debts, which had followed her around for several years. Her spending, I felt, was not just a way of making me feel good, but also of permitting Mary to meet me on equal terms.

In therapy sessions, clients often said that they desired things like a 'bourgeois life', a house, 'nice' furniture, holidays and presents for their dear ones. However, how might gambling help them? It was 'the dream', they said. Clients in therapy had learned from experience that they could not win money in the gambling hall. Mary was used to reflecting on her situation from her many times in therapy groups for 'ludomaniacs', where I first met her, and said that what she really needed was 'to be satisfied with what I have'. She further explained that 'It is dissatisfaction with my life that makes me want to gamble in order to get rich quick.' Like the other clients, she was attempting, by means of therapy, to stop living the dream that a large sum of money would forever bring her the happier 'problem-free life' that she aspired to. Mary, who was now thirty years old, had been born into poverty in Thailand and had only partly managed to escape it in Denmark, where she was now living more or less from hand to mouth because of her hopeless gambling debts. She had been sixteen when she arrived with her sister and her mother. Her father had found another woman in Thailand, and besides he drank and had a gambling habit. Mary's mother had found an opportunity to leave the misery and marry a man in Denmark. Mary's entry into the everyday life of Danish society had been partly via the Asian community, where gambling was a major pastime activity. She was now trying to break with that community by taking up more 'Danish' things like salsa evening classes and regular meetings in a self-help group for 'ludomaniacs'. But she was only partly happy with these activities because they did not provide the same kind of excitement and opportunity as gambling did. And so Mary appeared somewhat stuck between the Asian immigrant community of gambling and her attempt to lead a gambling-free life with her Danish boyfriend, who on top of it all worked in a casino. When Mary gambled, she preferred

black jack and baccarat in the larger casinos. It was only occasionally that she went to a gambling hall, she said.

Anne was a lone mother with two sons, who had both been categorised with learning difficulties and behavioural disabilities. The oldest had been placed in a special home because Anne could not cope with him. I had met her at a treatment centre for 'ludomaniacs', where she was attending a week of therapy for the second time. She had difficulties quitting the gambling hall altogether, even though she really wanted to. Taking a chance with some of her welfare money in the gambling hall was a way of keeping the dream of a 'problem-free life' alive: 'When the children's benefit cheque arrives I think that's a lot of money, but then again I think that it's really not that much, so why not spend some of it in the gambling hall to see if I can make some more out of it',[33] she said. However, gambling also took her mind off past and present worries. Anne was seriously abused as a child – a history that, she said, she had partly overcome with the help of family counselling. Her father, according to Anne, had said that he felt there was nothing he could do in regard to her past – 'the only thing I can give you is money'. Sometimes, when Anne ran short of money for her daily expenses, she had received what she termed 'survival help'[34] from the social office that gave her regular welfare payments. She shuddered at the thought of not having that option.

However, Anne also frequently received little sums of money from her father when she requested them for special items for herself or the children, like clothes and presents. When Anne talked about this money and the contact with her father, I thought I traced a content look in her face. The fact that she brought up the subject perhaps indicated that she felt more secure about her position because there was a source from which she could rely on money given to her in love. In contrast to this money from her father, the regular welfare benefits that she received and was legally entitled to but might not be given out of love of her. When Anne talked about money from her father it was directed at meeting special need of herself and the children, whereas the welfare money had the character of 'survival'.

[33] *Når børnepengene kommer så tænker jeg at det er mange penge, men så alligevel så er det jo ikke ret mange penge, så hvorfor ikke gå ned i spillehallen og se om jeg kan lave dem om til nogle flere.*

[34] *Overlevelseshjælp*

During my fieldwork, the liberalisation of the money market seems to have peaked. One could hardly open a local paper or ride the city buses without observing advertisements in the form of huge posters, streamers and appeals to citizens to borrow money. I myself continually received offers in my mail from a wholesale society catalogue offering loans of up to 200,000 kroner with 'free opening of account; use the money when you feel like it; no need for a guarantee; we make it easy to apply'. I did not meet anyone during fieldwork who was happy with the extremely easy access to credit on the financial market. In fact, people frankly expressed their anger over the liberalisation of the money market and the many options for credit cards with large interest payments. Many would use debit card options offered by financial sources other than their banks, thereby avoiding what they felt to be embarrassing questions about how they would spend the money. There was certainly no escape from money in people's everyday lives. *To have money* in the sense of having spare money which was not marked for other purposes meant, as seen here, being happy, self-assured, enjoying prestige and being able to attend social events. Not having spare money might even be a source of 'depression' and 'low self-esteem.'

Having spare money, however, was not only a source of joy. Jens, a former drug user and now a client in a therapy group for 'ludomaniacs', said that having spare money made him restless to a point where he felt quite uneasy, because he had experienced many times that this restlessness would make him gamble and lose more money than he had. 'When I don't have any money, then I'm at peace', he said. Money apparently had an embodied dimension, and spare money, was constantly on the verge of moving away, leaving the home sphere.

'At home we like to put a handful of twenty kroner into the piggy bank sometimes just to enjoy the sound of a lot of money,' Anne said. From the gambling hall, I knew that some people liked to play with money by click clacking the coins or showing off their wallets and notes. I was also told by people in the gambling hall that winning gave them a 'great feeling'; some even said that it was 'like an orgasm' when the coins were rolling in the payout tray. The bodily pleasure of money also consisted in its aesthetic and decorative dimension. In Mary's home, I saw a glass jar filled with money with a vase on each side containing decorative grasses on a bookcase. Were Anne and Mary thus partly trying to save despite their poverty, partly reminding themselves that they too might be part of affluence as a means of transforming their selves? At least these manoeuvres with

money indicated that money was not just money: it was at once savings, treasures, decorations and ready money that was sometimes put to rest in between restless movements in the everyday world of busy transactions in shopping and gambling.

The apparent paradox of money being a 'dead' object that people like Steen and Jan had said they did not 'care about' on the one hand, and money as a means of love, community, joy and perhaps ecstasy on the other indicated that money was surrounded with ambivalence. Money matters were in effect a very sensitive issue, which meant that there was great reluctance to be interviewed about matters concerning money, especially about the size of losses and debts. I sensed an atmosphere of money belonging to a very private sphere – perhaps a sphere even more private than that of sex.[35] Furthermore, I sensed feelings of shame and guilt about money in gambling and debts that could not easily be talked about.

It might look as if money was valued differently depending on how one had obtained it and that the experienced meaning of money depended on the source from which one had obtained it. Thus Anne had indicated that her welfare payments had less or a different value than the money she received from her father. We also see hints of some money having an extraordinary meaning. Thus in certain circumstances money might offer a unique experience, as respectively in the father-daughter relationship, the aesthetically decorative money jar on the bookshelf in the living room, the pleasure of coins rolling in the piggy bank, and the ecstatic feelings of jackpots in the gambling hall. In a way, some categories of money had an almost sacred nature, which somehow completed people as persons.

In the classic work of Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* he writes that sacredness is normally associated with religion, being derived from a desire to believe in a self-transcendent power greater than oneself (Durkheim 1976: 37-38). Therefore, the sacred is related to something extraordinary or unique, and as such, it is set apart from or perhaps even opposed to the ordinary of the profane world (ibid.). The extraordinary pow-

[35] Occupational psychologist Einar Baldursson claims that Danes speak more about sex than about matters of wages when chatting with colleagues in the work place Karner, L. (2008). Løn større tabu end sex. B.T. 6-10-2008**:** 14. Se also Kreuger, D. W. (1986). 'Preface'. The last taboo: money as symbol and reality in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. D. W. Kreuger, Brunner/Mazel**:** vii-ix.

ers of the sacred imbued with mystery (ibid.: 262) have been powerfully described in Claude Levi Strauss', analysis of a healing rite used by a shaman in childbirth (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 186-205), as well as by Carol Laderman's insight into the bodily effects of the symbols in Malay cosmology (Laderman 1994). In these cases the extraordinary power of symbols is manifested in their effect in balancing the power of invisible spirits. Victor Turner suggests that such sensations are found in collective religious rituals and rites of passage, as well as in individual participation in mundane rituals of play and leisure (Turner 1977; Turner 1995 [1969]; Turner 1996). When humans view or experience something as sacred, we may be inspired to perform certain, perhaps extreme commitments or sacrifice. Furthermore, belief in the sacred may be sustained by myth and ritual. But in what way may money and its use be seen as related to the sacred and to sacrifice in a Western secular context?

One way in which humans make sense of money is to ascribe it with sacred meanings. Paul K. Eiss analyses how Mexican pesos are effectively 'recoined as the Virgin's money through ritual processes and thereby absorbed into an economy of quotidian miracle and sacred debt (Eiss 2002). Russell W. Belk and Melanie Wallendorf emphasize that, in contemporary Western society, collective definitions of what is sacred are not limited to religious contexts (Belk and Wallendorf 1990). In secularized contemporary western society, sacredness may find its expression in non-religious areas, such as sex, art, sport and shopping (ibid.: 39). Furthermore, many consumers consider, for instance, gifts, vacation travel and collections as having a sacred status. Gifts connect people to other people rather than just connecting people to objects. A profane commodity is not valued beyond its economic worth; it is fungible and can be replaced by a similar object. The sacred meaning of money, on the other hand, differs from the profane in representing something special or in creating a unique experience for a person.

In my own exploration of the meanings of money, the sacred meaning of money seemed to depend on the source of the money, and certain monies, like coins in a jar waiting to be spent, held out a promise for the future, thus protecting a person in the here and now. There was, however, a paradox of money in the sense that different and contradictory moral spheres of money were at stake, as in the household sphere, the sphere for private loans from parents, the sphere of welfare office, the sphere for helping oneself out of the till, savings etc. I will account for the different spheres from which people accessed

money for gambling, but before doing so I will expand further on the subject of the moral and symbolic meanings of money and discuss them in relation to distinctions among the aims of spending in general.

My informants expressed in different ways the fact that money was a source of material wealth and happiness, but also of personal worth and prestige. Moreover, as a moral domain, money was imbued with feelings and ethical dilemmas. Lene, for instance, told me how bad she felt about having borrowed money from the manager of the gambling hall when she ran short of her own money for gambling. 'I really want to pay back those loans. It is something to do with my honour', she said, and asked me if I thought she was a 'bad person' for not returning the loan to the manager. On an everyday basis, consumption was restricted but nonetheless directed at 'luxury' goods such as chips, presents and not least gambling. The complexity of money was thus evident. In addition, money was imbued with a morality strongly associated with the household. Hence gambling was regarded as an excessive form of spending in opposition to a moral imperative of thrift in the household. For most people in my study, money was also separated from labour.

For the poorest, gambling represented a pragmatic choice to eke out one's allowances or low wages, but it was also a way of physically experiencing the sensation of money and to dream of a large sum of cash that might turn one's restricted consumption into a more affluent one. In the gambling hall the sound of heaps of coins rolling was ever present, mostly as a designer sound in the gambling machine, but also occasionally as real payouts hitting the payout trays of the gambling machines when customers had pressed the payout button. These observations reminded me of one anthropologist who has argued that spending is a ritual with both sacred and profane goals.

In his book, *A Theory of Shopping*, Daniel Miller argues that shopping may be understood as a sacrificial transformation of money, implying a vision of both profane and sacred goals (Miller 1998). Drawing on fieldwork in a shopping area in north London, Miller argues that in daily provisioning people operate with two goals: a sacred goal of caring, love and obligation, and a profane goal of leisure and luxury in which the act of spending becomes a goal in itself (Miller 1998: 7, 73, 75, 96, 108, 126). The sacrificial nature of the spending process ensures that the vision of excess, as well as attention to the realm of love, takes place as a kind of devotion, much as in Hindu worship, where a token

is presented to the deity (ibid.: 99). Hence, the spending process implies a process of devotion where money is presented to some sort of divine sphere. In shopping as in sacrifice, Miller suggests, there is a separation from the concerns of social and profane obligations and those focused upon the divine (ibid.: 104). In the absence of a deity, something may be evoked beyond the immediacy of particular relationships or the material world (ibid.).

The evocation of money, as seen for instance in the sounds of coins rolling, indicated that money somehow brought people beyond the profane goals of material needs, status and relationships. Or was it that the sounds of money would bring forth an ecstasy which might momentarily bring about a change in one's relationships and being in the world? If gambling can be seen as a consumption ritual, then perhaps the sound of money may be viewed as kind of sacred mantra. In that case, it might be a mantra bringing about a sense of change to one's social status, one's wellbeing and one's relationship with an unspoken force holding the power to transform one's being. As in Hindu worship, where mantras are held to contain the powers of the deity as well as having healing powers (Kjærholm 2007), the sounds of money in my informants' lives might have had a similar significance. In any case, the designer sounds of coins rolling in the gambling hall was experienced as a kind of omen in that they were directed at a promising future inherent in the idea of luck. Likewise, the pleasure of the sounds of coins rolling in a piggy bank might be seen as holding out a promise of the transformation of one's being.

If we follow this line of argument, then the transformation of money in the gambling hall was more than a process changing the meaning of different kinds of money to bring it in accordance with the logic of the gambling sphere. In that sense, gambling might not have been so different from the ordinary, everyday shopping that Miller characterises as an ongoing social relationship. Miller observed this relationship in the bodily and verbal gestures in the shopping centres in London, and, as I will demonstrate throughout, my informants were equally engaged in a relationship with the gambling machine in what Miller characterises as 'minutiae that make up the constantly changing nuances of a social relationship' (Miller 1998: 141). With respect to gambling, this was a relationship where the stakes were continuously placed in the gambling machine, despite the financial odds being on the side of the gambling hall. In that process, many customers found that their perception of ordinary clock time was somehow suspended. They 'bought time with the gambling machine' and hence got stuck with it in the spending process. Thus money was

situationally defined, but might its meaning(s) also be subject to negotiation in the process? In order to answer this question, we should consider further ethnographies of the meaning of money.

Cross-cultural meanings of money

So far, I have indicated that money mattered to my informants in terms of turning people into respectable consumers and persons. However, as already indicated money had different meanings, depending on the context in which it appeared and was used by people. Furthermore, money was tactual, sensual, associated with joy as well as with prestige and perhaps seen as holding a promise of the future. From a contemporary anthropological and sociological viewpoint, money cannot be defined strictly in quantitative economic terms with a unifying effect on social life as it is seen in classical sociological work on money.[36]

[36] Simmel's book *The Philosophy of Money* (1978) is one example of the classical school of the sociology of money. In his view the unifying process of money as a general purpose means of exchange is seen as 'heartless', destructive of community and solidarity between humans and consequently impersonalising human relations Simmel, G. (1978 (2006)). The Philosophy of Money. Third enlarged edition edited by David Frisby, Routledge.

In his writing on 'credit' for instance he explicate this position: 'Just as money places distance between ourselves and objects, and also brings them closer to us – thereby displaying its specific indifference in these contrasting effects – so too the instrument of credit has a dual relationship to our total assets. On the one hand, the form of cheque transactions, through the multiple mechanisms that we have set in motion, dissociates us from money. On the other hand it makes the transaction easier, not only because of the technical convenience but also psychologically, because money as cash gives a visual impression of its value and makes it harder for us to part it' (ibid.: 479); and later: 'credit has become an impersonal organization and trust has lost its specific personal character' (ibid.: 480). According to some scholars the view that capitalist money is a utilitarian and uniform agent that flattens all social relations where everything is rendered quantifiable according to one scale of value is a view that also runs through the works of Marx, Weber, Parsons and Giddens (see for instance Bloch, 1989: 4; Mauer (2006): 20; Zelizer (1994): 6-10). In the context of this thesis, I do not totally dismiss the influence of capitalist money as dissociating humans from the personal character of value and trust in money and in the corrosion of community and human relationships. However, throughout I shall try to show how the social and symbolic processes of money in gambling categorises and changes the meaning of money and demonstrate the implications this has for everyday life in general and for spending in the gambling hall in particular.

Thus it is argued that money is more than a utilitarian object, a medium of exchange, a unit of account, a standard of payment or a store of value (Bloch and Parry 1989; Parry and Bloch 1989; Belk and Wallendorf 1990: 45; Zelizer 1994; Singh 1997; Robbins and Akin 1999; Gilbert 2005: 358). Thus money is at once a material reality, a social relation and a symbolic referent that creates spaces and times of value for humans (Gilbert 2005: 361; Mauer 2006: 17, 27). Money, these authors argue not only varies in meanings between cultures, it may also mean different things within the same culture, thus the meaning of money is 'not only situationally defined, but also constantly re-negotiated' (Bloch and Parry 1989: 23). When Anne, for instance, talked about the money she received from the welfare office and the money she received from her father, she valued them differently. Moreover, when money acquired aesthetic, perhaps sacred as well sensory qualities, it seemed to be based on the morality of whichever sphere in everyday life money entered into[37]. The negotiation of the meaning of money was certainly an issue in gambling, as we shall see later in this chapter.

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[37] The notion of separate spheres of economic exchange within specific cultural locations has been addressed in Bohannan's work on Tiv economy in Northern Nigeria Bohannan, P. (1955). "Some principles of exchange and investment among the Tiv." American Anthropologist **57**: 60-70. Here Tiv mark the distinction between subsistence and market exchanges by different behaviour and values (ibid.: 65). 'Conversions' by means of all purpose money – exchanges of items from one sphere to another – are morally charged because they involve exchanges between spheres that are ranked differently with marriageable women belonging to the highest rank and subsistence to the lowest. Consequently, in 'conversions' between spheres, there will always be a party who gain in social position and another who lose. In contrast to 'conversions' exchanges within spheres – 'conveyances' – by means of special purpose money, are morally neutral.

Another important contribution to the understanding of separate spheres of economic exchange is Frederik Barth's essay on economic spheres in Dafur Barth, F. (1967). "Economic spheres in Darfur." ASA Monographs **6**: 149-174. Here Barth examines the relation between two major spheres in Fur economy: a sphere of material items, including a monetary medium associated with market-place facilities and another sphere for the exchange of labour and beer. In Fur economy, the two spheres are separated by morally sanctioned behaviour, thus preventing labour and beer from being sold for cash. The relevance of Bohannan's and Barth's insights for this study is that they stress the importance of multiple and context dependent moralities of money and that money may undergo a moral evaluation when used in transactions between spheres.

In a study of informal economic transactions in The United Kingdom Davis, J. (1972). "Gifts and the U.K. economy." Man **7**(3): 408-429. Davis identified four sub-systems of economic spheres: the

In Jonathan P. Parry and Maurice Bloch's anthology *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, the contributors draw attention to the differentiation of money into different kinds of currencies with different symbolic meanings. Olivia Harris, in her study of money in Bolivia, found that money belonged to different spheres of morality due to the relevance of different cosmologies for money. The idea that money in Bolivia belongs to a wider cosmology of fertility thus ascribes it with a meaning similar to that of crops growing in the fields (Harris 1989). Janet Carsten observed that women in a Malay fishing community were in charge of the distribution of household money (Carsten 1989). It was imperative for that money to be separated from the sphere of exchange, which was considered potentially divisive and liable to disruption. Women's role in symbolically 'cooking' the money which their husbands brought home from the fish market could thus be seen as a symbolic transformation that separated the money from the community of exchange relations into the domestic sphere of unity and indivisibility (ibid.: 137). In Fiji, where money is considered irrelevant to the creation, fulfilment or maintenance of social bonds, money has to be symbolically 'laundered' in a form of ceremonial exchange which is achieved in the *gunu sede* drinking ritual (Toren 1989). Bloch points out that market transaction in western settings are imbued with a morality that is not always found in non-western settings (Bloch 1989). For people in Imerina in Madagascar, the use of money in a transaction did not give that transaction a special meaning, rendering money a much more neutral phenomenon than we find in the West, where the ethics of the creation of money as value are tied to ideas of labour. In Imerina, creation was tied to the mystical quality of the unchanging ancestral world, which was responsible for the domain of morality and was defined in opposition to the domestic sphere and market exchanges (Bloch 1989: 167: 188).

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market sub-economy, the redistributive economy, the household-economy and the gift-economy (ibid.: 408). Each sphere, he argues is governed by different rules. However, David's analytical focus is on the transactions between the spheres rather than on the symbolic meanings and morals of each sphere (ibid.: 411). Karen Fog Olwig and Steven Sampson see a similar economic sub-systems in their study of Denmark, Eastern Europe and the West Indies Olwig, K. F. and S. Sampson, Eds. (1986). Uden regning: Danmarks anden økonomi og kultur. Steven Sampson identifies six economic sub-systems apart from the formal economy: criminal economy, for instance drug dealing and organised crime; informal economy, for instance fringe benefits in paid jobs; black economy, for instance whole or part illegal activities like barter and untaxed labour; near economies, for instance exchange of goods and services in everyday life og at special occasions; family economy, for instance do-it-yourself work and household work (ibid.: 24-25).

Joel Robbins and David Akin agree with Bloch and Parry in their understanding of the ideas of money as varying both across cultures and within cultures (Robbins and Akin 1999: 3). However, they attach greater importance to currencies per se as having unique properties (ibid.: 15). They make an analytical distinction between money produced in institutional settings, such as shopping and labour, and money as currencies with particular powerful properties. Currencies, they argue, may be ascribed powerful meanings in transactions and social reproduction which have implications for how money is handled and perceived (ibid.: 28ff.). In Melanesia, reliance on exchange as a mode of sustaining the social contextualises currencies as something particular (ibid.: 39). For example, currencies may change identities according to how they have been obtained. Thus, in Melanesia, money obtained through antisocial means was believed to be barren or magically dangerous and was called 'bitter money' (ibid.: 35). But money might also be seen as powerful in itself, as, for example, in the Mount Hageners' belief in its power to heal (ibid.: 31). It is therefore fully justified, according to Robbins and Akin, to talk about the fetishism of money when that money is attributed human powers (ibid.: 31).

These are all examples from so-called non-western countries. Was there any reason to think that the social and symbolic mechanisms and processes of money that we saw in these non-western settings would in any way resemble what might be observed in western settings? My intention in bringing these studies from non-western setting into the context of contemporary Danish consumer society has not been to argue for similarities, but rather to pinpoint the aspects of symbolization and moralisation of money. In my field, there were indications that seemingly homogeneous market money – kroner – which customers in the gambling hall relied on was subject to differentiation, symbolisation and moralization to the extent that it significantly influenced the way it was used. My informant Steen was not the only one who said that money was a 'dead thing,' and that money did not matter to him. This denial of the meaning of money indicated that money might in fact be loaded with meaning, perhaps even to the extent that this meaning had somehow to be smothered in order to circulate the money in the gambling hall.

In a study based on historical documentary sources, such as personal letters, documents from welfare societies and magazine articles on the meaning of money, Viviana Zelizer shows that people in America around the late 1800s and early 1900s ascribed different meanings to different kinds of money (Zelizer 1994). Her assumption is that this

period in history has an impact on modernist perceptions of money to this day. ‘Consider for instance, how we distinguish a lottery winning from an ordinary pay check, or from an inheritance’ (ibid.: 2). Some money is regarded as more ‘honest’ than other money, thus leaving ‘dirty’ money to be stained by its ethically dubious origins (ibid.: 3). Money that is ethically dubious somehow burns a hole in one’s pocket and has to be spent quickly, like one man mentioned by Zelizer who could not use the money he had obtained from a robbery for a church donation because it was ‘dirty’ money (ibid.). On the other hand, Zelizer found that sometimes ‘dirty money’ was morally laundered by donating a portion of it to some worthy cause. My informant Bo said to my astonishment that he did not consider his jackpot wins to be his ‘own money’, but this information came at such a late stage in my fieldwork that I was not able to determine whether this also applied to others. However, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, the changing meaning of money in gambling was happening as a consequence of the gambling process, as well as being a precondition for gambling.

It is central to Zelizer’s theory of money that earmarking it is a social process and that ‘money is attached to a variety of social relations rather than to individuals’ (ibid.: 25). Zelizer points out that people create currencies for different purposes in many creative ways, such as decorating coins, when they are engaged in delicate or difficult social interactions (ibid.: 25). A few examples from Zelizer’s book will illustrate this point: courtship expenses serve to create or dissolve social ties; fees and gifts are used to mark rites of passage; and loans or money gifts to friends or kin serve to manage intimacy (ibid.: 26). Thus, according to Zelizer, modernity does not depersonalize life completely, since ‘in the circulation of state currency, people always introduce distinctions, doubts, and directives that defy all instrumental calculation’ (ibid.: 30). When I managed my own money in relation to my gambling expenses throughout fieldwork, I tried to do so by categorising part of my wage for gambling purposes. I also kept that money together with an account book in a separate box which I bought for the purpose, stored on a kitchen shelf. When I asked people I met in the gambling hall how they kept track of their money, they said that it was ‘in my head’ how much money they spend and how much they won. Thus, my informants were not physically separating earmarked money for gambling but trying to keep track of it in their mind.

When Zelizer argues that money is a social process in which specific currencies become imbued with potent meanings, I was immediately able to relate this to my own observations about money in gambling. Zelizer's analysis leads her to the assumption that one kind of money cannot always substitute for another kind of money, and therefore that the notion of a single, general-purpose money does not make sense.

Following these reflections, four key insights emerge. One is that utilitarian, standardised and universal market money is more than a medium of exchange, a unit of account, a standard of payment and a store of value. Money is a social process that follows from it being embedded in different spheres of social relations. Therefore money is situationally defined and negotiated, often in relation to spheres of morality like the domestic sphere and the market sphere. Thus money may, to lesser or greater degree, be imbued with morality according to the sphere in which it is experienced. Consequently, different kinds of money may need either to be kept apart or to undergo symbolic laundering in order to serve the moral purpose of each situation or sphere.

The second important insight is that the symbolic laundering or categorizing of money appears particularly powerfully in the process of separating, for instance, market money from domestic money. Engraving coins, storing money in jars and piggy banks and reserving money in different funds for different purposes can be seen as means of ascribing money with different and powerful meanings. A third insight is that money may have different meanings depending on how it has been obtained, which may direct it into different spheres of morality. The fourth important insight is that money may be linked to non-utilitarian purposes, such as caring, healing, intimacy – in short to non-profane matters in life, and therefore have a somewhat sacred meaning in the sense mentioned above in discussing the work of Miller and Belk. One purpose of money with sacred meanings may be its use in managing or creating relationships of intimacy or love, while another may be its use in individual transformations of the self where feelings of ecstasy may be involved.

If money was so closely entwined with complex social relations, moral boundaries and ambiguities, and more or less enchanted strategies with currencies, while at the same time being a deeply private matter, it is little wonder that the people I talked to reported feelings of guilt and shame in relation to money. Might it be a result of somehow having abused or transgressed the moral boundaries of money? I often heard people talk about having 'lied a

great deal about money to my dear ones' as a consequence of having either got hold of money illegally or using private loans that they had been given for 'paying bills' or purchasing food.

One way of overcoming the defeat people experienced of having transgressed the moral boundaries of money was to re-categorise kinds of money, like, for instance, from theft to 'loan'. Such a categorization of money affecting the mechanisms of the interchange of the different logics and qualities of money in the different spheres of everyday life also formed part of the stories of despair and attempted suicide I was given.

In the following sections, I will pursue the issue of the moral meanings of money in relation to the gambling hall. Based on my empirical observations I will reflect on the questions of the moral boundaries of money, its symbolic laundering, differentiating money, its sacredness and money as a means of individual transformation.

Acquisition of money for gambling

Accessing money for gambling was both a practical and a moral problem. The practical problem of how and where to get one's hands on money for gambling was closely related to a process of categorising and re-categorising money, or what Zelizer calls moral earmarking (Zelizer 1994). Interviews indicated that the morality of money in everyday life was being pushed to the limits in gambling. One of the most extreme consequences of the moral problems of categorising household money or other kinds of money for gambling was thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviour.

Bent, a thirty-year-old man, characterised himself as a 'ludomaniac' in a talk to a group of professionals from the gambling machine business that he permitted me to record. Bent had gambled with gambling machines and only gambling machines since leaving school at the age of sixteen. His gambling habit had escalated when he had an accident at work, from which he was on sick leave for over half a year. When his sick leave, ended he lived on welfare benefits and odd jobs in different bars where he continued gambling. Bent had managed to lie about his gambling habit to everyone around him, but when he began to see a psychologist at his mother's request, he began to question his own morality about money. It was a particular event with a welfare payment cheque that set him off

on a suicidal trip to a train station. Bent was narrating his story dramatically in the present tense to an audience of representatives of the gambling machine business at a conference:

> 'The day I go to see the psychologist I also have to get the cheque from the welfare office for the deposit for my new flat. It's 4,300 kroner – and that's what it says on the cheque. The psychologist asks me some questions but I answer something else because I'm only thinking about how I can cash this cheque. I need cash here and now. I go to my bank and say 'Good morning, I've got a deposit that I want to cash.' They tell me that the cheque has to stay in my account for three days before I can cash it. Then I take the cheque and we go to the next bank. And it's probably not the best bank, because I owe them 10,000 kroner and they can remember this. Well, I take the cheque and we go to the next bank. I think it's in the fourth bank that I get lucky. They give me my 4,300 on the strength of my blue eyes and I say thanks very much and thanks for your help. Next stop is the gambling hall – the sky's the limit when you've got 4,300 kroner in your pocket.
>
> But the 4,300 was actually supposed to go home to my sister. That's what we'd agreed, so that I wouldn't spend it. I had to spend it on my flat. Right. So anyway, I went down to a place called 'The Chimpanzee'. There were three machines there. We throw 200 kroner in each of them, take the newspaper and read while they are running. The 4,300 kroner only lasts a couple of hours because we don't win anything and my phone keeps ringing. I can see that it's my Mum and Dad, then my sister and my brother. Why hadn't I brought home that money? I sit there keeping track of so many lies. I don't answer them. When the 4,300 is gone I see only one way out. And it's probably the hardest way.
>
> Then I go to the train station and stand on the bridge over the line ready to jump in front of the next Inter City train because there is no life left to live. My mother and father will not be pleased with me because I am not worthy of being in the family. There is only one way out and that is to make that jump. I'm actually staggering there with one foot over the rails. But the thought of my nephew and my mother and father holds me back. They must love me since they bring me to see the doctor and everything. So we climb back. Then I hide from my family because I cannot look them in their eyes. What will they do if they find out that I

> am a 'ludomaniac'? It's a tough battle. I hide away at my girlfriend's place. I'm usually not home before eleven thirty or twelve every night. When she asks where I have been, I tell her a lie about having been to see my friend Asger.[38]

In Bent's story, his suicidal thoughts and his hiding away were related to his practice with and experience of morals about money. He was constantly thinking of ways to access money for gambling, he avoided those with whom he had made arrangements about managing his money, he lied about his whereabouts, he felt bad about not being 'worthy of being in the family' and consequently he saw only 'making the jump' in front of a train as a way out. Thus, Bent had been very busy trying to keep track of lies about his whereabouts and how he used his money, or rather dealing with the morality of the different spheres of money: domestic money, welfare money and gambling money, which belonged to different rationalities altogether. Transgressing the boundaries of these spheres and dealing with the moral issues at stake might have exhausted him to the point of suicidal behaviour.

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[38] *Den dag jeg skal op til psykologen, da skal jeg også hjem og hente den check med mit depositum til min nye lejlighed. Det er 4.300 kroner, som jeg får på en check. Psykologen spørger i øst og jeg svarer i vest. Mens jeg sidder der tænker jeg kun på hvordan jeg skal få vekslet den check. Jeg skal have kontanter her og nu. Så jeg går ned i min bank og siger: dav. Jeg har mit depositum, dem vil jeg gerne hæve. Ja men den skal stå på din konto i tre dage inden du kan hæve den, siger de i banken. Så tager jeg checken og vi går hen i den næste bank. Og det var nok ikke den bedste bank jeg gik ind i, fordi der skyldte jeg 10.000, og det kunne de godt huske. Nå men jeg tager checken med og så videre til næste bank. Jeg tror at i fjerde bank der er jeg heldig. Jeg fik mine 4.300 på mit glatte ansigt og jeg siger farvel og tak for hjælpen. Og så skal vi eddermame ud og spille, nu skal vi have det godt. 4.300 på lommen..*

Men de 4.300 de skulle faktisk hjem til min søster. Det var aftalen i hvert fald, for at jeg ikke skulle bruge dem. Dem skulle jeg bruge til depositum til en ny lejlighed. Right. Så jeg røg ned på noget der hedder Chimpansen. Der står lige tre maskiner. Vi smækker 200 kroner i hver. Tager avisen og sætter os over og læser den mens vi de kører. De 4.300 kroner varer kun to timer, fordi man ikke vinder noget, og min telefon den kimer løs. Jeg kan jo se det er min mor og far, så min søster, og min storebror. Hvorfor kommer jeg ikke med de penge der. Der skal jeg altså sidde og holde styr på mange løgne. Jeg svarer dem ikke. Da de 4.300 kroner er opbrugt, så kan jeg kun se én udvej. Og det er nok den hårdeste udvej man kan tage.

Så jeg tager op på togstationen og stiller mig på broen over skinnerne; er klar til at springe ud foran det næste inter city tog, for der er sgu ikke noget liv tilbage at leve. Min mor og far vil ikke have nogen glæde af mig fordi jeg er ikke værdig at have med i familien. Så der er kun én vej at tage, og det er at tage springet ud over. Jeg står faktisk og vakler på ét ben ind over skinnerne. Men tanken om min nevø holder mig tilbage i livet sammen med min mor og far. De må jo elske mig siden de prøver at få mig til læge og alt sådan noget. Så vi klatrer ind over på den anden side. Og så gemmer jeg mig fra min familie, fordi jeg ikke kan se dem i øjnene. Hvad ville de gøre hvis de finder ud af, at jeg er ludoman? Det er en hård kamp. Jeg gemmer mig ude ved min kæreste. Jeg er for det meste først hjemme klokken elleve halv tolv om aftenen. Når hun spørger hvor jeg har været henne, så stikker jeg en løgn om at jeg har været ude ved min kammerat Asger.

For Anne and her partner, who were both living on welfare payments and liked to gamble, money was constantly a practical and moral concern. According to Anne, their quarrels were often about trust in dealing with the money they had and about who was more entitled to gamble. Sometimes Anne had taken money from her partner and gambled with it without telling him. She herself called it 'stealing'.

> 'Me and my partner had quarrelled for a long time about which of us gambled the most and why, and when one of us was allowed to gamble why wasn't the other allowed too. He thought there was a bigger chance of winning money on the horse races than on the gambling machines. So he felt he was more entitled to gamble than me. But things had gone badly for him a few times and I hadn't gambled for a long time, so we agreed that I should take over all our money. But that wasn't a very good idea because I went out and gambled it all away. I was ready to jump in front of a bus. I was actually sitting there waiting for a bus to come along. It wasn't only me, it was also him – I'd called him a 'ludomaniac' and stuff like that. But I was the one who had lost all the money – his money too!'[39]

In Anne's account, the money that they circulated into daily provisioning was not separated from their gambling money. Being short of money to meet their daily needs, her partner had tried to convince her of the idea of winning back some losses by going to the horse races. However, he had finally given in to Anne's management of their common pool of money, which she bet without luck in the gambling hall. For Anne and her partner, as for most of my informants, gambling had become an everyday commodity. For Anne, one of the consequences was that it sent her off on a suicide trip similar to that of Bent's. Thus, Bent and Anne were caught up in moral dilemmas with money in mixing up their house-

[39] Anne: *Min kæreste og jeg havde gået og skændtes i lang tid om hvem der spillede mest og hvorfor og når den ene måtte spille, hvorfor den anden ikke måtte spille. Han mente der var større mulighed for at vinde pengene ved at spille på trav end der var på spilleautomater. Så derfor synes han at han var mere berettiget til at spille end mig. Men det er gået galt for ham nogle gange og jeg havde ikke spillet længe, og så blev vi enige om, at jeg skulle have alle vores penge. Det var så bare ikke så smart, for da jeg så havde alle vores penge så gik jeg ud og spiller hele lortet op. Der var jeg klar til at hoppe ud foran en bus. Jeg sad virkelig og ventede på, at der skulle komme en. Det var jo ikke bare mig selv, det var også ham jeg havde kaldt for ludoman og ting og sager, og så sidder jeg der, og har oven i købet brugt hans penge også!*

hold money with gambling money and consequently violating the mutual trust between them by lying.

Trust in money matters in the spheres of family life and business life is the subject of Supriya Singh's book *Marriage Money* (Singh 1997). Singh distinguishes between marriage money, market money and banking money. Marriage money, she argues, is domestic, private, personal, joint, cooperative and nebulous, whereas market money is public and impersonal, individual, calculable and contractual (ibid.: 3). Banking money shares most of these characteristics of market money, but it also differs from market money in being personal rather than impersonal (ibid.). In marriages, banking money also differs from market money in being collective rather than individual because of the wide use of the joint account. Consequently one of the most important matters in marriage money is trust between partners (ibid.: 62). Hence a lack of trust in marriage money is essentially a crisis of trust in the marriage.

In Bent and Anne's account, we saw that the violation of trust in families around money matters may lead to suicidal behaviour. In Bent's account, this was due to his betraying an agreement with his sister about how to spend the welfare cheque. Considering these observations in the light of Singh's analysis, we can see that Bent's welfare cheque was destined for a family sphere in which it relied on the trust between sister and brother. In Anne's account, her spending her partner's money in the gambling hall was a serious blow to her self-perception, but I also knew that Anne was struggling to give up gambling and did not feel supported by her gambling partner in this. Anne struggled with trust in money matters in her love relationship. Bent and Anne were not alone in this. I knew for sure that another informant, Bo, had divorced following his embezzlement and his community sentence, and many others were facing serious dilemmas over money in their intimate relationships.

Together with Singh's analysis, my own observations make it probable that pulling money from the intimate sphere of co-habiting, love relations and other family spheres into the gambling sphere was an extremely sensitive matter. Singh uses the term 'economic infidelity', which has a likeness to 'betrayal', a word that was sometimes used when my own informants described their shame. In the following I will return to Steen's

and others' accounts of moral problems in the process of transformations of money in gambling.

At one point, during the hours I spent observing people handling money in the gambling hall, I began to wonder if the moral meaning of money had somehow to match the nature of the gambling machine. I believe it was when I had seen so many heaps of coins being handled in restless movements between change machines, hands and gambling machines that I came to see them as instruments to keep the wheels in the gambling machine turning, playthings to obtain entertainment and chips to feed the machine with. Did the meaning of money have to match these properties in some sense? Would these piles also need to cease to be marriage money or household money altogether and perhaps become 'bad' money, just as gambling was partly seen as a 'bad' activity?

A careful examination of my field notes revealed that many kinds of money were accessed for gambling in the gambling hall: household money, savings for weddings, holiday savings, insurance money, money released after divorce, money earned on the black job market, embezzlement money, particular pensions, money obtained from selling a car, money lent on the black market, money gained from selling stolen goods, child allowances, bank loans, credit or debit cards, council housing deposit for apartments, money stolen from a boyfriend or girlfriend, money lend by one's children, inheritance, money from one's family in Lebanon and a mother's savings. The list clearly indicated that, on an everyday basis, money was categorised and managed for different purposes, but it also suggested that money for gambling might have to undergo a transformation in meaning in order to be pooled into the gambling sphere, as I will demonstrate in the following two cases.

Bo had covered his gambling expenses with what he termed 'borrowing' over 250,000 kroner from a fund that he was administering. For this he was sentenced to a period of community service. He was now partly successful in staying away from the gambling halls by having his father and his bank manage his income. His income had changed recently from welfare money to a daily wage earned as a shop assistant. I carefully brought the topic of money up with Bo from time to time, but he preferred to talk about his friend's dealings with gambling and money. Bo regretted his friend's gambling habit and com-

plained how difficult it was to make arrangements to spend time with him without gambling being involved. One of the things Bo also regretted about this relationship was that he often had to help his friend out with money one way or the other, and he was keen to free himself of that commitment. When I asked Bo where his friend got money for gambling from, he said:

> 'It's usually credit cards. He buys some things and then takes them back to the shop and gets the money back, and he gets a loan from someone. Then he wins some money and pays a bit back and has a bit to gamble with. He takes some chances and he sometimes wins as a result. The problem is that in the end things turn out bad for him. He may win, but the problem is that he never pays back his loans when he has won. Then he has absolutely no money, and then he goes out to buy stuff on his credit cards again and take it back to get hold of some cash … He gets a friend to return the goods to the shops for him. Now I've told him that I won't do this any more.'[40]

Bo himself had re-categorised a theft he had committed as a 'loan' to make it morally compatible with gambling, but he was not at ease with the transaction, which he understandably wanted to put behind him. Bo's moral concerns about money matters were reflected in what he did not want to talk about, as well as in what he was willing to disclose. The way his friend acquired money for gambling indeed represented a transformation in the meanings of money from a so-called 'free' credit card to items purchased with the credit card to the return of items and receiving cash in return to gambling money. The option of a free credit card also plays an important role in the next account about accessing money for gambling.

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[40] *Det er som regel kontokort. Han køber nogle ting, og så bytter han og får pengene, og han låner lidt ved nogen. Så vinder han nogle penge og så betaler han lidt tilbage og så har han lidt at spille for. Han tager nogle chancer og han vinder også på det. Problemet er at i den sidste ende da går det galt for ham. Han vinder måske men problemet er bare, at han aldrig får betalt noget tilbage, når han har vundet, og det han får betalt tilbage det er på hans købekort. Og så har han absolut ingen penge, og så går han ud og køber for dem igen og bytter, så … Han får en af hans kammerater til at gå ned og bytte varerne. Nu har jeg så meddelt ham, at det gider jeg ikke mere.*

Jan worked as a shop assistant in charge of a cash desk up until he reported his embezzlement to his boss and was sentenced to a period of community service. The part of his story that I recorded from scratch notes from an interview in a treatment setting is about Jan accessing money for his gambling activity at a point where his gambling expenses had come to exceed his monthly income:

> 'I find out that there's something called an Accept Card and so I get one. At that time you could get a card with a ceiling of 30,000 kroner, but I got an account with 15,000. But that wasn't for gambling, it was for everyday expenses. Six months later, when I hadn't yet spent my credit up to the limit, I was offered credit up to 30,000 kroner. So I thought, why not? So I got a new card because the magnetic strip on the old one was broken. Then I went to a supermarket and cashed 3,000 kroner – I knew that was possible. I gambled that 3,000 kroner away in two-three hours at PIT STOP. So that money was gone. That same day I cashed in 5,000 more which I gambled away in one day. I lost it all and got tired of the whole thing, so I stopped gambling for a month. But then I got fired up again. Lise: "What fired you up?" Jan: Boredom. I cashed in 5,000 and won big. In one case I gambled 1,000 kroner and won 9,500. That was really lucky. But I didn't think at the time that I'd won that money, only that now I had money to gamble with. I didn't gamble any more that day. But the day after I went out and gambled 3,000 kroner and also the next two days. After three days I'd gambled away my 9,500 winnings, so I get tired of gambling for a fortnight. But I still had my Accept Card, and the last money I burned[41] pretty quickly. Then I started using my normal bank card. I haven't had a Dankort[42] since I was eighteen. I wasn't mature enough to have one. I gambled away 40,000 kroner in two months. I was so obsessed by gambling that I didn't go to family gatherings. Then I got tired of gambling again. In six months I'd burned 70,000 kroner on gambling. But now I've proved that I can control my gambling. Then at one point I burned another wage and after that I borrowed 5,000 kroner from someone in a gambling hall.

[41] Translates into 'the last money I blew…', but Jan is using the Danish word 'brænde' which literally means 'burn'

[42] Danish national debit card.

> But the rate of interest was huge. I had to pay back twice what I'd borrowed to a bloke who knew some Hell's Angels. So I decided not to borrow anything from him ever again, and I've stuck by this decision. I started to borrow money from the till at the kiosk where I worked. When a customer bought some spirits or tobacco I scanned the goods without registering them so I could put the customer's payments aside. That way I could put 1,000 to 1,500 kroner aside every day. That way I managed to pay back the loan from the gambling hall. Then he offered me a new loan, but I said no to that. I could make myself incredibly cold … that's what woke my gambling devil. In two years I siphoned off 276,000 kroner from the till.'[43]

In Jan's case his gambling costs were first covered by that part of his wages, which he did not need to cover his daily budget. However, after a year he began using money for gambling instead of food and clothes; then he turned to various credit cards until he finally began to acquire money illegally, or 'borrowing' as he said, in order to cover for his expenses. Although Jan was telling his story in the past tense, he talked in a tone as if it had all happened to him only a few days ago. When he said that he 'was strong anyhow' when

[43] *Så finder jeg ud af at der er noget der hedder Accept Card og anskaffer mig sådan et. Dengang kunne man få det med et rådighedsbeløb op til 30.000, men jeg oprette en konto på 15.000. Men det var jo ikke til at spille for. Det var til normalt forbrug. Et halvt år senere, da jeg endnu ikke havde brugt hele kreditten fik jeg et brev fra Accept Card med et tilbud om at udnytte kreditten op til 30.000 kroner. Så tænkte jeg, ja hvorfor ikke. Så fik jeg et nyt kort fordi magnetstriben på det gamle kort var gået i stykker. Så gik jeg i supermarkedet og hævede 3.000 – det vidste jeg man kunne. De tre tusind dem går jeg ud og spiller op på 2 – 3 timer i PIT STOP. Så var de penge væk. Samme dag hæver jeg 5.000 mere, som jeg også spiller op i løbet af en dag. Jeg tabte det hele og det blev jeg træt af. Så holdt jeg op med at spille i en måned. Men så bliver jeg tændt igen.* Lise: *Hvad tænder dig?* Jan: *kedsomhed. Jeg hæver 5.000 og vinder stort. For eksempel spillede jeg for 1.000 kroner og vandt 9.500. Det var stort held tænkte jeg. Men det jeg tænkte var ikke, at jeg havde vundet de penge men at nu havde jeg penge til at spille for. Men jeg spillede så ikke mere den dag. Men dagen efter der gik jeg så ud og spillede for 3.000 kroner og det samme de efterfølgende to dage. Efter tre dage havde jeg spillet min gevinst på 9.500 op. Så blev jeg træt af spil i 14 dage. Men jeg havde jo stadig mit Accept Card. Og de sidste penge derpå brændte jeg ret hurtigt. Så begyndte jeg at bruge mit hævekort. Jeg har ikke haft et Dankort siden jeg var 18 år, fordi jeg dengang ikke var moden nok til at have et. Jeg spillede 40.000 væk i løbet af to måneder. Jeg var så optaget af spil, at jeg meldte fra til familiesammenkomster. Så blev jeg træt af spil igen. På et halv år havde jeg brændt 70.000 af på spil, men nu har jeg bevist at jeg kan styre mit spil. Men så på et tidspunkt så brænder jeg en ny løn af, og dernæst låner jeg 5.000 kroner af én i en spillehal. Men det var nogle heftige renter. Beløbet skulle betales dobbelt tilbage og ham jeg havde lånt dem af havde forbindelser til rocker miljøet. Der var jeg alligevel stærk, for ham ville jeg ikke låne af igen. Så jeg begyndte at låne penge i kassen i den kiosk, hvor jeg arbejdede. Når en kunde købte spiritus eller tobak, så scannede jeg varerne ind uden at de blev registreret og så kunne jeg lægge kundens penge til side. På den måde kunne jeg lægge 1.000 – 1.500 kroner til side om dagen. På den måde fik jeg betalt ham jeg havde lånt penge af i spillehallen. Han kom så med et nyt tilbud om et lån, men det sagde jeg nej til. Jeg kunne gøre mig ufattelig kold … det var det der vækkede min spilledjævel. På to år lænsede jeg kassen for 276.000 kroner.*

he resisted the loan shark and began to 'borrow money from the cash desk', instead he was still experiencing the double rationality somehow, of money in the gambling sphere and market money. He handled this dilemma by making himself 'incredibly cold'. I also noticed that Jan was using the word 'burn' to describe the money he spent in gambling as if he was implying a process of rapid spending as well as an element of excess.

Steen did not access money for gambling by illegal means. However, the moral implications of asking his parents for loans to cover his daily expenses other than gambling and then renegotiating these loans into the gambling sphere was troubling him a great deal. Throughout my interview with Steen, he emphasised that he did not think he was unintelligent and that he understood perfectly well that gambling machines did not reward customers financially, but still there were some 'obscure' and 'recurrent mechanisms' which he felt subjected to in the gambling process.

Steen, who was living on a study grant, was very troubled at having 'betrayed' his parents and his girlfriend. Steen did not use the word 'lie', although this is what he had done in order to cover up his time in the gambling hall and the more than 250,000 kroner that he had gambled for over three years. He had sold many personal items to cover his gambling expenses before he started asking his parents for loans. His account reflects many moral concerns about his financial transactions:

> 'I borrowed money from my parents to cover a shortfall caused by gambling. So in principle it wasn't money to gamble with, but it was anyway. It covered my gambling losses. A thousand times I've thought when I had money in my pocket or when I had money back from the taxes or sold something that I want something for myself, something for clothes or a holiday for me and my girlfriend, or getting a bill paid or something. I can fool myself like that for a few hours. But then I think I might just go to the gambling hall and see what happens. I felt so bad about borrowing that money, and at the same time I had this incredible urge to gamble when I borrowed that money. My parents had sensed how bad things were, but they didn't know how to deal with it. Lise: "Did you tell your parents what you needed the money you borrowed for?" Steen: I never said that I needed it to cover my gambling losses. Normally I said that there were some bills that needed to be paid. And that was usually not a lie, but the bills hadn't been paid

even though I had the money, you see. I don't know what the mechanisms are, but they are pretty … not palpable, but recurrent mechanisms all the time. In the course of one day you can change … let's say that you just gave me 5,000 because you owed me. Then I have 5,000 in cash on my table. Then suddenly I think of gambling halls. You switch to and fro: first I want to gamble, and then I don't. No, now I have to gamble. No, I need a new pair of shoes; I must remember to get a haircut. And now I should do some things for myself or pay that telephone bill. You switch to and fro all the time. And you spend a hell of a lot of energy on thinking what is best and what is bad, and now I'm going to stop and go down and buy it, and today I think I'll never gamble again. Yesterday I lost 5,000 kroner, now I never want to gamble again. I don't know if others feel the same way. But I do. I've transformed my money a thousand times. Had money for something, but then channelled it into.… I've also thought: Here I have some money. I need to pay a bill, now I'll try to turn it into more money. Then I convince myself that it's a good idea to go to the gambling hall.'[44]

[44] *Jeg lånte penge af mine forældre til at dække et underskud der var opstået på grund af spil. Så man kan sige at i princippet var det ikke penge til at gå ned og spille for, men det var det jo så alligevel. Det var jo til at dække det underskud jeg havde oparbejdet på grund af spil. Jeg har jo tusind gange tænkt når jeg har fået nogle penge på lommen eller fået nogle penge tilbage i skat eller solgt et instrument eller noget, tænkt lidt på, at nu skal der være noget til mig selv. Til noget tøj eller til en ferie til min kæreste og mig. Eller til at få betalt en regning eller noget, ikke. Det kan jeg godt gå og bilde mig i nogle timer. Men så tænker jeg, at jeg kunne jo lige gå ned i spillehallen og se hvad der sker. Jeg havde da på én og samme tid utrolig dårlig samvittighed og så en utrolig spillelyst, når jeg lånte de penge. Mine forældre havde godt en fornemmelse af hvor galt det stod til, men kunne ikke helt finde ud af hvordan de skulle gribe det an.* Lise: *Sagde du noget om hvad pengene skulle bruges til, når du lånte af dine forældre?* Steen: *Jeg sagde jo aldrig at det var for at dække et underskud på grund af spil. Typisk så har jeg fundet på, at der var nogle regninger der skulle betales. Og det har som regel aldrig været løgn, men de blev bare stadig ikke betalt selv om jeg lånte de der penge vel. Jeg ved ikke hvad det er for nogle mekanismer, men det er nogle ret … ikke gennemskuelige, men nogle tilbagevendende mekanismer hele tiden. I løbet af en dag kan jeg veksle fra at sige … lad og sige at du lige har stukket mig 5.000. Du har stukket mig dem i hånden for dem skyldte du mig. Så jeg har 5.000 til at ligge i kontanter oppe på bordet. Lige pludselig kommer jeg til at tænke på at der er spillehaller. Man skifter frem og tilbage: nu skal jeg ned at spille, nej lad nu være, nej nu skal jeg ned og spille, nu skal jeg have nye sko, jeg skal huske at klippes. Og nu skal jeg gøre nogen ting for mig selv og måske også lige betale den telefonregning. Det springer frem og tilbage hele tiden. Og man bruger så fandens meget energi og tankekraft på at sidde og tænke igennem hvad er bedst og hvad er skidt; nu stopper jeg og nu går jeg ned og køber det; i dag vil jeg aldrig nogensinde spille mere. I går tabte jeg 5.000 kroner, nu vil jeg aldrig spille mere. Jeg ved ikke om andre har det på samme måde. Men det gør jeg. Jeg har tusind gange transformeret mine penge. Haft nogle penge der skulle bruges til et eller andet men fået dem kanaliseret om til … Jeg har også tænkt: jeg har nogle penge her. Jeg skal betale en regning, nu prøver jeg at gå ned og lave dem om til nogle flere. Så har jeg fået overbevist mig selv om, at det var lige så smart at gå ned og bruge dem i spillehallen.*

Steen was split between the 'badness' of gambling and what he thought of as 'best', like paying his bill and going on a holiday with his girlfriend, or buying some clothes. But in fact he felt more like spending time in the gambling hall than with his girlfriend, other friends or family. He also felt more like gambling with gambling machines than doing any other kind of leisure activity that he used to love. He did not borrow money to gamble with but to 'cover his deficit', and he needed ready cash to operate the gambling machines. Perhaps he did not categorise money for gambling as such because he considered gambling to be bad. Rather, he invented 'cash on the table' as a category of ready cash by selling personal items, borrowing, getting sums repaid like taxes or private loans and then starting a process of negotiating with himself in a hardly realised inner dialogue regarding which sphere his money belonged to – the good or the bad.

There was indeed an aura of badness surrounding gambling and people who gambled. It occurred to me that Steen, who had been raised in the Evangelical wing of the Church of Denmark, where gambling was considered a sin, might be an example of the working of the Protestant work ethic. In Max Weber's analysis of the spirit of capitalism, he ascribes to a particular trait of that ethic (Weber 1989). Even though one might be critical of Weber's thesis of capitalism as a specifically Protestant project, his analysis of the strong link between labour and money as an overall ethos particular to the Protestant world appears relevant here. Indeed, money that the people I met had not earned through a hard day's labour was somehow valued differently. This might explain why even the more or less enthusiastic players who informed this ethnography embraced the gambling halls with hesitance and ambivalence. Moreover, it might explain why people who gamble were so readily pathologised as 'ludomaniacs', as is the case in contemporary Denmark.

Hence, the badness of gambling and the demonization of people who gamble may be seen as a historical and cultural legacy of the Protestant work ethic, where gambling is an antithesis of the rational management of time and money as a prerequisite for the discipline of labour (Reith 1999: 82). In her book *The Age of Chance*, Gerda Reith argues that the demonization of gambling and of gamblers was not only a religious matter. It also appeared in the process of the Enlightenment tradition where chance and uncertainty was anathema to the rational progress of civilisation (ibid.: 83). Legitimate games might not be bad in themselves, but the danger of idleness and excess when the gambler might succumb to his passion was seen as an undesired state (ibid.). Thus in the context of the

Protestant work ethic, gambling was condemned for its waste of both time and money. A cultural legacy of such an ethic in contemporary Denmark might be mirrored in Lene's concern for her 'honour' in her ability to pay back a loan as well as in others' moral qualms about getting the different spheres of money mixed up. If so then the liberalisation of the gambling market created some ambiguity in the everyday lives of the customers in the gambling hall. One problem they were faced with was the categorisation of money or perhaps a lack of a perceived categorisation of gambling money, because the existence of such a category might not be culturally acceptable. In any case, the implicit moral boundaries of money appeared to be transgressed at the expense of peace of mind in the individual and in family life. It was likely that the moral meaning of household money was now under heavy pressure to be transformed into kinds of chips or play money and in turn to be reflecting that moral meaning back on to other spheres of money in everyday life.

Consider how many different kinds of money were transformed into ready cash for gambling in the three cases presented above: ready cash transformed by returning items bought with a supermarket credit card; ready cash transformed from the Dankort debit card in shop or bank; ready cash from wins; cash from private loans; and the repayment of loans from somebody else. In the cases above, we see that Steen, Jan and Bo were engaged in a process of constantly re-categorising and renegotiating their money. However, this was not a rational, commonsense negotiation of money; it appeared rather to be a hardly conscious struggle of ridding market, banking, illegal or domestic money of its contextual meaning in order to legitimize it for use in the gambling hall. Furthermore, these transformations and re-categorisations of market money were followed by coping strategies that reflected moral concerns and emotional turmoil: Bo coped by attempting to ignore his 'loans,' while Jan made himself 'incredibly cold'. Steen felt bad about asking for loans, but justified them by spending them on household items or bills that needed to be paid. This way he could maintain the idea that he was not using loans for gambling. His inner dialogues about money and gambling mirror not only moral turmoil over the daily management of money in gambling in relation to other expenses, but also the fact that money was a process of continuous negotiation and categorisation.

Thus, accessing money for gambling essentially took place as a process of negotiation over different kinds of money, ranging from more or less sacred money linked

to intimate relationships or special savings to market money in public institutions. The re-negotiation of money, however, was not limited to the process of accessing it, it also took place in the gambling process itself. This observation is also made by Jansbøl, who found that in gambling, 'money functions as chips as well as wins in the game' (Jansbøl 2005: 31).

In the following, I add my own ethnographic observations to the transformation or division of the meaning of money in the gambling process, analysing this ethnography in relation to legal rules giving rise to that transformation or division of money. But I also expand my argument regarding the transformation of money as a ritual kind of process of consumption where money may be seen as serving an extraordinary process in which luck is worshipped.

The transformation of money in the gambling process

I have already mentioned the difficulties involved in obtaining information on money matters from my informants. This was even more difficult when it came to information on the exact amounts that customers were spending in the gambling hall. This difficulty proved to be grounded in moral as well as practical matters. Most of my observations in the gambling hall focussed on customers who spent more than thirty minutes there. When I focused my observation on how much money these customers were spending, I rarely noticed anyone spending less than 300 kroner and sometimes up to 1,000. Those I asked cited amounts between 200 and 400 kroner. Those who used the gambling hall more like a social club might have spent less because they would take breaks and watch or talk to fellow customers or staff. Some reported having gambled at least two million kroner in the gambling hall in the course of four years, others 250,000 kroner in one year. My impression was that people did not seriously realise how much they had spent in the gambling hall. Only after a theft, for example, or a relatively large amount of money had disappeared from a savings account without there being any material evidence of how it had been consumed, except in thinking back on lots of times spent in the gambling hall did it become clear to some how much money they had lost. It therefore occurred to me that something might happen to the

perception of money in the gambling process that was different from other forms of provisioning in everyday life.

'Lucky twenties' and other kinds of money

'What we go for is a lucky punch with a few coins', Hans said. When I asked him the meaning of 'lucky punch', he said that it was a jackpot of no less than 2,500 Credit,[45] and explained that winning less did not count in his idea of a win. From time to time I heard customers use the term 'lucky twenty' for the twenty kroner coins that must be used to operate the gambling machines. The idea that luck might strike on a 'lucky twenty' was vividly in one's mind whenever one gambled. Many had started their gambling careers with a win of, for instance, 1,000 kroner on a few 20 kroner stakes. And if they did not have this luck themselves, they had heard of or knew of someone who had had just that kind of luck. In the gambling hall I often heard people say things like: 'Just before you came someone got two thousand on that Orientexpres' or 'The other day someone had a big win on the Sir Win a Lot' while stacking twenty kroner coins in their hands. Did all twenty kroner coins in the gambling hall become 'lucky twenties', and if so how did it happen?

Gambling machines could only be operated with standard market coins, namely 5, 10 and 20 kroner, the latter being the most commonly used and also the largest Danish currency unit. Changing notes provided customers with the required units of market money; however, it also implied more than just breaking notes into coins. When I saw how rapidly one hundred, two hundred and five hundred notes were changed and subsequently fed into gambling machines, they were not only being broken down into smaller units, they also changed meaning altogether.

When coins had been inserted into the gambling machine, they changed their name to Credit. A twenty-kroner coin – a 'lucky twenty' – became 'Credit 80' in gambling machine language. The number of Credit was shown at all times on the machine's display. Thus the number of Credit had to be divided by four in order to arrive at the standard market value of money inside the gambling machine – the stake. Customers had different practices with Credit. Some used it to play attentively with the machine, while others preferred to read a paper, having pushed the Auto button in order to leave it to the randomness of the

[45] 'Credit' is a term indicating the current stake or amount of money in the gambling machine.

gambling machine to manage their chances. In this way money was transformed into time, as Hans expressed it: 'We lose track of the fact that it is money we put into the gambling machine. It is time we put into the machine.'

A gambling machine that had been gambled a lot without granting any jackpots was sometimes considered a resource to which customers might claim a user right. Thus, it was quite common for customers to 'reserve' one or more gambling machines. They might use Credit to reserve one by inserting a few coins into it, or by putting a 'reserved' sign on the display panel, indicating their intention of coming back to a gambling machine after a short break or even overnight. The service counter might provide 'Reserved' signs. When a customer had picked a gambling machine, he or she might ask other customers in the gambling hall if the gambling machine was available in order to respect the informal rule that a customer might have earned a user right to play with the gambling machine. I sometimes observed quarrels about user rights to gambling machines, and customers who wanted to settle matters called on the staff. One gambling hall manager told me that he frequently came across customers who would sell the user rights of gambling machines to one another. There is a cruel irony here in gambling machines weighted in favour of the state and the gambling business being seen as resources by customers.

Jang, who earned a steady and well-paid income as a carpenter, told me that he felt that there was somehow more luck in five hundred notes than in hundred or two hundred notes, for which reason he preferred to change five hundred at a time. However, I rarely saw those living on welfare payments change more than a hundred or sometimes two hundred notes at a time. Many customers preferred to change money alternately at the change machine and the service counter. Often customers became more bodily alert or restless after their notes had been through the change machine or the hands of staff at the service counter. Alexander confirmed my observation that notes that had been changed either in the change machine or by being returned as a win in the form of a payout from the gambling machine not only changed their meaning, but also their time dimension: 'When I have a win I change it into notes. If it is loose in the pocket then it is blown fast.' When customers had large payouts after a jackpot they would often go the counter to change the coins into notes after putting, for example, a hundred into a gambling machine to try their luck again. In many cases they would hesitate a little before changing these notes into money 'loose in the pocket' or they might choose to end their gambling sessions. Accord-

ing to one manager of a gambling hall who had been in the business for over a decade, change machines had enhanced gambling. He believed that customers felt more at ease in changing money by the change machines than at the service counter, where they had to face a person. Hence, coins were more than instruments to operate gambling machines: they were money that had been transformed into specific currencies directed at the gambling machine. As such, this currency formed part of a particular temporality of the gambling hall, where it was ready to be invested in the rapid transactions in the gambling machines.

When I talked over the matter of changing notes with Anne, she said that in her experience men gambled 'harder' than women did because they changed bigger notes than women. She was astonished at the amounts that men change: 'I would never dream of changing 500 or 1,000 kroner', she said. However, she also acknowledged that she changed a lot of money, but not at once: 'it's my way of trying to keep track of my spending', she said. Some of the men I talked to felt that women gambled more 'responsibly' because they were in charge of the family budget and felt more responsible for the children. On the other hand, Anne often took her welfare allowances to the gambling hall, but I never heard of women who had committed actual crimes because of gambling. Regardless of gender, the conflict between gambling and the household was always there.

Keeping track of domestic money and gambling money

Managing gambling money that the gambling machine had been transformed into a win back into the everyday household economy proved very difficult, but this does not mean that people did not try. Lone and Anne were not the only ones who did so. Hazim said that he gave his wife money for food and felt good about that because 'Then I will not use that money on gambling'. Bo had obtained a Visa Electron debit card which had more restrictions on its use than the ordinary debit card or Dankort. Bo also had his finances partly managed by a close relative. This was one of the practical arrangements that were applied as part of 'ludomania' therapy in the Center for Ludomani. For Anne and many others the ideal way of handling a win was to 'take it all out of the machine and leave the gambling hall'. Anne recalled some years back, when she won 3,600 kroner just after she started gambling and spent everything on make-up, clothes for her children and other things that she had not been able to afford for a long time. The same thing had happened to her re-

cently, she said, and although she might also recycle her wins into a gambling machine, she claimed that she provisioned more often than she gambled with the money she won, this being a means of her restricting what she spent on gambling:

> 'You definitely have to make sure you shop for the things you need. I think that's a good system: go shopping first. Then you can see: Uh, there's not actually much left! Then that has to be spread out over the rest of the month. I know lots of people who do their shopping before they go down to the gambling hall. So that's one way to safeguard yourself. I gamble differently now. For example, if I win, then I hurry up and leave before I gamble away my winnings. Some time ago I won 3,000 kroner. Then I hurried out to buy new clothes for my son. I gave my partner 500 kroner, and then we went to a restaurant.'[46]

Lone was also trying to reduce her gambling expenses, but in her account the strategy is slightly different:

> 'I've put a limit on myself. I only gamble twice a month and only 500 kroner a month at the most. I simply don't want to gamble any more, and if I win I have to stop gambling because I don't have the time or money for it. Therefore, I often go to the gambling hall without gambling. Again, that's the social thing about it, because I know them. I go and have a coffee. Then I may sit and have two coffees without gambling. It doesn't matter to me. Even though I tell myself that it's a bad idea to stay there. It may be dangerous in itself. But otherwise I think it's nice. I may sit there with several thousand kroner in my purse without gambling. I've decided that I only want to gamble twice a month for 500 kroner, that's it. I can't afford any more time and money. Lise: "Can you stick to that decision?" Lone: Yes. It works really well. I've done it for several months now, and I've had

[46] *Man skal i hvert fald sørge for at få købt de ting man mangler. Det er også en god måde synes jeg; at gå ud og handle ind, for så kan man se: Hov der er sgu egentlig ikke ret meget tilbage! Så skal det så deles ud til resten af måneden. Jeg kan se der er flere, der inden de går ind og spiller, så har de været inde og handle. Så det er også en måde at gardere sig på. Jeg spiller på en anden måde nu. For eksempel hvis jeg vinder, så skynder jeg mig at gå inden jeg begynder at spille gevinsten op. For noget tid siden vandt jeg 3.000 kroner. Så skyndte jeg mig ud og købte tøj til min søn. Jeg gav min kæreste 500 kroner og så gik vi på restaurant.*

> wins. The first time I thought that I might as well blow that money. Lise: "So you're looking forward to using your quota?" Lone: Yes.'[47]

Categorising money for gambling was a way of controlling gambling expenses. But as we can see in Lone's account, it also became an incentive to gamble.

My own experience with the gambling money I set aside in a box in my kitchen was that it partly contradicted the logic of money in the gambling process. My log-book and earmarking strategy felt petty because it prevented me from making an earnest investment in gambling, and I never had enough money to make joint bets with other customers in the gambling hall. It also prevented me from making unplanned visits to the gambling hall when I did not have my gambling money with me. In fact my strategy was like Lone's: at once a restriction on my gambling as well as an encouragement. Consequently I came to experience a conflict between the logic of having money for food, clothes and entertainment on the one hand and my gambling money[48] on the other. I had hoped that my wins in the gambling hall would balance out what I spent on gambling, and they did in fact for several weeks, but then my expenses grew more than I won. At a late stage in my fieldwork, when I told Bo about my experiences, he repaid me by telling me about a recent episode of dealing with his household expenses versus his gambling expenses:

> 'I won 700 kroner yesterday and 300 kroner on Sunday. Lise: "How did you spend that money?" Bo: With the 300 kroner I went shopping in the supermarket because I didn't have anything in the fridge. On Saturday I won 160 kroner, and spent 90 on a pizza and gave some money to someone who didn't have any food.

[47] Lone: *Jeg har lagt klausul på mig selv. Jeg spiller to gange om måneden og højst for 500 hundrede kroner om måneden. Mere vil jeg simpelthen ikke spille for. Og vinder jeg, så må jeg ikke spille flere gange, for det har jeg hverken tid eller råd til. Så derfor er jeg der tit uden at spille. Men det er jo igen det sociale, fordi jeg kender dem. Så går jeg over og får en kop kaffe. Så kan jeg sidde og drikke to kopper kaffe uden at spille. Det gør mig ikke noget. Selv om jeg siger til mig selv at det er en dosk idé, at jeg fastholder mig selv i at være der. Det kan godt være farligt i sig selv. Men ellers synes jeg det er hyggeligt nok. Jeg kan godt sidde med flere tusind kroner i min pung uden at spille. Jeg har bestemt mig for at jeg vil kun spille to gange om måneden for 500 kroner. Slut. Mere har jeg ikke råd til og tid til.* Lise*: Og det kan du godt holde?* Lone*: Ja. Det går rigtig godt. Det har jeg gjort nu i flere måneder. Og så har jeg prøvet at vinde. Den første gang det var fordi jeg tænkte, arh jeg må hellere få brændt den ene gang af.* Lise: *Så du glæder dig til at bruge din kvote?* Lone*: Ja.*

[48] Note that for me, however, gambling was not entertainment but part of my job.

I know it's wrong, and that I shouldn't do it. I also bought some wrong things. I bought a deodorant for 160 kroner, and a china box. I don't need such an expensive deodorant, and the china box is also unnecessary because I have oatmeal, milk, yogurt and rye bread at home, so I didn't need to buy that china box. I also bought a beer in town for me and my friend, but you have to do that sort of thing from time to time. Things like that are expensive. On Thursday I had 540 kroner left. When I get down to 540 kroner I think it's my money, but not before. The other money is mine and yet it's not. It's looser in my pocket. The more money I have, the more I spend on gambling. I hate spending money. The less money I have, the less I care about my money. I know that I must spend money on necessities. For example, on Friday I get 4,200 kroner for four weeks. Normally I get money every two weeks. But this time I've asked for the whole lot because there are things I need to pay … my health insurance, for example. They've asked if I want it once a month from now on, but I said no thanks. I said I want it every two weeks, otherwise things go wrong. I also need to pay for my dance classes, and if I don't it's bad. It costs 700 kroner for 13 lessons.'[49]

In this account, we see how money was somehow processed into spheres and negotiated, and especially how gambling money were weighed against money for daily provisions – almost like different currencies belonging to different moral spheres. Bo was processing a cashbook in his mind over his daily provisioning and gambling expenses. His process of dividing the money he had for different purposes was followed by a sincerely moral ear-

[49] *Jeg vandt 700 kroner i går og 300 kroner i søndags.* Lise*: Hvad brugte du så de penge til? Bo: For de 300 kroner gik jeg i supermarkedet og købte ind, for jeg havde intet i køleskabet. Lørdag vandt jeg 160 og brugte de 90 til pizza og noget til en anden som ikke havde mad. Jeg ved det er forkert og at jeg bør lade være. Jeg har også købt nogle forkerte ting. Jeg købte en deodorant i går til 160 kroner og en chinabox. Jeg behøver ikke sådan en dyr deodorant, og chinaboxen er også unødvendig, for jeg har både havregryn, mælk, yougurt og rugbrød derhjemme, så jeg behøvede ikke at købe den chinabox. Jeg købte også en øl til mig og min ven ude i byen, men det skal jo til engang imellem. Sådan noget koster. I tirsdags havde jeg 450 kroner tilbage. I det øje blik jeg kommer ned på de 540 kroner, så mener jeg det er mine egne penge, men ikke før. De andre penge er mine og alligevel ikke. De sidder løsere i lommen. Jo flere penge jeg har jo mindre bruger jeg på spil. Jeg hader at bruge penge. Jo færre penge jeg har jo mere ligeglad bliver jeg med mine penge. Jeg ved jeg SKAL bruge penge til fornødenheder. For eksempel på fredag da får jeg 4.200 udbetalt til fire uger. Normalt får jeg hver fjortende dag, men denne gang har jeg bedt om at dette hele fordi jeg har nogle ting jeg skal have betalt … for eksempel "Danmark." De har spurgt om jeg ikke vil have en gang om måneden fremover – nej tak, har jeg sagt – jeg vil have hver fjortende dag, for ellers går det galt. Jeg skal også have betalt det dans og får jeg ikke gjort det er det skidt. Det koster 700 kroner for 13 gange.*

marking of dividing different items into two major categories of 'wrong' and 'bad' items. I knew that Bo valued friendships and get-togethers, and ideally, he would rather spend money on other people than on gambling. What did come as a surprise to me, however, was that he did not consider the money he had won in gambling to be his own money. Was this because he had used illegal money for a long time in gambling, or was it because the money that had passed through the gambling machine had acquired a different status? In any case, the money that the gambling machine returned as winnings seemed more likely to be recycled into the gambling machine or perhaps spent on the 'wrong' consumption items.

'Money is converted'

What struck me at first on observing customers handling money in the gambling hall was that the money was being spent so rapidly. Once customers started their betting in one or more gambling machines, they spent several hundred kroner in what felt to be no time at all. The time spent on gambling was simply far more expensive than drinking a beer or a coffee in a café. As far as I have been able to determine, the time intervals between stops of turning wheels in different gambling machines varied between two and four seconds, two seconds being the statutory minimum and as such the most common (Skatteministeriet 2000b: §8). I tried to compare the cost of a seventy minutes gambling session with other consumption processes. By comparing the cost of gambling on gambling machines with restaurant meals and drinks, I found that a person would have to take a meal in an expensive gourmet restaurant or drink twenty large draught beers in a similar span of time to match the money typically spent in a gambling session. Indeed my own experience with gambling was that my earmarked money, which was approximately the price of one large draught beer, for each day in the field would not take me very far. I settled for a solution that fifty kroner each day would be enough as a gateway to other gamblers' goodwill in talking to me. Although I settled for this and accepted my losses, I also enjoyed the times of luck, but as time flew so did my wins.

On each gambling machine was a sign saying: 'Maximum Kredit 2,000.' The current Credit in the machine was displayed alongside the wheels on the screen. Credit went up and down in the process of gambling. At the beginning I did not understand this number, but a customer informed me that this rule meant that the maximum bet that was

allowed was 500 kroner. In the statutes, however, it was given as 300 kroner (Skatteministeriet 2000b: §12). In any case, 'The number of Credit has to be divided with four', the customer said. 'The reason for this', he explained, 'is that one bet – that is, one turn of the wheel in the machine, costs one quarter of one krone'. 'Does this mean, then, that it is not possible to insert more than 500 kroner at a time?' I asked. 'Not at all', he replied; 'I have seen people insert thousands of kroner, and when the games run high, the credit exceeds that limit. You just have to insert them while the wheels are turning in a game. You cannot insert them all at the beginning of a game', he told me and thus confirmed what the special consultant in Spillemyndigheden had told me, that there was no upper limit to the amount of money that might be inserted. I also came to observe situations when Credit would run up to as much as 18,000 kroner as the customers won series of games, that were in effect wins that might be cashed. Again I became a little confused about the rules of gambling machines, and again I consulted the statutes on this matter, which said: 'Gambling machines must not by means of steady or changing numbers show Winning Banks greater than statutory maximum winnings, or register hidden banks that may return cash greater than statutory winnings' (Skatteministeriet 2000b: §14).

Anne proved her own point about the transformation of the meaning of money in the gambling process: 'Lately I've been having nightmares about money coming out of the gambling machine. However, it wasn't money. It was all kinds of screws, washers, nuts – that kind of crap'.[50] Her own understanding of this dream was that it proved that she was beginning to see more clearly than ever that the money she put into the gambling machine lost its meaning as ordinary market money, but also that it was changed into 'crap', which she understood to be devaluation. Even though gambling had come to absorb a large part of everyday life, and even though the moral boundaries of money from different spheres had become blurred, some were trying to solve the puzzle of what was actually happening with their money. When I talked to Hans one day in the gambling hall, he compared gambling to buying a pair of trousers.

> 'What happens when you gamble with machines is that money somehow loses its value or meaning. If you go looking for a pair of trousers, then you think about

[50] *Her på det seneste har jeg haft mareridt om at der kom penge ud af maskinen. Men det var ikke penge. Det var alle mulige slags skruer, spændeskriver, møtrikker – den slags lort.*

how much they cost. If you see a pair for 500 kroner you think that's too expensive, and then you find a pair for 300 kroner. You're more careful with your money with that kind of thing. However, when you're in here loads of money disappears because you don't think about it. It's not that the money changes its value, but it changes meaning. Something just happens to money the moment you enter the gambling hall.'[51]

Hans 'thought about' how much trousers cost, but he did not 'think about' how much money he spent in the gambling hall, where money changed 'meaning' and he related it to the 'rush' of money in the gambling process. According to Hans, the transformation in the meaning of money started when he entered the gambling hall.

There was no doubt in Steen's mind, however, about the value of money in the gambling hall. He related money in the gambling hall to the times, only a few years back, when gambling machines were played with gambling tokens – a kind of 'fictive money', as he called it. Steen simply felt that money changed meaning and value in the gambling hall:

'When you're in the gambling hall money has no value. And you bring 1,000 kroner and your cash card and it doesn't matter if you cash 1,000 or 2,000 more. You think about it when you draw the money, but once you're standing by the machine the machine takes over. You don't feel … 1,000 kroner is nothing. I don't know if it's got anything to do with … you throw in 100 kroner you get 400 credits. Your money is converted. When you go to Turkey you can get a beer for five kroner, and the money is called something else, and is worth a lot more. You may get 10,000 for 100 kroner. Something happens. I don't know what it is. It's the good numbers in the gambling hall, because twelve hundred is the max win. That's the fictive element. 1,200 is more than 300. 1,200 credits is the same as 300 kroner. But when there are 6,000 credits in the machine you've actually only

[51] *Det der sker når man spiller på maskine er, at pengene lige som mister deres værdi eller betydning. Hvis man for eksempel går ud og kigger på et par bukser, så tænker man over hvor meget de koster. Hvis man ser et par til 500 kroner så tænker man, at det er for dyrt og så finder man et par til 300 kroner. Man er mere nærig med sådan noget. Men når man er her henne, så ryger der en hel masse penge, fordi man ikke tænker over det. Det ikke er sådan at pengene skifter værdi, men de skifter betydning. Der sker bare noget med pengene i det øjeblik man træder ind i spillehallen.*

won 1,500 kroner. It's all in the mind. You have to keep on your toes all the time. Why can't they just write what's actually there? I'm sure this is a deliberate and clever trick – you only win one-quarter of what it says. There's definitely a psychological effect of this. That's how I feel anyway. Lise: "Is it deception?" Steen: Yes, but you're part of it yourself – you could just walk away.'[52]

Lone was also explicit about the meaning of money in the gambling process: 'Every time you change a hundred and put it into the machine, you don't think about it. To you they are just five copper coins, nothing else. That's why so many are being rushed.' To Lone the transformation of money in the gambling process was related to the changing of notes into coins whereby they became 'just five copper coins.'

In these examples Hans, Steen and Lone experienced a kind of devaluation of their money in the gambling process. They were somewhat lost when it came to an understanding of the mechanisms of the transformation in the meaning of money in gambling. In everyday shopping there was time to think about which pair of trousers to buy by comparing price and quality, but in the gambling hall the logic of spending was different. Hans explained this logic as a consequence of his thinking, combined with a change of meaning of his money. He did not explicate this 'something' that happened further in my conversation with him because he got caught up in a game on an Orientexpres. No matter what the amount, or to which category the money belonged in everyday life, money in the gambling hall had to be presented and given casually and out of faith that one would be lucky. Steen, who was looking back on a gambling career that he was trying to quit, spoke about the gambling hall as a 'twenty-kroner hell.' This was in stark opposition to the idea of 'lucky

[52] *Når man kommer ind i en spillehal, har penge ingen værdi. Og tager man 1.000 med derned og har Dankortet med, så betyder det ikke noget at hæve en tudse mere eller 2.000 mere. Man tænker lige når man står og hæver, men når du så kommer ind til maskinen så kører det bare igen. Man har ingen fornemmelse af … 1.000 kroner er jo ingenting. Jeg ved ikke om det er noget med … når man smider100 kroner i så får man 400 kredit. Det der med at det bliver regnet om. Tager du til Tyrkiet, så kan du få en fadøl til 5 kroner, og pengene hedder noget andet og er meget mere værd. I hvert fald kan du måske få 10.000 for 100 kroner. Så der sker et eller andet. Jeg ved ikke hvad det er. Penge har ikke nogen værdi i en spillehal. Det er de gode tal i en spillehal, for 1.200 der er maksgevinsten. Så er det igen det der fiktive element. 1.200 det er jo mere ned til 300. 1.200 kredit der er lig med 300 kroner. Men … så altså når der står 6.000 kredit i en spillemaskine, så har du reelt set kun vundet 1.500 kroner. Det er bare et eller andet psykologisk. Man skal hele tiden holde sig ajour. Hvorfor kan der ikke bare stå det der reelt er? Det er garanteret et bevidst og snedigt trick der har virket, det at man vinder en fjerdedel af det der står. Det har hundrede procent en psykologisk betydning for at man drives af det. Sådan oplever jeg det selv.* Lise*: Er det bedrag?* Sten*: Ja, men man er jo selv deltager i det bedrag. Man kan jo bare lade være.*

twenties', the phrase I sometimes heard customers use in the gambling hall. Nevertheless, in the 'dream hall' the click clacking of 'lucky twenties' or 'fictive money' somehow talked its own language of restlessness, waiting and hope of abundance.

The process of 'devaluation' went fast, but in terms of meaning people did not experience this as a simple process. On the contrary, there was confusion in people's minds over matters of money, as expressed in self-blame and feelings of shame and guilt. Whenever one blamed oneself for being 'stupid', using 'bad excuses' for one's behaviour and having the 'wrong' kinds of thoughts about money, then the problem with the 'devaluation' of money was partly individualised. But it was also recognised that what appeared to be the opaqueness of the gambling machine was part of the problem. Players were in a sense up against a kind of secret knowledge in the gambling hall, and when they could not crack open the door to that knowledge, they turned the blame on themselves.

I have already indicated that the legal regulation of gambling machines played a part in the gambling process. In the following section, I will expand on this matter.

Legal rules give rise to the transformation of the meaning of money

In his analysis of the Danish gambling market, Kåre Jansbøl has shown that gambling as a commodity is partly constructed by legislation and administration, and that gamblers operate in an environment of secret knowledge, which they relate to in their gambling (Jansbøl 2005). The way I saw the people I met during fieldwork was that they were playing with a gambling machine that they sometimes experienced as a friendly giver, a kind of partner, sometimes as an opponent or an adversary. Although they might have some idea of its material and legal construction and although knowledge about this was not immediately accessible to them – a situation they partly accepted, but also found frustrating and unfair. They were playing with a commodity, which was allowing them the excitement of the game and perhaps of companionships but not the right to gain which was reserved for the State and the legitimate gambling businesses (Skatteministeriet 2001: 30, 103). When the State had had its legal share of the gross revenue from gambling machines (Skatteministeriet 2000a: § 22-24), the rest wash split between the firm providing the gam-

bling machines and the leasing company running the actual gambling hall, so representatives of Danish Gambling Machine Trade Association[53] told me.

For customers in the gambling hall, the experience of the way the gambling machine dealt with money was related to the process of an experience of money transforming its meaning as well as its value. Losing money in the gambling process was experienced as not winning back a fair amount of what one had put into the gambling machine rather than a clear-cut loss of well-bounded amounts of money. Jabir explained the mechanisms this way: 'You've got 10 kroner that you throw into a machine. But these machines will give you a Super Game, or they'll give you a jackpot. It's wonderful that the machine gives you money, so you try again. Next time you try you lose, and now you begin to come back every day to win. I think the machines make people sick. You can't fight a machine like that. It's taken your money.'[54]

Customers usually went for winning no less than the 300 kroner at a time and hoped for 'series' of wins when Credit would rise to maximum of 2,500 Credit, equivalent to 625 kroner. The statutory maximum wins specify 1,200 Credit equivalent to 300 kroner (Skatteministeriet 2000b: § 12), but this did not seem to bother Hans and others who were not familiar with the statutes. What did bother Hans, however, was that he did not feel he was being repaid the fair amount for his investment in the gambling process, and that he could not keep track of what he had actually lost and what he had won.

One afternoon I was restlessly walking around the gambling hall with one hand in my pocket, where my day's ration of coins for gambling was waiting. I was trying to get an interview with Hazim, whom I asked for advice on which machine to gamble with my ration. Hazim, who was looking around undecidedly like myself, smiled and waved his arms in an upward movement, saying that he did not know. He asked me who I was and what I was doing; and when I explained that I was an ethnographer doing university-based research on what people find attractive about gambling machines, he said: 'Do you think the machine really pays back 85 %[55] or does it cheat? I don't understand this

[53] Dansk Automatbrancheforening

[54] *Du har ti kroner du smider i en maskine. Men de er altid sådan her de maskiner at de giver dig et superspil, eller de giver dig en jackpot. Det er dejligt at maskinen giver dig penge, så du prøver igen. Næste gang prøver du igen, så taber du og nu begynder du at komme tilbage hver dag for at vinde. Jeg synes folk bliver syge af at spille på de maskiner. Du kan ikke slås med sådan en maskine. Den har taget dine penge.*

[55] In some gambling halls, the repayment percentage was higher than the statutory 74%.

thing about the 85 %. Does that count for each machine or for all machines combined? Do the wheels have to turn a thousand times or how many times before one gets one's money back?'[56] I instantly recalled Lone's sarcastic tone when she had talked about gambling as saving up: 'It's a solid saving up with no guarantee that anything will be paid out. Like a piggy bank that you can't crack open. Well, sooner or later you'll get a payout. But the interest rates always work against you. I've spent about 2 million kroner at least. I used to do sums in my head until it drove me crazy'.[57]

A special consultant in Spillemyndigheden[58] did his best to explain the technicality of the Repayment Percentage to me: 'In most gambling machines the Repayment Percentage is 74 %, which is [the statutory] minimum. This means that if I put in 1 kroner, I should get back 74 øre. Gambling machines use very small Credits. One Credit is 25 øre'.[59] In the gambling hall this technicality was often understood as Hazim and Lone had explained it to me, as a promise that the gambling machine would in fact 'repay' in cash a proper repayment of what had been invested in the gambling process. When players discovered that the 74 percent was repaid both as wins in a random pattern that they could not estimate, and as playing time that could not be paid as cash, then they lost not only considerable amounts of money but also their self-respect and blamed themselves for 'having been so stupid', as they said. It was no wonder that they called this experience an 'expensive lesson'.[60] What customers found hard to come to terms with was that the 74 Repayment Percentage was another way of putting the message across that customer would inevitably lose at least 25 percent of the money he or she had gambled. The 'expensive les-

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[56] *Tror du at maskinen virkelig gir' 85 % tilbage eller snyder den? Jeg forstår ikke det med de 85 %. Går det på den enkelte maskine eller på alle maskinerne tilsammen? Skal valserne køre rundt tusind gange eller hvor mange gange før man får sine penge tilbage?*

[57] *Det er en solid opsparing uden garanti for at der er noget der er noget der udbetales. Lige som en sparegris du ikke kan få hul på. Jo på et tidspunkt skal man nok få noget udbetalt. Der er i hvert fald trukket renter den forkerte vej. Jeg har brugt de første to millioner kroner. Jeg plejede at regne og regne til jeg blev helt skør af det.*

[58] *Spillemyndigheden* – a special division of the Danish Ministry of Taxation.

[59] *På de fleste maskiner er tilbagebetalingsprocenten 74, hvilket er minimum. Det betyder at hvis jeg lægger 1 krone i, så skal jeg have 74 øre tilbage. På spilleautomaterne opereres der i meget små kreditter. Én kredit er lig 25 øre.*

[60] *Dyre lærepenge*, which literally translates as 'expensive learning money'.

son' was a blow to one's individual finances, as well as one's self-perception. It might explain why many tried to win back their losses by gambling on.

Henry Lesieur has conceptualised this as 'a spiral of option and involvement', where the gambler chases his losses in a process of interlocking activities, concealing losses, getting money, concealing the fact that he has got money and then gambling again (Lesieur 1977: X-XI). The poorer the gambler is and the poorer his luck, the quicker he will fall into a long-term chase. This self-enclosed system creates the problem of losses, as well as being seen by the gambler as a way of resolving the problem (ibid: 14). Lesieur points at a very important aspect of poverty as a motivation to gamble. However, he describes the spiral of option and involvement as a drive in the individual, in my opinion somewhat neglecting the interaction that a person has with the environment. As I have demonstrated above and intend to prove throughout the thesis, people were not only working on the gambling machines; the gambling machines also had to be working on the body and mind of customers for the spiral of option and involvement to proceed.

The Repayment Percentage somehow created an illusion of reciprocity – an idea of fairness in the give-and-take process in gambling – the experience that the gambling machine might be a friendly giver. Games with names like Free Games, Feature Games, Extra Chances, Super Chances and Jackpot Games tempted a player to continue gambling sessions. On one occasion I walked away from such a game, leaving other customers astonished at my disinterest in such an opportunity. The special consultant in the Gambling Authority described the mechanisms of the gambling machines in this way:

> 'There's no doubt that gambling machines are designed to make people gamble the most. We get people who call us here saying that they've never won anything on those machines. But when I ask people if they've had any small wins, then they say they've had lots of those, and they have to include those as well, but they don't. It's only wins of three hundred that people count, and they don't happen too often. And it's unusual for the machines to give several 300-kroner wins in a row.'[61]

[61] *Der er jo ingen tvivl om at maskinerne er indrettet, så folk spiller mest muligt på dem. Vi har da folk der ringer herind og siger, at de aldrig har vundet noget på de maskiner. Men når jeg så spørger folk, om de ikke har fået små gevinster, så siger de, at dem har de fået masser af. Og dem skal de jo tælle med. Men dem regner folk ikke med. Det er kun dem på tre hundrede folk regner med og dem er der længere imellem. Og det er jo meget usædvanligt, at automaterne giver flere 300 kroners gevinster i rap.*

Some games like Super Chance were free in the sense that Credit would not decrease as games were played. But then again some games could not be played for 'free'. There were many situations in which customers experienced that it was only after series of what they called 'valueless games' and 'insignificant wins' – perhaps three symbols like Hats or Skulls – that a climb up the hierarchy of games would give 'free' games.

These experienced 'valueless games', that is, games that could only be played using Credit, apparently contradict the words in the Gambling Machine Regulations of the Ministry of Taxes, which state that: 'The right to free play or prolonged playing time is not considered a win'[62] (Skatteministeriet 2000a: §16). When I dropped a question about that to the 'special consultant', he said 'It is a very difficult question' and that 'legal trials on the matter had occurred,' but he did not want to pursue the matter further with me.

Another kind of encouragement to continue gambling sessions was the design of games whereby the customer might 'gain feature points'. Such 'feature points' were represented by, for instance, symbols or spots being switched on by a yellow or red light, indicating that the customer was now closer to a bigger game with greater chances. I often heard customers refer to these points as valueless like the 'valueless games'; however, they acknowledged that such 'points' created an imagination which the customer went along with. Feature points that had been gained in the gambling process stayed on the screen after games had been terminated. Even though customers I talked to acknowledged that this was not a sign that the gambling machine was closer to a jackpot win, I often observed customers choosing to play a gambling machine where 'feature points' were visible as small lights on the display of the gambling machine. When I read these words in the statutes: 'The right to Feature Games or feature points that may have been gained at a time where a game is terminated may not be deleted'[63] (Skatteministeriet 2000b: §6), then I assumed this 'right' to Feature Games to be the customer's 'right', but I also began to wonder who this law was protecting.

Customers in the gambling hall experienced differences between gambling machines as differences in the design and symbolic features of the gambling machines, as

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[62] § 16: *Retten til frispil eller forlænget spilletid anses ikke for gevinst.*

[63] *Retten til featurespil eller opnåede featurepoints, der måtte være optjent på et tidspunkt, hvor et spil afsluttes, må ikke slettes.*

well as in the intervals between and sizes of jackpots. Some gambling machines granted larger jackpots than others did, but with bigger intervals and in patterns that did not follow the typical hierarchy of designs. Such gambling machines had a more circular or web-like design and they would grant jackpots 'suddenly' and in series without any notice. They were usually faster in the sense that the speed of the wheels met the maximum limit of two seconds for each turn of the wheels – one turn being technically speaking a game in the language of the gambling machine. Managers I have talked to used the terms 'hard' and 'soft' machines for this difference between gambling machines. Hard machines were more expensive to play because of the features just described, whereas the 'soft' machines with slower turning wheels were preferred by people who were not chasing big wins but who mostly played for 'social reasons', managers said. One manager said that 'hard' machines might grant players up to 20,000 kroner in a series of single maximum wins. I never heard customers use the term 'hard' and 'soft' gambling machines, but they knew from experience that there were these differences between machines. They also learned that the patterns they might have been able to determine on particular machines changed. Some managers told me that machines were sometimes swopped around in the gambling hall in order to prevent customers from becoming too familiar with a particular machine.

I began to see that customers might experience the legal rules of play including the Repayment Percentage as a somewhat secret or mystical domain – an unknown sphere of randomness, a promise of fairness and possibility that people turned to, optimistically and in good faith, that luck would come their way. In the end, however, randomness turned into unpredictability and fairness into adversity. The Repayment Percentage gave rise to a symbolic change of money with enormous consequences for the players.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1 I set out with the assumption that gambling represents the commodification of chance and a ritual of the worship of chance – a vague unspoken hope of a transformation in one's life (Reith 1999: 14-17; Binde 2007a: 158). In this chapter, I have addressed the transformation of money in gambling in the gambling process itself and in everyday life. The presence of money, imagined or real, in everyday life was associated with a promise

of vague, unspoken dreams of a better future: a 'bourgeois life,' a house, a wife, nice furniture, a holiday; and it also validated one's self-worth. The commodification of chance provided a means of aspiring to all of these things by way of 'luck' turning up eventually. Consequently, money may be said to serve two vital purposes: as a measure of time, and as a dynamo that kept the gambling process going in a persistent belief that 'someone had to win'. If we assume that gambling in modern society is a form of secular ritualistic worship of chance, then the meaning of money would have to be transformed symbolically to match this aim of worship.

As we have seen, money acquired different kinds of meanings in relation to the gambling hall and was experienced as having quite different qualities in accordance with its purpose. The sensual properties of money were evident in the joy of the sounds of coins rolling around the payout tray of the gambling machine, while aesthetic properties were seen, for instance, in the money-and-flower centrepiece in a living room. Money was transformed into meaning categories such as 'money loose in the pocket,' 'lucky twenties' on the part of customers and into Credit on the part of business. Customers invented their own names for gambling currencies, while the gambling machine itself presented its own variety of categories for stakes. In this process the market value of money was turned into fluid signs like Hats, Skulls and Aubergines, as well as 'Credit that had to be divided by four,' in effect becoming somewhat uncontrollable. One consequence of this transformation of the meaning of money was that jackpot wins might be recycled into the gambling machine as if they belonged to the sphere of gambling and not experienced as being the ownership of the player, or being money that might enter other spheres of exchange that were considered to be 'bad' or luxury.

I have suggested that the renaming of standard twenty-kroner coins as 'lucky twenties', enjoying, at times to the point of ecstasy, the sound of coins rolling around in a piggy bank or in the payout tray of a gambling machine, or enjoying money as an aesthetic decoration in a glass jar in the living room may all be seen from the perspective of money as sacred. In everyday life, money was sometimes transformed into gifts that were meant as caring for children or for sustaining friendships. In Anne's case, her father appeared to give her money with the intention of healing a wounded life, whereas the extra money she might receive from the welfare office was merely 'survival money.' In arguing for the sacredness of money in certain contexts (Belk and Wallendorf 1990) and for the gambling

process in particular, I have relied on evidence of how my informants use and see money. However, I have also relied on sociological and anthropological arguments about money and about how consumption mediates experience in much the same way that ritual does (Douglas 1966: 19; Miller 1998; Reith 1999). Like ritual, money may create a link between the past and the future and consequently an experience of continuity. In Douglas' view, 'money is an extreme and specialized type of ritual' (Douglas 1966: 19). In this chapter, we have seen that money was a process in which the standard krone was transformed into a variety of currencies. Moreover, money in the gambling hall also represented a specific temporality where customers experienced ordinary clock time as somewhat suspended. Furthermore, money, including its auditory properties, represented a promise or dream of transformation at the level of the body, of healing relationships and creating a link to larger forces represented by the idea of luck as a gift of grace.

The link that money seems to create between the past and the future is perhaps most clearly seen in its relationship with hope. In the tale of the impoverished and abused Cinderella, for instance, the hope of richness becomes linked to a promise of strength, charm and wisdom (Belk and Wallendorf 1990: 42). Likewise, the acquisition of money may be hoped for because it may hold out the promise of a ritual transformation of the individual. In contemporary secularized and individualized society, consumption may be seen as an activity that has replaced so-called traditional rituals and story-telling (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 43). From this perspective, we may also see daily provisioning as a sacrifice inherent in the process of purchasing as addressed in Miller's theory of shopping (Miller 1998).

Although I have argued that gambling can be regarded as a secular ritual of the worship of chance and luck, we have seen that the somewhat sacred nature of money in gambling was not separated from its profane dimension. The accounts I have presented in this chapter indicate that there might be at once a profane and a sacred process going on in gambling in the sense that customers were not only pursuing a dream of the total transformation of their liminal status in society, but also a desire for momentary financial gain to stretch their welfare allowances in the here and now.

As I have indicated in this chapter, my informants experienced the Repayment Percentage, the function of games and upper limits for wins and Credit as obscure verging on secrecy. For some players, the lack of transparency in the commodity became

an opponent to play with. However, it also became an adversary when players took it to mean that one was being given a fair chance as well as fair 'repayment' for one's investments. Hence, the gambling hall contributed to the creation of a vision of fairness, with its promises of Repayment, 'free games' and Credit, where the idea was fostered that gambling was a kind of account which would eventually repay the customer in cash the legislative minimum of 74% of his or her stake. This appeared a cruel vision in the face of poverty – a vision created not in the sick minds of 'ludomaniacs', but in the logic of the state incorporated gambling machine business in the presence of hopeful customers who had 'bought time' with the gambling machine.

I have pointed to 'lucky twenties' as a kind of gambling currency, which was separated from its meaning and value as a standard medium of market exchange. This is particularly ironic given that the gambling hall earns a profit exactly in the market value of kroner. To Steen, Anne, Bo, Lone and others, however, the meaning of money was transformed in gambling to a point where they 'lost sense of money'. If these men and women may be said to have operated in the somewhat sacred sphere of a secular ritual place and process, then they were somewhat vulnerable and unprotected in the face of an industry and a state whose profits from customers' investments was secured by legislation.

Chapter Four

Liminality: a twilight zone of entertainment and diagnosis

'Step into the darkness and
experience the spider walk
in the moon light.'[64]

Introduction

Entering the gambling hall was like stepping into a dark, sheltered and comforting room with golden light flickering and glowing in the gambling machines and the coffee table set with large thermos flasks and cups. I was often pleased with the little niches in corners of the dark room, where I could have a morning coffee in front of a Midnight Magic and begin my observations from a somewhat sheltered position. But seen from a different perspective, maybe just on days with a more cynical view of one's life, the gambling hall was also an open public place with 'ludic offerings' (Turner 1996: 54) that might catch the customer in its snares, a place replete with ambiguity over whether gambling was 'bad'. Clients in treatment settings often described the gambling hall in metaphorical terms like 'refuge'[65] and 'free space',[66] thus linking the gambling hall to an experience of freedom or

[64] Text on the display of a Midnight Magic gambling machine: *Træd ind i mørket og oplev edderkoppen gå i månelyset.*

[65] *Tilflugtssted*

shelter from something, or else they used terms like 'bubble'[67] and 'cheese bell',[68] connoting a more constricted experience of being separated from something. But they also describe their experiences in the gambling hall in terms of 'going crazy',[69] 'addiction'[70] and 'ludomania'.

In this chapter, I approach the gambling hall primarily as a particular *inter-subjective* and existential experience of a ritual practice of separation. Taking this approach, the gambling hall might be seen from the outside to be a place of leisure, withdrawal and freedom from the constraints of everyday life. Here humans might enjoy moments of daydream and freedom from the responsibilities of everyday life: a *heterotopia*[71] in Foucault's sense (Foucault 1986) and a *liminoid setting*[72] for free-wheeling activity in Turner's sense (Turner 1996). From the inside the gambling hall might be seen as a practised place of stories, movement, tactics, trajectories and drama (de Certeau 1988: 36-42), and as a ritual and body praxis (Jackson 1983). However, the gambling hall might also be viewed in a more constricted sense in terms of the disease label 'ludomania', a kind of frame of deviance or as a place for governmental surveillance of behaviour (Foucault 1984a; Foucault 1984b; de Certeau 1988: 117-118) and the *stigma* of pathology (Goffman 1963b). Thus the gambling hall was a complex cultural place and process containing the ambiguity of freedom and release in a liminoid place that also contains pathology and stigma.

In this chapter, I argue that the gambling hall offered a process of play in which individuals might find some form of release and recover, at least momentarily, from smaller or greater losses in life, as well as indulging in the *hope* of a better future for themselves. I demonstrate how biographies that reflect somewhat *liminal* lives, together with

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[66] *Frirum*

[67] *Bobbel*

[68] *Osteklokke*

[69] *At blive skør*

[70] *Afhængighed*

[71] Foucault uses the term 'heterotopia' to connote an 'enacted utopia', that is, spaces of leisure like cinemas and fairgrounds that are separated from everyday life; see Foucault, M. (1986).

[72] Turner use the term 'liminoid setting' to connote leisure spaces as well as for the process of play or 'free-wheeling' that takes place; see Turner, V. (1996).

specific features of the gambling hall, work together to bring the individual to a particular state of mind in which one might seek to transcend one's particular situation in life. This argument is backed by confronting my ethnographic observations with the contemporary theories of mundane rituals (Jackson 2005) and of ritual as a transformation of the self (Handelman and Lindquist 2004). I the support my argument further by reference to other scholars' observations of similar gambling settings in Japan. Furthermore, I discuss the implications of the 'ludomania' label in its underpinning the gambling hall as a liminal place and process, as well as providing a kind of frame for the surveillance of individuals.

Lost plots and liminal lives

In an observational study of working class men who gamble on the horse race Kenneth Irving Zola found that gambling provides the opportunity for a person to feel in control over something in a world which is otherwise not controllable to lower class individuals (Zola 1964: 257). By taking the opportunity to exercise skill and knowledge, the individual can gain recognition for their accomplishments (ibid.). Hence, according to Zola, rather than being dysfunctional or deviant, gambling is a practise that offers the individual to let go of otherwise destructive frustrations.

It was when I began listening to stories of my informants' lives that I started to view the gambling hall as a place and a process that might happen in a particular time and circumstance in someone's life. Johan began telling me part of his life story while he was gambling with a couple of machines by saying that he had 'lost the plot'[73] because of misfortune in his marriage. The dream of a happy family life with his wife and baby daughter in a house they had bought had been shattered when it turned out that the house was infested with dry rot and there was no insurance to cover the loss. On top of this, one day Johan found his wife in bed with his best friend when he returned from work, and so everything had gone wrong in his life at the same time. The matter-of-fact way in which he described his loss, combined with his heavy investment of time and money in the gambling

[73] *Filmen knækkede,* which literally translates into 'the film broke' – in Danish a 'broken film' or *knækket film* is an idiomatic expression similar to having 'lost the plot'; see for example www.urbandictionary.com. Here I use the term to connote to a breakdown in a person's view of his or her life.

hall, left me with the impression of a devil-may-care attitude that had replaced his involuntary loss of his role as a family man. Furthermore, he had a stressful job working at night as a manager in charge.

The metaphor of the 'lost plot' reminded me to see the gambling hall from the perspective of a break or a stopover in the movement of life. The life stories told to me narrated disruptions and blind allies. They were experiences of loss, trauma and neglect, but they were also stories that narrated a will to change one's perspective on one's situation and perhaps make a fresh start.

Anne had recently moved into a council apartment on the outskirts of Århus, in an attempt to counter her gambling habit by physically distancing herself from gambling halls. On my second visit to her home, I took the opportunity to let Anne talk about the objects that decorated her living room. In telling about them, she connected them with events and stories of her life with her two children. She had put fresh flowers in vases, candlesticks were lit, and her used furniture was draped with white cotton cloth. Drawings that her son had recently made at school were put on the wall above a small bookcase with novels and a few self-help books, while on top of the book case were some handcrafted decorations from her youngest son. Above these items there was also a reproduction of a Renaissance painting of the Virgin Mary in the sky surrounded by many sheep and shepherds. Anne said she loved the painting and had defied the opinions of her dearest, who found it 'strange'. One painting, however, stood out against the rest. Anne called it an 'abstract' painting because it did not 'depict anything in particular'. However, she did point out an object in the middle, which 'somehow represents a cat hanging by the neck from a rope'. Then she directed my attention to the fact that if one turned the painting round it looked like something else. Anne liked to turn the picture from time to time to make the image change, she said.

I knew she was trying to influence her life in such a way that she would be brought out of the gambling hall where she had simply lost so many of her welfare benefits time and time again. Standing in front of these objects in her living room, I recalled my first visit to her place one morning when I overheard a telephone conversation she was having with a person from the welfare office about a delay in her monthly allowance. Anne was complaining about the delay and struggling to keep a balanced tone in her conversation with the welfare officer. After the conversation she said that found it extremely

strenuous and humiliating that the welfare officer patronised her in her role as a recipient of welfare benefits. She said that years of being subject to family counselling had made her better able to stand up for her rights. Although Anne said that she did not really like the gambling hall, she had come to see it as a place where she could relax from her worries and take a chance with some of the welfare money. Anne used the word 'outsider' when she talked about what she thought of her position in society. She talked about having been abused as a child; about raising two somewhat handicapped children on her own; about being on social welfare; about being raised to 'keep up appearances'[74] despite vast family problems; about school being a 'nightmare';[75] about suffering from what she termed 'social fear',[76] a label she had been given by a psychiatrist; and about using gambling as an 'escape'[77] from all that.

> 'The social fear disappears when you're in the gambling environment because it's the only thing you have to do. You don't have to be anyone special in the eyes of anyone else. And anyone can play a gambling machine. You feel at home. Because there's nobody telling you that you're no good at it. You just have to push a button. I can be tense and feel sad, but as soon as I get inside and change [money] … actually immediately after you've arrived, you know all those people … you don't need to put money in the machine … then you're on home ground. And there's no one making demands on you. And that's what does it. You're free.'[78]

When Anne talked about things to do with the gambling hall, a very sad and tired look crossed her face. I took this look to mean that we should not pursue these matters for too

[74] *Holde facaden udadtil*

[75] *Mareridt*

[76] *Social angst*

[77] *Flugt*

[78] *Den sociale angst den forsvinder når man er i spillemiljøet, fordi det kun er det man skal. Man skal ikke præstere noget andet over for nogen. Og alle og enhver kan jo spille på en spilleautomat. Så man føler sig hjemme. For der er ikke nogen der siger, det der er du sgu ikke god til. Det er jo bare at trykke på en knap. Jeg kan være anspændt og føle mig trist, men lige så snart jeg kommer ind og får vekslet … ja men det er faktisk med det samme man kommer ind, man kender alle de mennesker … du behøver ikke nødvendigvis at have puttet nogle penge i maskinen … så er man på hjemmebane, og der er ikke nogen der stiller nogle krav til én. Og det er så nok også det der gør det. Man er fri.*

long. It seemed strenuous to Anne to talk about the consolation she got from the gambling hall from time to time. Talking about hopes of jackpots in the darkness of the gambling hall was an antithesis to her living room, where the late spring light poured through the windows to make her place so feminine, aesthetic and cared for. The painting of the cat hanging from the rope somehow represented what I saw as her trapped situation in life.

Anne was in a situation where she had little scope for changing her life in any other direction, although she was using her imagination and creativity in an attempt to do so. Attending the gambling hall had become one of the means that provided her with a sense of freedom and an option for manipulating the odds of life to her advantage, at least on an imaginary level.

Jørgen was in a different situation from Anne, though sharing the same feeling of a lack of opportunity to change conditions in his life. As a child, he had escaped from bullying at school by attending the gambling hall, and in his adult life, the gambling hall had become a safe haven from stress in his work place whenever he wanted to recover his state of mind. Jørgen did not seem to be dreaming of a change in his social status like Anne did, since he had a steady job, but what he termed 'the nothing land' of the gambling hall, where he could enjoy his time off, somehow resembled Anne's description of the gambling hall. Jørgen wanted to stop gambling altogether, and he had just moved to a different city in order to escape the temptation to frequent his regular gambling hall. As he saw it, his gambling habit was getting in the way of his establishing the stable family life with his girlfriend that he desired. His story was not unlike those of Bo and Lone, for instance, who had been familiar with gambling machines since childhood.

> 'When I was fourteen I got a Tivoli card from my grandparents for my birthday. I got one every year for my birthday. Then I popped over to Tivoli to gamble on the machines. I think it was forbidden for children, and I think I was thrown out every now and then. There I found a kind of free space that I could enjoy and be myself in. Yes, that cheese bell effect. Shut everything out. When I went, there all my problems remained outside. I went into my own world … it was a place where I didn't have to be responsible for anything. Later on in my adult life I es-

caped from problems. I know I've used it as a refuge. I went to get the kick, the rush. I won at first, and played quite often.

I did have friends at school, but I wasn't one of the cool boys. Maybe I tried to get away from that. Lise: "Not being part of a group?" Jørgen: Yes, I found something to replace that. Some of my friends were bullied at school and I felt bad about not doing anything or being part of the bullying. A nothing land. For long periods of time I have experienced being addicted to that problem-free area where I could put all my troubles and problems behind me. I've been addicted to some kind of kick. When I talk about addiction, then it's the rush, the kick and the addiction to that problem-free area I didn't have to relate to.… Lise: "What type of problems have you had in your adult life?" Jørgen: It's been very job-related at times. I've had problems saying 'No' to colleagues. Then I take on too much … suddenly everything gets too much for me. Instead of getting started from the beginning and getting things done, I drop everything and think that they can go to hell, and then I go off to gamble and shut everything out.'[79]

These stories indicate that the gambling hall played the role of some kind of enacted utopia, a dream of change in the course of a life when some circumstances were working to

[79] *Da jeg var fjorten fik jeg et tivolikort af min mormor og morfar i fødselsdagsgave. Det fik jeg altid til min fødselsdag. Så smuttede jeg i Tivoli og spillede på automater. Jeg tror det var forbudt for børn, og jeg tror også jeg er blevet smidt ud af de der spillehaller, men det var meget sjældent. Der fandt jeg en eller anden form for frirum eller sådan, hvor jeg kunne søge hen og være mig selv. Ja hele den der osteklokkeeffekt. Kunne lukke al ting ude. Når jeg gik derind så blev mine problemer uden for parken. På det tidspunkt da jeg søgte derind og ind i min egen verden … fordi det var et sted hvor jeg ikke behøvede at tage stilling til noget, ikke behøvede at være ansvarsbevidst omkring nogen ting. Siden hen er jeg flygtet væk fra problemer. Jeg ved jo godt selv at jeg har brugt det som et tilflugtssted. For jeg gik ind for at få det kick, det rush. Jeg vandt ret hurtigt. Jeg spillede også en del.*

Jeg havde nogle gode venner i skolen, men jeg var ikke én af de hotte drenge. Måske er det noget af det jeg er søgt væk fra. Lise: *Det ikke at være med i en gruppe?* Jørgen: *Ja. Så fandt jeg noget der kunne erstatte det. Der var nogen af de andre der blev mobbet, som jeg havde det dårligt med at jeg hverken prøvede at stoppe det eller var med på mobningens side. Sådan et intet-land. Jeg har jo oplevet at jeg i lange perioder er blevet afhængig af at få det her problemfrie rum, hvor jeg kunne sætte alle besværligheder og problemer bag mig. Og så har jeg været afhængig af at få et eller andet form for kick. Vi snakkede om det i behandlingen når jeg spiller og vinder ja men så kan jeg ramme det felt i løbet af meget kort tid. Når jeg snakker afhængighed så er det de to andre ting med at få det rush, kicket der og så afhængigheden af at have et problemfrit område, hvor jeg ikke behøver at forholde mig til …* Lise: *Hvad er det for en type problemer du har i dit voksenliv?* Jørgen: *Det har været meget arbejdsrelateret i perioder. Jeg kan være dårlig til at sige fra over for kolleger og andre afdelinger. Så jeg får påtaget mig for mange ting som jeg ikke kan … så pludselig vælter læsset. I stedet for at starte fra den ene ende af og sige, så må du få det ud af verden så lader jeg lortet ligge og så tænker jeg, at så kan de rende mig et vist sted, og så er jeg taget hen og spillet og lukket al ting ude.*

the disadvantage of Jørgen or Anne. This was also the case in Lone's story, the only difference in hers was that she talked explicitly about the gambling hall as a kind of therapeutic place that she sought at a time when everything had fallen apart in her life.

Lone had invited me to interview her in her home. She had chosen a quiet time in the middle of the morning when her two children were at school. She herself was on long-term sick leave, a situation she found utterly unsatisfactory, not least because she might not be able to return to the job she loved anymore. Her motives for frequenting the gambling hall were many, but here I will focus on what Lone said about using the gambling hall as a 'tranquilizer'.

> 'I used it as a tranquilliser. I didn't need to relate to the person next to me. You see, I could mind my own seat and my own machine, and even that I didn't have to mind as long as I played the automatic button. Then I simply had to sit and look at it. In that way, it was very stress-releasing for me. [Lone then said that she started gambling ten years ago when many things in her life went wrong.] It was one shock after another. [Before that time, gambling did not mean anything to her, but at the time she had a mental breakdown and was admitted to a psychiatric ward and released again with pills]. I used it [gambling] to escape. I could go to the gambling hall and just sit and stare, talk superficial, no-one tapping me on the shoulder saying "How are you actually?" I didn't want anybody to talk about anything but the weather. Lise: "But you liked being with other people?" Lone: Yes, the more noise the better. It was nice to have some people around, nice that there were noises and someone in the background, but I didn't have to relate to them. It helped me through a time when I couldn't relate to anything, not even to myself. It's good that it has helped me that way. If I had money in my account, then I'm sure I would gamble. I can see that it has done me some good, even though it has been expensive. Lise: "In what way has it helped you?" Lone: It's helped me compose myself. It gave me peace, at least when I was sitting there. I had the chance to think things over once more. It helped me, and therefore to me it makes

sense why people gamble. Over there you can get peace from issues in your everyday life.'[80]

Jørgen's, Anne's and Lone's stories depict the gambling hall as some kind of safe haven from the adversaries of life, as some kind of stopover in a life that they would like to change. Ghanim's story is slightly different in expressing a deep concern for the gambling hall being at once a place of recovery and a rip-off.

Ghanim was present almost every time I visited the gambling hall. Like his fellow customers there, he was at once extremely critical of the presence of the gambling hall in his neighbourhood and at the same time a regular customer who struggled to keep his gambling expenses down by engaging in extended conversations with fellow customers between his gambling sessions. Ghanim told me that he was divorced, like almost all the other regular male customers in the gambling hall. He was also the father of two grown-up children, whom he regretted not having been able to provide adequately for emotionally, nor had his ex-wife, he said.

One morning he greeted me as follows:

'Welcome to the gambling hall. This place makes us sick and steals our money. [Ghanim used to be in a bad mood, grumbling about my nosiness, but on this day

[80] *Jeg brugte det som nervemedicin. Jeg skulle ikke forholde mig til ham der sad ved siden af. Jeg skulle heller ikke forholde mig til ham ved siden af igen. Altså, jeg kunne sidde på min plads og passe min egen lille maskine og den behøver jeg ikke engang nødvendigvis at passe, for den kunne jeg sætte så den kunne køre automatisk, så kunne jeg bare sidde og se på den. Så på den måde var det bare afstressende for mig.* Lone fortæller at hun startede med at spille for ti år siden da en bunke ting gik galt i hendes liv. *'Det var det ene chok efter det andet.'* Før da havde spil ikke betydet noget for hende men nu var hun på randen af et mentalt sammenbrud og blev indlagt på en psykiatrisk afdeling og senere udskrevet med piller. *Jeg brugte det* [spil] *meget til at flygte. Jeg kunne sætte mig ind i en spillehal og smide penge i og så bare sidde og glo. Jeg skulle kun snakke overfladiske ting. Der var ikke nogen der klappede mig på skulderen og spurgte: hvordan har du det egentlig. Nej for så ville jeg jo bryde grædende sammen. Der var ikke nogen der skulle snakke med mig om andet end vind og vejr.* Lise: *Men du ville gerne være sammen med nogen?* Lone: *Ja, jo mere larm der var jo bedre. Og jeg brød mig egentlig ikke om at være alene. Så det var jo rart nok, der var nogen. Det var rart nok, at der var nogle lyde og noget larm og nogen i baggrunde, men jeg skulle ikke forholde mig til dem. Men det har jo hjulpet mig i den periode, hvor jeg ikke kunne forholde mig til noget som helst. Ikke engang til mig selv. Der er det fint at det har hjulpet på den måde. Havde jeg penge på kontoen, så er jeg helt sikker på så ville jeg spille. Jeg kan jo godt se, at det har hjulpet mig, selv om det har kostet dyrt.* Lise: *Hvordan har det hjulpet dig?* Lone: *Det har hjulpet mig, sådan at jeg kunne samle mig lidt bedre sammen. Det har hjulpet mig i at få ro, i hvert fald mens jeg sad derovre. Det gav mig en vis ro lige at få lov til at tænke tingene igennem én gang til ikke også. Jeg kan godt se det fornuftige i at folk de spiller. Derovre kan man få ro for hverdagens ting.*

> he was in a light mood and volunteered to give me his account of gambling and the gambling hall.] Something has hurt us in our lives, so we come here to forget and to gain a bit of peace. We find peace. It's like people who go to a restaurant or bar. Something has happened in their lives which hurts them, then they go to the restaurant and they feel better. They forget, they have fun and enjoy themselves while they're there. But when they aren't the problem is still there. Am I making myself clear? Most of the customers here are divorced men. Perhaps when you come here you see people enjoying themselves, talking, joking, laughing, but beneath there's something else. Do you get me?'[81]

In the stories above, life is about 'hanging by the neck in a rope', having 'social fear', being 'bullied', feeling like an 'outsider', having 'problems', experiencing 'stress', getting 'shocks' and having been neglected and abused. These people had not been in a position to influence their lives, but appeared overwhelmed by the experience of being in a kind of deadlock.[82] To them, the gambling hall was a place which put all these experiences on stand-by so that one might gain 'freedom', 'release', or 'peace' and have a chance to 'compose' the self, at least momentarily. The gambling hall evidently offered an opportunity for some kind of transformation, if not of a whole life, then at least of a state of mind, here and now for individuals who sought an escape from the stresses or burdens of everyday life. These are observations that have also been made in the USA and Australia in regard to women (Surgey 2000; Schull 2002). Men like Steen, Poul, Ghanim, Jørgen and Ove said that they used the gambling hall as a refuge, and judging from Nadim, Ghanim and many other men whom I saw in the gambling hall, they also used the hall as a refuge from everyday life. Thus, women were not alone in seeking peace of mind in the gambling hall.

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[81] *Velkommen til spillehallen. Det her er et sted der gør os syge og stjæler vores penge. Der er noget der har såret os i livet og derfor kommer vi herind for at glemme og for at få fred med os selv. Vi får ro. Det er lige som de folk der går på restaurant* [værtshus]. *Der er sket noget i deres liv, som har gjort dem ondt, så kommer de ind på restauranten, og så går det bedre. De glemmer, de morer sig og hygger sig mens de er der, men når de ikke er der, så er problemet der stadig. Udtrykker jeg mig klart nok? De fleste mænd i spillehallen er fraskilte. Det kan godt være, at når du kommer ind her, så ser du at folk hygger sig, snakker sammen, pjatter og griner, men neden under det, så er der det andet forstår du?*

[82] Karen Elmeland makes a similar observation about large-scale alcohol consumers in Denmark; see Elmeland, K., P. Nygaard, et al. (1990). Storbrugere: 12 fortællinger om alkoholbrug, Psykologisk Institut, Aarhus Universitet.

Another common theme connected to the issue of seeking refuge in the gambling hall was the problem of relating to a world of others – to other humans such as partners, parents and colleagues. The stories I was told by people in the gambling hall and by clients from treatment centres aroused my ethnographic curiosity as to how individual lives interacted with the gambling hall. Jørgen and Lone's stories showed that the gambling hall not only provided some kind of refuge from the demands of the everyday, but it also provided an opportunity to re-relate somehow to the world of others in the face of distress. Perhaps this might be understood as a demand for existential integrity – of *ontological security* in the sense of searching for a meaningful way of belonging in a world of others where one is struggling to find a balance between being-for-oneself and being-for-others – a condition of social existence (Jackson 1998: 16).

This may be approached analytically as a matter of intersubjectivity or reciprocity between humans and between humans and the material surroundings. If we accept the premise that everywhere humans engage in some form of exchange as a condition for being in the world, then the biographies of Ghanim, Lone, Anne, Jørgen and many others might be seen as particular expressions of ways of relating or perhaps re-relating to the world anew. However, in the refuge aspect of the gambling hall people seemed to be relating intersubjectively through their bodily experiences of the gambling process. In Dan Zahavi's reading of the phenomenology of intersubjectivity, we see that it has an inner dimension, a volitional structure related to the senses (Zahavi 2001: 161). Thus, the body may be seen as having a subject-object status in itself. I take this to mean that intersubjectivity may take the form of some kind of speechless inner dialogue in persons that is none the less experienced as a kind of communication where the individual may, for instance, reconcile, come to terms with, negotiate or 'compose oneself', as Lone had said.

Was 'composing oneself' a kind of inner dialogue where one reconciled with circumstances? In what Jackson terms 'mundane rituals', that is, unspectacular rituals which individuals may perform in order to overcome emotional, environmental or social difficulties, categories like verbal/non-verbal, object/subject, human/animal may be seen as the raw material with which ritual works (Jackson 2005:104). When I compared my observations of many hours of silent and lonely gambling in the gambling hall with biographies of distress such as Lone's, I began to see humans whose attention had moved from their relationship with the external world to an inner world of one's pre-verbal state of being.

This process may be similar to what happens in eastern traditions of meditation and yoga, where stillness and steadiness is brought into one's thoughts or 'peace of mind' as my informants would say.

Studies of other kinds of electronic gambling machine, such as the Pachinko machines in Japan, indicate that engagement with these machines provides players with a sense of release and mental well-being (Shinohara, Yanagisawa et al. 1999; Hirano and Takahashi 2003). In that sense, the refuge aspect of the gambling hall might have worked as a supplementary modality of acting that made persons' social and practical action more effective. In her book *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas suggests that a person's inner turmoil may be managed by ritually cleaning, rearranging, buying new clothes and thereby inducing a sense of being in control of one's circumstances (Douglas 1966:12). However, if such action becomes an overall occupation of a person's everyday life, occupying every minute of the day in terms of attention and energy, then we may speak of madness or pathology in being, as Jackson argues (Jackson 2005: 106-107).

Given such considerations, it seems relevant to ask how the gambling hall might be said either to liberate persons from their sense of deadlock in their lives in any way, or to examine in what sense the gambling hall might work to further the deadlock and keep people in a liminal state.

Liminality and liminoid place

The gambling hall was apparently a place that might evoke extraordinary feelings, sensations and states by which persons were transformed or sought transformation brought on by symbols of, for instance lemons, aubergines and 'bars' on the fast moving wheels, flickering lights in the screens of the gambling machines or the large variety of designer sounds emitted by each gambling machine. To the person attending the gambling hall it was the experience and articulation – sometimes a silent one – of a kind of dissociation from particular experiences in one's life, a dissociation that I will refer to as the refuge aspect of the gambling hall in the rest of this chapter. I will examine it as a ritual process of gambling in which the gambling hall marked a liminoid place and a liminal way of being

(Turner 1967; Handelman and Lindquist 2004). Thus, I discriminate between the gambling hall as a liminoid and liminal place and process, and liminality in terms of biographical lives.

In his book on Ndembu rituals, Turner developed a concept of liminality to describe a specific process by which the neophytes – participants in an initiation ritual – are what he calls 'betwixt-and-between'; neither-this-nor-that in social and cultural status (Turner 1967). This implies that the neophytes have been declassified but not yet reclassified (ibid.: 96). Neophytes enjoy the equality of status among themselves, but are defined as outsiders or non-persons in society. In the liminal process, neophytes have extraordinary experiences evoked by the symbolic properties of given rituals and are led by ritual experts who teach them to acquire a new status in society.

Anthropologies of disability and of infertility have reported on the experience of liminal beings in a social order that tolerates deviances but hardly fully acknowledges them (Murphy 1987; Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999). Robert Murphy describes living with an impairment in America and draws attention to liminality as a permanent condition for the disabled, whom non-disabled persons recognize and yet pass as unnoticed in their encounters with them (Murphy 1987; Murphy, Scheer et al. 1988). During my own fieldwork, I often noticed how my friends and acquaintances felt infuriated by 'all those gambling halls on every street corner' at the same time as being curious about what was going on inside them. When I said to my friends that they might just visit a few to see for themselves, the mere thought of going to 'such places', as they said, provoked consternation, thus implying that the place itself would discredit them as persons. Gambling halls were not only seen as inappropriate places in the environment, but also places that were discrediting or stigmatising for anyone who might enter. One concern was the perceived 'sleaziness' of the gambling hall, another that they had become linked to an inevitable pathological definition of 'ludomania'.

In Goffman's definition, stigma refers to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, and hence affects the social identity of a person (Goffman 1963b: 13). The disgrace of some kind of mark, like, for instance, a diagnosis attached to a person, may affect that person negatively in terms of being somewhat bad, dangerous or weak: 'He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and unusual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive' (ibid.: 12). One of the

consequences of becoming a reduced person in the minds of other humans is a feeling of shame as an attribute of a stigmatized self-perception (ibid.: 18).

Lene was one of my informants who was most explicit about the shame of her 'ludomania'. Thus she often said, 'I am tired of myself' when she talked about her 'ludomania' and all the money she had lost, and she would often begin to blush and feel hot at the beginning of our conversations. She felt somewhat discredited by her children, who disapproved of her gambling, but she did not blame them, she said. To me Lene had taken on the self-blame which accompanied the stigmatising process. However, it was when I realised that lying about their whereabouts, and especially their financial affairs, had been a strategy used by everyone to conceal from significant others and sometimes even from themselves that they were 'ludomaniacs' that I began to wonder whether 'ludomania' was in fact a liminal process underlined by stigma.

For Murphy, liminality is tied to the process of stigma by which disabled persons remain on the margins of society unrecognised as incomplete members of society (Murphy 1987). Like Turner's neophytes, who are in a liminal process 'likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon' (Turner 1967: 95), Murphy sees disabled persons as having obscure and submerged identities and as therefore remaining in social seclusion (Murphy 1987: 135). This kind of social liminality is also significant in Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen's study of infertility. She describes the experience of being a fragmented person at the hands of medical professionals who focus on diagnoses and bodies in the process of infertility treatment (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999). Childless persons undergoing fertility treatment experience their lives as momentary and liminal partly because of their status as childless, partly because the fertility clinic as such is a liminal space where couples are caught up in time adjusting to biological clocks and medical routines and indefinition, or becoming parents (ibid.: 53-59, 172-210).

Likewise, persons who frequented gambling halls had to face the stigma of 'ludomania', a category that was omnipresent, and therefore it could not be escaped, whether or not one undertook 'ludomania' treatment. Lene, for instance, told me that she had received letters from the Center for Ludomani with its name in large print on the envelope. She had called the centre and told them to remove this name of the treatment centre from any envelopes they sent her in the future. To me she said that, living in a small town

where the mail carrier knew everyone, she did not like everyone to know her as a 'ludomaniac'. Bo was the only one who did not seem to mind being labelled a 'ludomaniac'. Once when I interviewed him in a café, he was completely indifferent to other customers listening in to our conversation, even though I told him that others might be listening and suggested that we go somewhere else. But when Steen expressed his shame at belonging to a 'category of people' whom he also referred to as 'bad', he was touching on the great sensitivity of gambling being linked to pathology, as well as to low social status. I could not help interpreting the difficulties of recruiting informants in the gambling hall as a consequence of the perceived 'badness' of the hall itself being so strongly linked to pathology. In a case reported to the Danish Co-Op magazine Samvirke, a man who had given an interview to a newspaper about his gambling problem was fired from his new job (Braad 2008). This man's manager had looked him up on Google and found his name in an article on 'ludomania'. The consequences of the stigma of 'ludomania' in this case might end in a permanent liminal condition for the person affected.

It was when Anne said that she enjoyed the gambling hall because she could experience the freedom of no one putting demands on her and that she was able to control the game in her own way that I saw her experiencing the gambling hall as a liminoid place and process. I also saw her biography as a manifestation of the somewhat permanent liminal condition of her life. For clients in treatment settings and for most of the men and women I encountered in the gambling halls, liminality may be said to be an overall condition of their lives,[83] as well as a momentary state of being in the gambling hall. More or less pressured everyday lives were represented in life stories in relation to the gambling hall.

In the stories of 'lost plots' provided here, liminality was a product of two conditions. One was a process of social participation in community and society. This might take the form of unemployment, material and emotional loss as well as illness. Even childhood might be a liminal condition, as in the story of a man looking back on his gambling career set off by the gift of a season ticket to an amusement arcade. The other condition was that of the gambling hall as a place of transformation in terms of the positive qualities

[83] At a seminar on anthropological welfare analysis 02-05-2005, Department of Anthropology and Ethnography, Aarhus University, anthropologist Inger Sjørslev drew attention to processes of social inclusion and exclusion that are also taking place in so-called welfare societies. I use liminality in connection with being in a situation where a person is in a somewhat marginal position – that is as relative poor and without the means to use consumption as a means of social participation and performing as a consumer.

of rest, peace and not least a feeling of acceptance. Hence, the concept of liminality I am applying here refers to my informants' lives as a movement through biographical time and to the gambling hall as a liminal and liminoid place.

In his book on play and ritual (Turner 1996), Turner extends his concept of liminality to modern western phenomena of leisure activities in what he terms 'liminoid settings'. The main difference between liminal and liminoid phenomena is that the first tend to be collective, following the socio-structural rhythms of calendars , whereas the latter are rather individual products assigned to leisure activities that are set apart from work in time and space (ibid.: 54). Examples of liminoid settings are places like bars, cafes and social clubs, where people engage in freewheeling activities that are contrasted with the more restricted modes of conduct found in workplaces (ibid.: 33, 55). Here experience is characterised by a loss of ego, a sense of being in control of one's actions and environment (ibid.: 56-58). The liminoid shares the characteristic of the liminal as a domain of engagement 'betwixt-and-between' or neither-this-nor-that (ibid.: 39). Thus we may see the liminoid as a domain with freedom to play and to be entertained, a ritual process with a ludic element (Droogers 2004) or a frame of play (Bateson 1972 [1955]).

In my reading of Turner's concepts of liminal and liminoid phenomena, these analytical terms refer to movement and process in the lives of humans in times and places where imagination allows for reflection. In Turner's sense liminality is a collective phenomenon, whereas the liminoid has a more individualistic connotation. However, as I will discuss in the next section, there may be good reasons for expanding liminality to non-collective processes in which people are highly atomised in their experience of liminality, as has been demonstrated by anthropologists who have worked in western settings. My intention in drawing on the concept of liminality and the liminoid is that they provide an entry to an understanding of human movement and process through life being at once place-bound and bound to biography. Hence the gambling hall offered a liminoid place in which one's momentary being was perceived as being at once at a standstill and yet sensing the movement of one's own playful actions.

In the gambling hall, everything proceeded according to the regularity of electronic gambling machines, and yet customers were somewhat stuck, unable to proceed further in waiting for a jackpot in the process of play. Thus, there was a paradox of a kind of frozenness in time and place and yet in movement, the experience of being stuck in

one's life as well as being stuck in the gambling hall. Yet there was hope or a dream of a better future brought on by the embodied experience of movements of ever-changing lights flickering, the symbols changing on the rapidly turning wheels, the changing features of imaginary landscapes that somehow spoke a language of adventures, journeys, escape and transformation. Did these games speak of a change of scene that somehow worked like untold narrations of changed lives? Were they stories that underpinned the liminal biography and limnoid state of affairs of the gambling hall? If so one might see two kinds of stories at work in the gambling hall: the spoken and unspoken 'lost plots', the biographies of lives in the margins and stories at play in the gambling machines. Were the biographical 'lost plots' interacting with a particular kind of narrative quality embodied in the gambling hall?

Narrativity and liminality

Stories may be said to convey the teller's body-subject experience of occupying, inhabiting and moving through space, thus transforming it into places (de Certeau 1988: 118; Jackson 1998: 33). What makes a physical setting with its material properties into a place is the fact that we apply our stories, actions, movements and experiences to it in the process of our use and attention. The stories that made up the gambling hall were the narrative of game, the small talk on matters of everyday life and the broader biographies – the 'lost plots.' In practice these stories were, of course, interwoven, but the 'lost plots' added something to the liminal and liminoid character of the already existing physical features of darkness, seclusion, symbolism and play-narrative. Hence, the stories of 'lost plots' represented above mirrored more than a celebration of individualized self-awareness and release. They also mirrored the gambling hall as interacting with the 'lost plots' to bring about the 'refuge' quality of the gambling hall as a process of a desired transformation of the self.

In narrative theory, narratives are perceived as versions of reality or points of view by which the teller may gain an understanding of themselves in-the-world (Ochs and Capps 1996). As such, 'narrative activity is crucial to recognizing and integrating repressed and alienated selves' who are also tied to other humans and things (ibid.: 30). The relationship to family members and colleagues, as well as to the gambling machine, were reflected

in the stories of 'lost plots' presented above. Narratives possess a paradox of remembering and forgetting in the sense that 'lives are the past that we tell ourselves' (ibid.: 21). In this sense, it may be said that my informants brought their 'lost plot' into the gambling hall in order to regain it or to mend what was broken in their lives. Forgetting, then, was a kind of transformation of temporality in which the life-story perspective was changed. In that sense, stories of 'lost plots' may be seen as mirroring a kind of liminal being.

Perhaps we – in Danish society – are lacking in collective rituals to lead us through life and therefore we rely on ourselves to narrate our lives. However, there are still expectations to life, which must unfold step-by-step, as Tjørnhøj also points out, and which, I have suggested, humans may experience as a loss of one's plot in life. Narrativity has a more open and less established structure than the ritual that Turner describes. Was the narrative structure of games kinds of rituals in which individuals might play with the idea that the course of events in one's life might change in a different and desired direction, notwithstanding the cruel fact that the gambling odds were in favour of the hall and not the customer?

My own experience of gambling was that the games that were visualised in light and diagrams on the screen of the gambling machine and further underpinned by suggestive sounds depicted kinds of stories. However, they were stories that had no beginning or ending, as in the classic fairy tale. Yet they were still like narratives, replete with climaxes that evoked emotions and sensations in the body.

Climbing Mount Everest: games as narratives

Terms like 'refuge', 'free space' and 'problem free area', which I have taken to connote what I call the refuge aspect of the gambling hall, were positive qualities which added something to one's everyday life, whereas metaphors like 'bubble' and 'cheese bell' denoted a sense of claustrophobia, an inability to move, of being stuck. Were players in the gambling hall walking in the moonlight soon to be caught by a sticky web or released by the jackpot, such as the lyrics of the Midnight Madness indicated? To me these metaphors indicated that the gambling hall was a frame, a parenthesis, a separation from ordinary eve-

ryday life. Perhaps this could most clearly seen in accounts of the Jackpot Game,[84] to which I will now turn.

An important and obvious motivation for attending the gambling hall was the hope of an instant jackpot win. The road to a jackpot, however, was most often travelled along a path of time-consuming and patient betting for the desired combination of symbols on the three or four wheels which might lead to Jackpot Games, the latter keeping the player in suspense about the outcome. A part of this chapter is therefore devoted to the play aspect of the gambling hall as an intersubjective experience as well as a frame for the subjective experience of play.

My introduction of the refuge aspect of the gambling hall is inspired from my own and my informants' experience of altered time by means of playing games. The often labyrinthine, circular or hierarchical design of the games on the display of the gambling machine resembled a journey along which the player had to travel a variety of imaginary distances in order to reach the peak represented by the jackpot. The games that were designed and visualised on the screen of the gambling machine was a movement – like a journey in a landscape or like a labyrinth or a circular space where a small point of light would travel across the screen in the process of betting. When the light hit the top of a hierarchy or the centre of a labyrinth, for instance, this meant that a player had achieved a jackpot. The player then had to accomplish certain things like 'counting stars', 'lighting lines', 'collecting diamonds' or 'fighting dragons.' In the following, Jang, Johan, Anne and Hans respectively explain the principles of games.

> Jang: 'The basic principle of games on machines is that you have to go through three stages. First you need three of a kind on the wheels, which gives a game. This game leads to some kind of Super Game, which will then give you a Jackpot Game. It's like climbing a mountain, like the name of this machine – Mount Everest. And when you get up there, then you have to collect stars.'[85]

[84] I use the Jackpot Game as synonymous of similar kinds of games with different names, as, for example, Super Chance or Game Flash.

[85] *Grundprincippet i spil på maskiner er, at du skal igennem tre led: Du skal først have tre ens på valserne, som skal give et spil. Det spil skal så give dig en eller anden form for superspil som så giver Jack pot spil. Det er lige som at kravle op ad et bjerg, nu lige som den maskiner der hedder Mount Everest. Og så når du kommer op så skal du samle stjerner.*

'Climbing mountains' and 'collecting stars' was one of the symbolic visions that reminded me of a 'ludomania' client in a treatment centre who had talked about the gambling hall as a 'dream hall'. The imagery of games certainly seemed to evoke some sensation of adventure, of chance journeys driven by the hope of luck.

> Johan: 'If you hit the line and you get the third, and the twelve is lit up and it gives a game flash, then it goes all the way through and stands on the chance. Then it gives one chance. It may give forty Top Games. Each time you hit one of them, it goes on the Top Board and may give Bonus Extra or Super. And that's from 50 to 1.200. And that's actually good to have if you have lines … getting 40 Top Games, because then you hit almost each time. If you have all three lines, then it's Top Game. If you have 40 Top Games, then it goes up there all the time. Then it may grant up to 4-5,000 kroner if you are lucky. This is what you sit and dream about, but it happens so rarely. I tried it once. That was bloody good fun. It lit up and went round and round before I finished … each time you get Bonus Extra or Super, then you light up that card under the Top Board. I had lit all four Super cards. The wheel went round, and inside the wheel there's something called Bonus with one or two. I hit the one and had a game in one of those with a light. That's big amounts. 12 – 8 – 6. I had games while it was playing games. So every time I hit an orange or one of the others it just went.… It was very crazy in the end. After each push, I had three bars. It was really fantastic fun.'[86]

[86] *Hvis du rammer stregen og du får den tredje og tolveren er tændt og den giver game flash dér så kører den hele vejen igennem og står på chancen. Så giver den én chance. Den kan give fyrre Topspil. Hver gang du rammer én af dem, så kører den på Toptavlen og kan give Bonus Ekstra eller Super. Og det er så fra 50 til 1.200. Og det er faktisk godt at have hvis man har linjer … at få 40 Topspil, for så rammer du næsten hver gang. Hvis du har alle tre linjer så er det Topspil. Hvis du har 40 Topspil så kører den deroppe hver gang. Så kan det give helt op til 4-5.000 kroner, hvis du er rigtig heldig. Det er det man sidder og drømmer om, men det sker så sjældent. Jeg har prøvet det én gang. Det var fandeme sjovt. Den lyste og den kørte bare og inden jeg var færdig… hver gang du får en bonus ekstra eller super, så tænder du det kort under den runde på Toptavlen. Der havde jeg så tændt alle de fire Superkort. Så kører hjulet rundt, og inde i hjulet der er der noget der hedder Bonus med to og et. Jeg ramte etteren og så fik jeg spil oppe i dem der med lys på. Det er store beløb. 12 – 8 – 6. Der fik jeg så spil samtidig med at den spillede. Så hver gang jeg ramte enten appelsin eller én af de andre, så kørte det. Det var helt sindssygt til sidst. Næsten hvert tryk der fik tre barer. Det var simpelthen så sjovt.*

Johan's story demonstrates that the importance of chance and luck in terms of money should not be underestimated in understanding people's motivation to gamble. Anne, for instance, might have preferred Virginia City gambling machines because they had Jackpot Chance written on them.

> Anne: 'It says Jackpot Chance on all the Virginia Games. That means that what it's about is landing on the Jackpot Chance. That's the simplest way of explaining it. In two of the games, you have to get to some Gold Nuggets. You have to get to the middle. There are arrows, and then it gets to some rings. First, it goes in the outer circle, and in the end, it gets to the middle. If a Gold Nugget comes and if it lands on the right arrow, that's not something you can control yourself. Then there's another one in which you have to get some diamonds in order to get up in a column, and it counts every time you get a diamond. Then it's about whether there will be some diamonds or not. But the last one is where you can nudge your way to getting more nudges or more games. There are also some heads you can land on and maybe you get more games. That's the one which is most fun.'[87]

Anne stressed the attraction of 'chance' and the promise of the possibility of a positive transformation that games offered, as well as the experience of the option of manoeuvring in the diagrammatic landscape of the game on the screen of the gambling machine. Hence, to Anne, the attraction of the gambling machine might have been pure luck disguised as ingenuity. It was, however, precisely the 'chance' aspect that some considered a regular 'danger' of being stuck with the gambling machine.

> Hans: There're four lights in the Virginia City that needs to be lit before one can get to the Jackpot Chance. That's what makes the machine dangerous. One gets

[87] *Der står Jackpot Chance på alle Virginia spillene. Det vil sige, at det som det går ud på det er at lande i Jackpot Chancen. Det er den simpleste måde at forklare det på. Der er to af spillene hvor du skal ind til sådan nogle guldklumper. Du skal ind i midten. Der er pile, og så kommer den ind i sådan nogle ringe. Først kører den i den yderste og så til sidst ind i midten. Og om der kommer en guldklump og om den lander på den rigtige pil, der kan man ikke styre noget selv. Så er der en anden én hvor man skal have nogle diamanter for at komme op i sådan en søjle, og den tæller bare hver gang man får en diamant. Og det er så også om der kommer nogle diamanter eller ej. Men den sidste det er så hvor man kan nudge sig frem til enten flere nudge eller nogle spil. Der er også nogle hoveder man kan lande på og så kan man få nogle flere spil. Det er den, der er den sjoveste.*

> burned on to it. The three lights stay lit even though the player leaves the machine. They will only go out when someone gets the Jackpot Chance.

Colours, lights and symbols visualised the stage of a journey that could be travelled any time. Some people might prefer to gamble only with machines with which they were familiar, but some made their choice from where in the landscape the lights were lit, when they were ready to make their bets. In an Orientexpres, for example, what mattered was what 'lines' were 'switched on'. When luck was out in a game – that is, when the mountain top had been reached or when certain lines were lit – when Jackpot Games or Top Games were achieved the number of Credit might go up or at least stabilised, and the player was invited to 'play games'. An imaginary landscape with symbols like 'stars' and 'diamonds' and promises of Extra Games and Super Chances would appear on the screen. The gambling process might be visualised in terms of climbing step-by-step towards the ultimate dream, where the player would reach certain plateaus with games they were invited to play in order to reach the next plateau of what was imagined to be unlimited luck. But as it happened, players were more frequently thrown off the cliff, or they were invited to journey down to a lower plateau rather than being brought up to new heights. As long as the game was going, customers were captured by the sensation of excitement of a jackpot win being just round the corner.

What Jang, Johan, Anne and Hans demonstrated in their accounts was that the principles of games were shown as visual and auditory attributes, which invited the player to interact with the gambling machine. This confirmed my own observations. I often saw people engaging closely with the visual attributes by commenting, pointing at and even talking to the gambling machines. Thus, I often found customers occupied with interpreting the symbolic attributes of games. Hence players were engaged in a creative act, as they saw it themselves, where they interacted bodily with the play features of moving coloured lights on the screen of the gambling machine. However, they also engaged in quiet contemplation, aided by the constant presence of designer sounds pouring out allowing each customer to create or recreate his or her own inner state of mind, perhaps a story in the process of gambling.

According to the stories presented above, and to my direct observations of gambling sessions in the gambling hall, this was enacted almost as absorption of the player

into the play elements of the gambling machine where he or she entered a world of imagination and make believe, of play and fantasy. It was at times an engagement, when the player stopped discriminating between what was play and what was not play that playing the game became deadly serious. In Chapter 6, I will expand further on the issue of the intimate relationship between player and gambling machine in a discussion of animism in respect of my observations from the gambling hall. Here I want to relate the stories about games as narratives to Gregory Bateson's theory of play and fantasy.

In his article 'A theory of play and fantasy', Bateson investigates the nature of play based on his observations of monkeys playing in a zoo in San Francisco (Bateson 1972 [1955]). Bateson observed that monkeys nipped each other playfully without biting seriously. They denoted their actions of biting by nipping in a playful way (ibid.: 181). Bateson remarks that denotative behaviour is also found in histrionic behaviour and in art where human actors are engaged in communicating about something that denotes what they are communicating (ibid.: 182-183), and he mentions bluff, threat, teasing and adult gambling as other examples of denotative behaviour (ibid.: 181). In poker playing, for example, players are engaged in what Bateson calls an 'elusive act' of equating the chips for which they are playing with money, and they insist that the loser accept his loss as part of the game (ibid.: 182-183). Bateson calls this 'addictive realism'. Thus there is a strange play with reality in playing – a play between truth and untruth, between existence and non-existence, between play and non-play. This is the paradoxical frame of play to which all players submit when they engage in the act of playing (ibid.: 185).

Furthermore, the play frame implies a special combination of primary and secondary processes (ibid.: 187-188). In the primary process of play, play is equated with reality, whereas in secondary processes play is discriminated from reality. It is a characteristic of play that it may both be equated with and discriminated from reality: is it play or not play; is it reality or fantasy; is it a map or the real landscape or both overlapping? When the player becomes caught up in play, he or she may therefore need to be reminded by him- or herself or by something from the outside that this is play in order to keep a grip on reality. Human manoeuvres between the primary and secondary processes of fantasy and reality thus form a premise system of the frame of play (ibid.).

The person playing with the gambling machine might bluff, threat and tease the gambling machine and fellow customers in the process of playing, and he or she might

even attempt to deceive the gambling machine by the use of ingenuity. The person playing might also have a fight with the gambling machine. Thus, in the process of playing games with the gambling machine, a kind of semi-reality was evoked. We may say that a dramatization occurred in the achievements of the player's manipulation (Droogers 2004) with the gambling machines, and that another reality was evoked by the means of the play element in the ritual (ibid.: 148). However, this process of playing depended on the availability of ludic equipment in the gambling hall that was ready to respond to the player's actions so as to make the process proceed and to keep the attention of the player on the game and the stakes. Hence bluff, threat, teasing and deceit relied, as far as I could determine, as much on the gambling machine as on the person playing the game.

The Jackpot Game was one of the main attractions of the gambling hall. As we can see in the accounts presented above, this attraction was not only due to its relation to financial gain, but as much to its world of play and fantasy. The player was invited to 'collect Stars ', 'climb Mountains and 'fight Dragons' in a highly symbolic and poetic universe. It was an imaginary movement in an imaginary landscape, one that might become deadly serious once the player had been taken in by the game. The game itself was thus premised on the assumption that it did nothing to remind the player that this was play; on the contrary, it was designed to draw the player ever closer to its premise system of make believe.

Bateson's theory of play and fantasy is also relevant in relation to the biographical stories of 'lost plots', in which we saw a split between a desired, expected or conventional life and life as it unfolded in the everyday world. In these accounts, the 'lost plot' had become a landscape in which the player had in a sense come off the track of life and was trying to navigate within a frame of hope, play and daydreaming. If we accept what Bateson has to offer then the gambling hall offered a frame with ludic capacities, which some players used to overcome the split between dream and reality. In this process they might – partly wordlessly – have attempted to find a way by a change of mind, to find a new point of departure or arrival, or to perhaps construct a new map that would fit the current landscape in and of their lives.

Ritual transformation

In Chapter 3, I discussed ritual transformation in relation to the gambling hall in terms of a possible sacrificial aspect of the gambling process. Here I wish to draw attention to the inner scene of ritual as experienced by individuals in the gambling hall as a place and process. One contribution to ritual theory in the form of a cross-cultural exploration of the substance and experience of rituals focuses on what people do with rituals and how they act as persons (Handelman and Lindquist 2004). It is the reality of the experience of rituals and their consequences rather than their meaning and what rituals represent which the authors investigate. Their claim is that rituals have an inner logos by which a transformation of the cosmos or the participants is brought about either temporarily or permanently (Kapferer 2004; Lindquist 2004; Nagy 2004; Handelman 2004a). These contributions opens up an understanding of ritual as collective as well as individual manifestations, as expressions of silent processes as well as more expressive manifestations and as private as well as being performed in public. In the following, I will compare ethnographic examples from this book with the refuge aspect of the gambling hall. I have chosen two examples. One is about ritual weeping whilst sitting in a church (Nagy 2004). The other example is about soul retrieval in a modern urban shamanic setting in Denmark (Lindquist 2004).

A church may be seen as a symbolic artefact of a physical and imaginative frame of the inner scene of ritual in the sense that, for the individual, the church becomes a focal lens and a symbol of his or her clarification – an existential achievement (Nagy 2004). The historian Piroska Nagy argues that, in religious weeping in the Middle Ages in the west, an invisible inner transformation of the individual was performed in acts such as prayer, penance and the liturgical celebration of the Mass, and that this may be understood as a liminal process (ibid.: 127). This kind of inner communication with God became more valued alongside the growing control of the clergy over religious life, where the Church came to control the private life of its brethren (ibid.: 130-133).

Perhaps people's use of the gambling hall as a 'refuge' where peace of mind from more or less troubled lives was sought show similar characteristics to the kind of religious weeping that Nagy describes. However, in a secularised society where people might have turned against religious values, the need for an inner transformation of a state of mind may not have diminished. Hence, the case I have presented indicated that part of the motive for attending the gambling hall was that it offered time off within a frame of seclusion

and imagery supported by the entertainment features of the gambling machine, where some achieved an altered state of mind.

When approached on these terms, the gambling hall may even be compared to a neo-shamanic ritual in Denmark examined by Galina Lindquist, where simple drumming sessions brings the individual on a journey through which a lost soul or soul part is retrieved (Lindquist 2004: 161 ff). The only difference, though perhaps a very important one, between the liminal process in the gambling hall and the spiritual liminality of churches and shamanic rituals is that the gambling hall might not be designed to set up an actual relationship having a spiritual dimension. However, as we shall see later in this chapter, some customers in the gambling hall had an explicit desire to achieve a state of peace of mind. Furthermore, the attraction to luck might in itself be an alliance with the forces of the unknown, mystery or fate, perhaps a secular worship of luck as a gift of grace.

In the stories from the gambling hall, there was also a sense of a sacred time and space surrounding the individual, safeguarded by the physical and symbolic lay out of the gambling hall. Nagy and Lindquist argues that, by means of a liminal process, the ritual transforms persons and that this is brought about by a process of interaction between human and symbol, human and shaman, and human and God in healing and in prayer. In the case of the gambling hall, we may say that it was equally brought about in a process of interaction between human and symbol enacted by the hope of luck in search of jackpots. The working of hope thus required an opening of space/time, in which cause and effect might be joined, and where renewal, rebirth, resurgence, reshaping and remaking could take place (Handelman 2004a: 15). According to Handelman, liminality is a folding of space/time into itself, so that whatever enters is made to relate to itself differently and comes out differently (ibid.).

Having compared the gambling hall with spiritual settings and practices, it is important to stress that ritual is not limited to the realm of religious or spiritual practice. Thus secular rituals can be seen as ceremonies that draw on certain parts of a social and cultural background sharing the properties of religious rituals by being repetitive, bringing order into a process and being evocative through manipulations and sensory stimuli (Moore and Myerhoff 1977: 7). The philosopher Susanne Langer has argued that all rituals may effectively transform perception in that symbols fire the imagination of the human mind (Langer 1942: 40 ff). When the substance of symbols is conveyed dramatically, it

appeals the senses and makes them almost tangible, whereby they transmit experiences that are felt to be real (ibid.). From this perspective, the games in the gambling hall might convey important messages of promises of movement, transitions and transformations of the states of minds of individuals, change in financial status and ultimately an improvement in one's well being and social status in society. The ritual transformation that the gambling hall offered seemed to be working at two levels. One was the transformation of states of mind that made it possible for a person to cope with certain constraints in everyday life. The other level was the dream of an ultimate transformation of one's status as relatively poor. This dream appeared manifest in the narrative expression of games interacting with the 'lost plots'.

A critical comment on the comparison of gambling with narrative and ritual may be in place here. Unlike narrative and ritual, games in the gambling hall do not possess beginnings and endings. In an analysis of electronic games on the internet, Rizzo has compared the diagrammatic spaces of games with catalogues (Rizzo 2004). The absence of openings and endings in the gambling narratives presented to the player meant that these needed to be installed by the player. It was my experience that endings might often be extremely difficult to effect because of the element of suspense in games. This may be a vital aspect of a liminal state and furthermore it may be very hard to break out of once a person had entered. Hence, for most of my informants the gambling hall provided a situational liminality, as well as creating and/or deepening an overall liminal state in their lives.

Suspense over outcome of a Jackpot Game kept customers by the gambling machine. It had puzzled me when Lone had said that 'It takes oceans of time to gamble'. To me everything happeneed so fast because the wheels were running as rapidly as two seconds per turn. But of course jackpots did not occur with such frequency. There was a different temporality in the gambling hall than outside it. Much of this was due to the dark and secluded atmosphere, combined with the hypnotic effect of the rapidly moving colours, symbols and lights in the gambling machines. But might it also be due to a certain take on the situation in the gambling process and on one's life? In the following section, I will address this matter through a discussion of temporality in the gambling hall. First, I will approach this discussion by exploring the perception of time in relation to chance and luck, and then I will discuss time in relation to hope.

The temporality of chance in the gambling hall

One customer in the gambling hall had told me of a rumour that a man had spent his whole summer holiday in a gambling hall and become so absorbed by it that he forgot to return to work when his holiday ended. Although I could not verify this, it was a rumour that articulated an important aspect of how one might experience time in the gambling hall. As we have already seen, for players to be caught up in waiting for Super Chances, Jackpot Chances or Goldmine Games was a predominant activity in the gambling hall.

Reith has argued that in games of chance the immediate present is all-important (Reith 1999: 139). According to her, this is because human's temporal perception disturbed in the gambling process, which requires the player's complete attention to the immediate moment. Hence the perception of ordinary clock time is suspended, which in turn leaves the player in a state of 'pathology of becoming' (ibid.: 140). This perspective is interesting as far as it emphasises the importance of the immediate present and may provide an explanation for why it becomes possible to experience a kind of timelessness and forgetting in the gambling hall.

One evening I noticed a man gambling with the same Orientexpres for two hours. He had pulled out wins of around a hundred kroner several times and attempted to leave the gambling hall each time that happened. However, every time he had gone back to the same Orientexpres to reinvest the winnings that were loose in his pocket. When I approached him, he was using the Auto button and just watching the wheels changing symbols on the display every two seconds. After a while he said: 'One gets totally hypnotised by this', and, pointing to the ever-changing symbols on the turning wheels, complained: 'And it's terrible with the sounds too. One has to think that it's the machine that wins, but one hopes all the time to get a jackpot.' The man closely watched the movement of the tiny spot of light on the screen of the gambling machine and, with his finger, explained where in this imaginary landscape the chances were greatest. 'If only it would stop there', he said, pointing his finger at a particular point where he wanted the spot of light to stop, and continued: 'One hopes all the time that it will give something. Come on. It might just give three Faces.'

Chance may be defined as the probability of a certain outcome when a problematic situation is resolved, as, for instance, in tossing coins (Goffman 1969: 107ff). In gambling, chances are technically seen as odds, that is, the chances of a favourable out-

come, and therefore chance is a term with positive connotations, although objectively speaking chances may be low when they are a threat to one's bet (ibid.: 110). The temporality in gambling is a crucial element of chance in the process of playing, and according to Goffman it is due to specific actions taking place in a ritual sequence (ibid.: 111-112), as well as to the strong element of fatefulness (ibid.: 119-122). In his analysis of poker playing in Greece, Thomas M. Malaby sees gambling as a window on to experience, with the aleatory and unpredictable aspect of being (Malaby 2003: 143). He shows that when poker players play the game they are engaging in a momentary ordering of their reality (ibid.: 156). Hence, Malaby points out what has also been identified by Jackson, that uncertainty is a universal human condition (Jackson 1989: 15). From such a perspective, gambling may be seen as providing a unique opportunity for humans to relate to uncertainty by aligning themselves with chance. In Chania, where Malaby worked, this ordering of reality took place between the players around the poker tables. However, in my own work this seemed to take place as much within the individual player when he or she mastered the game with what was often, but not always, considered a serious, distant lack of concern and of emotionality.

The presence of chance depends on the willingness of the player to let go of his or her hold on and control over a situation and to make a commitment, that is, to bet, which brings randomness into play, which, according to Goffman, players call 'mere chance' or 'pure luck' (ibid.: 111). The players I met in the gambling hall also used these terms, but they did not have the same meaning as implied by Goffman. To my informants chance connoted to unpredictability, randomness and uncertainty, as well as possibility. Reith has characterised this in terms of the dual nature of certainty and uncertainty in the game (Reith 1999: 183). 'Luck', on the other hand, was the object of desire inherent in 'a lucky punch', a 'lucky twenty' or a jackpot – something that befell an individual when the combination of chance and one's competences as a player worked out to one's advantage. As such, 'luck' was, of course linked to every dimension of chance. It is therefore important to discriminate between 'luck' and 'chance', as the psychologist W. Wagenaar does when he asserts that 'luck' is a favourable force which players direct at the future, whereas 'chance' belongs in a more immutable domain and governs the outcome of a gambling process (Wagenaar 1988: 102). Following this line of thought, we may see in a player's

over-engagement in a game the consequence of an alignment with a positive destiny of uncertainty.

Goffman has described this alignment as proceeding through four phases in the gambling session: 1) the squaring-off phase, referring to the moment the bet is made. This is a phase of decision-making, of aligning oneself physically and determining the timing of the bet, thereby passing the point where the decision cannot be unmade; 2) the determination phase, which is when the play process has got going and randomness is working to produce the outcome. In a gambling machine, this is technically speaking the time it takes for one turn of a wheel or the time taken by particular games that involve several turns of the wheels; 3) the disclosive phase between the determination and the informing of the participants in the game, which is very brief; and 4) the settlement phase, in which the outcome has been disclosed and lasts until losses have been paid off and winnings collected (Goffman 1969: 111). According to Goffman, it is in the determination phase that one may get caught up in suspended time, not least because of a strong element of pleasure in the excitement of betting and playing, a sense of grasping an opportunity, of some freedom of choice and self-determination (ibid.: 113-117). This suspension of time is particularly relevant in what I have called the refuge aspect of the gambling hall, where one might enjoy the pleasure of entertainment, forget one's whereabouts, experience a moment off and perhaps momentarily lose one's orientation.

We have seen that games offered the opportunity to travel across a universe of chances and adventures where the player was drawn ever closer to the premise system of play in a somewhat unreal reality, where one might get stuck if nothing or no one warned one that it was only play. Such 'transit time', as Goffman calls it (ibid.: 119), can be problematic in the sense that unexpected and unprepared for events may occur, and when an activity is at once consequential and problematic, it is a fateful activity (ibid.). As already mentioned, players placed great faith in chance as luck might be the result of their actions in the gambling sessions. The bases of fatefulness, namely adventure and a willingness to be 'on the line', a willingness to place oneself in jeopardy or to accept some degree of risk and the co-presence of other players, forms a social situation with a particular time reference in which 'the mixture of fear, pleasure, and confident hope in face of external danger [is what] constitutes the fundamental element of all thrills' (ibid.: 122-124,

146). Hence, what may appear as passivity in games turned out to be loaded with action and a variety of experiences in giving oneself up to the present.

The temporality of hope in the gambling hall

The absorption into the moment in the gambling process entailed more than just a desire to lose oneself in the present, and as we have seen, there was in fact an element of future anticipation in the 'hope of a jackpot'. 'It's so banal. We sit and hope for some games. You throw money into the machine. You want to win some money',[88] Steen said in an interview which I conducted with him a week after his first therapy session to quit gambling. But how was this hope related to Steen and other people's experience of the gambling hall as a refuge? With time, and like most people whom I met in the gambling hall and in 'ludomania' treatment settings, Steen had come to experience that the chances of making any money on the gambling machine were extremely small. Despite this, they had continued to hope that a game would come up, and ultimately a win. Money was needed to play the gambling machines, but in terms of the 'refuge' and 'hope' aspects of the gambling hall, money remained secondary or instrumental as an operator of time.

In a way *hope* itself came to have a life of its own released from its object of desire – a jackpot or a Chance Game. When a jackpot occasionally came out, Steen would reinvest it in the gambling machine to do some more 'sitting and hoping', like many of his fellow customers there. For them this was a main activity in the gambling hall: sitting, pointing and hoping for something to happen, such as a game, a change in the course of the game, another entertainment feature and perhaps a reward for all that time and money invested or an indefinite transformation of one's state of mind or life. Playing in the gambling hall was an ongoing process that required the virtue of patience. But without the hope of a jackpot as a legitimate object of desire to follow the process, the player might have chosen a different kind of engagement like therapy or meditation to achieve this transformation. When Lone reflected on this aspect of her interest in gambling, she did in fact compare it with therapy. She had told me that she had preferred to seek release in the gam-

[88] *Det er så banalt. Vi sidder og håber på der kommer nogle spil. Man smider penge i maskinen. Man vil gerne vinde nogle penge.*

bling hall rather than with a psychologist because she had felt that a psychologist might confront her too strongly with the hardships she had been through.

What puzzled me was that customers maintained hope in this indefinite process of uncertainty and extremely low chances of significant reward in the form of money and games. It was as if hope was a *tactical ruse* in the gambling process in de Certeau's sense (de Certeau 1988:39) and a practical anticipation in Bourdieu's sense (Bourdieu 2000:208), but also a mode of being inviting an existential approach (Crapanzano 2003; Lindquist 2006). More specifically, it might be said that hope in the gambling hall had a specific relationship with time and that this might also be understood as a particular manifestation of the experience with the environment of chance that the gambling hall offered. However, might all this waiting also be related to one's overall experience with a life on the margin and the hope of transforming one's situation?

Bourdieu's concept of hope is composed of two distinctive elements: *illusio* and *lusiones*. In illusio there is a belief and interest in the game and thus a practical anticipation of what will be forthcoming (Bourdieu 2000:11, 208). Illusio connotes a basic interest in participating in the world with one's stakes or investments as a way of being occupied with the world, a subjective expectation and therefore the complete opposite of disinterest. Without illusio there would be no interest in the game. Hence illusio is interest in the future that leads one to the game and the chances it offers. Lusiones, however, is directed to the very immediate here-and-now. This is the chance aspect of hope which Bourdieu ascribes with objectivity (ibid.: 213). Investment is therefore characterised by a particular relationship between subjective expectation and objective chances. This means that, for an investment to be made, one must see oneself as having chances of winning which are neither nil nor total (ibid.); in other words, he or she must have a vision of a kind of fair play. One of the implications of these two dimensions of hope is that there are two time dimensions at stake: the future-directed illusion, and lusiones directed at the immediate present. Thus hope gives both meaning and direction to the game, as well as suspending time because of engagement in the future here-and-now (ibid.: 66, 207).

In her book *Conjuring Hope: Healing and Magic in Contemporary Russia*, Galina Lindquist defines hope as 'the existential and affective counterpart of agency that replaces it where channels for agency are blocked and presence in the world become precarious' (Lindquist 2006: 4). Here hope is seen as a counterpart to agency which has been

suspended in the face of precarious life circumstances. One of the questions that Lindquist raises is under what circumstances hope stops sustaining people who take part in the game. She refers to Greimas and Fontanille's definition of hope as composed of three elements: desire + time + uncertainty (Greimas and Fontanille 1993 in Lindquist, 2006: 21). Taking part in the game therefore implies dealing with all these elements. However, if and when uncertainty becomes too high, then the time dimension becomes warped and hope will no longer sustain the player (ibid.).

Seen in this light, 'sitting and hoping' in the gambling hall was meaningful in so far as it maintained the player's interest in a future by keeping him or her occupied in taking chances. But might it not also have legitimated the absorption into the here-and-now and forgetting by being linked to a vision of a better future, an improvement in one's condition, a total change? In any case, the gambling hall allowed one to forget to attend to matters outside it or to find some relief in a break from them, of being released from the responsibility to attend to everyday affairs.

From a phenomenological perspective, hope may also, as I have already implied in my descriptions above, be seen as a practice of resignation in the realistic anticipation of an unknown future with no possibility, a state of being in which the individual takes refuge, searching for peace of mind in a hopeless situation. Vincent Crapanzano discusses hope as implicated with waiting and analyses it in relation to two historical incidents – the Melanesian Cargo cults in the 1940s, and the last years before the fall of apartheid in South Africa (Crapanzano 2003). In the latter, white South Africans found themselves hoping for a solution that they could not envisage; their fate was empty, since they were caught up in waiting for something they could not envisage (ibid.: 18). In Crapanzano's interpretation, this waiting constituted what he calls a 'refuge' of dreams and desires, though indefinite and removed from reality and not feeling responsible (ibid.: 19). According to Crapanzano, hoping reflects a certain take on the world in coordinating progress and success (ibid.). This is the transcendent quality in hope, which allows a human being to take refuge in him- or herself in order to see life unfolding (ibid.: 9). When Melanesians built hangars for western consumer items and performed cults in order to attract the items they desired, they were engaged in what Crapanzano calls 'cargo expectation'. Their waiting for and expecting western consumer items were, however, visions of nameless or unreal phenomena. Crapanzano's point is that hope may give direction to people's actions, even though the

object of that hope may be nameless (ibid.: 25). Hope cannot, however, be removed from social engagement and implication (ibid.). In these rituals people waited, danced and fell into trance, but they waited in vain. In Crapanzano's interpretation, this kind of behaviour can be seen as simple madness as the colonists, administrators and missionaries saw it, but it can also be seen as a way of changing the course of event in a positive or desired direction: rituals as providing collective hope (ibid.).

In the first section of this chapter, I argued that the gambling hall was a liminal place and process in its own right. Many of those I talked to regarded themselves as mad in one way or another in their insistence on the pursuit of luck in an uncertain environment. However, my informants might not have been madder than the Melanesians who built hangars in which to receive western consumer items and performed cults to attract the desired goods. Was *jackpot expectation* in some way for customers in the gambling hall what cargo expectation was for Melanesians? If so then the practice of hope in the gambling hall may perhaps be seen as a ritual tactic, a certain take on the world by which players coordinated progress and maintained luck as a possibility in what was experienced as a timeless atmosphere. It might equally be a tactic of taking refuge in oneself: to have a break from a life in which one was stuck, perhaps even to experience a kind of trance – a liminal way of being – and currently, without any other means than gambling, to change the course of events in a desired direction. If this was the case, such a state of affairs might be seen as a ritual practice of hope that may have contributed positively to everyday life as a form of informal and unconventional therapy, which might help a person to overcome distress. However, the gambling hall was a place of ambivalence in being perceived at once as immoral, addiction- and sickness-enhancing, as a place of ruin, as well as a place of joy and entertainment. In the following, I explore the experiential dimension of this ambivalence and discuss it as a twilight zone of entertainment, as well as of diagnosis and implicit surveillance.

The twilight of the gambling hall

When Henry Lesieur referred to the gambling hall as a 'twilight zone' or 'dream world', he was referring to the concentrated intense moment when the player experiences the shortening of the times span in becoming absorbed in the moment, where the emphasis is on the here and now, on action and winning (Lesieur 1977: 14). This absorption in the moment of play and gambling in which a person may lose his or her sense of self has been referred to as a pathological state of dissociation (Reith 1999: 130). In examining the stories told by Lone, Jørgen, Anne and others, I was not completely convinced by Reith's assumption of dissociation. They might have experienced dissociation from part of their being in everyday life. However, did they not in effect experience a kind of release and the opportunity somehow to compose themselves and acquire peace of mind, despite the moral and financial problems caused by gambling?

Furthermore, pathology was installed as an official medical category or diagnosis that could hardly be escaped. Hence, it might affect the individual in one way or the other, since classifications applied to humans are valorising in ways that may be experienced negatively or positively but nonetheless unavoidable for the individual once the classification is at work (Jenkins 2000: 20). Thus, there appeared to be more at stake when a person might experience a suspension of everyday clock time and enter into a liminal process and being. In this section, I therefore wish to place the twilight of the gambling hall in a broader perspective.

There was a strange opposition between the experience of gambling halls on 'every street corner' – their offering to almost imposing themselves on would-be customers – and the gambling hall as a secluded place. There was also an opposition between my informants' opinion of the gambling hall as 'disgusting' or 'sleazy' and the attraction of the gambling hall in terms of dissociation from the everyday. Thus the gambling hall was an invitation to enter a room which offered a demarcation from the outside by means of its secluded atmosphere of designer lights and designer sounds in an otherwise more or less darkened room, where no daylight was allowed to enter. Whenever I have entered the gambling hall, I have always had a very clear sensation of having crossed a line between the 'there' and 'here', between my everyday life and a world that was so different from that. Once inside the gambling hall the world outside felt very distant and it gave me an

opportunity to engage in freewheeling activity as part of my fieldwork tasks of participant observation.

To me the gambling hall seemed at first a transit-like place of anonymous beings engaged in solitary betting with gambling machines in an impersonal and synthetic atmosphere with other customers who were passing some time off from their other daily chores. No relationships, or history were made, and the experience of linear progressing time was missing. There were only moving lights and the sounds of coins and gambling machines and people sitting in front of gambling machines placed in lines sideways on to one another. There was an unwritten rule that customers who preferred this kind of solitary involvement must not be disturbed, and most managers were keen to maintain this rule. Somewhat lonely and inarticulate humans met the eye. I could not help agreeing with Augé's definition of a non-place as one in which there may be human activity and mediation of relations, but which cannot be defined as relational, historical or concerned with identity (Augé 1995: 82). Passengers in a transit area, customers in a shopping centre and Sunday drivers share being just that in that particular time; but according to Augé they are not engaged in a relational activity which creates meaning, only solitary contractuality (ibid.: 94; 101). In a non-place everything proceeds as if space has been trapped in time (ibid.: 104). However, as my fieldwork proceeded, I found that this was only partly true of the gambling hall. As we have already seen, customers brought their everyday lives and their biographies to the gambling hall, which they inhabited with their more or less vaguely defined hopes, dreams and aspirations.

De Certeau argues that space is practised place (de Certeau 1988: 117). A place is characterised by human everyday activity of common practice – walking routes, narrating stories, using tactics – which forms the special character of any place (ibid.: 39-40). Tactics represent a 'clever utilization of time' by those without power who must resort to guileful ruses and isolated actions whenever an opportunity presents itself (ibid.: 37-39). But a place is also characterised by strategy established by institutions such as science and politics (ibid.: 36). Strategy can represent a mastery of places through 'panoptic practice proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and 'include' them within its scope of vision' (ibid.). Thus, there is an ambiguity about place resulting from the operation of both tactics and strategy in its actualization (ibid.).

Seen from this perspective, my informants may be said to be people without formal power. However, in the gambling hall they were using tactics in front of the gambling machines in a clever utilisation of time in isolated actions in an environment in which opportunity presented itself in the form of jackpot chances. Moreover, the gambling hall was a panoptic practice by means of cameras and electronic surveillance systems, even though customers were not bothered by these installations and perhaps even felt protected by them.

In the gambling hall, the more indirect means of surveillance was the therapeutic regime of 'ludomania' managed by means of labels and pamphlets warning against addictive gambling. This was an initiative of the Center for Ludomani and the state-incorporated Dansk Automatspil. The warning labels and pamphlets in the gambling hall obviously made customers aware of some of the hazards of gambling, as well as pointing them out as potential deviants. As Howard Becker has pointed out: 'The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is that people so label.' (Becker 1963: 9). The ludomania labels and leaflets may thus be seen as an example of a process of institutionalising 'ludomania' that worked by what Becker has called an enterprise of 'rule makers' and 'rule enforcers' (ibid: 147-162) which pointed at the perceived dangers of gambling. Hence, the gambling hall was at once a place of leisure, and a place of an official pathology.

The power of the 'ludomania' category and its impact in the gambling hall or more specifically on its customers, may be understood in terms of Foucault's concepts of bio-power (Foucault 1984a; Foucault 1984b) and leisure sites as counter sites to everyday life, or heterotopia (Foucault 1986). Bio-power refers to a strategy of the surveillance of bodies, for example, by means of therapies and statistical analysis (Foucault 1984a: 267; Foucault 1984b: 278). Bio-power is the right of institutions, both public and private, to govern individual bodies in order to secure the health of populations, as well as to control troublesome elements (ibid.). Foucault's concept of heterotopia, however, is a concept of leisure sites as counter sites to everyday life such as cinemas and fairgrounds. The role of such heterotopias is to create a space of illusion that compensates for the messiness of the real world, to be a reserve of the imagination, places of dreams and adventure (Foucault 1986:27). By bringing together Focault's concept of bio-power with his concept of heterotopias, my aim is to emphasize that the gambling hall might be seen in this perspective of

the constriction of a frame of diagnosis as well as daydreaming. However, in order to understand this kind of doubleness in freedom as well as constriction of the gambling hall, we might also benefit from looking in another direction.

In his book on mad travellers, science philosopher Ian Hacking analyses clinical cases of economically underprivileged but not terribly poor men who went on extensive train journeys after the arrival of modernist and industrialist Europe (Hacking 1998). These men were arrested by authorities and brought back to their families and doctors for treatment and diagnosed with 'fugue', which was considered to be related to hysteria or epilepsy by the doctors who treated them in their clinics (Hacking 1998: 31ff). According to Hacking, this illness can be understood as a combination of historical, cultural and medical conditions at work in that time of history, where these men, constricted as they were in their relative poverty, were nonetheless somewhat free to explore the world from a different position as 'travellers'. Might 'ludomania' be seen in a similar light as being at once a space of constriction and of freedom?

Hacking calls diagnosis an 'ecological niche' with four principal 'vectors': 1) a medical taxonomy or diagnostic criteria and the name of the disease; 2) a cultural polarity indicating both fear of the vice of a certain behaviour and romantic visions of leisure, play and fantasy; 3) observability in the sense of the operation of some system of surveillance of behaviour; and 4) release from the experience of entrapment (Hacking 1998: 82-84). In such a perspective the gambling hall may be said to operate as a vector of a medical taxonomy; and as such the practice of the gambling hall as a place of governance shaped customers' experience of gambling indirectly and directly. As I have already discussed, the cultural polarity may be present in the form of dreams of transformation of one's social status and of a transformation of one's state of mind. Thus, these vectors may be seen as underpinning the gambling hall as a liminoid place and a liminal state of affairs in the everyday lives of the hall's customers.

This combination of a release vector of dreams and hopes and the operation a medical taxonomy of 'ludomania' as a deviance of individual behaviour was an ironic combination. Thus, the gambling hall was a combination of heterotopia and bio-power that unfolded between two poles: one of surveillance and the control of human behaviour, the other of a place for the experience of an enacted utopia. Perhaps my informants expressed this irony of the gambling hall in the polarity of meaning in the metaphors for freedom: the

'refuge' and 'free space' on the one hand, and the 'bubble' and 'cheese bell' effect on the other hand. In the sections above, I have discussed the gambling hall as a liminal and liminoid place as well as providing a panoptic of surveillance and pathology. In the following section I will pursue this matter in adding evidence of the gambling hall as a place that acted as a stopover or station in the movement of the individual's life as it unfolded. Was it possible that the 'ludomania' label had an embodied dimension for my informants like fugue had for the mad travellers in Hacking's examination?

Tim Ingold has referred to 'places as stations along the path of life'[89] and suggested that places might be understood through movement. I have already suggested that the gambling hall was a place that occurred in larger biographies as a movement through life. In this section, however, I will focus on the journey to the gambling hall on an everyday basis. Some experienced a kind of madness and forces beyond their control in this journey. To be out of control and captured by larger forces was, however, a morally unacceptable way of being in a secular and consumer society which praised individual free will and self-control. How did informants deal with this state of affairs when they found themselves caught between the ideals of free will and self-control on the one hand and situations of release and letting go on the other?

Amnesia, 'devils' and 'heart pound'

In two accounts of journeys to the gambling hall, Poul and Lene, respectively, reported their motives in attending the hall, as well as their bodily experiences linked to it.

> Poul, whom I meet for an interview at the treatment centre for 'ludomania' just after he had finished a treatment session, said that he was 'melancholic these days'. It troubled him that his wife was not well. He talked about a painting he had made which his son liked, and his face lit up with a smile. But Poul's story was also replete with illness experience – his own as well as a close relative's. Poul explained how he often felt wooed into the gambling hall by the sounds pouring out of it whenever he passed it on his way to do his everyday shopping in

[89] A phrase used by the anthropologist Tim Ingold in a Ph.D. seminar at Aarhus University on 14-04-2007.

> the mall. 'I'm addicted to gambling. I don't understand it. It's not a physical addiction in the sense that if you don't play then you get withdrawal symptoms, but you get restless. It's as if a devil inside you says "Go there and gamble". My wife was admitted to hospital, and that was rather tough for me. Then I found some relief by going to the gambling hall on my way back from visits to the hospital. I discovered that gambling was an empty space I could attend. Addiction – that's what I call a moment's peace and quiet. When I gamble, I shut out everything else.'[90]

For Poul the gambling hall had become a refuge that he withdrew to in situations where the strains of everyday life had become overwhelming. The danger of gambling as far as he was concerned was not about money; it was about needing peace and quiet so badly that it seemed to make him restless and vulnerable to the calls from the gambling hall on his everyday journeys. Perhaps it was not by accident that Lene and Poul had become allies in the self-help group, since they both experienced a sensory attraction to the gambling hall. Poul had talked about the sound effects as waking up his inner 'devils' of gambling, while Lene talked about a 'hunger', about breathlessness and a state of amnesia.

> Lene was in a process of detaching herself from the gambling hall. The first time I met her was after a session in a self-help group in a treatment centre. She described her process of attachment to the gambling hall to me in this way: 'I'd been gambling normally for four years before I started gambling more intensely. At that time I found it easy enough to control. But after I had the blood clot I began gambling more intensely. It was as if I couldn't do without it. That's what makes you a 'ludomaniac'.... It's like a hunger. You simply <u>have to</u> gamble. Even if you don't want to, your car drives you to the gambling hall. I've often found myself in the car, breathless, with a high pulse and restless, and before I knew it I was in the gambling hall. Then when I got there, I calmed down and had a good

[90] *Jeg er jo afhængig af spil. Jeg forstår det ikke. Det er jo ikke en fysisk afhængighed på den måde at man får abstinenser, hvis man ikke spiller, men man bliver rastløs. Det er som om der sidder en djævel inde i én og siger: gå hen og spil. Min kone blev indlagt på sygehuset, og det var ret hårdt for mig. Så aflastede jeg mig selv ved at tage i spillehal, på vej hjem fra besøg på hospitalet. Det der hedder afhængighed det er det jeg kalder et øjebliks fred og ro. Når jeg spiller, så lukker jeg mig inde i min egen verden.*

time. When I gambled I didn't bother to socialise. It's simply terribly annoying if someone interrupts you when you're in the middle of something.' [91]

The second time I met Lene it was in a café because she was no longer attending the self-help group for 'ludomaniacs'. She started our conversation by asking me if I had gambled recently. She was eager to talk about her favourite gambling machine: 'It's the one with the Indian. Do you like that too?' she asked me. Then she interrupted herself by starting to talk about the changes she was trying to make in her life: stopping smoking, decorating her house by painting the walls white, putting flowers in large pots outside, seeing friends, and replacing gambling with social games like petanque, trips and the theatre. She regretted having missed a trip with her singles club because she had spent the money she had set aside for it on gambling machines.

Thus, it appeared that invisible forces like the 'devil' in Poul and in Lene's 'hunger' almost drew them into the gambling hall. Their bodies entered an almost hypnotic state or a state of amnesia just by the mere thought of the gambling hall. Poul and Lene experienced this as an interaction between the brain and the lights and sounds of the gambling hall. Designer sounds were like 'magnets', and the interaction between the invisible inner 'devils' of one's body and the hunger for such magnets was a forceful sensory experience. Thus, designer sounds appeared to have some healing qualities as well as a disturbing impact on the body. One's experience of the sounds not only depended on their volume and character, but also on the situation, and on the persons exposed to it. Therefore, the evocation of moods and sensations that designer sounds, lights and colours had on the body was a process brought about in the gambling hall. However, the effect reached further than the physical gambling hall into other spheres of everyday life, such as one's home. The gambling hall was not only a place but also a process. Amnesia was cause as well as effect in this

[91] *Jeg havde spillet helt almindeligt i fire år, før jeg begyndte at spille mere intenst. Dengang havde jeg ikke problemer med at styre det. Men efter blodproppen begyndte jeg at spille på en anden måde. Det var lige som om jeg ikke kunne undvære det. Og det er det der gør at man bliver ludoman. Det er lige som en hunger. Man SKAL spille. Og selv om man ikke vil, så kører bilen én hen til spillehallen. Jeg har tit oplevet at finde mig selv hel forpustet med høj puls og rastløs i bilen og før jeg vidste af det var jeg i spillehallen. Men når jeg så begyndte at spille, så faldt jeg til ro og hyggede mig. Da jeg spillede gad jeg ikke være social. Det er simpelthen skide irriterende hvis der kommer nogen ind i en spillehal og afbryder dig med det du er i gang med.*

process. Thus, amnesia maintained a condition of the refuge, and as such, it played a vital part in the gambling hall as a place of dissociation from everyday life – a liminoid place.

With all these bodily experiences and altered states of mind I began thinking about trance, and I recalled people talking about being 'obsessed'[92] with gambling. Even though they would often refer to other people when they were talking about others whom they thought of as being more than preoccupied with gambling, Poul's and Lene's stories were among those that indicated more or less extraordinary sensations in gambling. I therefore began thinking about trance states.

Anthropologists often describe states of trance in the liminal phases of a ritual, even though it is difficult to gain access to the embodied experience of such states. However, Inger Sjørselv is one anthropologist I know of who has combined an anthropological theory of trance with an analysis of the embodied experience of states of trance and its meaning. In her book *Gudernes Rum*, she explores the performance, meaning and embodied experience of *candomblé* in Brazil, a modern religion with African roots, most of whose adherents are impoverished black women (Sjørslev 1995). Sjørslev's informants attended various cults that worshipped gods of African origin in ritual processes of dance, sacrifice, fortune-telling and magic, whereby they experienced the gods entering their bodies and transforming their being, at least momentarily.

Like my informants, Sjørselv's informants did not talk specifically about trance, but it was obvious to Sjørslev that during the ritual these women experience an altered sate of perception where they copied the deity, perhaps in a dance accompanied by drumming when they experienced the deity entering their bodies (ibid.: 230). According to Sjørslev, it is not, as one might think, a state of being where a person is beside herself, but rather a sense of something outside of oneself taking over. Sjørselv, who participated in dances herself in the cults she studied, writes: 'I recognise the sensation it gives when something else takes over, when it is no longer me who dances the dance, but the dance that dances me. This is what trance must be like, and like this, it is related to other body performances, such as play, sports and love-making. Also the kind of performance that takes a great deal of intellectual concentration and which has an audience, such as a theatre role or simply speaking for a large audience, may have some of these characteristics' (ibid., my translation).

[92] *Besat*, which can mean 'possessed' as well as 'obsessed'.

In the cults Sjørslev studied, participants had to give something to the deity, therefore the ritual possession may be seen as a particular form of sacrifice, she suggests (ibid.: 332). Those who chose to become possessed did not only become tools of the deities, they also created a temporary symbolic connection across the existential gulf between humans and the divine (ibid.: 333). In those hours in which the ritual sacrifice and transformation took place the woman was somewhat like the sacrifice, but as the one who gave the sacrifice and nourished the deity she was not the sacrifice. She was at once subject and object in relation to the repeated sacrifice (ibid.: 333). When the person who had been at the ritual walked home, she was no longer possessed.

I have already discussed the gambling hall comparatively in relation to places of sacrifice and dealing with the realm of the divine. Here I want to expand a little further into the embodied experience of ritual in relation to the gambling hall. In the views of my informants and I, the anthropologist, people entered the gambling hall of their own volition, but like them I had my doubts about them all being able to navigate safely in and out of the frames of play in the gambling hall and the frames of their everyday lives. As we saw in Chapter 3, the transformation of the meaning of money produced many problems for the player. If the money that people presented and bet with might be understood as sacrificial offering then might we not speak of gambling machines as the altars in which that sacrifice takes place, and the realm to which they presented this sacrifice as fate, the unknown and uncertain destinies of luck and chance? Sjørslev's informants were healed by the ritual in the sense that the ritual provided a direct comment on and articulation of some of the most painful issues of the human condition. However, if the gambling hall contained a healing aspect as I have argued it was also clearly working in an opposite direction.

Attaining 'peace' of mind and using the gambling hall as a 'tranquilizer' are metaphors for healing. However, as we have seen, people were also deeply troubled about the fact that the gambling hall might lead to what they termed 'ruin', 'sickness' and 'addiction'. When they talked about being 'possessed', they were not talking about it in a positive light, but rather as a condition, which might be extremely difficult to wrench away from. It was the experience of a 'kick' or 'rush', which may be more likened to the Dionysian way of experiencing trance: a condition of ecstasy, oblivion, and uncontrolled possession (Sjørslev 1995: 78-79). It was a state of being in which people became indifferent to their children, spouses and ironically not least to money. Jabir told me that he was so very

afraid of gambling, of 'sinking into a mud hole, unable to escape', as he said. He also told me that he had a friend who also gambled with gambling machines, and who did have the idea that he would soon be appointed ambassador to Saudi Arabia, as well as believing that he was a spaceship. As Jabir saw it, these were delusions that he believed to be caused by extensive use of gambling machines, which in his opinion created unreal fantasies that persisted in the player beyond the gambling hall.

When Lene told me about her heart pound and her car taking her to the gambling hall, I noticed that she gave weight to this experience as an important power that had in a sense worked behind her back, a condition that she could not be held accountable for. But it was also an experience of a movement from one reality to another in which conventional perceptions of clock time were suspended. There was somehow a movement in a frozen landscape, which for some people supported a need to forget or imagine. And this was achieved in the somewhat timeless atmosphere of the gambling hall.

When the habit of gambling became a preoccupation in everyday life, the effect of altered time had far-reaching consequences. Informants from treatment settings who were in the phase of detaching themselves from the gambling hall were unhappy about all the money they had lost, as were many of those I met in the gambling halls, though they often maintained that they were more concerned with their loss of biographical time, as well as loss of self-respect. Steen said that money did not matter to him and that he was more concerned about having 'deceived' those closest to him with lies about how he spent his time. Lone and Anne were equally concerned about having missed out on their caring responsibilities as mothers due to their extensive use of the gambling hall. Lone, for instance, said that 'the time I have spent in the gambling hall is lost time.' Thus, for people like Lone, Steen and Anne and many others who used or had used the gambling hall extensively, the experience of forgetting and the altered perception of time in the gambling hall also accounted for the loss of biographical time and therefore also as a kind of loss of self.

In the sections above, I have described the aspect of the gambling hall as a refuge and discussed it as a liminal place and process in which amnesia, 'devils', 'hunger', madness, obsession/possession, imagery and the experience of a suspension of clock time all occurred. According to the descriptions on how people used the gambling hall and what they achieved in the process, the gambling hall worked partly through an evocation of the minds

and bodies of those who engaged with it. In extension of this I will take the argument of liminality further by discussing it as a ritual process that organised a degree of autonomy, and as such had agency (Handelman 2004a: 27). Handelman suggests that rituals have degrees of self-organisation by which change may be brought about, or if not, then ritual highlights, enhances and condenses the existing social order (ibid.). Like Victor Turner, who described liminality as process of separation from the larger social order and a process of renewal, rebirth and remaking, Handelman and his co-authors explain this by arguing that the interiors of ritual are oriented towards creating, generating and producing effects (Kapferer 2004: 37ff; Handelman 2004a:5). The interactive and evocative agency of ritual is thus stressed.

The stories about the journey to the gambling hall were not only stories about amnesia: they were also stories about symbols and their effect on the body. The efficacy of symbols on the human body has been described by Lévi-Strauss in his analysis of a healing rite in childbirth (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 186 ff) and more recently by Laderman in her analysis of Malay cosmology of the four elements (Laderman 1994). Both studies provide evidence that symbolism may not only work effectively on a person's thoughts and mind, but also on the physical body when the shaman relieves a woman of the pains of labour, and when the inner winds that Laderman experienced in her own body made her 'see' Malay symbols.

The 'devil' on Poul's shoulder and the 'magnets' in the gambling machines lured him into the gambling hall and made him gamble somehow against his will. Lene's fascination with the 'Indian', her breathlessness and the pounding of her heart were narrations of her experience of being subject to powers somewhat beyond her control. When others reported 'madness', 'obsession/possession' and a sense of getting 'burned'[93] on the gambling machine, which somehow made them unable to detach themselves from it once the gambling session had started, then this also suggested a suspension of one's will. The evocation of symbols, including those of pathology and addiction, appeared to have a direct bearing on the body, leaving the individual somewhat powerless in its grip and consequently not responsible. This part of the liminal experience of the gambling hall disturbed somewhat the peace of mind that gambling with gambling machines might otherwise offer, as did the experience of the refuge quality of the gambling hall altogether.

[93] *Brænde fast*

In addition to the bodily experience of a kind of madness, 'devils' and breathlessness in gambling, the 'ludomania' diagnosis was also narrated as a problematic side of gambling. Poul said that he did not care for the term 'ludomania'. Instead he referred to addiction as what transformed his worried mind to a peaceful one. But this was a consequence rather than a cause as he saw it. It was the bodily interaction with the gambling machine in the process of gambling that brought about the hypnotic or peaceful state of mind. Therefore, it became more and more obvious to me that symbols and the environment of the gambling hall were not only working on the passive bodies of the customers. There was an interplay between what Jackson calls 'habitual patterns of body use' and the environment (Jackson 1983: 330). Habits, Jackson says, are interactional and tied to an environment of objects and others (ibid.: 334). Extraordinary possibilities of cults and initiations are vehicles for the re-creation of the world of those who participate, because the process and the interaction between humans and the environment contain the strength that makes this possible.

I myself used the strength of the lyrics in the Midnight Magic gambling machine to overcome situations of fieldwork observations in which I had to balance between participation and observation. Looking back on events, I recall the tense feeling I often had on days when I travelled to the gambling hall in the hope of having luck ethnographically in terms of connecting with the people there, and how I sometimes picked a Midnight Magic with the spider lyrics to ease my tension. In the stories of the journey to the gambling hall, we also see the power of symbols evoked in a process that occurred before the physical contact with the gambling machine. Merely thinking about Indians and Virginia Cities as well as hearing the designer sounds pouring out from the gambling hall when one passed by might bring about extraordinary sensations, and sometimes a hypnotic element was achieved in the process of gambling. Hence the sleepless night of initiations that, for instance, Sjørselv describes, where people experience the confinement connected to self-restraint, and self-containment might somehow be valid for what I describe here as the refuge aspect of the gambling hall.

As I came to see it, the body in the gambling hall was a body betwixt-and-between, and as such was in some form of ritual or cult-like state and process – sometimes in a kind of trance. It was a body inhabiting an environment of objects (gambling machines) and other bodies (fellow customers and staff). This was also an environment of a

governing principle (state, industry, diagnosis and therapy), which contributed to the experience of the gambling hall. In a strange way, it was an inversion of the strength of possibilities because people were stuck or 'burned on to the machine', as some said, thus expressing their inability to move on.

Perhaps the gambling hall was not a cult house, and certainly not a church with the explicit function of initiation. However, the way people used the gambling hall, it might be seen to serve as the liminal phase of a ritual process in their biographies and their everyday lives, where they might receive a different perception of their lives. However, the gambling hall was also, as I have already hinted at in the beginning of this chapter, a place for the working out of a pathology, including ideas of addiction. I will therefore reflect on the pathology of gambling as an interactive agent in the gambling hall that underpinned the hall as a liminal place in a counter-productive process to the self-chosen and sought out therapeutic outcome of 'peace' of an individual's mind (Hacking 1998; Hacking 1999; Lloyd 2002).

'Ludomania' as an interactive kind

In the gambling hall, I was sometimes confronted with two apparently contradictory views on the matter of 'ludomania'. One regular customer said to me: 'In this gambling hall we are all 'ludomaniacs', while another regular customer in the same gambling hall stated: 'In this gambling hall you will find no 'ludomaniacs'. At first it puzzled me that there could be such disagreement on this matter, but at least it indicated that the disease label was present as a perception of deviance in gambling. Later I came to experience how people used the label to tease one another, accuse one another and sometimes to warn fellow customers of the danger of gambling when they thought that someone was gambling too much.

Becker has pointed out that labelling processes occur in an interactive field where people to whom the label is ascribed adopt their behaviour accordingly with an eye to what others have done, are doing and might do in the future (Becker 1963: op.cit, 182). Jenkins has argued that labelling processes are by definition a *collective identification* (Jenkins 2000: 9). In practice internal and external collective identification processes is founded in individual bodies, in settings and interactional practices and in institutionalized appropriation of space embodied in for instance buildings and visible symbolism (ibid.). In adopting their behaviour according to specific deviance or pathological labels people en-

gage in a variety of strategies such as ignoring, pretending, making secret of their acts, using humour, branding oneself as deviant in order to punish one self as well as condemning others for their deviance (Becker 1963: 28, 31, op.cit; Jenkins 2000: 15).

I have already pointed to the presence of the 'ludomania' diagnosis in the gambling hall in the form of warning stickers and information leaflets, and discussed it as a governing principle, as well as a vector of a medical category. The implications were that 'ludomania' was in a sense marketed alongside gambling and therefore it contributed to a perception of gambling as a disease pertaining to particular humans. Given the somewhat unclear or undefined boundaries of 'ludomania' and yet its omnipresence in routine public interaction of for instance humor and verbal abuse there is little wonder that its ambivalence and ambiguity was mirrored in jokes, seriousness and ignorance. I often felt that people who refrained from talking to me in the gambling hall did so because they did not want to be seen as 'ludomaniacs' and therefore did not want to contribute to a study on 'ludomania', even though I said that I did not see them as 'ludomaniacs'. The 'ludomania' label was there and could not be escaped. However, as we shall see later in this section, some preferred to use other terms to describe the darker side of gambling at work – terms that differed in meaning and content from 'ludomania'. Poul, for instance, said that he did not care much for the term 'ludomania', and preferred to talk about his gambling habit as a matter of everyday life and his conditions within it. Before I turn to some of my informants' own categories of 'ludomania', I will pursue a theoretical approach to an understanding of diagnosis as *interactive kinds*.

In view of considerations like those above, we might rightfully ask what kind of thing problem gambling is, as Michael Lloyd does in an article on the medicalisation of gambling (Lloyd 2002: 161 ff). Problem gambling is identified by screening methods alongside diagnostic criteria. However, the problem is that there is no way of verifying that knowledge other than using the very instrument that is being validated, which makes problem gambling highly subjective (ibid.: 155-156). Lloyd is thus raising a point about the subjectivist conditions of diagnostic processes which have also been done by Ian Hacking (Hacking 1998; Hacking 1999: 100ff). But the consequences of disease categories are also part of its reproduction.

In an essay on madness, Hacking argues that the medicalisation of schizophrenia makes it easier for a person to think of his or her illness as an *other*, almost as an

agent that acts upon one (Hacking 1999: 113ff). Since diagnoses are a precondition for medication and treatment, we may suppose that diagnosis in itself has an effect on humans (ibid.). Classifications like 'fugue,' 'hysteria,' 'anorexia nervosa' and 'schizophrenia' may therefore be seen as constructions which operate like *interactive kinds* on those persons who are labelled by them (ibid.: 115ff). Hacking does not define interactive kind but writes that: 'The *inter* may suggest the way in which the classification may interact, the way in which the actors become self-aware as being of a kind, if only because of being treated or institutionalized as of that kind, and so experiencing themselves in that way' (ibid.: 104). Unlike *indifferent kinds* such as microbes and *natural kinds* such as water and the horse, which are unaware of how humans classify them, interactive kinds have a so-called *looping effect* because they are constructed by yet also operate on the self-awareness of humans (ibid.: 105-108). I will return to the looping effect of ludomania in Chapter 5, where I discuss the matter of interagentivity and intersubjectivity in detail. Here I want to stress that categories are interactive by their social and cultural nature.

Lloyd and Hacking both argue that some illnesses may become psychiatric categories that define groups of people, and that the diagnoses rely on knowledge which is highly context-dependent. Thus, neuro-scientific research on pathological gamblers appears to suggest that some people get a kind of pleasure from gambling caused by certain chemical process in their bodies which are addictive like drugs. There is now an extensive body of psychiatric knowledge on the dopamine D2 receptor gene in pathological gambling, which is processed for use in the clinical treatment of pathological gamblers.[94] According to Lloyd, despite this scientific process of locating chemical/biological substances as a factor in problem gambling, it remains important to draw on the social context in order to understand gambling and how it affects people's lives (Lloyd 2002: 163-164). So far we must conclude that problem gambling is neither in the heads of the gamblers themselves nor in the natural world, but anchored in socially organised processes (ibid.: 162, 166).

I have demonstrated that my informants experienced the gambling hall at the bodily level. It is important, however, to emphasize that what was taking place occurred in an intersubjective environment, that is, between human bodies and the physical and symbolic properties of the gambling hall. The metaphors that my informants used stressed this. Furthermore, and in light of the theoretical arguments above about categories and diagno-

[94] See, for example, http://psychservices.psychiatryonlineorg/cgi/content/full/50/8/1021

sis as interactive, it seems reasonable to assume that my informants were dealing with the classification of a diagnosis. Perhaps terms like 'devils', 'addiction', 'madness', 'getting burned on the machine', 'magnets' and 'obsession/possession' as rather evocatiove qualities with a bearing on the body can be seen as a response to the institutionalised 'ludomania'. In any case, evocative symbols like 'devils' and 'magnets' can hardly be separated from evocative play symbols in the gambling machines by which one might also acquire 'peace of mind' and opportunities to 'compose oneself.' One of the effects of symbols, including diagnosis in the gambling hall, was that they appeared to bring about an experience of being out of control or not responsible. Being 'out of control' in terms of psychologically defined deviant behaviour and experiencing oneself as 'not responsible' are, however, moral categories that deserve analytical attention.

I did not see my informants as out of control. Jørgen, Anne, Ghanim, Lone and Johan among others had told their stories of loss, distress and lack opportunity in life. Some of them sought help in therapeutic institutions in order to fight their 'gambling devil' and overcome their 'madness' and 'obsession' – to put an end to their gambling habit. We might say that they experienced themselves as suffering from what Kirsten Hastrup calls 'weakness of the will' (Hastrup 2008: 18), which was not due to a defect in personality but to a general inconsistency in being (ibid.). In her analysis of William Shakespeare's dramas *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, Hastrup pinpoints states and conditions in human life that reflect existential insecurity, namely restlessness, indecision, darkness, powerlessness, paralysis, timelessness, passion and nightmare. This is madness, Hastrup admits, but it reflects madness in the environment rather than madness in individuals (ibid.: 11).

Seen from this perspective, the gambling hall might be seen as a space of madness where the passion for playing with money and symbols took place in the darkness of the gambling hall in a timeless atmosphere. A certain measure of powerlessness was evident in most of the life stories, reflecting the constraints in people's lives that we have identified in this chapter. Perhaps a kind of paralysis had set in as a state of mind as well as an inability to proceed along the expected course of one's everyday life. Gambling was a possibility in this state of affairs of *incontinent action*, where a passion for objects, material or symbolic was present. It might be a process of joy and excitement. On the other hand, it might well end in a nightmare of ruin, lies, and perhaps a chronic liminal position in society for those involved in gambling.

If those I talked to in the gambling hall, and those I met in treatment settings were people who had surrendered in a neutral sense of the word because their will to plan their actions, to follow a conventional life course and to be in control of it had been more or less shattered. Had they surrendered to the ambiguity of a life in which individual intention only partly directed the course of events? In this respect, the stories I have reproduced may reflect a general human condition, which was subjected to the limitations of a common sense where there was indecision and deceitfulness. It was an ambiguity in the madness of the individual, which in fact reflected the madness in the environment.

People who gambled and who in turn suffered extensive financial loss relative to their current status were being singled out in a historic process as a somewhat mad or pathological minority. Given Hastrups's notion of 'weakness of the will', we can see that the relationship between opposites like good and bad or mad and not mad is not as absolute as one might have hoped. The customer in the gambling hall was part of a drama or tragedy in which he or she was playing a game repetitively and replete with ambiguity. The individual might get caught up in the game, but he or she might also, if circumstances allowed, get out of the game and begin to play a different part. Thus Lene was partly successful in replacing gambling with other kinds of communities and an interest in the aesthetic qualities of her home, while Bo had taken up dancing, as well as succeeding in making progress in his job.

Conclusion

The life stories of Ghanim, Lone, Jørgen and Anne mirrored, I have argued, the overall liminality in which they found themselves stuck at that point in their lives. Other's life stories, such as Bo, Hazim, Jabir, Johan, Irene and Lene's, shared similar characteristics. Even though Bo and Lene seemed partly to be extricating themselves from the gambling hall, their deep fascination with the hall was still with them when I finished my fieldwork. Bodil was more like a 'period gambler', as she said, using the gambling hall whenever she was out of love.

I have discussed the gambling hall as a liminoid place with some of the characteristics of a liminal process, a place of leisure with playful freewheeling activity set

apart from the everyday life, a place for the transformation of states of mind brought about as an interaction between customers' biographies and the entertainment attributes of the gambling machines. Like Hacking's poor and somewhat mad travellers who went on long train journeys in the wake of modernist Europe, to seek adventure and release from everyday life, people like Ghanim, Lone and Johan sought adventure and a form of release in the gambling hall in a society that emphasised the individual as a consumer. In a ritual perspective, the gambling hall enacted a process of kinds of transformations and transcendence. I have suggested that stories of 'lost plots' were a vehicle in the unfolding of lives in the gambling hall, which, together with attributes like darkness, symbols, suspensions of clock-time and the secluded atmosphere, was constructed as a liminal and liminoid place and process. The impact of the entertaining features of the gambling hall on the body played a vital part in the experience of the gambling hall as a liminoid place.

The intersubjective experience of the gambling hall did not only qualify as liminal by means of the social misfortunes or marginalised position of those who used it or by the physical and symbolic features of the setting. Liminality was also a condition brought about by a vector of the medical syntax of 'ludomania' as an underlying frame of pathology and surveillance in the gambling hall. The interaction of folk idioms of 'devils' and the therapeutically applied label of pathological gambling thus interacted with the gambling hall as a stigmatised place of leisure. But it also involved a vector of cultural polarity, namely that of a somewhat sacred place of joy, play and winning chances on the one hand, and as a place of what was considered deviant, morally dubious or even pathological behaviour in 'sleazy' corners of the gambling hall on the other. For the player, however, the attraction of the gambling hall was the environment of opportunity, chance and *ludic* capacities in which one was invited and accepted to a journey along a road of hope and daydreams called, among others, Virginia City, Midnight Magic and Sir Win a lot.

Chapter Five

Communitas: inter-human engagement in the gambling hall

'Here it is like a club,
where I can meet someone
and have a chat.'
(Hazim)

Introduction

Even though I often saw customers gambling alone with gambling machines with no immediate contact between them, there were many instances of inter-human engagement or contact. There were moments of intimacy when bodies would just swiftly touch when they walked to and from gambling machines, or when two people who might be or might not be lovers were standing so close in front of a gambling machine in co-playing and trick exchange. Such situations were moments of human intimacy that contrasted an environment, which felt otherwise synthetic. Moreover, there was a lot of looking and seeing out of corners of the eyes. But perhaps listening had a priority over vision when it came to experiencing other humans in the gambling hall. Thus, I was often taken by surprise when a customer who had been gambling alone with his back to the open space of the gambling hall would suddenly comment, out of familiarity with sounds and voices in the gambling hall, on the status of a particular gambling machine and the way a person was gambling at it.

The possibility of casual and informal encounters with fellow customers at times made the gambling hall a sociable place.

The focus of analysis in this chapter is of the gambling hall as a place of dialogical activity between customers, in their engagement with its physical and symbolic environment in the process of gambling. Contrary to the intersubjective experience of liminality, which I addressed in Chapter 4, this chapter examines experiences and events in which humans engage in encounters with one another in the gambling process (Goffman 1961; Goffman 1969; Bateson 1972 [1955]). The argument regarding liminality, which I discussed in Chapter 4, is here taken further in suggesting that gambling encounters in the gambling hall may be understood as a kind of *communitas* of equal members (Turner 1995 [1969]). Here communitas refers equally to the concepts of liminality and the liminoid.

Reith has suggested that part of the appeal of games of chance is their absolute democracy because anyone, regardless of background or competence, may participate in chances that are equal for everyone (Reith 1999: 94). Goffman also refers to equality between players (Goffman 1969), - almost an echo of Anne's statement about gambling machines being for anyone. In this chapter, I continue to approach the gambling hall analytically in terms of intersubjective processes played out in various frames of play and non-play, reflecting on what is at stake in terms of human relations in this environment of chance.

The importance of community

Our individual world is not a private world but a world in which we constantly make our way on a daily basis in work, caring and communication as means of relating to the world and to others (Zahavi 2001). Hence the perception of the other precedes the actual encounter of the other, although intersubjectivity cannot be reduced to the concrete encounter (ibid.: 155-157). In Chapter 4, I addressed the inner aspect of intersubjectivity, the volitional structure related to the senses. Here I want to relate descriptions from the gambling hall to an outer dimension – the visual and tactual (ibid: 161). Zahavi suggests that we are in a way strangers to ourselves and therefore open towards others and capable of understanding others in the same way (ibid.). The assumption that Zahavi infers from his phi-

losophical examination of intersubjectivity is that it is present in pre- or extra-linguistic forms such as emotions, drives or body-awareness. Furthermore, it is not an objective structure in the world but a relationship between subjects that needs to be approached from the perspective of subjects. Finally intersubjectivity only comes about in relationships between humans who are related to the world as a fundamental condition of being (ibid.: 166).

We may say that the gambling hall was a forum for social life that consisted of the actions of separate individuals acting together, whether face-to-face or in a more individualistic manner, but nonetheless in a common endeavour of the pursuit of luck on the gambling machines. As such, the customers constituted a loosely knit group of individuals with a common goal, even though people most often pursued that goal in an individual manner. By pursuing this goal in the same place, customers impinged on one another in a variety of ways that may be analysed as series of events, in which little rituals of play took place.

The human mode of practising and exchanging moods, tricks, entertainment, money, empathy and co-creation in the gambling process turned the gambling hall not only into a gathering in Goffman's sense, but also into a process of the inter-agentivity (Ingold 2000: 47) or intersubjective dialogue (Jackson 1998: 32) of humans with their physical and symbolic environments. We may therefore speak of customers investing not only in financial luck, but also in the hope of establishing whole or partial human relationships in the process of gambling. In the gambling hall, no one was obliged to talk, help or do anything except gamble, and yet everyone might have enjoyed the sense of equality – of *communitas* – that came from being a player among players in the gambling hall. The existential dimension of what went on in the hall was evidently one of searching, not only for a transformation in one's existential being, as we saw in Chapter 4, but also for ontological security in the endeavour to form relationships with other humans, however temporary they might turn out to be. My suggestion is that these included a struggle for control over the gambling process, as well as control over one's wider being in the world.

When I visited the gambling hall in the neighbourhood where Lone was living, I saw her there sometimes giving her skilled advice to other customers, bringing her shopping, taking a rest between daily chores and having a chat with the manager. From the living room of her apartment, there was a view of the mall where the gambling hall was

located, formerly a kiosk selling tobacco and food items. Lone said that she did not frequent the gambling hall as often as she used to before she received treatment for 'ludomania'. However, if she had not been to the gambling hall for some time, she missed the company: 'Sometimes you may just go for a coffee, and other times you can go to gamble. But it's cosy because you know everybody there. You get your small problems solved. How is your son and how is your diet? Matters like that. It makes you want to come back. Some say, "Hello, nice to see you". That's the social thing about it. You know each other so well and often … when it's as close as two hundred metres (…) neighbours and friends coming in.' Thus, to Lone the gambling hall offered a kind of intimacy and community that she found attractive. The gambling hall had served her as a 'refuge',[95] but also as an informal meeting place or social centre where she might engage in exchanges with other people. Lone referred to this aspect as 'the social life'[96] of the gambling hall, and it corresponded with my own observation of it as a sort of contemporary village pond where people in the local community would gather. Thus, despite its somewhat secluded atmosphere and its being a place set aside from the everyday, the gambling hall was experienced as a place that was open to everyone. In that respect it might also differ from the many small centres of specialised activities for residents, as other anthropologists in similar residential areas such as Lone's have observed (Lund, Christensen et al. 2002: 117-121).

Lone had told me at our first meeting that she had been active in residential politics in her neighbourhood for several years, one of her ambitions being to establish an informal walk-in meeting place for the residents. There used to be such a place, but now it was only used for people with special needs like 'mothering groups and that kind of thing', she said. Lone had also told me that what she was looking for was that kind of sociability that she might find in a local bar, only she could not put up with drunks, she said. In the course of my fieldwork, I came to know Lone not only as a receiver of what she experienced as beneficial sociability in the gambling hall, but also as a provider of it. As a result of Lone's way of attending the gambling hall, interaction between people there was more likely to occur, and it gave the hall a touch of homeliness when she brought her groceries, Christmas gifts or perhaps newly picked berries in a plastic bag. Since on many occasions

[95] The 'refuge' aspect of the gambling hall is described in Chapter 4.

[96] *Det sociale*

she would assist a customer in playing a game on a machine, it was no wonder that Lone was one of the manager's favourite customers.

Bo, who was very devoted to online gambling on the internet from his home computer, sometimes got bored with it because he missed the company and therefore wanted to go out. Then he would go to a gambling hall and choose one where they had 'good coffee and nice company', as he said. In the gambling hall he might get involved in goal-oriented jackpot chasing in a process of either co-creation or communal effort with fellow customers, or he might simply enjoy the free 'good coffee'. Hazim said that 'Here I can meet someone and talk a little. There's no place to go. You can go to the café in the supermarket, but I don't care to. Here it is like attending a club', and he continued to talk to me about the unemployed men in the neighbourhood who used to stand outside the supermarket in the mall, but were not longer allowed to do so. Judging from these examples, the gambling hall filled a void in everyday life in terms of human company, contact and community.

I too sometimes found the gambling hall sociable on my somewhat lonely field trips during the winter, when I would enter a well-heated and radiant gambling hall, with its many flickering and glowing lights, soft music from the gambling machines and sometimes a friendly manager who looked up and greeted customers. The room appeared as a contrasts to the grey concrete of the shopping mall outside on a cold and damp November day. The sounds of the gambling machines, depicting humans voices such as roars, 'naa-na-na-naa-na' teasing sounds, and 'anybody hooome?', added something to sociable atmosphere. The so-called Top Board,[97] which might reflect the status of the games on certain gambling machines, also added something of a community feeling because it made it possible for all the customers to follow the course of a Jackpot Game that just one customer might be playing. But despite the visual and auditory effects of these changing lights, sounds and colours, they were still unresponsive when compared to the responsiveness of humans interacting with one another. After entering the hall, I would shake off the rain from my windcheater and head for the coffee table behind two rows of gambling machines. In one hall I sometimes found a man with an empty Metro Express newspaper bag, who greeted me with a smile, thus acknowledging my presence, and we sat together in communal silence sipping hot coffee while observing customers trying

[97] *Toptavle*

their luck in front of the Apaches, Orientexpreses and Sir Win a Lots. The newspaperman resting after his delivery of morning papers, and me feeling like a companion in the situation. In spite of days when no one seemed to notice anyone else, the gambling hall provided a place for informal encounters both in and beyond gambling. This was the kind of scene that corresponded to what I had heard people refer to as a 'club',[98] a 'drop-in place'[99] and a 'warm shelter'.[100] These terms differed from the terms 'refuge', 'free space', 'bubble' and 'cheese bell',[101] which was also used to describe a more lonely experience or perhaps inner process of mind in the gambling hall. Although the terms 'refuge' and 'warm shelter' share the common feature of a place where people might experience a degree of seclusion from everyday life and thus experience the inner volitional dimension of intersubjectivity, the terms I highlight in this chapter have stronger connotations of intersubjectivity experienced in a community with fellow humans.

Communitas

The seclusion of the gambling hall and the opportunity to socialise within it on an equal footing with other customers echoed the gaming encounters that Goffman used in his book *Where the Action is* (Goffman 1969) as well as Victor Turner's writings on communitas in his book on Ndembu rituals (Turner 1995 [1969]). Goffman says that in gaming encounters individuals are engaged in an environment of mutual monitoring possibilities, this being a social situation in so far as two or more individuals find themselves in another's immediate physical presence (Goffman 1969: 122). Gaming encounters are extraordinary niches in social life because they contrast the safe and well-regulated world of home, work and business by providing an opportunity for the individual to be put in jeopardy, to release oneself to fate and to generate expression (ibid.: 125, 137, 204-205). In this sense, gaming encounters are extraordinary niches that might resemble some of the characteristics of Turner's communitas.

Communitas is a Latin word that Victor Turner used to denote a modality of social relationship in which individuals pass through a transient phase in being (Turner

[98] *Klub*

[99] *Værested*

[100] *Varmestue*

[101] These terms are discussed in Chapter 3.

1995 [1969]: 97). Communitas is observable in specific gatherings of people, but as a modality communitas represents more than the matter-of-fact get together (ibid.: 131-132). Turner distinguishes between communitas in organised social groups and in more spontaneous gatherings, as in a liminal phase in which people are in a process of transition between two states of being. In both kinds of communitas, people relate to each other in an immediate and direct manner. Participants share the equality of comradeship among themselves, as well as their statuslessness and perhaps sacredness (ibid.: 96, 137, 138). Communitas is transformative of being in the sense that participation in communitas contrasts with participation in the structures of everyday life by generating imagery and feelings of endless power through which participants seek a transformative experience that goes to the root of individual being (ibid.: 133, 138-139, 154-155). Thus communitas is a process laden with potentiality and prospects that characterise the subjunctive mood (ibid.: 127-128).

One example of communitas is a church (ibid.: 138). In a church, there is a gathering of humans – strangers as well as friends – for worshipping a common God, and sometimes also of taking part in community around the church. Defined in such terms, we might find some similarities to the gambling hall. In Chapter 4, I discussed similarities and differences between a church and a gambling hall in terms of a sacred ritual of the individual worship of chance and luck. Here I draw attention to communal engagement with chance and luck in the gambling hall as a means of relating to fellow players as human others for the sake of community – of inhabiting common ground in a search for ontological security.

In principle, gambling halls were open to anyone who was ready to invest a few coins in a gambling machine. From my own observations, the gambling hall was a gathering of both strangers and acquaintances, but always a coming together of equals. The larger casinos have a dress code and require customers to register, which is not the case for gambling halls. I sometimes came across customers in the gambling hall who stressed that the gambling hall did not discriminate in respect of the social status of those who attended. Thus a mixture of workers, academics, people on welfare benefit, business people, the well off and the poor attended the gambling hall, they said.[102] Never the less I saw far more

[102] Bonke and Borregaard's survey of gambling and problem gambling in Denmark asserts that those with the highest frequency of gambling with gambling machines are students and people with little or no educational background; see Bonke, J. and K. Borregaard (2006). Ludomani i Danmark: udbredelsen af pengespil og

males with what might be called a working-class background in the gambling hall than any other group. However, this fact did not disturb the ideal of the gambling hall as an open playground for equals. What mattered was the game, the fun, the excitement, and not least being together and sharing the experience of equality involved in being together in a common engagement with imagery, where everyone was seen as a potential winner. A transformation of one's total existential being, or at least a momentary change, was therefore at least an imagined possibility.

From his studies of casinos, Goffman observed that individuals might use one another in gaming encounters by providing a field of action for someone else, who in turn might use his field of action, while a slight degree of camaraderie, including openness between the, was generated by a joint and mutually visible exposure to fate (Goffman 1969: 155, 158). Goffman also stressed that the openness of casinos ensured that anyone with money might enter, and this was further ensured by the physical design of the casinos to service not only people of widely different social status, but also those in widely differing physiological states (ibid.: 151).

The gambling hall in my own field attracted people with disabilities. Nadim used to help an old man who was speech- and hearing impaired to gamble on the gambling machines. He would hand over some coins to Nadim and indicate with an upward gesture in front of a particular gambling machine that he wanted him to gamble on a win. Another man, middle-aged and quite experienced in gambling machines, but also with a speech impairment, was always making jokes and chatting to fellow customers about their chances and how the gambling machines were running. He told me that he used to work as a technician in the gambling machine industry. He always appeared to be in a light mood and attentive in a kind way to customers, although he did not gamble much himself. He connected with people by attending to their games in a gentle way thus adding to the community feeling in the gambling hall. When I came across customers with other minor or major impairments in the gambling hall and saw them mingling on an equal footing with other customers, I could not think of any other public place where these people might be on such equal terms with other humans than in the gambling hall, except perhaps for a church.

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problemspillere, Socialforskningsinstituttet. Furthermore, risk- and problem gamblers are males under the age of 44 with low income and no children in the home (ibid: 63). These data thus match my own observations of the clientele of gambling halls.

However, in being embraced with moral ambivalence, the gambling hall differed from the church. There was an interesting opposition between the anonymity of people in the gambling halls and displays of certain human movements and interactions. There was also an interesting opposition between the apparent mechanical and synthetic environment of the physical gambling hall and that of the sociable and cosy atmosphere that might unfold as gambling proceeded. Although people I interviewed sometimes called the gambling hall 'sleazy',[103] this opinion contrasted with my observation that the gambling hall was also attractive because it was 'cosy'[104] and 'social'.[105] These terms connoted to comfortable encounters and exchanges between players as well as to the comfort of the physical environment that stimulated the senses.

When I inquired directly into the question of friendships in the gambling hall, only a few said that they had made friends with anyone there. Many felt ashamed of their gambling activity. Nevertheless, some customers were friends beyond the gambling hall. They might know one another from the neighbourhood, or they might have developed an acquaintance with someone else through their involvement in the gambling hall. Lone, for example, told me that she sometimes took care of Hans when he had overspent in the gambling hall and therefore needed a meal. I also came across people who had met in the gambling hall and entered into a romantic relationship. Others like Bodil never went to the gambling hall with her partner, but liked to go when she felt lonely and her private life was not working out to her satisfaction. Then she would go in order to reduce her loneliness. She claimed to be an addict not of gambling machine gambling itself, but of the combination of the opportunities of games with gambling machines, the communal life and the hospitable atmosphere provided by the manager of the gambling hall. Thus, beneath the surface of what looked at first as individual customers' lonely affairs with gambling machines, there were, as far as I could determine, processes of inter-human engagement in search for some sense of feeling at home and being cared for – evidence for relevance of examining ontological security as an important aspect of intersubjectivity in the gambling hall.

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[103] *Klam*

[104] *Hyggelig*

[105] *Social*

Ontological security and community

According to Jackson, ontological security is an important aspect of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is essentially a struggle for being and belonging in a world, where humans need to engage effectively in a world of others from whom they receive recognition and ultimately a feeling of security and belonging (Jackson 1998: 16, 18, 154; Jackson 2005: 16, 192). Jackson suggests that intersubjectivity may be seen as a force field charged with energy and driven by need (2005: 16). According to Jackson, when people are experiencing a lack of control over their lives, they sometimes resort to ritual for security, for a degree of control over the forces of destiny (Jackson 1998: 71-72, 82; Jackson 2005: 71). This reminded me that Ankar had brought up the subject of religion when I first met him. He asked me if I was a churchgoer, and told me that he was a devoted Muslim who frequented the mosque every Friday. He also explained that he felt something of a conflict between being a Muslim and being devoted to gambling, because gambling was 'bad' according to his faith. Ankar was fond of attending the gambling hall and benefited from it in more than one way, therefore, I could not help seeing his devotion to it as a kind of secular devotion to fate, opportunity, and not least to community as a habit that complemented his practice of Islam. Although I did not see Ankar, who might have been the poorest of my informants, many of my informants were lacking in terms of financial independence and/or in emotional fulfilment in a nurturing family life. In addition, persons like Ankar were ones with lives in a particular marginalised position who might be searching for meaningful relationships – for ontological security.

Ontological security may, according to Jackson, be lost or threatened under specific circumstances such as cultural invasion, bureaucratic subversion and personal forces that will ultimately lead to an experience of loss of control and a loss of a sense of feeling at home and being secure in the world (Jackson 2005: 154). In Chapter 4, we saw examples of losses that might correspond somewhat to what Jackson is writing about, though perhaps on a smaller scale. In this chapter we see that such losses and deficiencies might have been partly recovered, or attempts made to do so, by seeking out a place where one could feel the presence of other humans in some sort of togetherness. According to Jackson, a basic human need for ontological insecurity drives people relentlessly to recover their loss and to sustain their sense of being against forces that threaten to reduce them to nothingness in the sense of both *being* and *having* nothing (ibid.). Again I was reminded of

the stories of loss, insecurity and rupture in life that were taken into the gambling hall. Whether in lonely or communal involvement in the gambling hall, customers partly succeed in creating an emotional atmosphere out of the collective and symbolic environment of both humans and gambling machines in which at times they might feel at home and perhaps trusting other humans in the same situation.

In the gambling hall that Bodil frequented, customers had formed what she called 'clans'. These 'clans', which were in effect friendship groups, would meet on a private basis and often with one of the service personnel in attendance, a former customer of the gambling hall. In this gambling hall management had carefully built up a circle of regular customers over a decade, whom they had nursed with telephone calls, as well as carefully attending to matters in their everyday lives when they attended the gambling hall. 'After all, they are the ones we make a living from', as one person on the staff said. A manager in another gambling hall took a complete opposite approach to his customers. In his opinion it was unethical to show a hospitable attitude to customers because this might in itself create an addiction to the gambling hall, he said. In any case, a hospitable attitude on the part of the staff was not necessary to turn the gambling hall into a sociable experience in terms of human encounters and co-creation. Customers might do quite an effective job at this in the way they inhabited the gambling hall by investing in dreams and in hopes in co-creation in playing games with the gambling machines.

Players in the gambling hall did not interfere with other players' gambling unless asked by their co players to do so. As I pointed out in Chapter 4, this was an informal rule, which also managers observed closely. However, important exceptions to sole gambling did occur. Sometimes customers agreed to gamble jointly and share their win. This occurred in romantic partnerships when couples shared the experience of gambling on one or more gambling machines. I saw from time to time how couples would sit or stand in a close embrace in front of a gambling machine and make joint bets and decisions on how to proceed with their betting, or they might each gamble on a machine just next to each other to enjoy gambling together. Partners in gambling might also be experienced customers who would agree to gamble on certain machines in order to combine their knowledge of gambling and share expenses as well as any winnings. Sometimes partnerships in gambling also entailed other pragmatic motives of a division of labour when one would attend

to a shared gambling machine, while the other would fetch a pizza or run other errands. I was invited from time to time to gamble in joint sessions when someone wanted to 'share the joy of playing with someone', as well as the expenses. Joint gambling was not, however, a precondition for sharing in the gambling hall.

Ways of sharing in gambling

When someone played a Jackpot Game, I often saw people leaving their own gambling sessions for a while in order to get together with the lucky player to share the joy of the excitement of the Jackpot Game by commenting on it, advising or just watching. One particular situation drew my attention. It was a rather dull morning in the gambling hall, and playing proceeded in a drowsy mode. The sounds pouring out of the gambling machines were cutting through my ears like an inferno, and I was close to leaving because of its disturbing impact on my nervous system. Then suddenly one or two players hit a Jackpot Game, and the other five customers in the gambling hall walked over to the lucky ones and started the gambling machines next to them. The noise level of the gambling machines rose, and players joined in a collective uttering of sound or words that were incomprehensible to me. They also made bowing and rocking movements in front of the gambling machines in a rhythmic process following the gambling machine sounds. Then they played in a line next to each other, facing one machine, but sometimes reaching over to press buttons on the machine that the person next to them was playing. The whole incident only lasted a few minutes before they walked back to play individually on other gambling machines in different parts of the hall.

To me the designer sounds were often heard as noises, that is, as unwanted sounds, much like classical music is experienced as noise by the drug addicts hanging out in the central train station in Copenhagen, where it is used to scare them away from the place (Harsløf 2007). However, to the customers in this particular situation, the sounds appeared to make sense in their process of play. By its evocative effect on the body it instigated their bets, but it also directed their actions to communicating with one another and to their involvement in small collective actions or frames of play, in little rituals, in other words.

Learning to gamble was a matter of individual trial and error, but some customers did not mind giving advice and tricks to novices, especially if they considered

themselves beyond the point of pursuing games and preferred a 'social' way of attending the gambling hall. Informal apprenticeships were therefore also a common kind of encounter between customers. In this respect Nadim was exceptional. He was always willing to help any customer who asked for his advice, even though he gambled intensively on several gambling machines.

So far, I have addressed different manifestations of inter-human engagement in the gambling hall. A number of specific expressions of inter-human engagement belongeed to a general domain of caring which lay beyond gambling, but they were practised along with the gambling process. As far as I could see, co-playing and informal apprenticeships in the gambling hall were frames in which some of the expressions of caring were manifested. I will turn to this issue in the following section.

Frames of action in the gambling hall

In the section above, I touched on a number of issues concerning inter-human engagement in the gambling hall. One was the physical and symbolic universe of the gambling hall in which customers monitored possibility. Another was the direct and intimate encounters between customers, while a third issue was related to the feeling of equality between participants in the more or less loosely knit groups of players. In the gambling hall, individuals had the opportunity to be or to demonstrate specific competences or characteristics of personality, which might be as vital to their engagement as the game itself. In his book *Where the Action is*, Goffman draws on situations of games and gambling to address the dynamics of encounters in which individuals can demonstrate characteristics such as composure, courage, integrity, dignity and stage confidence (Goffman 1969: 164-171). According to Goffman, the capacity of the individual as a competent interactant is important to the other participants because the social order sustained in the gatherings draws its substance from the minor, disciplined forms of behaviour in which different kinds of character are performed (ibid.: 171). Gambling encounters are well suited to this purpose, since people experience some freedom of choice and self-determination (ibid.: 117). In this section I will address these issues further. I will present three frames of inter-human engagement in play as I observed them, each followed by a discussion of these with refer-

ence to Goffman's work on human interaction, Turner's concept of communitas and finally Jackson's idea of ontological security and intersubjectivity.

Frames are strips of events like stories, jokes and dreams as seen from the perspective of the persons involved in them (Goffman 1974: 10). Goffman's work is devoted to a situational perspective on what happens in human face-to-face interaction and how we might understand this in terms of dramatic performance. The situational perspective, to which a particular individual may be alive at a particular moment, is therefore central to the concept of frames, as is individual being and existence (ibid.: 8). This often involves other particular individuals, although it is not necessarily restricted to face-to-face gatherings (ibid.). One of the examples that Goffman uses in his model of frame analysis is a game of chess. This game, he states 'generates a habitable universe for those who can follow it, a plane of being, a cast of characters with a seemingly unlimited number of different situations and acts through which to realize their natures and destinies' (ibid.: 5). Thus, through intimate and attentive involvement, humans engage with each other and with objects, thus bringing forth situations that may be isolated as basic frameworks of understanding (ibid.: 10).

But frames are more than situational activity reflecting existential problems of being: they are 'brackets' around activity (ibid.: 251). 'Bracket is a term which Goffman derives from Bateson's article on play and fantasy, in which he makes a distinction between seriousness and play (Bateson 1972 [1955]). Such brackets or frames mark events in everyday life or realms of being other than the ordinary (ibid.: 564). In such brackets, certain conventions of action that are often followed Goffman calls 'episodic conventions', implying that activity is often framed in a particular way which marks it from off from the ongoing flow of surrounding events (ibid.: 251ff). It is, however, not the bracket itself which is of particular interest, but the vulnerabilities and tensions that may be produced within them (ibid.: 10, 255, 569).

Bracketed activity has a strongly dramatic focus in Goffman's analysis in the sense that stories are told explicitly or implicitly; there are actions between people played out as conventional roles and some degree of metacommunication between players and the audience (Goffman 1974: 564). Players in a game of chess, for example, stand to gain or lose as they make their moves, each player manipulating or *animating* the pieces on his/her side (ibid.: 566-567). Nonverbal bodily expression is of particular interest in frame analysis

because much expression is carried out as emotional display or as symbolisations. It is, however, the relation between the frame and these expressions which should be attended to in the analysis in order to understand the strip (ibid.: 569).

Consider now the gambling hall as a place of framed activity in which customer's actions may be approached as strips of events or brackets where events unfolded as little rituals. I will now attend to such strips. I have chosen three, which emphasise three different aspects of inter-human engagement in the gambling process. Common to these is the fact that human interaction plays an important part in the gambling process.

'It's Jazzpot time': entertainment as drama

This situation focuses on the importance of entertainment and joy in the gambling process as a communal effort. It was a situation in which it became clear to me that there were many ways of relating to others in the process of gambling, and that each individual took the opportunity to alternate between different intensities and kinds of expression as a means of relating to his or her fellow humans and to the environment.

> Tonight there are six men and two women in the gambling hall, including myself and the service person on duty. The age of the customers is between thirty and sixty. Mette and Hans are gambling alone, while Peter, John and Tom are slowly walking around the centre of the gambling hall piling twenty-kroner coins in their hands and making clack-clack-clack noises. This is the usual business of endless sequences of betting with the machines, which one can see in every gambling hall throughout the city on an evening like this. Customers change hundred- kroner notes or two hundred-kroner notes either in the change machine or at the service counter, insert coins and make bets on one or more gambling machines, withdraw their winnings or stakes, bet with that money on another gambling machine, change their winning coins into notes or change their notes to coins for gambling, make bets and so forth, in an almost rhythmic flow.
>
> When I arrive, Peter, Tom and John are in opposite corners of the room, but they soon begin to interact with one another. John and Tom have each picked a gambling machine on which they gamble, while Peter is standing by for the time being. They interact by crossing the floor from one gambling machine to another, apparently in order to inspect the status of one another's machines. In doing this

they accidentally barely touch each other by the arms or elbows while making remarks and comments like ‘Well’, ‘OK’, ‘Get it going’ or ‘Play that line’. They appeared to enjoy getting together like this in an easy-going manner. John expresses his gratitude to Peter for helping John’s friend out in the middle of what he calls ‘a crisis with a broken coffee machine’. Then Tom, the third man in the group who is gambling on a Midnight Madness in a corner, steps away from his gambling machine and walks over to John, who is by now becoming more intensely absorbed in gambling on his own Midnight Express. Tom informs John about a mutual friend.

They engage in a brief discussion in which John expresses his disagreement and showing a dismissive attitude to Tom by keeping on gambling with his back turned towards Tom during the discussion. Tom, who has been standing behind John facing his back during this conversation, now seems put off by John’s somewhat dismissive attitude and returns to his own Midnight Madness, watching its moves on the wheels as he loads more coins into it and presses the auto button. Peter, who has been silently but sympathetically observing John’s and Peter’s activities, has also begun to bet on a gambling machine. The intensity of the exchanges fades, as they are now all devoted to a gambling machine with deep concentration on their faces as they carefully watch the rapidly moving symbols of melons, aubergines and death’s heads appearing on the display at each stop of a bet every three seconds.

They gamble this way for at least half an hour. Then John leaves his Orient-expres in order to carry out an unrequested inspection of a second gambling machine, which Tom started up a while ago and has left unattended on auto-play while doing auto-gambling on the Midnight Express placed on the other side of a wall. ‘You have a Goldmine Game’, says John in a friendly and light-toned voice. ‘Hm’, says Tom, pretending to show no interest what so ever. ‘I’m not bull-shitting you; you have a Goldmine Game’, Peter insists. Reluctantly John detaches himself from his Midnight Madness in order to inspect the Goldmine Game on the other gambling machine. He pushes the auto button, then leaves the machines with an expressionless face to play the game unattended and returns to

the Midnight Madness while Tom returns to his Midnight Madness and the Sir Win a lot machine, which he is now also gambling on.

Peter has been gambling on a Virginia Express for about fifteen minutes, when the sounds in this machine change. Instead of scattered sounds of musical strophes, bells ringing and neighs, a series of 'bip' sounds going rapidly up and down a scale has started. Tom leaves the two machines he is gambling on and walks over to Peter's machine. 'It's Jazzpot time', says Tom matter-of-factly and walks back to his own machines to carry on with his bets. Peter, who has gambled with his back to the centre of the hall, now turns with his right side to the front of the machine with a merry look and a somewhat secretive smile on his face. He starts imitating the sound: 'bi-bi-bi-baang! bi-bi-bi-baang! bi-bi-bi-baang!', while moving his right arm and torso in a waving movement up and down following the sound, as well as the up and down movement of lights on the machine's display.

Peter carries on like this for about five minutes – the time it takes to finish the game before the Credit starts to go down again. Peter's entertainment does not appear to have any impact on the gambling sessions of John and Tom, who remain rather concentrated on their task. They look tenser as the evening wanes. I have no proof of disappointment over losses, but John leaves the gambling hall alone with a faint 'goodbye', just before Peter and Tom leave after an interval of a few minutes just before closing time.

As these three men pursued their task of betting in the hope of drawing the winnings they desired, they were engaged in an ongoing dialogue with each other, as well as with the gambling environment. Their verbal exchanges show that they were a friendship group beyond the gambling hall, and that this was confirmed by their discussion of everyday matters. Their use of the floor as a meeting place turned the gambling hall into a lively, lived-in place. The gambling process proceeded in three phases: one of relaxed mingling, the next phase when trying and choosing which gambling machines to gamble on, then a more intensive phase of gambling when Tom's and John's bodies became tenser in the process of inserting and losing more and more money. Peter, however, decided to share his winnings by entertaining his friends with a dance-like performance, as if he wanted to cheer them up. Peter looked relaxed and contented whereas Tom and John, who did not gain were left tense and silent. Changing money in the change machine or at the service counter

represented options for different levels of encounters and human contact. I quite enjoyed this little performance, which showed people inhabiting an otherwise synthetic atmosphere in the gambling hall, but I was also impressed by the three men's competences in communing with one another, as well as in dealing with their emotions in the process.

The three men used techniques of inhabiting the place: walking around, chatting about everyday matters, confirming their friendship beyond the gambling hall, helping each other in the gambling process, sharing, and not least their ability almost to hide their disappointment at losing a game. In this way, they demonstrated the strength of stoic characters, refusing to be affected by losses. Were they trying to cover up for the fact that they were not in control of the gambling machine? They might have been partly in control of the situation in that they chose to gamble just before closing time, which forcibly set a limit to their betting and possible losing. In my experience, this particular event was a unique performance. However, it was not untypical in terms of customers communing while gambling. To me one fascinating thing about the gambling hall was how customers managed to make it lively in the way they attended it and in how they used it, how they made use of what appeared to be the responsive attributes of gambling machines that were in fact programmed to perform beyond the control of player's intervention. How might we understand this in terms of intersubjectivity?

I will approach this matter by discussing it in relation to Jackson's and Ingold's writings on intersubjectivity in relation to the material world (Jackson 2005). The material world, Jackson writes, is without subjectivity and is highly resistant to human control (ibid.: 111). Yet it is a world, which is constantly subject to the intense physical and intellectual labour of humans. It is re-imagined in stories and rituals, as well as elaborated in belief and science. Thus anthropomorphic thought 'absorbs the object into the subject world, and establish the ground rules for magical, ritual, dialogical and social relations between them' (ibid.).

Ingold takes a similar approach to intersubjectivity in arguing that life itself is a task, an ongoing process of renewal, and therefore humans create contexts of experience in which objects also become alive and animate,[106] not from some mysterious life force infused into objects, but from experiencing the liveliness of the environment (Ingold 2000:

[106] In Chapter 6, I explore the concept of animism in relation to human–machine interactions.

97). In attentive involvement with the environment through watching, listening and feeling, and actively seeking out the signs, the world is revealed to humans (ibid.: 99).

In the 'Jazzpot' event Peter, Tom and John engaged with each other and the physical and symbolic attributes of the gambling hall in such a way that they somehow came to inhabit the place and thereby added a human dimension to it. Their bodily movements and sensory engagement with the sounds of the gambling machine indicated phases and intensity in the gambling process. By mimicking and imitating the sound patterns of the gambling machines, they somehow incorporated them into their being in the gambling hall, whereby a resonating or animated environment was brought about. Given their constantly flickering lights, designer sounds and rapidly moving coloured symbols the gambling machines looked and sounded like responding entities. It was, however, a response, which was beyond the control of the players, whose investments were randomly distributed. Peter having luck while Tom and John were losing. Peter's 'Jazzpot' performance put him at the centre of events, but he did not control the gambling machine, a fact he was fully aware off. His imitation and mimicking of the 'Jazzpot', however, created an animated atmosphere in the gambling hall, where the gambling machine was included as a subject – perhaps even a non-human friend – in the creation and reproduction of human relationships in the situation.

Had it not been for the tense bodies and persistent silence with which Peter and John mastered their losses, I might have seen the event as a harmonious creation of resonance in a familiar landscape. This would be in accord with Ingold's claim that the landscape is not alien, but rather imbued with meaning as a result of human practice, including story-telling and the narration of myth, which makes people feel at home (ibid.: 57, 87, 208). Jackson takes a slightly different standpoint in stressing that the material and natural environment is from the outset alien, unresponsive, resistant and unpredictable. Consequently humans are involved in a constant relationship of struggle with it (Jackson 2005: 111, 117). Intersubjective life is not a harmonious and conflict free process; on the contrary, it is a process characterised by struggle for survival, respect, knowledge, dignity and recognition and against alienation (Jackson 2005: 130, 187). What is at issue is 'a balance between the world one calls one's own and a world one deems to be other. This balance is a matter of control, and it is the struggle for this control that is the driving force of intersubjective life…' (Jackson 1998: 18). The way I see it, Peter, Tom and John were each

in their own way having an individual dialogue with the physical and symbolic attributes of the gambling hall, but they were also engaging in this by way of an inter-human effort to balance the struggle with the unpredictable gambling machines to their advantage. Peter played a vital part in this effort by mastering the 'Jazzpot' event.

'Can we please have some quiet time to work!' Communal jackpot chasing

This situation focuses on communal jackpot chasing, not as a joint effort, but rather as a collective effort of individuals brought together in attentive engagement with the gambling machine. It took place in the afternoon when I was sipping my coffee as usual from a position by the coffee table where I had a good view of all the gambling machines.

> Ten out of eighteen gambling machines are running. Besides Jan in his forties, a rather thin man in blue jeans and jacket that looks newly washed and ironed as usual, and Tobias in his thirties, slim, wearing a black fleece sweater, security shoes and working trousers with small outside pockets, there is Paul in his fifties, tall and grey haired. Tobias gambles the whole time seated by a Midnight Magic, which he carefully watches while playing with the auto button, while simultaneously keeping an eye on an Allan Capone and a Jackpot further away from his seat. For the first hour and a half, he is intent on the task with a smile on his face and alert and energetic movements. He is playing the machines as if he was a mechanic working with them – full of attention and alertness in the act. He is not relaxed. Every fibre of his body seems tightened. Tobias loads the Allan Capone and the Jackpot with several hundred kroner at a time and makes them gamble on auto, while he uses choice buttons on the Midnight Magic, where he is seated.
>
> The wheels of his gambling machine are spinning round and round without ever stopping to give Peter the slightest chance of Super Games. 'It's unbelievable. One never knows if it will do it even if it usually does', says Tobias sulkily, but then adds with a smile: 'It may do something unusual suddenly'. Paul is smiling the same crafty smile. Jan shakes his head out of a shared experience of the unpredictable gambling machines. There is a penetrating noise this morning coming from a drilling machine in the kitchenette, where two men are putting in some cupboards. 'Can we please have some quiet time to work', says Jan loudly, in an

attempt to drown out the drilling noise. The drilling does not stop, but the three men intensify their gambling activity with several gambling machines. They are going for a 'lucky punch'.

Then Christa, a regular customer, arrives dressed in her grey, worn-out windcheater, carrying her empty canvas shopping bag as usual. She throws a one-kroner coin in the Midnight Madness, which Tobias is gambling on, only to discover that that there is Credit in the gambling machine. Tobias insists that Christa withdraws the coin from the gambling machine, but Christa won't do so. Instead she starts whispering confidentially to Tobias about the Midnight Magic that he is playing: 'Someone had a jackpot on this machine yesterday', she says, and squeezes his arm gently and swiftly for a second or two. Then she walks over to Jan for a brief chat and a brief touch of his arm, as well a more confidential whisper that I am not able to pick up. After this the atmosphere feels more relaxed, bodies more at ease, breathes deeper, smiles…

An hour later, the three men are running thirteen gambling machines. By one o'clock, the optimism that Christa may contributed is gone. None of the customers has had a single win of any significance. Their eyes have lost their radiance: Tobias now has a furrow across his forehead, and a thin line from his tightly pressed lips has replaced his smile. His skin looks grey. The entire attention and energetic movements of Tobias's, Jan's and Paul's bodies are turned towards the gambling machines in what appears an endless and persistent striving and struggle for a return of at least some of their investments. Tobias remarks somewhat bitterly to me that there was a woman before I came in this morning who won 1,500 kroner with a thirty-kroner stake. Jan leaves the gambling hall declaring that the Midnight Magic has a defect.

Despite the lack of direct encounters between people at this event, there was a sense of strong togetherness between the men who were gambling, who became more and more absorbed in intent struggles for jackpots as the late afternoon passed into evening. They looked like equals in a common playground who were enjoying each other's presence. Their moods ran high at the beginning, filled with a kind of optimism that fuelled their energetic, alert, attentive engagement. This soon appeared, however, to be a cover for a

tense, frustrated and bitter experience over losses. Despite these player's wishes and attempts to have it otherwise, the gambling machines proved not only unpredictable, but also unresponsive and resistant to the moves of the players. Their bodies and faces became tenser as if they were controlling suppressed feelings as they played on. Now they gambled beyond joyful playing, into tense insistence on getting a win. This culminated when Jan blamed his defeat on a 'defect' in the gambling machine.

Goffman asserts that capacities of a different character in humans who engage in the risk-taking of fateful events are evident as a means of managing risky and high-pressure situations (Goffman 1969: 160ff). As already mentioned, courage, never admitting a defeat, integrity, gallantry, composure, presence of mind, dignity and stage confidence are major forms of character that bear on the management of fateful events (ibid.: 164-170). Demonstrating character is important in social environments, whether one is involved co-operatively with others or is engaged by oneself, because this shows one's capacity as a competent person in interactions and with the capacity of self-control (ibid.: 171, 173). The universal human necessity to transact one's enterprises makes the management of character vital in maintaining social support because in any social situation the individual is exposed to the judgement of the others who are present (ibid.: 173, 175).

In the bracketed gambling actions described so far in this chapter, a great deal of character management appeared to be taking place as a means of self-control and of sustaining a sense of community in the gambling hall. I think Goffman might have recognised his eight forms of character in the situations described above. However, there were others like empathy, kindness and caring that complete the picture. Christa's presence and her caring and encouraging behaviour softened the somewhat frozen and tense atmosphere and intensified gambling sessions followed. Despite this new optimism, their tense bodies betrayed the bitter experience of unrewarded investment in the gambling machines.

Christa's capacity as a nurturing and empathetic person was not unique to females in the gambling hall. I have seen male customers engage with empathy by assisting co-players with tricks or friendly comment. Leif, a regular and good humoured customer, always dressed in clogs, jeans, a white shirt and a black vest, and with spectacles on the tip of his nose, was always encouraging his fellow customers to do some joint pools coupon betting. In fact, this particular betting activity was not permitted in the gambling hall but must only be carried out in the adjoining gambling café. Leif grumbled about this

because he liked to sit by the café table in the gambling hall where he could comment on gambling machines and on customer's actions. People with caring and nurturing attitudes like Christa and Leif added something of an element of trust and stability to the community of customers in the gambling hall. It was an irony that customers like Christa and Leif, who appeared to enhance other customer's gambling, rarely spent much money on gambling themselves.

I have already discussed the issue of human control and struggle with the physical and symbolic environment of the gambling hall, which was repeated in this situation. What I want to focus on in extension of this particular event is the particular kind of community feeling I sensed in the event and many others like this, which I observed. I will approach the matter by including notions of 'the social' and of 'closeness' as indigenous terms observed by anthropologists in two different cultural settings – Brazil and Norway.

The Joanna Overing studied the Piaroa, an egalitarian community of people in the Amazon, and showed how trust between people was brought about by paying daily attention to design, the transformation of food and the social skills of caring and balancing respect for individual autonomy (Overing 2003). Drawing on Annette Baier's moral philosophy in relation to her field, Overing introduces the concept of *generative culture* to understand informal, non-prospective moral instances in daily relations (ibid.: 295). Overing found that trust was the result of a specific manifestation of a community of similars, where the Piaroa expressed the 'social' through shared daily actions and interactions of a personal sort (ibid.: 300). According to Overing, this was a powerful means through which the Piaroa could actively work against the development of coercive relations (ibid.). The Piaroa practised their generative culture through their everyday skills of care, cooking, killing birds and animals and making blowguns, all which was reflected in their vocabulary, in which 'to cure', 'to make', 'to transform' and 'to create' all have the same root (ibid.: 302-305).

It is the notion of the 'social' in Piaroa generative culture, which I am concerned with here. Although the everyday life that Overing analysed is in no way a liminal condition or forming a liminal community, the emphasis on equality, regeneration, transformation and practices of caring as reflected in the Piaroa notion of the 'social' may be compared to similar values and practices in the gambling hall. If customers in the gambling hall constitute communitas, as I have suggested earlier, then we might see this liminal

community as a spontaneous community which was partly preoccupied with generating a specific way of being. This was a being in which some degree of trust and caring among its members was valued and practised. From this perspective, it might equally be understood as an example of a communitas in which its members were seeking to transform their being by building a trustful, caring and 'social' atmosphere against the unpredictable forces of the physical and symbolic environment of the gambling hall, as well as against restrictive forces in their wider existence.[107] The search for security and control over the forces of destiny by which humans acquire a sense of belonging in a world – that is, ontological security – is characterised by Jackson as a constant struggle by humans to recover losses and to sustain their being and having (Jackson 1998: 71-72, 154). In the gambling hall there were many examples of struggle, but there were also examples of more harmonious processes, like Christa caring for her fellow players.

Marianne Gullestad has pointed out that the idea of 'closeness'[108] is a central value for human relationships in contemporary Norway (Gullestad 1991a). Furthermore, closeness is closely associated with giving and receiving care, having peace, and being whole, authentic, honest, informal, safe and equal (Gullestad 1991a: 491). In Gullestad's anthropology these values are seen as symbolic notions generated in the intimate sphere of the home, which has become the centre of an ethic that has replaced the Protestant work ethic of former times (ibid.: 490). Thus, according to Gullestad, in a secular society like Norway, the home has gained a sacred status by generating vital symbolic meanings of social life (ibid.). In another article, Gullestad has substantiated her argument about closeness to apply to all Scandinavia (Gullestad 1991b).

In observing how people might help one another, chat on every day matters or even engage in more intimate or long term relations I began to see that customers in the gambling hall liked to give themselves up to the egalitarian and trustful processes of gambling and that they valued this way of being 'social'. This was also confirmed in what I was told about the cosy atmosphere of the gambling hall being addictive. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, biographies indicated that cherished values like those that Gullestad and Overing describes had been shattered for persons like Lone, Anne and Habib. As Mary Douglas has pointed at, and as many of my informants experienced, the ideals of the home

[107] I address the question of these restrictions more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

[108] *Nærhet/nærhed* has an almost identical spelling in Norwegian and Danish respectively.

as a safe haven for the sacred values of care and comfort do not always stand up to harsh realities (Douglas 1991). Was the gambling hall a place where one could experiment with human relationships anew?

If we understand addiction as a dependence on something, we might, with Jackson in mind, end this section by concluding that in the gambling hall customers might gain a sense of belonging in the world from their experience of depending on other humans. Perhaps it was not as much as a struggle to survive, but in retaining a feeling of being able to rely on mutual trust and caring among humans based on a universal human striving for ontological security and values of trust and caring. An example of mutual trust in the gambling hall came up one afternoon when I witnessed two men who used religious and ethnic difference creatively as co-creation in the gambling process

'Electric finger': co-creation in the gambling process

In my discussion above of communitas in the gambling hall, I briefly mentioned Ankar, who proclaimed to be a devout Muslim. Here I want to return to an encounter with him and a fellow customer. The example demonstrates skill and co-creation in the gambling process, where a curious division of labour between Ankar and Erik, whom I presumed to be a non believer, was taking place.

> This morning I meet Ankar for the first time in the gambling hall. Having gambled my day's ration away on a Midnight Magic, I get to chat with Ankar, who has kept an eye on me and my adventure with the Midnight Magic. Ankar asks me if I go to church on Sundays and tell me that he attends a mosque every Friday, but he considers Sunday to be a lucky day for gambling. He also says that he prefers to gamble in this uptown gambling hall instead of the one in his neighbourhood because his 'people' there tell him all the time that gambling is a bad thing to do. Ankar proudly walks me round the gambling hall, like he is hosting the place, pointing out the different machines – Mount Everest, Sir Win a Lot, Allan Capone – that he has become skilled in. He moves his fingers rapidly over the screen in the gambling machines following the lines and structures of the games, thus showing me that he has this knowledge at his fingertips. 'I don't read, but I know these machines well', he says with confidence. Shortly after-

wards, a man called Erik enters the gambling hall greeting Ankar with a happy smile: 'Hello Ankar'. Ankar returns his happy smile, saying 'Hello Erik'. Ankar whispers to me: 'He is one of those I've helped'. Erik starts gambling feverishly, explaining that he has 'to be somewhere else in a few moments'. Ankar walks over to Erik to make some suggestions on which choices he should make with the buttons, but Ankar's tricks do not bear fruit. Erik says to Ankar: 'Even though you have electric fingers, they haven't worked recently', and Ankar shakes his head in agreement.

Now Erik gets a bit irritated at not winning: 'It's unbelievable how many small games it [the gambling machine] will give you'. Despite having just established that Ankar's 'electric finger' has not worked recently, he now gives Ankar a twenty-kroner coin to gamble in his (Erik's) machine. Ankar gambles but doesn't win. Erik says in a somewhat ironic but sympathetic tone to Ankar: 'Why don't you go home and lie down for a moment completely relaxed and touch that rosary and then come back here'. Ankar doesn't reply but keeps up his friendly smile. Then Erik returns to the gambling machine he first gambled on when he entered and puts in a few coins, this time apparently getting a small win. He pushes the payout button to collect his money and hands Ankar a twenty-kroner coin, apparently acknowledging his positive influence on the outcome. Then Ankar suggests that he and I have a joint gambling session, and once again Ankar demonstrates his thorough knowledge of the structure of the games. We keep losing money, but Ankar appears rather composed.

Ankar appeared to be a very competent player in at least two ways. He had acquired an embodied, visual knowledge of gambling machines. Like any other player, he had acquired his knowledge of gambling machines by watching the small light on the screen of the gambling machine travelling through the symbolic landscape of the game. He had trialled, tested his knowledge, and incorporated the symbolic world and its movements. He tried eagerly to tell me the course of the different games and gave me examples of successes when he had helped other customers to win games. However, his Danish was so poor that I did not get the details. I could see, however, from the way he moved his fingers on the display of the gambling machine to demonstrate how a game would run that he was a very

experienced player. I noticed that he did not get frustrated like many others I had observed when their expectation of a positive outcome of their actions did not result in a win.

Ankar waved his arm and shook his head lightly as he gambled without luck and perhaps he knew and accepted the unpredictability of the gambling machines. I was rather struck by the obvious trust in Ankar that Erik demonstrated by giving Ankar a coin to gamble with and through his willingness to share, but also by how Erik solved his own annoyance at the 'small games' by handing over the task to a co-player.

Ankar had acquired a feel not only for games on gambling machines, but also for the place and the players as a whole. This he demonstrated with his kind manners and careful conduct in balancing his exchanges with other customers without placing demands on them. In the gambling hall, he might have experienced a degree of respect and equality in his being that he might not have had otherwise in his everyday life, where he was up against racism, illiteracy, unemployment and low chances of improving his financial status. Ankar's history was one of drugs and crime, and he was currently living from a part-time cleaning job. He told me that he had replaced drug-taking with gambling and that he felt more at ease with this because now he was more in control of his temper and he did not 'have to knock out old ladies to get money for drugs', as he said. Ankar was married and the father of an infant.

I found two aspects of importance in my encounter with Ankar in terms of intersubjectivity in the gambling hall. One was Ankar's incorporation of the symbolic world of gambling machines; the other was the way he was able to offer this knowledge in reciprocal exchanges with other customers in the gambling hall. Like most customers I have talked to and observed in the gambling hall, Ankar played the gambling machines for fun, as well as in the hope of winning. The movement of the little spot of light on the screen of the gambling machine showed Ankar how the game proceeded and indicated something about his chances. The experience that Ankar narrated was a story told by moving his fingers across a symbolic landscape of chance, defeat and success. He managed to make the gambling hall a place through the confluence of paths of movements of symbols in the gambling machine by a narrative. Hence, Ankar was in a way chasing the jackpot in the symbolic landscape of the gambling machine and using his embodied knowledge of the these landscapes on the screens of the gambling machines much like a hunter knows the landscape in which he hunts his game.

According to Ingold, there are two ways whereby a hunter can narrate his experience (Ingold 2000: 24-25): he can tell that he is a perpetually skilled agent who knows where the animals are; and he is able to narrate stories of his hunting journeys and his encounters with animals (ibid.). This is not knowledge of a formal, authorised kind which is transmissible in contexts outside those of its practical application. 'On the contrary it is based on feeling, consisting in the skills, sensitivities and orientations that have developed through long experience of conducting one's life in a particular environment. […] hunters draw it from close attention to the movements, sounds and gestures of animals' (ibid.: 25). When I watched customers playing, I began to realise that they were watching play features on the screen of the gambling machine, as well as listening to the sounds that supplemented them, in order to learn and determine when there might be good opportunities to invest. Close attention to visual and auditory play features was inevitable in the play process. It was this attention that produced narratives, and by which people learned to play the gambling machines.

To me Ankar demonstrated his narrative skills as a kind of hero of gambling when he won, and ultimately he used his experience in reciprocal exchange with other customers in the gambling hall. Thus, he was not only inserting meaning into the landscape, but also allowing his fellow players a place in the landscape in such a way that this meaning was revealed or disclosed. In this way, Ankar's stories helped open up the world of the gambling hall and created it as a place of intersubjectivity in which reciprocal exchanges between players had an important part in the gambling process.

Reciprocity, or exchanging something in give and take relations, is part of the logic of intersubjectivity, according to Jackson (Jackson 1998: 77; Jackson 2005: XVI). Even though the material world of the gambling hall per se was without subjectivity, it was a world subject to Ankar's and many other player's intensive labours by which they absorbed and incorporated the gambling hall into their stories, experience and little rituals. Ankar's rosary, his incorporated knowledge and other customer's use of him as some kind of empowered mascot, for which he received respect, kindness and a token of financial reward, was perhaps an example of how human relationships came about and how they were reproduced in the gambling hall. But it was equally a story of how Ankar had become somewhat transformed from a criminal drug addict, not respected by the wider Danish society, to an equal partner-in-play inside the gambling hall.

Concrete human interaction was far from necessary for the gambling process, but it enhanced the entertainment value of the place, as well as creating a friendly and informal atmosphere. By practising the place in ways that personified the entertainment experience, customers inhabited the room and made it alive with their attentive engagement. Lone used the gambling hall as an extension of her living room when she brought her groceries and everyday affairs to be talked about with the manager. Peter, Tom and John made the gambling hall come alive by chatting about everyday matters, their cooperation in the gambling process and enhancing the entertainment effect of a Jackpot game. Christa eased tensions for a while among disappointed customers who kept losing money, and probably encouraged them to continue gambling. Reciprocal exchanges of tricks and coins between Erik and Ankar was another example of how inter-human interaction animated the gambling hall and made it a lived-in place and experience.

However, as I have already implied and discussed in Chapter 4, the experience of the gambling hall was also an experience of the darker sides of gambling, and I discussed the impact of the power/knowledge aspect of the 'ludomania' category in the gambling hall. We saw that 'ludomania' was experienced as an embodied deviance that might render a person 'mad' or 'possessed' as well as 'composed' and finding 'peace'. In the next section I show how the power/knowledge category af 'ludomania' played a part in the in the gambling hall and how it helped point out customers as 'ludomaniacs'.

Out-of-frame and breaking frames

In his study of deviance, Howard Becker shows that people adopt a deviant behaviour and identity in processes of internal-external dialectic of how one sees oneself and how one is perceived by the public (Becker 1963: 41-120). Thus, labelling of deviance does not happen automatically but because of institutionalised categorisations being internalised in human's self-perception. Here I want to substantiate my argument about the reproduction of the 'ludomania' category in the gambling hall as a practiced place. In turning attention to how customers used the 'ludomania' label interactively in out-of-frame events I will discuss it in the light of Becker's interactionist theory of deviance (Becker 1963: 181) and of Hacking's theory of classification (Hacking 2004).

Situations of encounters between customers were not always related to specific gambling sessions. On some nights, a certain customer might bring his dog with him to the gambling hall. This would draw attention away from the other customers present and somehow loosen up the atmosphere of lonely gambling. From time to time, there were attempts by customers to break with the ethos of the lonely affairs that people had with their gambling machines in order to experience the gambling hall in a more communal way. A curious example was when, one day, some gambling machines were being repaired and therefore had been moved a little away from their usual position against the wall. This caused the manager to do some cleaning, and one of the non-gambling customers started throwing a wet cleaning towel to some other customers, who in turn caught it and send it off to other customers as in a ball game, causing laughter and amusement. Customers like Christa and Leif often attended the gambling hall without gambling much themselves, but they liked to join in the community by chatting with customers on everyday affairs, doing football betting, reading newspapers or drinking coffee by the coffee table. With their smiles, gestures and encouraging remarks they struck a balance between interference and a more unobtrusive way of attending. On the other hand, by not engaging directly in playing the gambling machines, they were somehow distancing themselves from the frames of play.

We might say that customers were sometimes engaged in what Goffman calls *out of frame activity* (Goffman 1974: 201), that is, when players were disengaged from what might be considered the ordinary course of events. This, of course, depended on whose perspective one takes and on what was at stake in any particular situation. In most

of the gambling halls I attended, the management did not approve of customers engaging in activities that were not strictly playing the gambling machines. In other gambling halls, as we have seen, the management favoured inter-human relations among customers. My impression was that, even though customers often preferred the lonely engagement with gambling machines, they liked 'having other people around', as Lone had told me, but only as long as it did not disturb their individual engagement with the gambling machine. If these examples above can bee seen as out-of-frame activities then they might not be extraordinary. They occurred from time to time as practices which were easy to adopt to when there was reason to do so (ibid.: 246), and once adopted, they became part of continuous gambling sessions. There were some out-of-frame events, however, that I felt caused uneasiness among people in the gambling hall.

On some occasions, I witnessed customers making remarks about specific and non-specific customers being 'ludomaniacs.' One such customer told me that he made these gestures in order to make people think about what they were doing. He told me that his daughter had a gambling problem, and now he was trying to help others by making them reflect on what they were doing. On another occasion, I witnessed a customer arriving in the gambling hall in saying aloud: 'Are there any 'ludomaniacs' here?' Thus, the 'ludomania' label, was used to designate customers as people who gamble in a general way, as well as people who gamble too much and therefore had a gambling problem.

Humans who have been labelled with an officially sanctioned deviance share that label and the experience of it (Becker 1963: 11). Is it possible that the customers who called their fellow customers 'ludomaniacs' to profess themselves were reacting against a disease category and its individualising consequences and felt a need to share it communally? Becker has argued that people who are engaged in deviant practices engage in labelling practices where they sometimes accuse or condemn their fellow deviants for their acts in order to justify their own involvement and perhaps even punish themselves for it (Becker 1963: 28-29, 31). The events I observed where customers used the 'ludomania' label in face-to-face encounters it was used by persons, who intentionally or unintentionally discredited the cognitive assumptions of the gambling scene being sustained, and I have therefore suggested that they might be seen as out-of-frame events (Goffman 1974: 347-348). However, the interactionist order of ludomania includes more than the face-to-face encounters. Ludomania is, as I have already discussed in relation to Foucault's notion

of bio-power, Becker's and Goffman's interaction theories and Hacking's notion of *inter-active kinds*, an institutional category imbued with knowledge and power.

Ian Hacking has suggested that Foucault's top-down approach to bio-power and Goffman's 'buttom-up' approach may be complementary to the understanding of labelling processes (Hacking 2004: 277). According to Hacking, Goffman provides extensive descriptions of human face-to-face interaction: words, gestures, body language, the tone, silences, and the withdrawals in order to understand how people defined themselves and how they were understood by others in specific situations and settings. Foucault on the other hand uses big amounts of statements at specific time and places dissociated from the human beings who spoke them, and uses them as data to characterise a system of thought, a discursive formation (ibid.: 278, 288). Hacking's aim is to arrive at 'an understanding of how the forms of discourse become part of the lives of ordinary people, or even how they become institutionalized and made part of the structure of institutions at work.' (278).

According to Hacking, humans cannot interact with deviant categories before such categories have been invented. However, once invented and practiced in institutions, even persons who have no perception of the label will learn from their fellows deviants thus classified (ibid.: 297). This is also a central theme in Beckers interactionist theory of deviance (Becker 1963: 31ff). However, Hacking specify that labelling processes are more than reactive expressions to classifications in face-to-face interaction. Labelling processes occur due to the power of knowledge inherent in classification (Hacking 2004: 298). Thus, he contends that knowledge of genetic dispositions for deviant behaviour may well 'over-confirm' deviant behaviour, because the classification is confirmed in cycles or what he terms *looping effect of classification* (ibid.: 297).

The principle of the looping effect goes like this. First, there is an effect on people who are classified as part of scientific knowledge, and some of the classified change their behaviour accordingly to fit the classification.[109] Then there may be a change in the criteria of the classification, which in turn may affect the people classified, and looping may continue (ibid.: 297-298). If applied to gambling, the looping effect might go as follows. First, we have a segment of a population with a tendency to have a gambling

[109] A similar kind of observation has been made by Allan Young about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (see Allan Young: A description of how ideology shapes knowledge of a mental disorder (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), in: Shirley Lindenbaum & Margareth Lock (Eds.) (1993): Knowledge, power and practice: the anthropology of medicine and everyday life.

habit. Then we acquire some proposed knowledge of this type of behaviour, and then, by virtue of the classification, the classified adapt their behaviour accordingly day by day. Classifications become not only habitual in terms of role, they also become almost an integral part of the body and thus part of one's essence' (ibid.: 299}.

The 'ludomania' label and treatment opportunities were introduced simultaneously with the liberalisation of the gambling laws that introduced the expansion of legal gambling in Denmark, and due to press coverage the label was well known to everyone by the time legal gambling was in Denmark. Customers in the gambling hall were therefore familiar with the term, as well as with the perceived dangers of gambling in terms of addiction and financial ruin and we have seen how the 'ludomaia' category became part of an embodied experience – perhaps almost an essence of ones being as a customer in the gambling hall.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed subject players in terms of their worldly incarnate existence in their common field of experience in order to determine the nature of sociability in the gambling hall, as well as its role in people's motives in attending the gambling hall. Of course, communal life in the gambling hall did not always run as smoothly as I might have pictured it above. Conflict arose in some situations over user rights to certain gambling machines, which had to be solved by the manager of the gambling hall, and I was also told that regular customers were often reluctant to share their knowledge about gambling machines with newcomers. Conflicts might also arise over winnings if one customer felt that he had a share in another's win because he had contributed with tricks. Despite such observations, the gambling hall was also a lived-in or 'social' experience as Lone and Anne had emphasised – a kind of social centre where informal exchanges between people took place, like caring, tricks, gossip, knowledge and occasionally small presents. The exchanges of swift touches and smiles were an important part of the 'social' element. The difference between gambling sessions that did not involve such interactions and those that did was often very clear. Friendly human interaction made customers feel more at

home and comfortable with any situation, not least when they were financially unsuccessful in their gambling.

Bauman may be right when he writes that the experiences of closely-knit communities, where people share biographies through a long history, are nowadays missing (Bauman 2001: 48). One vision of contemporary society is of existing communities representing specialised or aesthetic groups of people devoid of a feeling of belonging (ibid.: 60-71). When Bauman speaks of 'instant communities', he is referring to communities of consumption which do not have any bearing beyond the point of consumption (ibid.). This was partly true of the gambling hall, but only partly so because, as we have seen, people shared history in the gambling hall even though they were faced with restrictions in the physical layout of the material environment and the obvious limitations which financial loss produced. However, it depended on the mood of the customers present and on the flow of life in the gambling hall in that situation. Lone stressed the advantage of the gambling hall as a place where she was free to enjoy either solitary engagement or a more 'social' way of attending. This, she said, would depend on what mood she was in on a particular day. The view of the gambling hall as a 'sleazy' place filled with 'bad people',[110] as Steen had said, conflicted with my observations of trust and caring between the people.

When I watched people in the gambling hall talking to, kicking, laughing at, teasing, dancing, making bowing movements and uttering spells in front of the gambling machines that were flickering and moving with lights and sounds, a lively environment appeared. It was an environment in which customers constituted what Goffman calls a 'habitable universe' and 'a plane of being' (Goffman 1974: 5), a being that was brought about in a continuous dialogue with fellow customers and the environment of the gambling hall. The intersubjective character of designer sounds apparently played an important part in the experience of the gambling hall as a process of community. There were different kinds of sounds, like teasing, invoking and calling, and they were used among other things as a way of navigating in a landscape in which customers played with chance and fate, but also sought to be in control. In the community aspect of the gambling hall, sounds were not only sensory phenomena with symbolic attributes, as I discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Sounds were attributed with the qualities of a subject that customers included in their repertoire of subjects in the gambling process.

[110] *Dårlige mennesker*

Gambling offered an opportunity to demonstrate to other humans that one might master the characteristics of self-control in the face of uncertainty. In terms of human interaction, this might be interpreted as a search for ontological security – an experience of belonging to the community of a place (Jackson 2005: 36). Perhaps this struggle for control and security reflected a universal human condition of a world that people experienced as alien and other, and yet as one's own.

For some customers, the gambling hall became a more or less permanent and stable place or station in their everyday journeying. They might be incorporated into a 'clan' to which they belonged, or they might rely on the hospitable atmosphere of the gambling hall, where the staff might be ready to serve the customers. When the gambling hall became this kind of place, we may begin to see it not as a transient, spontaneous gathering of a liminal communitas, but more as a modality of an organised kind of communitas, with its own normative and ideological character. Most of the gambling halls I frequented had been established recently, yet they were beginning to show some of the same characteristics as the older gambling halls that had 'clans' of regular customers. I wondered if that would make them less liminal, spontaneous and existential. As I write this, I think not. I have argued that the moral, physical and symbolic seclusion from ordinary everyday life which these places represented, as well as the actions that went on there, qualify the gambling halls as liminal and liminoid places and processes in Turner's sense and as heterotopia in Foucault's sense.

Intersubjectivity in the gambling hall consisted not only of the face-to-face encounters observed in the verbal and physical encounters between people. It was also, and perhaps more importantly, what was at work in customer's emotions, drives and handling of physical and symbolic objects in their dialogical experiments with one another and the environment, including the 'ludomania' category.

Chapter Six

‘It’s fucking me with its eyes’

An animistic relationship with the gambling machine

Sir Win a Lot
Virginia City
Allan Capone
Thors Hammer
Midnight Magic
Orientexpressen
Mount Everest[111]

Introduction

When customers in the gambling hall were fully absorbed with the features of symbols and games, and with their faces so close to the display of the gambling machine, making eyes, faces and gestures in front of it, at times scolding it and kicking it, I sensed players in a deep and intimate, almost bodily involvement with the gambling machine. At other times, their engagement with the machine would be more like ignoring it or pretending to ignore it by looking away or stepping back with a detached countenance, but even so, it still confirmed the existence of some kind of relationship with the gambling machine. There was

[111] Names of some gambling machines.

also an abundance of body metaphors that were used in verbal interactions in the gambling process, and I also discovered that gambling had a sensory dimension in which specific bodily experiences occurred.

In Chapter 4, I described the relationship that a person might have with him- or herself in the form of an inner dialogue taking place in the gambling process and discussed it as a liminal state of being. In Chapter 5, I described the gambling hall as the interaction of a community of equals – a *communitas*[112] – in an expansion of my argument of the gambling hall as a liminal place and process. In this chapter I take this argument further by analysing the overt interaction between a person and a gambling machine as a specific kind of relationship and discuss what is at stake in it.

This somewhat intimate interaction with the gambling machine that I observed was, as I have already shown, partly based on a demand for a jackpot. However, it might also reflect a need to maintain relationships in one's wider being as we saw in Chapter 5, where I discussed ontological security in terms of human community. In Jackson's sense, we might say that the gambling machine was part of the dynamic of *intersubjective*[113] social life, where persons are likened to things and things to persons (Jackson 1998: 77; Olsen 2003: 95-96). In this chapter I will therefore take this discussion further in order to explore what was at stake in this relationship between human and machine (Silverstone 1993; Jackson 1998: 81; Hornborg 2006: 29). The gambling machine might be understood as *humanised nature* in the sense that it was a technology constructed to serve humans, and as such, it engaged people with it in a form of life (Pfaffenberger 1992: 244). If this was the case, then players engaged with the gambling machine as a non-human subject. Therefore we might approach it analytically as an animistic practice (Jackson 1998: 76-82; Ingold 2000: 91, 114; Jackson 2005: 132, 137; Hornborg 2006: 22; Scott 2006: 60).[114]

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[112] See Chapter 5 for a discussion of *communitas* in relation to the gambling hall.

[113] A phenomenological definition and discussion of *intersubjectivity* is undertaken in Chapter 4.

[114] I have chosen *animism* and *anthropomorphism* as the analytical category for this chapter well knowing that Actor-Network Theory (also known as ANT) might be suited for the analysis of human-machine interaction. (See Law, J. and J. Hassard, Eds. (1999). Actor Network Theory and after, Blackwell Publishing. Latour, B. (2005). Reassembling the social, Oxford University Press.). Thus, ANT includes non human actors as essential for the understanding of actors as results of *networks* (Ibid). Although there may be important differences between ANT according to Law and ANT according to Latour (Latour 1999: 24), it largely dismisses the term and epistemology of *intersubjectivity* as well as the analytical importance of face-to-face interaction (Latour, 2005: 84, 200-210). In light of my choice of *intersubjectivity* as a central analytical concept in this thesis, I have found discussion with *animism* and *anthropomorphism* more compatible with my

Customers in the gambling hall often pointed out to me that it was dangerous to become deeply involved in gambling because it might entrap one in a destructive way. In the following I discuss this as a danger inherent in *animism* – a danger of becoming one with the non-human subject and losing one's sense of being human (Ingold 1996; Ingold 2000: 123). I also discuss it as a ritualistic activity – a mundane ritual – that replaces acting and therefore becomes a form of escape through which the individual might lose him- or herself in a dissociated state of mind (Jackson 2005: 109). In the following, I describe the interactions of Jang, Ahmet, Nadim, Anne, Lone and others with the gambling machine, including how they countered difficult situations in the process of gambling. I analyse customer's engagement with the gambling machine primarily with reference to Jackson and Ingold's theories of intersubjectivity and *animism*. I also discuss the relevance of these theories for an understanding of my informants' experiences with or fears of an 'addiction' to gambling machines and their perceptions of their 'dangers'.

Getting so close to a gambling machine

My first experience with a jackpot came a few weeks after I had started my fieldwork in the gambling halls. It was a rather sleepy morning, and I was surrounded by quietly humming and buzzing gambling machines waiting to become alert and turned on with more and louder sounds by customers putting coins in them. A few drowsy customers and I were looking at our chances while sipping the free coffee from small plastic cups. It felt like a comfortable way to wake up. My own choice of gambling was for a Magic Night. I liked the music in this one, and I liked the visual image of a universe with planets. Before I knew it, the screen changed from quiet beeps and bleeps into a visual and sonic explosion of Stars that multiplied from a centre towards the periphery of the screen, where the words 'Congratulations, you have won' appeared. The fact that this win was only 125 kroner did not disturb my feelings of having been somehow chosen for this lucky strike. My first reaction was rather bodily: on watching the star explosion accompanied by the electronic sounds a sinking feeling was spread from my solar plexus and blended with the sensation

approach because they acknowledge the lived experience of human's practical engagement with non human objects.

of tiny bubbles of champagne tickling every cell in my body. I had won! I was at the centre of the bleeps and beeps of stars in an enormous universe. The Magic Night had somehow touched my body, and I experienced a kind of unity between myself and the gambling machine. I was experiencing the 'kick' of gambling that I had sometimes heard people talk of. Although this moment was very brief, it allowed me a sensory experience of being looked at by a universe, which rewarded my innermost, unspoken dreams of connectedness with abundance. I was thrilled for a few seconds until the intellectual and rational 'me' took over; I cooled down as my credit went down too at each push of the start button.

Weeks later, I came across a young man of sixteen in the gambling hall who was restlessly walking around indecisively, considering what to do. I approached him, and he told me that one year ago he had had a jackpot on an Orientexpres, and it had 'lit up in red and blue and green light', he said with a breathlessness and big shining eyes, as if this had just happened to him a moment ago. The jackpot had rewarded him with over 1,000 kroner. He told me that he had played the gambling machines many times since, but there had been no jackpot and he had lost a lot of money. He could not help returning to the gambling hall from time to time to see if he could make the same gambling machine light up again.

This reminded me of Jang, who had explained his approach to gambling machines to me as a matter of keeping a balance between 'luck, common sense and keeping a cool head'. Jang was rather sceptical of the way some people gambled with gambling machines. In Jang's opinion, 'ludomaniacs' were people who tried to win over the gambling machine, and that was dangerous. Another man, Ahmet, who was gambling several jackpots in a row while talking to me, used a similar image of getting 'burned' on the gambling machines and added another term of danger: 'The problem is that you get burned on to the machine. You can guess fifty percent of what the machine will do – the rest is pure chance. What makes you addicted is that you <u>read</u> four to six machines in a row'[115] (my emphasis).

'Reading' machines in order to estimate one's chances and judge which skills to apply in the process of gambling perhaps created a unity between player and gambling machine[116]. When a player started learning how to play a gambling machine, he or she

[115] Problemet er at man brænder fast på maskinen. Man kan gætte halvtreds procent, hvad maskinen vil gøre, resten er ren chance. Det der gør én afhængig er at man <u>læser</u> fire til seks maskiner i træk.

[116] According to Tim Ingold, reading is not reserved to literate people and societies, but may be considered a universal feature of humans as a way of relating to the world (Ph.D. seminar Århus University 14-04-2007).

became familiar with particular gambling machines and built a relationship with it based on human ingenuity and the gambling machine's perceived responsiveness. In this process, players sometimes got extremely close to a gambling machine that they were stuck or perhaps even merged a little with it as if in a melting process ('burned'). The perceived responsiveness of gambling machines was also expressed in the metaphor of getting 'turned on to'[117] the machine. The many flickering and coloured lights and sounds of the gambling machines that evoked the senses were not only irresistible to some, they were also attributes with which one might engage in an almost embodied way in the sense that there was an exchange between person and gambling machine in a process of 'entertainment'[118] and learning. Thus, it was likely that the interplay between one's ingenuity, the entertainment attributes of the gambling machine and one's perceived chances set one off in gambling processes where one might experience a range of emotions and states that instigated a continuation of gambling sessions.

The combination of perceived responsiveness on the one hand and unpredictability on the other hand was part of the excitement in gambling, but it also called for players' willingness and ability to engage attentively with their bodies and their imaginary capabilities. As far as I could determine, this was practised as a sensory engagement by listening, looking and to some extent intuitively feeling how the gambling machines were running in order to determine whether it would be beneficial to start gambling sessions, continue them or end them. However, as we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, it might also be done by pointing and following the moving lights with one's finger. Before I give more ethnographic evidence concerning the nature and process of the interaction between person and gambling machine, I will conduct an exploration into the philosophy of technology. In addition to this, I will consider ethnographic case studies of how people get to know machines on a daily basis (Ihde 1979; Barley 1988; Pfaffenberger 1992; Downey 1998; Olsen 2003).

According to primatologist and psychologist Jill Byrnit, humans are the only species who 'read' their surroundings and the motives of their fellow humans; see Prætorius, H. (2008). Vi er hypersociale dyr. Videnskabens Verden. Denmark**:** 16:03.

[117] *Tænde på*: literally 'ignite', but here translated as 'turned on'.

[118] *Forlystelse*

Machines as humanised nature

Bryan Pfaffenberger has suggested that technology is neither morally or ethically neutral, nor an autonomous agent dictating the patterns of human life; it is rather a set of social behaviours in relation to a system of meanings (Pfaffenberger 1992: 241). A piece of technology is not only an artefact: in anthropological terms it is also a total social phenomenon because the material matter of it is, so to speak, married to the complex social and symbolic web of associations that humans create with it – it is humanised nature (ibid.: 144). But how does technology become humanised? In his book *Technics and Practice*, the philosopher Don Ihde provides a phenomenological approach to the human experience with familiar technology that we are engaged with on an everyday basis (Ihde 1979).

Ihde writes that: 'Human-machine relations are existential relations in which our fate and destiny are implicated, but which are subject to the very ambiguity found in all existential relations' (ibid.: 4). By handling machines and instruments of any kind, humans come to experience them as part of their own selves. By this Ihde means that the machine or instrument is only secondarily experienced as an object, while being primarily absorbed into one's experience as an extension of one's self (ibid.: 7). This is an embodied relation, which is taken into the human experience of what is Other in the World – an existential relationship – because 'The machine is capable of anthropomorphization in terms of its 'otherness'' (ibid.: 12-13). We engage with technology in momentary relations on an everyday basis:

> In these cases, I have had a momentary relation with a machine, but in the modality of a deistic god. I have merely adjusted or started in operation the machinery, which, once underway, does its own work. I neither relate through these machines, nor explicitly, except momentarily, to them. Yet at the same time I live in their midst, often not noticing their surrounding presence. Yet their surrounding presence is almost constant. For example, in the here and now we may meet in the presence of lights, the warmth provided by our semi-automatic heating systems, and in many modern buildings in which there is a total environmental control by way of technological artifacts (none of which work well in my experience) and we may be said to be 'inside' a machine. (ibid.: 14)

Idhe's reflections above might have been a description of some player's more or less momentary relationships with gambling machines, but Ihde was in fact reflecting on the use of a toaster as an example of a familiar, everyday technology. It is not least due to the constant surrounding presence of machines in the familiar surroundings of everyday life that this relationship becomes possible. Likewise the gambling machines may be said to have become familiar counterparts with which the customers in the gambling hall established what Olsen calls *quasi-social relationships* (Olsen 2003: 94) by way of their presence, just as television may be said to be in our everyday lives (Silverstone 1993).

According to Ihde, the use of the machine as an instrument in order to get at something is a hermeneutical relationship which is established between the person and the domain of the machine-world (Ihde 1979: 32-33). In order for this relationship to occur, the instrument and its result must be read, so to speak. This requires skills of interpretation to an extent that what is invisible, hidden or unsuspected comes into the visible horizon as text which tells us something about the thing, and must be read by the one who is literate in its language (ibid.: 34-35). This reminded me of Ankar, who had told me that he could not read letters, and then demonstrated by moving his fingers across the screen of the gambling machine that he understood the way the game was played on the machine while the game was running.[119] In Ihde's sense, Ankar had become literate in the language of the gambling machines from his long experience of them.

Following Ihde's line of thought, what followed in the player's process of interpreting the gambling machines was a transformation of experience in which the machine took on positivity as a quasi-Other and came to reside in the domain of the player in front of the World (ibid.: 35-42). In this interpretation process, the relationship between human and gambling machine was one of exchange in which the machine now belonged to the domain of the World, and then in turn and by human engagement with it came to belong to the domain of the human in an embodied symbolism.

Again Ihde's machine philosophy made sense in relation to what Ahmet and Ankar had said about 'reading' the gambling machines. But it also made sense with regard to how this constituted a hazard of getting lost in that other world. Other players, like Poul and Karl, also complained that that the sounds of the gambling machines, even when heard from a distance outside the gambling hall, would 'pull' them into the hall and start them

[119] See Chapter 5.

gambling. Others had become so submerged that they could not seem to stop gambling once they had become engaged in the intense dialogue with a gambling machine.

Other ethnographies of human's engagement with machines show similar characteristics. In two of these studies, there is evidence that humans approach machines as entities that are subjectified in the process of engagement (Barley 1988; Downey 1998). Stephen Barley studied how technological assistants deal with CT scanners and the imaging modalities which occur in the process of dealing with the constraints introduced by the breakdown of the scanners. He found that engineers used a variety of strategies, including ritually re-entering commands, as well as downloading and rebooting the computer. One of the problems that technicians faced was that they did not have manuals explaining how the scanners should be operated. In the course of dealing with such problems, Barley observed that technicians ascribed human properties to the scanner, which was said to 'like' or not 'like' something, to have 'a mind of its own', to act 'crazy' and to beep when it wanted to say 'I'm hot' (Barley 1988: 520). According to Barley, such anthropomorphic talk allowed the technicians to presume a world whose causes and effects could be understood (ibid.: 519). In Barley's view such talk represented a final solution to problems when all other strategies had failed. When confronted with technical complexity and extreme uncertainty combined with a pressing need to act, the ascription of human-like attributes to machines may be far more pragmatic than we care to admit, Barley suggests (ibid.: 523).

Gary Lee Downey makes a similar argument in his book about engineers' use of CAD/CAM computers for construction drawings (Downey 1998). According to Downey engineers were managing two different sets of relationships at the same time. One was the intentional engineer gaining control over an inert machine in the process of appropriating it as a tool for human purpose. This implied a degree of suffering through learning, step by step, how one might come to control it (ibid.: 147). The other relationship was much less articulated, but one in which the boundary between the human user and the machine had become blurred. It was established in the course of intimate engagement and problem-solving, in which the engineers had to reduce their bodies to an analogue of the computer, to reduce all significant bodily movements to linear terms (ibid.: 151). Logging on to the computer was critical because the intentions of the user were intertwined with the agencies of the software (ibid.: 152). Logging on to the computer gave the user a sense of travelling in a diagram of what Downey calls 'history lines', which displayed a visual map

on the screen in sequences of choices or movements which the user had made from different menus (ibid.: 160-162). Like Barley's technicians using the CT scanner without much support from manuals or educational training, Downey's informants experienced that the only way to get good on a CAD/CAM was to 'play with it' (ibid.: 169).

What insights might be drawn from these two studies and Ihde's philosophy? One insight might be that humans approach machines and to engage with them in the same manner, as they would approach any living subject – in a dialogical process and relationship. Downey's informants reluctantly admitted that they became what he calls 'geeks' in this process of exchanging with the computers, whereas Barley's informants, in their struggle to make the scanners work, developed an embodied experience expressed in metaphors of the scanners as persons. When humans approached gambling machines, it looked as if, at least in these cases, they were striking a delicate balance between the experience of having to submit to the logic of the gambling machine on the one hand, and their desire to impose their intentions wholly on the machine on the other hand. In Jang's experience, this balance was of paramount importance for success in gambling. According to him, people who thought that they could win over the gambling machine had not understood the importance of this balance. Using Ihde's terminology, the relationship between person and machine was like a relationship with a deistic god: one has to accept its sovereignty. As I understand Ihde, this means that humans cannot dominate technology, and they have to be on good terms with it in order for the relationship to work well.

Gambling machines are particular kinds of machines that may differ from everyday technology by being designed to give the player an experience of extreme responsiveness to the player's actions. In the following section, I describe this experience of responsiveness before I expand my discussion further into the problem of the relationship between player and gambling machine.

Experiencing gambling machines as responsive

As I have demonstrated and discussed throughout, people invested time, hope and money in the gambling machine. In the gambling process, it was curious to see how players sometimes responded to the gambling machine as a kind of non-human subject. The gambling machine was always referred to in the third person as 'it', but in many situations 'it' was acted upon and treated with second-person attributes and characters. When I studied my field notes, I found a range of attributes related to the third person of gambling machines: female partner (girlfriend/lover), male partner (boyfriend/lover), baby and devil. Furthermore, randomness was a vital feature of gambling machines, which were viewed both positively, as chance, and negatively, as unpredictability. When I heard people say: 'One hopes all the time that it will give something', 'I'll give it one more chance', and 'They take so much and give so little', then I saw hope being invested in the somewhat humanised gambling machines. However, I also began to realise that I had to look for more than this in order to understand why people were prepared to continue gambling on machines despite their inevitable losses.

As it appeared to me, gambling machines connoted body and person, as well as the empirical, indefinite, non-human characteristics of *giver* and *taker*. I recalled how Jabir had talked about 'falling into a mud hole and become poor' because of the 'magic' in the gambling machine that he felt would sometimes 'grab' him. I have also heard people use the word 'magnet' when they described that quality of the gambling machine that pulled them into the gambling hall. Thus, the connotations of supernatural or omnipotent attributes of gambling machines was present.

A gambling machine might also be talked to or about as 'dirt ear'[120] and being 'greedy'[121] when it did not reward the player with wins and therefore 'took' too much. Despite players attempting to get to know or understand gambling machines, unpredictability was prevailing. Anne expressed it this way: 'If you put 100 kroner into the gambling machine and it doesn't give you anything, then you shouldn't gamble on it. But it may play. It may go two or three times, and you can see quickly if it will or not, because sometimes they're up for it. But gambling machines are unpredictable. Some of them, you put

[120] *Møgøre*. Danish slang for an objectionable or disagreeable person.

[121] *Grådig.*

200-300 kroner in and nothing happens, and then suddenly green bars come up and you get sixty Jackpot Games.'[122] When players said 'It has a life of its own',[123] this was an expression for the unpredictability of the gambling machine as a non-human subject, a quasi-Other.

Players often used a wide spectrum of body metaphors in the gambling process. Words and expressions like 'fuck',[124] 'puke',[125] 'open its arse',[126] 'come',[127] 'go'[128] and 'eat'[129] are related to the basic physical functions of sex, food and motion. The use of these terms indicated that customers were engaged in satisfying the bodily needs of quasi-persons hoping to be rewarded accordingly. I have not met anyone in the gambling hall who did not think that gambling machines were very active in 'taking' or 'eating' money. If it was not for the factual observation that customers deliberately loaded thousands of kroner into them, one might have the impression that gambling machines were literally reaching out to grab money from players, who had to try and satisfy the bodily and emotional needs of the gambling machines. 'Puking', 'opening arses', 'moving,', 'orgasm' and 'ejaculation' referred to situations when a jackpot paid out several thousand kroner, which might be released in the payout tray at the player's request by pressing the payout button. Customers might try to bring about such a situation by light kicking, talking gently to the gambling machine or caressing it with an almost invisible movement of the hand. But gambling sessions often started by 'warming up the machine'[130] by inserting a few coins

[122] *Altså hvis man spiller på en maskine og putter 100 kroner i den og den overhovedet ikke giver et spil, så skal man ikke spille videre på den. Men den kan godt spille, men den har det med at gå to – tre gange og det kan man hurtig se om den vil eller ej, for de lægger lige som lidt op til det ind i mellem. Men spilleautomater er uforudsigelige. Der er nogen af dem hvor du putter 2-300 kroner i og der sker ikke en dyt og så lige pludselig, så kommer de grønne barer og så får man tres Jackpot spil.*

[123] *Den har sit eget liv.*

[124] *Kneppe*

[125] *Brække sig*

[126] *Lukke røven op*

[127] *Komme*. Slang for having an orgasm.

[128] *Gå*. Slang for ejaculation.

[129] *Spise*

[130] *Varme maskinen op*

and press the start button. By warming up the gambling machine, the player hoped to improve his or her chances of a massive and fast cash payout from the machine.

Qasim was a man in his thirties whom I only met a couple of times in the gambling hall. He talked to the gambling machine in a caring soft tone like he was talking to a baby from whom he was hoping for a smile as recognition: 'Come on now'. To me he said while loading coins into the gambling machine: 'I feed it'. Later he told me that he was extremely unhappy about his life as it was, being unemployed, divorced from the mother of his two children and now single. I could tell by his snuffling way of talking and the very slow reactions of his hands and fingers on the buttons of the gambling machine that he was drunk. The second time I met him in the gambling hall, he was taking frequent breaks away from the gambling machine and then returning to the same machine each time in a more intoxicated state. His eyes were bleary and red, and he told me that he had been outside to smoke pot: 'I'm drunk and stoned', he said with a broad flowing out smile that looked more like a baby's cry.

One of the prevailing ambivalences with regard to gambling machines that was most clearly manifested in players was the persistent hope that the gambling machine would 'give something', while still realising that it 'took' more than it gave. Hence, the paradox of the embodied gambling machine was that it appeared to attract a person who was looking for a friendly giver, or at least for reciprocity and fairness. What they found, however, was 'greed', 'dirt ears' and unpredictability. The kind of quasi-person that the gambling machine had become was one that appeared to draw the customer into its arms of 'magnets'. These would not let go, only lead the unfortunate person astray, seduced and broke, like an unhappy love relationship, where the player was never or only momentarily loved back. A young man who had gambled on a gambling machine eagerly for some time gave it a light kick and said in a loud voice: 'What's it up to? It's fucking me with its eyes.'

It was this statement that made me aware that the sensory play features of the gambling machine were not only not only symbolic objects working on the body, as I have already suggested in Chapter 5, they were also part of a process of subjectification. After sensing my bodily reaction to a jackpot myself, I began focussing on other people's responses to the sensory play attributes of the gambling machines. In a café with two gambling machines,

where I used to spend time transcribing my field notes from other gambling halls while observing the customers, I noticed two women playing. After taking a sip of a cold Hof,[131] each of them chose a gambling machine to gamble. A teasing humanoid voice persisted saying 'naa-na-na-naa-na'. The second woman then said to the first: 'When it does that, you just tell it: 'naa-na-na-naa-na' back'. They both continued to insert money into their respective gambling machines, and after a short while the first woman's machine repeated the 'naa-na-na-naa-na' teasing sound, causing the first woman to respond with an 'uh, uh.' Having pressed the auto buttons on the two machines and ordered 'two cold Tuborg'[132] at the bar, they returned to their café table, both keeping an eye on the gambling machines, but now with a detached look on their faces.

Observed from a distance, responsive exchanges between players and gambling machines was most pronounced in the sound attributes of the latter. An example of a sound pattern in a gambling hall, which I observed over thirty minutes, was as follows: horse neighing, music from a church organ, deep male voice saying 'Helloo, is anybody hoome', heartbeat, drums, bell jangle, something spinning, coins ringing in a cash register, fanfare, strumming on a banjo, bleeps and beeps, person whining and sequences of music. Each sound lasted a few seconds before the next took over. The sound of coins ringing was the most frequent, but not necessarily the most dominant in terms of volume. Sounds in gambling machines complemented the visual diagrams of the games as displayed by moving lights in the symbolic journey on the screen.

I observed many different kinds of responses from customers to sounds from gambling machines. One customer in the gambling hall, whom I rarely saw talking to anyone, looked more content with his dialogues with the gambling machines than with fellow players. On several occasions, I saw him engaging happily with an Orientexpres by pretending to have a revolver in his right hand when the gambling machine played western music. I often noticed that the sound pattern in the gambling machine created a rhythm, by which people might respond by rocking their bodies or operate buttons on the gambling machine in time to the rhythm. One example was a man who had chosen to play two gambling machines that were placed on each side of a projection, thus creating a rhythmic movement

[131] Name of a Danish beer.

[132] Name of a Danish beer.

almost like a dance supported by fragments of tunes and fanfares. It was not unusual to see customers gamble with two machines next to each other at the same time. Then they would push the start buttons by lingering for some seconds over each button, like a musician playing percussion.

There was monotony as well as variety in patterns in the gambling hall, and both appeared to meet a desire for bodily movement. Sounds were attractions that drew the player close to the gambling machine and might keep him or her there. Poul usually played the auto button and did not bother to learn the games, he said; he was more attracted to the sounds than the playing features of the gambling machines: 'Sounds can draw you into the gambling hall. Sounds go directly to the brain. You listen out for familiar sounds. It was a familiar sound that drew me into the gambling hall. So perhaps the devil is in the sound.'[133] Poul had also told me that when he went shopping he tried to avoid kiosks with gambling machines because of the effect that their sounds had on him. Instead he would go to the supermarket, where there were no gambling machines as yet.

Despite the fact that sounds made gambling machines evocative and players were entertained by them, they sometimes complained that the sounds in the gambling machines were in their ears all the time because they had been immersed in them for so long. Players were not happy about this state of affairs. Complaints to management about the intrusiveness of loud sounds happened from time to time, and I was told by a person who was professionally engaged in designing sounds for gambling machines that players sometimes inserted money in gambling machines with the sole purpose of changing their sound patterns for a while because they found the sounds disturbing.

When I examined my observations of player's momentary relations with gambling machines in light of the biographies and the everyday lives of my informants, the gambling machines had in some respects taken up a role as quasi-persons in people's lives. Hence, the subjectification of gambling machine sounds and lights played a vital part. The process of subjectification of these play features was brought about by their sensory attributes, which created emotionally affective responses in players. Perhaps it would be going too far to say that the gambling machines became part of customers' social networks. However, recalling how customers might regard gambling machines as resources that they might

[133] *Lydene i maskinerne kan godt trække én ind i spillehallen. Lydene går lige ind på lystavlen. Man lytter efter kendte lyde. Det var en kendt lyd der trak mig ind til en automat. Så det er måske i lyden den djævel sidder.*

have fights about and how they often returned to the gambling machines that they had a particular liking for, then it certainly looked as if the gambling machines had become vital others in people's lives.

Nadim frankly compared the gambling machine to a girlfriend, and he told me that he was missing one badly. He always gambled heavily on many gambling machines at a time, but I never saw him getting mad at a gambling machine, as some would over their losses. Each time I watched Nadim he had a gentle and overbearing attitude towards the gambling machines he was playing, despite his losses much as he was patient with his fellow customers who often asked for his help in playing the gambling machines. He appeared calm and somewhat satisfied when he explained to me that one of the attractions of a gambling machine was that it was 'looking at me', a reference to the glittering and moving lights on its screen. When I asked him if he liked that, he said 'Yes, very much'. And then there was Lone, who declared that she had 'fallen in love with a machine that had a little green frog with trumpets or something', a reference to her liking for a favourite gambling machine that she had got to know well over the years.

Not everybody I talked to was divorced or single, but I frequently came across people who said that they had had some kind of marital problem or crisis. One man whom I judged to be in his late twenties told me, that he was filling in time in the gambling hall because his girlfriend was working so much and never had enough time to spend with him. If the gambling hall and the gambling machines were in some situations a substitute for desired human contact and relationships then we might also expect to find that gambling machines were attributed with body connotations. Jang did not talk about marital problems. However, once after having talked matter-of-factly with me about games he lowered his voice as if he was about to reveal his most precious secret about the gambling machines: 'The machines have a cycle. It's something you get a feeling for. Sometimes I can say for sure if a machine will give a jackpot or the opposite.'[134] In the situation, I was taken by surprise on hearing this statement because it sounded much like getting to know a human and act accordingly in building a relationship.

When I asked Jang about the impact of his gambling on his family life, he told me that he and his wife had an equal relationship, and that his spending money on

[134] *Maskinerne har en cyklus. Det er noget man finder ud af med tiden. Man får en fornemmelse for hvordan de virker. Nogen gange kan jeg sige med sikkerhed at en maskine vil give jackpot eller det modsatte.*

gambling was no problem because they both had good incomes. It was only the time he spent away from the children that was beginning to bother him, he said. It was a statement from Jabir that brought me as close as I came to a conclusion, that player's relationship with the gambling machine could match the human relationships in their everyday lives: 'When I am in a bad mood I go to the gambling hall and get mad at a machine instead of a person.' Thus gambling machines were not only constructed as momentary vital Others but Others that one got to know over time and therefore also incorporated into one's relationships with significant subjects in one's life.

It looked is if Jang, Nadim and others had become accustomed to gambling machines as familiar items of consumption in their everyday life and incorporated them into their intersubjective life where persons are likened to things and things to persons. Gambling machines had become Others endowed with human-like characters, sometimes friendly givers, lovers, babies and unpredictable, but perhaps most of all greedy Others. This subjectification of gambling machines happened as part of the play process of imagination and hoping for jackpots where learning and playing over time the interaction with the gambling machine turned out to become like an existential relationship. The gambling machine designs invited players to move their bodies within the diagram of light features on the screen accompanied by sound effects – rocking one's body, reading the light, and getting thrilled by events in pursuit of one's luck.

If we compare these observations with Barley's analysis of anthropomorphic talk with machines, we might see this as a response to the unpredictability of gambling machines – a way of maintaining some hold on the situation. In my discussions of the gambling hall as a liminal place and process, I have also pointed at player's ritualistic engagement with the gambling machine. In light of the discussion on subjectification of machines we might consider the gambling machine as inscribed in an intersubjective dialogue within a ritualistic engagement that was not only a momentary relationship, but also an existential and embodied relationship that was incorporated into their wider being in the world. In Downey's analysis of technicians handling CAD/CAM machines, we saw that the engagement became a quite bodily experience in which the machine's features were rubbed off on the technician, but also that the machines were attributed human characteristics.

A similar process appeared to be at stake in the gambling hall, where sensory stimuli sometimes had wide-ranging effects on one's gambling experience. It reminded me of Bo, who sometimes talked about his restlessness and having 'butterflies in the stomach' when he first experienced a jackpot, and how these sensations recurred over and over again and led him to start new gambling sessions, despite the cognitive therapy he had received in the treatment centre. When Hans, Ahmet and others referred to these bodily sensations as a danger in gambling, they became my most direct source of inspiration to look for some possible answers to *animistic* relationships in anthropology, that is, the specific relationship that sometimes evolves between hunter and animal in the hunt.

Animism, anthropomorphism

'Animism' is a key term in Ingold's anthropology of human engagement with the environment (Ingold 2000; Ingold 2006). He describes what he calls the inter-agentive field of relations between humans and humans, as well as between humans and non-human objects experienced as human (Ingold 2000: 47). For this argument, he draws on extensive studies of hunter-gatherer societies, from which he presents numerous convincing examples of the human experience of the animated environment and how human perceptions of non-human objects are founded in an intimate engagement with the world, including non-human objects becoming persons (Ingold 2000). Ingold proposes an application of a theory of animism based in relational ontology, which he sees as universally applicable for an understanding of humans' relations with the environment (Ingold 2006: 9). According to Ingold, animism is a matter of <u>being</u> in the world rather than <u>believing</u> about the world. It has a dynamic, transformative potential for beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, who continually and reciprocally bring each other into existence (ibid.: 10). For instance, the ideas of searching for life in outer space and the hunter imagining that there are spirits in animals are equally about the emergence of being alive in the world as springing from a human's engagement with his or her environment.

Animism, then, is a condition of being alive to the world by means of a 'heightened sensitivity and responsiveness in perception and action, to an environment that is always in flux, never the same from one moment to the next' (ibid.). Ingold makes a

similar kind of statement in an earlier essay where he writes that 'the perception of the social world is grounded in the direct, mutually attentive involvement of self and other in shared contexts of experience, *prior* to its representation in terms of received conceptual schemata' (Ingold 1996: 129). Animism, however, is not only a condition of being: it is also a practical way of dealing with human capacities, such as spirits, in the natural world (Ingold 2000: 107). This is achieved through intimate dialogue based on a kind of sensory participation where the intelligence lies neither in the head of the human nor in the fabric of the natural world, but in the co-presence of the human and in the natural world (Ingold 1999 664: 82).

Colin Scott observes that in Cree bear hunting, the hunters must strive to maintain good relationships with others in the world. This is manifested in the perception of the bear as a kind of spiritual alter that endows the hunter with a profound sense of identity, value and personal meaning so that his actions are at once practical, social, ethical and self-motivated (Scott 2006: 51). The observation that the Cree world is a place of deep vitality, sometimes restful, sometimes dynamic, always pregnant with possibility and surprising phenomena makes Scott question whether there is inevitably a distinction between the animation of living things such as animals or trees, and the animation of non-living things, such as stones or machines. May we in fact speak of dead objects at all (Scott 2006: 61)?

Admittedly, it may be a far-fetched idea to compare gambling machine gambling with animal hunting. However, the gambling hall might be compared to a hunting field of opportunities. There the customer sought his or her luck in a place of deep vitality. It was sometimes restful when none or just a few customers were playing sporadically on a few gambling machines, and sometimes dynamic when players were engaged in exchanging tricks, when stories of Jackpot Games blended with intense activity in gambling, gambling machine repairs and gambling machine sounds mixing with chatting about everyday life. If the gambling hall was also, as I have argued in Chapters 4 and 5, a place of possibility in its widest sense, in being a place of dreams of transforming one's life, then it might make sense for players to pursue this dream by animating the place and in turn being animated by it. To customers in the gambling hall, as to me, the observing anthropologist, gambling machines were certainly not dead objects. Rather the relationship between person and gambling machine was replete with ambivalence. Furthermore, it appeared that many

struggled to get the relationship to work to their advantage. The narrative and metaphorical construction of the gambling machine also indicated that it was at times a very hot relationship in terms of passion perhaps but more certainly danger of becoming one or stuck with the gambling machine. Was there a more profound way of understanding this strange phenomenon of almost becoming one with the machine?

In his monograph *Soul hunters: hunting, animism, and personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs*, Rane Willerslev argues for an understanding of animism as mimesis, in the sense that it is basically a mimetic practising of two modes of being in the world (Willerslev 2007: 9). When the hunter finds himself in the context of hunting, he is involved in mimetic activity in which he must be engaged as well as reflecting, becoming the same as the animal as well as being different from the animal and being himself yet not being himself (ibid.). Willerslev explains the mimetic mode of being as an expression that involves copying to the point of blending and becoming of the same kind as the other (ibid.: 10). This implies some lack of realism, an ability to move between identities, as well as an ability to be in a sphere of 'both/and' or in-betweenness – a state of fundamental liminality (ibid.: 12). In this liminal state of affairs it is crucial for the hunter to be able to steer the difficult course between human and nonhuman. Thus the hunter can and do transform himself into various human and nonhuman Others, but he must avoid total participation and confusion with the Other (ibid.). The experience of animals in animist practice is not a matter of some kind of cognitive schemata 'added on to animals', but a sensory experience in which animals reveal themselves as persons within a relational context of real-life activities and where specific kinds of animals can assume the form of other kinds of animals, persons, and spirits (ibid.: 19, 84).

When the hunter experiences animals as persons in travelling between his own body and the alien one, this involves the risk of a deeply felt anxiety of self-alienation (ibid.: 95). Willerslev explains this process as a mimetic faculty of being sensuously filled with whatever is being imitated (ibid.: 96ff). As Willerslev sees it, there is a theme of love and seduction implied in this transformation, in which mimesis collapses dichotomies like self versus Other in playing the trick of dancing between the very same and the very different (ibid.). Thus the hunter's identity resides in what he calls a 'mimetic double', that is, his ability to keep up an empathic double perspective in seeing or perhaps rather sensing himself as well as the animal in hunting: 'Practices of mimetic empathy provide the entré

to the perspective of the Other. In fact, this is the closest one can come to experiencing another's point of view without being that Other in an absolute sense', Willerslev argues (ibid.: 107).

Hence, according to Willerslev, the hunter is engaged in a seductive task in which he may experience sentiments of love. If the relationship goes wrong, however, the hunter will in effect be seduced by the animal and cease to be human. Was something similar happening in the gambling hall when one player said that the gambling machine was 'fucking me with its eyes', when Lone fell in love with a 'little green frog,' as she called her favourite gambling machine, and when Nadim liked to be looked at by the gambling machine in his vain search for a new girlfriend? In any case, the relationship which Lone, Nadim, Bo, Lene, Johan, Qasim and many others in the gambling hall had with a gambling machine was indeed an all encompassing one, one that had colonised or replaced other intimate human relationships in their everyday lives. Furthermore, it appeared to be based partly on a sensory experience by which the symbolic attributes of the gambling machine were in a way rubbed off on the players. Seen from this perspective, it is therefore no wonder that close family members of people with this level of involvement in gambling might protest at what goes on with their loved ones in the gambling hall.

In Willerslev's analysis of hunting in Siberia, we see the hunter blending with or copying his prey, thus bringing himself into a sphere of both/and or in-betweenness, as in a liminal state of being. Something similar was happening in the gambling hall when a person might imitate a gambling machine, talk to it and perhaps even assume its name. Like the hunter who must steer a difficult course to avoid total participation and confusion, so the player in the gambling hall must avoid becoming one with the gambling machine – getting 'burned on to the machine', 'reading' it, taking its name. The fact that a gambling machine is a technological item and not an organic being like an animal did not seem to make a difference in terms of a possible mimetic double being created in the gambling process. Might a person who got so close to a gambling machine in the process of attentive dialogue with it be as much in danger of losing him- or herself in the process as a hunter who falls in love with the animal he is hunting?

In this and the previous section I have suggested, that what may be characterised as a relationship with animistic characteristics between a person and a gambling machine was established as a process of gambling and relating intersubjectively with the play

features and the Repayment Percentage of the gambling machine. The Repayment Percentage and the gambling machine played a vital part as an Other from which one not only insisted on a response but by which one also hoped to be rewarded fairly. In the following, I will pursue this argument by describing how players used their ingenuity in trying to counter the randomness and unpredictability of jackpots in the gambling process.

Ingenuity and unpredictability

It has been argued that gambling machine gambling is a game that combines chance and play or competition in contrast to, for instance, poker, which involves elements of skill (Herman 1976: 7, 28-29; Caillois 2001 [1958]: 29-32, 181-184). However, I believe that many of the people I talked to would disagree with this contention, or at least they would play the games on the gambling machine *as if* they were skilfully manipulating their chances. This can be understood, however, as the specific play element of *ludus*, represented here by the idea of cultural creativity in gambling (Caillois 2001 [1958]: 33). Those of my informants who were in the process of quitting the gambling hall often said that gambling machines created an 'illusion' since they were all different, and they maintained that if all the lights and sounds were taken out of the gambling machines, then they would be entirely the same.

Magnus Larusson – addiction therapist and sociologist – has pointed out that the combination of chance as possibility and randomness as unpredictability is an important component in developing an addiction to gambling (Larusson 2007: 12). However, in light of my own observations, the combination of an image of ingenuity and randomness might be seen as equally addictive in the sense of getting stuck with the gambling machine. In Chapter 4 we saw that, when money was inserted into the gambling machine, small lights would indicate where one was 'going', 'landing' or 'jumping' in the symbolic landscape that appeared on the screen, creating an imagined journey. Such journeys might be created by using skill or ingenuity in the gambling process in order to reach points at which there were better chances of wins. But these play features were not the only means by which players were inspired to use their ingenuity. Very experienced players like Jang were also

using their sense of how the electronic equipment in the gambling machine was functioning now in order to determine his chances and make bets accordingly.

Part of the joy and excitement in gambling was learning how the games worked by playing along. Although there was a play manual for each type of gambling machine, these manuals would only give the general principles of the games. This left the player with the opportunity to discover the details of the games in the course of gambling. I observed considerable ambivalence in players about this. On the one hand, they liked the process of discovering how a new gambling machine worked; on the other hand, they might also get annoyed at having to spend a lot of money to engage in a process of learning by doing, and in effect learning by paying. When I asked those who preferred certain gambling machines why they preferred them, then, they did not explain their preferences as motivated by money. Rather they explained their preferences with reference to particular games with particular features and of having acquired a certain amount of experience of how the gambling machine functioned. However, the sense of familiarity with it as a somewhat lively entity was also vital and at times, the gambling machine and the player would merge into for instance a 'Midnight Magic Girl'.

Just as technical relations are embedded in social relations (Ingold 1997: 107), so technological skills must be understood as properties of the whole system of relations constituted by the presence of the agent, whether human or non-human, in a richly structured environment (ibid.: 111). Novices in the settings of practice and situations learn skills through a mixture of improvisation and imitation, where apprentices gradually assemble how to go about their tasks (Lave and Wenger 1991: 94-98). In this skills are also learned through sensuous engagement and rhythmic repetitions of movements that give rise to the regularity of form (Lave and Wenger 1991: 65; Ingold 1997: 112). If we approach *animism* on the premises of its intersubjective and ultimately relational character, as I have done above, then we might agree with Alf Hornborg that knowledge produced in animistic relationships is neither a representation nor a construction, but rather a relationship that shapes both the knower and the known (Hornborg 2006: 27).

It was never easy or straightforward to manage to talk to players in the gambling hall. One reason for this was that they were preoccupied with gambling and therefore did not like to be disturbed. One of the things that preoccupied them was following the routes of lights on

the journey to Jackpot Games and making guesses about what 'it' might do along the way. Another reason was that many players were working out when it was favourable to use choice buttons like Auto, Start, Hold, Stop, Payout and Nudge in the gambling process. Since the wheels turned at such a rapid speed, these processes were very sensitive, and an outsider's interference might disturb their attentive involvement with the gambling machine. It was a matter of dealing with chance and randomness.

> Tobias is playing two Virginia Cities, and Hans is standing by commenting. I tell them that I am conducting an investigation into why gambling machines have become so popular. In response to this they say that gambling with gambling machines is a matter of 'pure chance'.[135] When I object to this view by saying, that I have heard from another player that it is possible to get to know gambling machines and thereby improve one's chances, Hans says: 'That's not true, and we know because both of us have several years experience'. Tobias nods as if to confirm Hans's statement, and Hans continues: 'It's something you can imagine if you're very interested in winning. Then you can delude yourself into thinking that you can improve your chances by getting to know the machine. This is how 'ludomaniacs' think. Machines are designed to make them attractive in ways that you don't register.'[136] Later that afternoon more customers turn up in the gambling hall, and discussions about 'chance' continue. Some said that they believe that gambling with gambling machines is a matter of pure chance, while others believe that some machines pay out more wins than others.

The idea that skill and chance can be worked in combination is a point of view I also hear from time to time on television expressed by professional poker players participating in official international poker tournaments. In fact, the apparently successful Danish poker player Gustav Hansen uses the term 'guesstimate' to describe how players combine estimating and guessing their chances (Bjørnkjær 2008). When I was talking to customers in

[135] *Ren chance*

[136] *Det er noget man kan forestille sig hvis man er meget interesseret i at vinde. Så kan man bilde sig selv ind, at man kan forbedre sine chancer, hvis man lærer maskinen at kende. Det er sådan ludomaner tænker. Maskinerne er designet sådan at de er tiltrækkende at spille på, uden at man lægger mærke til det.*

the gambling hall who were using a similar rhetoric about gambling machines, I received the impression that they liked to think of themselves as being in a similar kind of relationship with the gambling machine as the poker player has with the poker table and opposing players. People whom I talked often told me to that that poker is associated with the application of skill by the player and that it enjoys a more prestigious position in the media than gambling machines. Were Tobias and his co-players trying to convince me and themselves that gambling with gambling machines was not a low status game but one which required human knowledge? In any case, discussions about randomness, chance and human ability to act based on some application of skill, perhaps in order to come to terms with unpredictability continued.

In the gambling hall, some expressed the opinion that gambling machines pay back in different kinds of patterns, and that it was stupid to gamble on a gambling machine that had just given a large payout. The gambling hall manager once interfered in such a discussion by stating that wins occurred 'completely at random',[137] while customers continued their involvement in 'reading' and getting to know the gambling machines they gambled on. Some players' involvement with the screen of the gambling machine somehow contradicted the statement about 'pure chance'.

> Niklas' credit is running high after a series of gambling sessions. A 'ludmania' prevention sticker on the gambling machine he has played says: 'Every game is random'.[138] When I draw Niklas' attention to the sticker, he says: 'It's nonsense to write that. It's both random and not random. You have to take the chances you get. The choices you make during a game are important, but even if you make the right choices, you still might not win. But, there's a better chance. It's a computer which has created the machine, and therefore it's nonsense to say that it's random because it's all programmed beforehand.'[139] Thus Niklas is not only questioning the fairness of the gambling machine, he is also drawing my attention to the exis-

[137] *Helt tilfældigt*

[138] *Ethvert spil er tilfældigt*

[139] *Det er noget vrøvl at skrive det, for det er både tilfældigt og ikke tilfældigt. Man skal bruge de chancer man har. Det er ikke lige meget hvilke valg man træffer, når man får et spil, men selv om man træffer de rigtige valg er det ikke sikkert det vil give en gevinst, men chancen er større end hvis man ikke gør. Det er en computer der har lavet maskinen, så det er noget vrøvl at skrive at spillet er tilfældigt, for det hele er programmeret på forhånd.*

> tential matter of how people are constantly engaging in the larger question of whether they were masters of their own lives or subordinated to fate.

Observing how players used their bodily and imaginary capabilities in a variety of ways in front of the gambling machine convinced me that one of the attractions of the machines was the opportunity to use one's experiences and ingenuity in the process of gambling. Gambling machines had up to five different buttons that might be used separately or in combination. One was Start, with which the player started the wheels turning. Another button was Auto, with which the player might choose to set the wheels turning automatically for as many turns as he or she wished. A third button was Stop or Hold (sometimes there was more than one Hold button, for instance Hold1 and Hold2), with which the player stopped the wheels turning. A fourth button was Nudge, which the player might choose to 'push', as it was called, a symbol 'up' to a certain point in the journey of the symbolic landscape on the screen; and a fifth button was Payout, which the player used to extract credit from the gambling machine. I have seen customers use all these buttons, except the Payout button, in combination to enhance their chances when playing.

The Nudge and Start buttons was an invitation to use ingenuity in the gambling process. However, these skill features of gambling machines contrasted the principle of randomness, because people used them to optimize their chances. The gambling machines were, as I also pointed at in Chapter 3, partly constructed by legislation, where the skill and the chance aspect was described as follows: 'The game may only take place by manual action from the automat itself. However, actions by players such as Hold, Nudge and the like, which do not involve skill but only chance, are allowed'[140] (Skatteministeriet 2000b: §7). In my reading of this text, chance means randomness. However, as I demonstrated and discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, players, who were confronted with randomness and unpredictability in the gambling process, saw chance as opportunity and possibility. The idea that players might manipulate their chances therefore relied partly on what might be called the skill or choice features of the gambling machines themselves, and partly on players' imaginations and desires to use ingenuity in the gambling process.

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[140] *Spillets afvikling må kun finde sted ved manuel påvirkning fra selve automaten. Dog tillades påvirkning fra spilleren som Hold, Nudge og lignende, som ikke indebærer behændighed, men som beror på tilfældet.*

The creative use of the buttons on the gambling machine apparently created excitement and joy, as well as being a means of influencing one's chances in the game. I will demonstrate this in the following examples, where Anne, Alexander and Nadim demonstrate the importance of ingenuity in building a relationship with the gambling machine in the process of gambling.

> Anne: 'I think the games at Virginia City are more interesting. You have to do some things. There are some dice, and you have to move one which is going round, and in order to do this you can nudge those wheels to and fro. And you have to do it yourself. Some of them have an auto button that can be pushed and it will give you the best chance inside the game, so that you get as far as possible. I like using that sometimes, but I prefer to nudge. I once tried to have several jackpots one after the other. That's great. That is done by getting into the Jackpot Chance by nudging, and then you may get lucky and have green bars inside the game, or you might get a game inside the game, and if you get that you often get a jackpot again. Lise: "So it's not an illusion created by the people who manufacture the machines that you can create your own luck?" Anne: No, I don't think so … some days when it plays and you get the game, but the dice aren't where they're supposed to be, then you can nudge your way to them. And that's all fixed inside the machine on the PCB. When the dice land I can often tell without looking … because it often lands the same way, then you know what you're supposed to nudge towards. If you don't do it properly then you don't end up where you're supposed to.[141]

[141] Anne: *Jeg synes de spil der er på Virgina City er mere interessante. Man skal gøre nogen ting. Der er nogen terninger, hvor du skal flytte med én der kører rundt, og for at gøre det kan du nudge de der hjul frem og tilbage. Og det skal man selv gøre. Der er nogen af dem, hvor der er en autoknap, hvis der er spil hvor du trykker og så tager den det bedste mulige inde i spillet for at du kan komme så langt som muligt, hvor man ikke selv skal gøre noget. Det synes jeg da også er rart engang imellem, men jeg kan bedst lide at bruge Nudge. Jeg har engang prøvet at få flere jackpot lige efter hinanden. Det synes jeg er herligt. Altså ved at komme ind i JackpotChancen ved at nudge sig frem, så kan man være heldig at de grønne barer kommer lige inde i spillet, eller at man får et spil inde i spillet og får man det så er det tit man får en jackpot igen.* Lise: *Så det er ikke bare en illusion der er skabt af dem der laver maskinerne, at man kan skabe sit held?* Anne: *Nej det synes jeg så ikke der er fordi … nogen dage hvor den spiller og du får spillet, men terningerne ikke sidder der hvor de skal, så kan du ikke nudge dig frem til dem. Og det er noget der er bestemt inde i printet. Det er forudbestemt. Jeg kan tit og ofte se det når terningerne lander så kan jeg fortælle uden at skulle gå hen og kigge … fordi den lander så mange gange på den samme måde, så man kan se hvad det er man skal nudge frem. Hvis ikke man gør det ordentligt, så lander man ikke der hvor man skal.*

As far as I could determine, to ‘do something’ in gambling was related to using some kind of ingenuity. Anne preferred a particular gambling machine because she had become experienced in gambling and thus felt that she had the proper knowledge about when to operate the Nudge button. She found the Virginia City particularly ‘interesting’ because there were many options in the course of games. Consequently, she had gained a reputation as some kind of expert in the Virginia City gambling machine with her embodied expertise in its peculiarities.

Alexander was also experienced in gambling on the gambling machines, and like Anne he used ingenuity in the gambling process:

> Alexander is gambling on three machines the whole morning, sitting by a Midnight Magic to the far right while keeping an eye on an Allan Capone and a machine called Jackpot in the opposite corner. The first half hour he is in good spirits, alert, smiling and concentrated. His body looks tense. It is as if he is working with the machines, paying full attention to every movement on the display. Alexander lets the Allan Capone and the Jackpot machine run by pressing the Autoplay Start button by turns. The wheels are turning and turning without granting Alexander a single game to be played. Alexander turns towards another male customer and says with a smile and a slight shake of the head: ‘It’s incredible. One never knows if it will do the usual thing. It may suddenly do something else’. The other customer smiles and shakes his head too.
>
> Alexander leaves the Midnight Madness on stand-by while shifting his attention to the Jackpot and the Allan Capone. Both machines give a few small games, which he tries to keep going while covering those parts of the display where the small spot of light is moving, his hands folded as if he was holding a small and very fragile object. When the moving light that is accompanied by sound effects stops, he abruptly takes away his hands. He also lays one flat hand horizontally across some lines to the left on the screen when the moving spot of light goes up and down.
>
> ‘It gives a lot of small games that do not give anything’, he complains to the other customer. Alexander is still smiling, but the smile has changed to a stiffened

line in his face, his eyes do not have the same sparkle as when he arrived in the gambling hall half an hour ago, there is a furrow across his forehead, and the colour of his skin has changed to grey. He now gives up the Midnight Magic that he was gambling on without luck earlier and starts another Midnight Magic in the middle of the room. Alexander does not want to talk but tries to make me gamble on a machine that another customer has bet thirty kroner on and won fifteen hundred with just before I came in. 'You never know which ones will give', he says.

On another day, Alexander had more luck with his bets. He talks while gambling intensely with three machines in different corners of the room. He gets games all the time on each machine. 'Today is a good day, but it's far from always the case. But today I have a surplus of three thousand', he says. To me Alexander looks very self-assured and self-confident in his gambling. He does not hesitate in choosing which button to push each time a new game appears. He holds his hand across the rotating wheels, points his finger at the games he wants and folds his hands over the part of the display where the light is running in a game until the game stops, then he opens his palms to see if he has got the desired result.

Alexander was out of luck one day and in luck another day, which underlined his experience of the unpredictability of gambling machines. In watching Alexander's movements they looked very deliberate and well chosen and in contrast to the randomness of the outcome of bets.

Despite using ingenuity – perhaps to counter the unpredictability of the gambling machines – players were obviously losing a lot of money. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 3, they felt cheated by the gambling machines, feeling that they 'took' their money. Faced with many complaints about this, the management in one gambling hall put up a notice with the following words:

'To our paying customers: if you choose Autoplay to gamble on the machine, you authorise it to choose when to hold Hold 1, Hold 2 and Hold 3, and also which games it will bet on. If you want to control our games yourself, we recommend that you push Start in any game. Any right to complaint is cancelled if the wheels

are changed. The maximum amount of credit saved in the machine is 18,000. Remember to push out coins before this is reached. According to the law. Kind regards, staff.'[142]

The notice reflected the idea that a player might control gambling sessions by using the start button, and as we have seen, players gambled with the gambling machines as if this was possible, yet knowing or learning by doing that this was not so.

Nadim also used his ingenuity to influences his chances in gambling, and being a very experienced player he had a large repertoire to deploy in the gambling process. It was a particular statement he made one day that made me realise that in his use of ingenuity there might be more at stake in his gambling than a desire to win money.

Nadim walks directly to the far end of the gambling hall and puts a coin in each of two different machines, which do not give any games, 'chances' or wins. Then he changes a two-hundred note in the change machine and almost throws himself on the two gambling machines while loading the money into them speedily. I ask him if he minds me following him closely for a while. He looks tired and sad and says that he thinks I will become tired too in trying to keep up with him, indicating that he is intending to play for a long time today. For three and a half hours I stand beside Nadim in the gambling hall. During that time he spends around 1,000 kroner. He changes 100 or 200 kroner notes at a time in the change machine. He helps other customers play their games, chain-smokes and drinks the free coffee from plastic cups while gambling on three gambling machines at a time.

When the two gambling machines that he gambled for twenty kroner each have used up the money, he picks another three gambling machines, one Orientexpres and two Midnight Magics. The Orientexpres is in a different line than the two Midnight Magics, which are in the same line where he is standing. He starts

[142] *Til vores spillende kunder. Hvis du vælger at sætte maskinen i Autoplay giver du maskinen fuldmagt til selv at vælge, hvornår den holder på Hold 1, Hold 2 og Hold 3, også hvilke spil den vil satse på. Hvis du selv ønsker at styre dit spil, vil vi anbefale at du selv trykker på start i hvert spil. Enhver klageret bortfalder hvis valserne er ændret. Max. opsparet kredit i maskinerne er 18.000. Husk derfor at trykke mønterne ud inden. Ifølge loven. Venlig hilsen personalet.*

by playing one of these with the auto button and the other with the start button. He walks back and forth between the two Midnight Magics and the Orientexpres on the other side, to keep them all going. Then he seats himself in front of one Midnight Magic and plays the start button while the two other gambling machines are running on auto. He gambles like this for about fifteen minutes, interrupted by sounds in the Orientexpres that make him suddenly get up and attend to that gambling machine. He takes a quick look at the display as if he is estimating if he should use the stop, start or auto button. Then chooses the auto button and returns to the two Midnight Magics on the other side of the hall, seats himself in front of one of them and continues pressing the start button at each turn of the wheels every two seconds, alternating with the auto button. When he uses the start button, he looks alert, attentive, and more relaxed than when he uses the auto button.

One of Nadim's favourite postures is sitting on a chair in front of the gambling machines that have a small shelf for coffee and an ashtray next to them. He leans back on his chair but only so far back that he can reach the play buttons with his right hand. He keeps his left foot on the floor and his right one on the low shelf in the space between two gambling machines. Seated this way, Nadim looks very relaxed. He smokes all the time, often forgetting his lit cigarette, leaving it to burning up in his hand or in the ashtray while his attention is fixed on the moving wheels as his credit goes down and down. The ash from his cigarettes leaves a grey smear on the carpet. Sometimes he gets up and starts feverishly breaking into an auto play session by chaotically pressing the start and auto buttons in turn.

Nadim leaves the Midnight Magic he has played manually with a credit of around 300 or approximately 75 kroner. He does not put a 'reserved' sign on the gambling machine but ignores it completely. When I ask him why he has stopped it, he says with a smile: 'It's tired, it needs to rest'. Now he uses the plastic reserved sign to cover the rotating wheels in front of him by taking the sign in his right hand and slowly pushing it from the right towards the left so that only the far left wheel is visible on the screen.

The 100 kroner that Nadim put in the Orientexpres at the start are now running out, and he leaves it to be gambled under his supervision by an adolescent who inserts his own money into the gambling machine. Sometimes the young man calls Nadim, who then walks over to give thorough instructions, but the young man does not win either cash or games. After a while Nadim gives up gambling and starts supervising an old man, making suggestions for his options in the gambling session. From time to time Nadim gets up from his chair, presumably stimulated by the specific sounds in the gambling machines. He breaks into the game on any gambling machine, regardless of who is playing on it, and gives instructions on how to play the game. These manoeuvres take a few minutes, after which time he returns to his seat to play a gambling machine manually by using the nudge, start and auto buttons while watching the turn of the wheels.

A few days later in the gambling hall Nadim has more luck: the machines he is playing are giving Chance Games. He plays some of them with the auto button and others manually by pressing start. Then he stops one gambling machine to proceed with the nudge button. He counts by pointing his finger but finds it hard to see the tiny lines because of a lack of light. He takes up his lighter and uses it to light up the part of the screen that he wants to focus on. Then he pushes nudge to reach the desired place. After this manoeuvre, he gets a lot of extra credit on the gambling machine. He takes the credit out of one gambling machine and puts it in his pocket. He has over 4,000 credit in one of the gambling machines, and when I ask him if he does not want to take it out, he says 'no' and the credit goes down to 0. The same happens with the Allan Capone, where he has just won 1,500 credit. Nadim continues his gambling sessions by using the hold, start and auto buttons on a Midnight Magic. As if out of the blue, he says: 'I'm trying to find a new girlfriend, but I haven't found her yet.'

In these examples we see how persons like Anne, Tobias, Hans, Niklas Alexander and Nadim applied different measures like 'nudge', 'making choices', tried to 'do it properly' and pointing at desired objects in the gambling sessions. Anne and Niklas emphasised the importance of making choices with the buttons against the unpredictability of the gambling machine or that fate which is 'determined inside the print' as Anne expressed it. And per-

haps Nadim, Alexander and Tobias felt they added something to the game by their embodied gambling style. Did they add excitement or was it rather a way of gaining a feeling of having some influence on the game, or both? Earlier in this chapter we saw that Ahmet was 'reading' the game in the process of gambling. Thereby they were all 'getting to know' the gambling machines, as Hans said, and in effect building up a somewhat personalised relationship with it. I have approached this relationship as an animistic practice on the grounds of the intense bodily relationship that some players established with the gambling machine.

According to Scott, Willerslev and others, an animistic relationship is based on endowing non-human subjects with human characteristics and becoming partly one with it. Persons such as Nadim, Anne, Lone and Alexander may not have been one with the gambling machines. However, they appeared to have incorporated the gambling machine into their existential relationship. I am not suggesting that they were deliberately using gambling machines as a substitute for intimate relationships. However, the tenderness with which I saw Nadim approach the gambling machine when claiming that it was tired was striking and painful, like the time when Qasim was 'feeding' his imaginary baby gambling machine. To me these events indicated that gambling machine gambling was not only about money and dreams of instant wealth. It might also to reflect a deep need to relate to the world of others, to want to break out of loneliness and develop meaningful relationships where caring and nurturing mattered to a person's sense of being. In the following section, I therefore expand on this theme by including some reflections on *animism* in relation to the concept of *transitional objects*.

Animism and transitional objects

We may identify three particular components of *animism* in this discussion. One is that animism is part of the field of intersubjectivity and therefore has to do with *relatedness* in the world of beings as dialogical and reciprocal (Jackson 1998: 77), consequently being a habit of sociality that reflects the ambiguity of all intersubjective life (Jackson 2005: 94, 138). Ingold suggests a similar definition of animism as 'the dynamic, transformative potential of the entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-

like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence' (Ingold 2006: 10). A second component of animism is that it involves human's *practical, attentive engagement* with non-human beings approached with specific wakeful attention (Jackson 1998: 76-82; Ingold 2000: 91, 114; Jackson 2005: 132, 137; Hornborg 2006: 22; Scott 2006: 60). Thirdly, animism may be seen as the *lived experience of a resonating life-world* (Ingold 2000: 95; Scott 2006: 51). What is implied in these definitions is that that *animism* represents a generalised way in which humans relate to the world in all matters of life, including in both permanent and momentary crises and traumas.

As Hornborg suggests, we need concrete reference points on to which to anchor ourselves (Hornborg 2006: 29). When we are overwhelmed by events and lack control over life, we need to objectify and turn to whatever come to hands – playing, toys, art (Jackson 2005: 103). I have described the gambling machines as in some way responsive and alive, yet this responsiveness was an illusion created by at least three instances: legislation, the gambling industry and the player's imagination. The cruel reality of gambling machines resided partly in this Janus face of responsiveness and unresponsiveness. How might a player's way of handling this experience of unresponsiveness be accounted for?

According to Jackson, animism is a way of alleviating the trauma of the unresponsiveness of matter (Jackson 1998:82). In doing so, we become removed from the subjective world and recover a sense of our ability to manage and act in the world (ibid.). One effect of anthropomorphism is that it transforms subject-object relations, such that a person comes to experience himself or herself as an actor, and not just as acted upon (ibid.: 107). The human tendency to ontologize experience is thus seen in the process of fetishization as a means of existential control that empowers and brings a sense of ontological security (Jackson 1998: 81).

These kinds of reasoning about the universal human striving for belonging and security as a basis for humans insisting on the responsiveness of all matter reminded me how Anne, Lone, Poul, Quasim and many others had referred to the gambling hall as a refuge where they sought to reconnect to the world and to a sense of self. As I have discussed throughout, the gambling hall appeared as a dense version of their lives, in which they were experiencing a lack of control, as well as distress in their interpersonal relationships. When seen from this perspective, engaging in a relationship with a gambling machine might represent an option for renegotiating one's relationship with the world at large

and with the world of Others whom one hoped might respond positively to one's efforts. Might this explain why gambling machines became personified in the gambling process, and why some players assumed the name of their preferred gambling machines, like Anne had been given by her fellow players?

Perhaps these players were involved in a dynamic of intersubjectivity of the non-human world, which tended to become imbued with consciousness and will (Jackson 1998: 9). Based on his own periods of fieldwork around the world, Jackson argues that people everywhere are concerned with the question of the relationship between those things that persons can be held responsible for and those they cannot (Jackson 2005: 129). Despite the unpredictability and ungovernability of how both the human and non-human worlds act upon us, we like to think that we can negotiate reciprocally with unruly elements, including the material world (ibid.). The tendency to act in this way represents a coping strategy to help us deal with the fact that matter is unresponsive, illusory and variable (ibid.).

In Jackson's view, intersubjective relations are characterised by a struggle for recognition and survival and against alienation; therefore we are susceptible to the feeling that hope, a sense of purpose and fulfilment are things that must constantly be striven for (Jackson 2005: 130). There is an ambiguity in all human relationships in that they are the source of fulfilment as well as frustration, of being as well as non-being. As humans we take this ambiguity into our relationships with both human and non-human Others, since both hold the potential to sustain our lives (ibid.). Our ambivalence towards machines must be understood against the background of our ambivalence towards others, and the way in which we experience our relationship with machines depends on the degree to which we are in control of these relationships (ibid.). However, our expectations of balanced reciprocity and fair play with humans as well as with machines are not always met. In such situations we may become angry or upset in the same way that we would with a person who we felt had behaved unfairly or failed to acknowledge a gift (ibid.).

I never saw anyone directly attacking a gambling machine out of anger over losses, although I was told by both customers and managers that it happened quite often, just as gambling halls were sometimes burgled. However, frustration lurked in the light kicks that I sometimes saw people direct at the gambling machines in what looked like an immense management of emotions when players kept gambling in silence despite losing.

And when their skin turned grey and their facial expressions became grimmer, despite attempts to keep up a joyful appearance, I did not have any doubts about its cause.

Anthropomorphism may be seen as a kind of modern animistic relationship when we attach ourselves to an item that becomes a fetish, an object that supports our emotional need to relate to the world in critical situations – a *transitional object* (Jackson 2005: 94). It might be argued that one of the most common transitional objects for all people is the television, which ensures our feeling of relatedness to the world (Silverstone 1993). Silverstone observes two aspects of what he calls the ontological and phenomenological reality of television. One is its visibility, its focussed and unfocussed attention, discussing and reading about television on an hourly and daily basis, and the opportunity it provides to be both sociable and solitary (ibid.: 575). Another aspect is the emotional experience of television as a disturber and a comforter, an informer as well as a misinformer. Its political significance as a core institution of the modern state makes the integration of television in our lives complete and fundamental to the point that it has colonized basic levels of our social reality (ibid.: 575-576). As such television plays a significant role in the sustaining of the experience of trust in our routinized daily lives (ibid.: 578-580). In a world that has largely abandoned rituals of community and oral narrative traditions, television offers a symbolic universe with which we attempt, as social beings, to manage our environment, others and ourselves. According to Silverstone, the illusory character of television somehow makes it a space of the everyday which is both there and not there, like a liminal space in everyday life in which we are disturbed, entertained as well as reassured by narrative stimulation (ibid.: 592).

Had gambling machines in some way come to occupy a similar place in the lives of my informants as that of television in everyday life? Like television, gambling machines offered narrative and ritual in terms of play and games, and like television they had become a lifestyle by virtue of their overall presence at this point of people's life. Perhaps the gambling machine, as the quasi-persons they became in the gambling process, incarnated the ambiguity of all human relationships, replete with joy, frustration, fulfilment, deprivation and emotions. However, as we have seen, the exchange between player and gambling machine was not an equal one, since the gambling machine always 'took more than it gave' according to the players. Hence, the gambling machine was not the same kind of transitional object that a television might be. However, given customers' per-

sistent hopes of financial reward and their intimate bodily dialogues with the gambling machine, which they tried to animate with gestures and words, they were perhaps coping with a kind of relationship with the gambling machine as much as with relationships in their wider being in the world. Steen, Jørgen, Lene and others stressed that they did not see their sometimes-strained life as an excuse for their gambling problem. Yet when I examined their biographies, they were full of broken or troubled relationships. Might we see the actions of Nadim, Anne and others, who were under-stimulated with their options for acting in their lives, as a way of supplementing or fulfilling a need for action and a sense of being in control?

According to Jackson, one reason we incorporate non-human objects into our intersubjective world of beings is when we are blocked from acting and emotionality becomes a strategy for recovering our existential footing in a situation in which we have no control or feel overpowered (Jackson 2005: 133). Similarly in human-machine relationships, agency will be experienced as oscillating between self and machine, depending on how well the relationship between the person and the machine is working (ibid.: 137). Hence when humans speculate over whether machines have minds of their own, this is no mystery since the question is grounded in the habits of sociality and reflect the ambiguity of all intersubjective life (ibid.: 138). One way of coping with this ambiguity and with constraints in intersubjective relationships, including those between human and machine, is by applying magical devices and practices as supplements to the will (ibid.: 94-95). When will, work and energy are put into an object, as in fetishisation, then the body of the thing becomes the surrogate body of the maker and user (Jackson 1998: 81). This universal human tendency to invest one's intentions in a non-human object may make one's experience of life more bearable, with a greater sense of security or sense of control. Far from being an unreal or pathological involvement in a thing, it is precisely the opposite: a real response to a difficult situation (ibid.).

In an analysis of crap players' use of magical devises, James M. Henslin suggests that the application of magic is a response to uncertainty or danger, and that it is applied in an effort to control the outcome of the game (Henslin 1967). Henslin's article is insightful because it offers a rare, intimate ethnographic insight into gambling situations, where he demonstrates that players use magic as a symbolic technology in the gambling process. However, in his discussion of magic he argues that the use of magic by the crap

players is a somewhat primitive belief, which fosters irrational behaviour. In this chapter, I have approached the matter by discussing human engagement with the gambling machine as an anthropomorphic or animistic *relationship*, rather than as the application of a technology of magic added on to a perceived dead object. In light of my discussion of animism the subjectification of the gambling machine was rather a consequence of players being humans. Like all humans, they insisted on relatedness to the world and that this should entail fair play in the exchange between human and Others, whether they were human subjects or non-human subjects such as gambling machines. This insistence on fair play in the relationship between person and gambling machine often overshadowed the experience of losses when it came to the decision to continue to gamble.

Conclusion

It was Qasim, Lene and other's inclination to treat or talk about gambling machines as romantic partners, as sorts of friends or opponents, that lead me to the idea of Jackson, Ingold and other anthropologists that machines can replace persons as vital others in intersubjective relations. However, as a relationship it contained the inherent danger of becoming overly attached to or stuck with the gambling machine, of becoming somewhat one with it. Then one might substitute it for acting and lose oneself in ritualistic acts in a somewhat dissociated state of mind – perhaps a kind of madness as brought about by the interaction of player's biographies and the gambling environment. However, in light of the discussions in this chapter, we may question whether this was a pathological condition of individuals or rather a real response to a difficult situation.

The fact that some preferred certain gambling machines indicated that some individuals were more attracted to certain entertaining features and symbols than to others. And their use of ingenuity by 'reading' and interpreting the journey in the imaginary landscape, as well as their creativity in pushing different buttons on the gambling machine in the process of gambling, indicated that players were using their imaginary capabilities in an intimate, attentive and creative dialogue with the gambling machine. I knew that Anne, Mary, Irene and Poul liked to make paintings, and Lene was concerned with the aesthetic of her new home. The problem, as far as they and others who said they wanted to give up

gambling were concerned, was that the gambling machine was absorbing too much of their time. Thereby they remained in the illusory space of gambling forgetting or losing interest in what they themselves saw as the more real activities of everyday life, like caring, cooking, shopping, attending family gatherings, talking to friends and perhaps make a painting. Had they ceased to be the kind of humans that they wanted to be, that is, humans who based the greater part of their lives on relations with humans rather than with a gambling machine?

To ask such a question bluntly of players and clients in treatment settings would have been out of place, partly because of the stigma of 'ludomania'. However, an answer to my question emerged from my reading and writing up of field notes, where there was evidence that most of my informants were ashamed of their affair with the gambling machine and the gambling hall. When I held this evidence against their desire to be involved with a rewarding family and community life, I began to wonder whether their relationship with the gambling machine was in a way the expression of a desire for meaningful human relationships.

I have argued throughout that gambling took place in an intersubjective environment, in which the customers in the gambling hall were searching for ontological security. In this chapter, I have expanded this discussion by providing evidence that, by means of their presence, familiarity and availability to players, and as animated objects, gambling machines became non-human subjects or kinds of quasi-persons in the process of gambling. I have discussed this in part by comparing it with animism in hunting. By bringing this discussion of animism into a modern setting like the gambling hall and relating it to the notion of transitional objects, I have also argued, that playing with gambling machines was in effect a practical and ontological aspect of the human endeavour, to feel secure and at home in the world of fellow humans, with whom one inhabits common ground.

However, people were also constantly relating to a realm of the unknown. Perhaps the experience of the mystery of what the gambling machine might do at any particular time might not only be understood as an anthropomorphic relationship, but as a relationship between a person and a deistic god, as in Ihde's machine philosophy. Was the gambling machine a kind of altar? Moreover, might the bodily involvement that sometimes resulted in a 'kick' or 'rush' be seen as a human striving for relatedness with a universe of abundance and/or of the unknown mystery of existence?

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In this work, I have approached the subject of 'ludomania' by asking, with Ian Hacking in mind, what makes it possible in contemporary Danish consumer society to become a 'ludomaniac'? The answer is not straightforward. However, by looking at biographies and stories about everyday life that I was told in the street, in the gambling halls, in homes and in treatment settings, and by drawing observations from these domains against the experience of the material and symbolic environment of the gambling hall, I have provided ethnographic evidence that the attraction of gambling halls is in more than one way an adaptation to a particular situation to life in a contemporary consumer society.

Firstly, I have argued that one of the conditions for the reproduction of 'ludmania' was the embodied experience of the gambling hall as a lived-in environment, where the material environment was humanised in *intersubjective* processes. Secondly, I have argued that the easy access to chance-taking and adventure in residential areas had become for my informants not only a way of generating an opportunity for financial gain, but also an existential strive for personal autonomy and human community in a context of relative poverty, a lack of opportunity and the stresses of work and family life. Thirdly, I have argued that 'ludomania' was reproduced interactively as a specific knowledge/power category with *stigmatizing* effects. Furthermore, I have explored the processes that may lead to over-involvement in gambling with self-destructive repercussions.

As I pointed at in the introductory chapter, gambling has always been used by humans in striving to rein the invisible forces of divinity or fate through a kind of invoca-

tion of extra-human powers in order to serve human needs. In contemporary consumer society, gambling may have become one of the ways in which some people deal with the fascination of chance, thereby in a sense invoking extra-human powers to serve one's needs. The bodily sensation of a kind of release, of altered states of mind, as well as the unspoken hope of a transformation of or improvement in one's life in several respects were important motives for people to continue their engagement with the gambling hall, despite their financial losses. The unique possibility of participating in a solitary manner, focussing one's attention on an exchange between oneself and the material and symbolic environment on the one hand, and engaging in human interaction on the other appeared to me a particular attraction of the gambling hall. However, the gambling hall itself was a place of a cultural polarity in being at once a place of entertainment and being seen by my informants as a 'sleazy' place inhabited by 'bad' people and as containing the stigma of the pathology of 'ludomania'. My hope is therefore that this work will both promote a recognition of a general human condition behind gambling *and* help the work which is being done to alleviate the suffering of those labelled 'ludomaniacs' in Danish society.

Contribution to anthropology

As I see it, despite its limited scope, my work is an addition to the existing anthropological literature on gambling. One central work in this literature is Geertz's on the Balinese cockfight. At first I was tempted to agree with Geertz's distinction between the *deep play* that pertains to high-status groups with high emotional involvement in the cockfight and the *shallow play* pertaining only to pecuniary gain in low-status groups, as is the case, for instance, with gambling machines. On the face of it my informants gambled just for money with little emotional investment. Steen, for instance, said that the banality of gambling in the gambling hall was the wish to win money, and Bo told me that he sometimes stopped going to the gambling hall for several weeks because he got 'tired' of losing his money there. However, by taking a closer look at Bo and Steen's statements and confronting them with both their own reflections and my own observations in the gambling hall, money could indeed be seen as both a vehicle and perhaps a motive in gambling. However, I found no evidence that the gamblers were driven only by greed for money, nor only by a

desire to win back their losses, in the manner that Lesieur argues is true of compulsive gamblers (Lesieur 1977). What I saw instead was a much more complex mixture of a general human need to participate in life by means of being together with fellow humans in inhabiting common ground, using the opportunities available to improve one's condition *and* the provision of gambling halls as places of chance that seem especially attractive to the relatively poor or otherwise disadvantaged. This, I suggest, is what needs to be taken into account in anthropological analyses of gambling. Anthropological theory and methods, if not other ones, are obvious means of reaching this kind of realization in a field otherwise dominated by statistics and biomedical science.

It is in the micro-interactions of gambling that these complexities may be observed. In Chapter 5, we saw how status concerns were discussed among a group of players in the communal 'Jazzpot' event, and the situations I have described throughout the thesis show that emotional issues were an integrated aspect of the gambling process. Such matters are implicated in Geertz's definitions of deep play, and therefore in the context of this ethnography it does not make sense to discriminate as sharply as Geertz does between immaterial and material concerns in gambling. In the gambling hall customers engaged in 'deep play' as well as 'shallow play', depending on their preferences, moods and situations.

Reith has argued that in gambling money is devalued and that gamblers play *with* rather than *for* money (Reith 1999: 145-47). However, in light of my own work it may be argued that money is not devalued in gambling, but rather transformed into a multiplicity of meanings and currencies with different qualities and purposes. My informants appeared to play with *as well as* for money. I have produced ethnographic evidence that money represented four main aspects: as the 'bourgeois life', in the sense of the middle-class values of a nuclear family, a self-owned house and ability to consume 'decently'; as a measure of time in the gambling process; as an instrument or chips with which to run gambling machines; and as a link to sacred dimensions of life like love, caring and healing. Furthermore, I have accounted for what might be termed the sensory-aesthetic properties of money, just as gambling machines had effects on the bodies of players. In light of these findings, I have argued that money is a ritual process in terms of both the transformation of its meanings and its multiple purposes in gambling and in everyday life. As an extension of

this I have discussed the multiple and often contradictory moralities and paradoxes of money.

Perhaps the most serious ambiguity about money for the individual was the conflict between market value money – kroner – and money as gambling chips or 'lucky twenties.' Steen claimed that he had never had a 'relationship with money', which in gambling he found it even harder to keep track of, while Bo 'did not care for money'. Others like Anne hoped that her child allowance would turn into a larger sum in the gambling hall. On the one hand, money was desired, but on the other hand having money was sometimes a source of restlessness and anxiety that did not go away until one had circulated all one's money, and sometimes other people's money, into gambling machines. Such behaviour, which matched the imperative to let go of one's control of money in the gambling hall, obviously clashed with the values of thrift. The shame of having spent one's wedding money or mother's savings on gambling was unbearable. And when Lene spoke of her losses in the gambling hall, she was in fact more concerned with the loss of what she termed her 'honour' in not being able to repay loans she had taken out with the manager of the gambling hall than she was with her financial losses.

The overall problem with money was that the rationality of money in everyday life – thrift – conflicted with the rationality of money as a plaything and with losing control in the gambling hall. Reith has hinted at the ironic aspect of gambling as involving a somewhat non-capitalistic disregard for money, in that gamblers play for honour and character rather than for material gain (Reith 1999: 66-68, 145-147). However, as I have argued throughout, as a place and a process the gambling hall was partly constructed as a commodity by an industry and legislation with the power to define the profits as going mainly to the state and industry, to the financial disadvantage of the player. To my informants, who were citizens and consumers in a consumer society, money mattered, as we saw in Steen, Bo and Anne's accounts, since it provided a means of basic living, but also as a means of prestige and participation in community. Consequently, the imperative of the double nature of the rationality of money resulted in a conflict of values, meanings and morality in money in everyday life.

In analysing the gambling hall as a practised place and process, I have tried to move beyond Geertz's discussion of gambling as a mirror of status concerns, as well as beyond Malaby's analysis of gambling as a way of making sense of the overall unpredict-

ability and fate in everyday life. My contribution has rather aimed at understanding processes in the intersubjective environment that constitutes 'ludomania' as a particular knowledge category, a place of leisure as well as a frame of surveillance, and as a body and ritual praxis. In this endeavour, I have wished to search for a way of understanding engagement in gambling, as well as self-destructive over-involvement in gambling, as a phenomenon of cultural practice, as a particular way of being in and relating to the world and the immediate environment of others. In my efforts to depict 'ludomania', I may have drawn a pessimistic picture of unrewarded human efforts in the context of Denmark's contemporary consumer society. However, I have tried to develop a more hopeful approach to the understanding of gambling. Hopeful in two ways: through the analytical focus on *hope*, and by allowing some hope to those categorised as 'ludomaniacs'.

Throughout the discussions I have undertaken, one particular tension has been persistent, namely the tension between chance and hope. Was there a real chance in gambling, or was the driving force hope, that is, the wish for the impossible? I have argued that when customers in the gambling hall became caught up in the gambling process, they experienced a suspension of ordinary clock time and entered into a double time that was altogether different from the order and demands of the everyday. This was a time in which their attention was stretched out between the very intensity of the here and now and the very exciting promise of the future. In the here and now, they worked with opportunity and probability; in the promising future, they were already caught up in using their money.

Bourdieu ascribes the experience of being caught up in time or the suspension of time as the chance aspect of hope – *lusiones* – where chance as the condensation of absolute certainty and absolute uncertainty is present (Bourdieu 2000: 213). Hence, the subjective expectation inherent in *illusio* is future-directed, whereas lusiones or chance is directed at the immediate present. This double aspect of the working of time sometimes caught my informants in a kind of suspension, which has been called pathology in being (Reith 1999: 145; Jackson 2005: 106-107). I have discussed this as a *liminal* state of affairs. The player could do everything possible, but ultimately hope depended on fateful chances. Or, as Ahmet phrased it: 'One can imagine fifty percent of what the machine will do, the rest is pure chance', reflecting a perspective that he might somehow estimate how the machine would respond to his actions, but there was a margin of chance that he could not control.

Behind this suspension in time, this double-time experience, both my informants and I – the anthropologist – had doubts about the real chances of freeing themselves from their present predicaments. If chance is the probability of a certain outcome – at once a positive opportunity and a negative risk – then gambling incarnates a universal human desire to be secure but not necessarily rich, a view to which Reith adheres (Reith 1999: 183). Therefore the consumption of chance may be seen just as much as a universal human desire for ontological security – of experiencing meaning in being and belonging in the world. Bourdieu and Goffman both assert that uncertainty as well as certainty – fair play – must be present in chance; there must be neither disadvantage nor advantage. In the gambling hall customers were acting on chance, but the question remains whether there was fair play or not. On bad days, my informants knew that they were living in a dream without any real chances at all. On such bad days I had to believe that somehow, maybe just by dreaming, they could change their lives, since accepting that they were being mislead by gambling machine industry, the management of the gambling halls, legislators and even themselves was simply too meaningless.

My work has been influenced by this wish to somehow see meaning and hope in their situation, and as such, it has not been so very different from their insistence on a better future. In the gambling hall, gambling could only take place when the chances were situated between a player's subjective expectations of jackpots and the objective possibilities of inserting cash into the gambling machines, to buy time with the gambling machines and wait for luck to come one's way. In this atmosphere, nothing was absolutely sure and yet possibility was there, as 'someone had to win', and it might as well be oneself, since everyone was equal in the *communitas* of players where luck was distributed randomly. As a *heterotopia*, the gambling hall represented a vision, a dream and perhaps an escape in being a kind of counter-place to everyday life. The gambling hall thus constituted a place and process, as well as an idea that might move a person ahead in life when the channels of agency were blocked. Stories like those one might tell or listen to in the gambling hall or in therapy sessions somehow reflected precariousness as well as reflecting an 'existential attitude of hope [a]s the state of being where the time dimension is secured; where the present is projected into the future' (Lindquist 2006: 4). Hope had suspended agency in the face of marginalisation, trauma, neglect, economic ruin and emotional turmoil. Hope had in some way become surrender to the immediate present, which offered a

peaceful condition, counterbalancing the turmoil and complexity of everyday life: 'It gave me peace, at least while I was there', as Anne put it.

However, unlike people in societies where uncertainty regarding basic physical survival (as for Lindquist's businesswomen in contemporary Russia, who struggle to maintain their economic survival), the participants in my own work lived in a society where a welfare system guaranteed at least material survival. The stories of 'lost plots' provided evidence of relative poverty and not least of lives that to a varying extent lacked basic social and emotional fulfilment. At the same time, the stories that were told pointed to openness towards the future and an insistence that life had more to offer than being a victim of 'ludomania'. This seems to be an important confirmation of Lindquist's point about hope being a projection of the present into the future.

In this condition, it was as if my informants were striking 'a balance between being an actor and being acted upon' (Jackson 2005: 2) in insisting that life had more to offer or in accumulating being, as Bourdieu would say. When nothing was possible, everything became possible. Why not invest your child benefit in the gambling machine? After all, the cheque was not that big anyway, and you might be lucky today. Despite the impossibility of gaining over the gambling hall, my informants insisted in trying to improve their lives by investing in a dream (a better life), a gambling machine (like a friendship), an illusion (a jackpot beyond imagination) or a 'little green frog' (a symbol of a loved one). This participation in the game was sometimes fun, sometimes agonizing in waiting for fairness, in terms of passing the time in a liminal state of betwixt-and-between. The games became a fascination that drew some into the darkness of the gambling hall and caught them up in the web of exchanges with symbols, kroner, Credit, Repayment, fellow humans and cascades of beeps and bleeps. At the same time, it was a process by which one was put into contact with a becoming that was unfolding at a distance, anticipating a transcendent quality in one's being. It made it possible, in spite of the madness in the environment, to take refuge in oneself in order to see life unfolding around oneself (Crapanzano 2003: 9).

Obviously my informants were willing to continue the game, despite the fact that the values of self-control and thrift in daily consumption were being challenged beyond the limits of what was held to be a decent or acceptable morality in society, and despite their complaint about 'gambling halls on every street corner'. The answer to this question must be found partly in the efficacy of symbols in working on the human body.

The fantasies of objects like Repayment, cash opportunities, Super Chances and 'green frogs' worked effectively because of the immediate preverbal feelings they created. The sensuous encounters with such an object, which might be 'fucking me with its eyes', created emotions and motivations that encouraged gambling and kept players' attention fixed on the gambling machines, even when they were not physically attending them. Thus, linked to the hope of reward, gambling processes sometimes became endless. Hope in its widest sense, illusion, anticipation, expectation, possibility, the future, doubt, fear, joy, utopia, realism, resignation and not least patience and waiting reflected the universality of hope in one's being (Crapanzano 2003: 6).

In the face of the unmet expectations of participating as a worthy consumer – of realizing a 'bourgeois' life-style, with a wife, children, a car, 'decent' furniture in a self-owned house – a state of realism and resignation also mirrored hope. The realism of one's situation as a permanent welfare recipient – marginalised; as a criminal having committed fraud – stigmatized; as a debtor and liar – guilt ridden; as a loser and escapist – shameful; and as such knowing that there is no salvation not even in gambling. In Bauman's somewhat pessimistic terms, the evocation of day dreams that the gambling hall offered represented consumer society taken to its illusory edge for those marginalised. However, in the undertone of the dream of realism and resignation, there was a desire to relate in different ways to the world and to human others. Lone hoped for a romantic relationship. Lene comforted herself with the caring friendships in the gambling hall whilst somehow anticipating similar ones in the future in a different settings; and Poul, Irene, Mary and Anne, who like many others had a deep fascination for the entertainment features of the gambling machine, also longed for more creative fulfilment. Moreover, some were actually beginning to extract themselves from the sticky webs of the gambling hall by taking up dancing or painting or going to the theatre.

Yet the gambling hall continues to be a symbol of hope, which evokes illusio and calls on citizen consumers to gamble by installing a state-regulated opportunity to take risks as part of one's daily consumption. As such, we may see them as multi-meaning symbols bringing about a new moral order in being a consumer, where the values of thrift and modesty have been replaced by a more casual attitude to money. Generally speaking, material objects of consumption are not only valued for their immediate quality and function, but also for the process of self-expression that comes with a certain product, design or

brand, as Douglas and Crapanzano have both pointed out. But as Crapanzano argues, there may be another process going on where an ironical or even cynical self-understanding ensures the masking or mystification of the product (Crapanzano 2003: 20). According to Crapanzano, the Melanesian cargo cults of the 1940s were an example of such a process, where moral and spiritual dilemmas were at stake for people who participated in anticipation of the arrival of containers loaded with western consumer goods. In my discussions of the gambling hall as a ritual place and process of the consumption of chance, I have implied that such halls may be seen as a kind of cult of consumption. The jackpot symbol at work in the gambling process offered the possibility of solutions in a specific kind of mass evocation somewhat similar to the Melanesian 'Cargo expectation' in Crapanzano's reading (ibid.: 24). For Anne, Lone, Ahmet, Poul and the rest of my informants, the evocation of what I have termed 'jackpot expectation' sometimes became a process in which they sought solutions to their current problems and concerns of everyday life.

My anthropological position has been to see my informants primarily as humans and their situation as open, despite the closed nature of the 'ludomania' category. In this position, I have drawn on a particular branch of anthropological theory regarding mundane rituals, as well as on theories of hope and anthropology of knowledge with particular reference to disease categories and their reproduction.

Contribution to addiction/pathology

When we write our ethnographies, we need to consider how we as anthropologists describe and analyse humans and their engagement in particular social and cultural processes. In the context of my work, it has not made sense to speak of gambling as either pathological or non-pathological. Likewise, it has not made sense to discriminate between persons as either pathological gamblers or non-pathological gamblers, since the problem per se was not, as far as my informants and I were concerned, a medical category or diagnosis of an *indifferent kind* that could be located in the body. It was rather a problem arising out of intersubjective processes in the environment.

If gambling is currently seen within the framework of either a medical model of pathology or a commercial model where gambling is a legitimate entertainment com-

modity, as Reith has suggested (Reith 2003: 22), then the medical model is the only one offering an explanation of the problems that people experience in gambling. However, there is no evidence in my work that the problematic consequences that gambling creates for some people calls for either a medical model of explanation, nor for an outright denial of the dangers of commodity gambling. Gambling has always been seen either as an extraordinary niche in everyday life that serves a socially integrative purpose, or as a deviant process, and now as a pathological process. In my work, I have tried not to associate it with either position by refraining from measuring the characteristics of my informants or their conduct against current ideas of the normative. Instead, I have pursued a discussion of the contemporary use of gambling halls in the context of my informants' concerns of everyday life in our consumer society.

By turning illicit gambling into a legitimate commodity, the state has created a situation in which my informants found themselves to be at once pointed out as deviant 'ludomaniacs' – that is, as sick or irrational consumers – yet following the calls of the state and the gambling industry to participate in the consumption of chance. When people used the term 'ludomania' as a synonym for 'gambling', especially for pathological gambling, then this reflected this state of affairs. I will discuss the 'ludomania' category of official pathology in more detail, but before I do so I will expand a little on experiences of the dangers of gambling as seen from the perspectives of my informants, as well as in the light of my own discussions.

The dangers of gambling with gambling machines

In my discussions of the gambling hall as a liminal and liminoid place and process, it appears that what my informants termed 'addiction' and 'danger', and what some might see as a pathology resulting from over-involvement, might better be understood as adaptations to the conditions of everyday life joined to specific features of the gambling environment. When Poul, Bodil, Lone, Jørgen and others talked about 'addiction', they were consistently referring to states of being that they had experienced in the gambling hall. Poul talked about his 'addiction to a moment's peace and quiet', Jørgen called it an 'addiction to a problem free space', and Bodil, Lone and others saw in their 'addiction' to the gambling hall their dependence on the companionship of fellow humans. In the liminal and liminoid process of gambling, they were all set apart from their ordinary everyday lives for a while.

Here they achieved peace of mind and they were entertained. However, they were also led into a wilderness by a combination of their own hopes and the opportunities for chance and luck, where they often lost their sense of orientation. What exactly went wrong in the gambling hall?

What Poul, Lone, Jørgen, Bodil and others referred to as the 'addiction' and 'danger' of gambling resided at once in their own participation and in what the gambling hall had to offer in terms of entertainment, including how this worked on the human body. The effects on the human senses of the material surroundings, such as the darkness and the flickering and glowing lights in combination with the electronic sounds, provided a sense of warmth in a secluded atmosphere. The experience of the suspension of ordinary clock time was partly a consequence of this. However, it was also due to games in the gambling machines that had no or very open endings, and consequently leaving it all up to the player to estimate his or her chances. Sometimes this was an impossible or overwhelming task because, in the logic of gambling, there was a demand to lose one's control of time as well as of one's money.

The promise of a transformation of one's financial status inherent in the 'Repayment Percentage' and the multiple meanings of money that appeared in the process of gambling caused bewilderment in one's mind about the sources, destinies, morals and purposes of money. To most of my informants, the rules of play belonged to a secret and mystical domain to which they did not have access. Yet they sometimes optimistically, sometimes routinely, accepted the sovereignty of randomness as part of the game, even though they were looking for fairness. As customers inserted money in the gambling machine, it became a measure of time and therefore fuelled a hope of being rewarded according to one's efforts. In the short term, the measure of success was a big handful of 'lucky twenties' rolling in the payout tray, and people invested more than they won to have this somewhat sensational experience. Some preferred gambling machines with high payouts, even though these 'hard-core' gambling machines, as one manager called them, offered payouts less frequently. Consequently, the stakes often became higher in such gambling machines because more money was needed to keep the wheels turning, and customers waited longer for a win. Thus being linked to the vagaries of chance, money also underpinned a relationship with unknown forces of randomness pertaining to unpredictability on bad days and to luck on good days. The visualisation of chances in the diagrams of games drew the players

ever closer to this system of premises. In Bateson's terminology, this accounts for the elusiveness in the play frame in which parallel processes of realism as well as fantasy, of truth as well as untruth, of play as well as non-play are going on. This 'addictive realism', as Bateson calls it, often caught players in the gambling hall in endless games with nothing or no one to remind them that there was another order of reality than the one in the gambling hall.

This premise system of play in the gambling hall constituted a risk of getting lost in other ways than through the fascination with luck and chance. The fascination with play was also a fascination with the perceived responsiveness of the gambling machine, the working of symbols on one's senses, or the idea that one might manipulate one's chances. In playing along in a kind of ritualistic process of repetitious interactions with the gambling machine, one might have a sense of controlling events without realising that one's being had become submerged with the logic of the gambling machine. One's being as a human kind had in a way ceased, as Ingold and Willerslev write of the hunter, who may lose himself in his prey in the hunt. Just as a hunter looks, listens and smells his prey, so the player in the gambling hall might at times be engaged in an almost ritualistic activity of 'reading' and listening to the gambling machines in order to come even closer to his or her luck.

The premise system of the gambling machines and the working of the material environment of the gambling hall on the body is one thing. However, another important aspect I have discussed throughout the thesis is the marginal position of my informants as relatively poor consumers, for whom the gambling hall provides an opportunity to experience themselves as consumers making choices out of their own free will, as well as representing hopes for a better life altogether. Perhaps this combination of the premise system of the gambling hall with the position of my informants was the ultimate danger in gambling. Stakes in what some occasionally saw as the 'social' and 'friendly' gambling hall may become very high due to the rapidly turning wheels in 'hard-core' gambling machines, and with the legal rules of play guaranteeing a profit to both the gambling industry and the state, players risk ruin.

Perhaps they are in a similar situation to the *zaria* players in Crete that Malaby describes (Malaby 2003: 121-122). Here players throw dice in a bazaar-like atmosphere of frenetic motion and sound with high stakes and high emotional involvement – a game

based purely on chance (ibid.). According to Malaby, the premise system of the game draw players into a state where they keep betting with higher and higher stakes, risking ruin. However, this alone does not explain the kind of obsession that Malaby detected in players. Malaby observed that many of the Chaniot *zaria* gamblers were marginalised and might acquire the experience of self-confidence by participating in the game (ibid.: 132). Thus, the combination of what Malaby terms the 'cruel chance' element in a game with the enormous risk of ruin with the liminal position of the players might account for the game's dangers. As I have implied throughout in relation to my own work, the combination of chance and relative poverty was a dangerous cocktail for my informants – the consumers of chance.

'Ludomania' is interactive

As implied above, the gambling machine came to represent a friendly *giver-Other* in terms of payouts and a friendly *companion-Other* alongside fellow human others in the gambling hall, perhaps even a vision of a life companion. Hence, when the gambling hall became a social centre for human interaction and community in which the gambling machine in a way became a part of one's social network, then this involved the risk of becoming attached to the gambling hall.

The dangers of gambling I have pointed out make probable that these were at once interactive and intersubjective. They were interactive as actions being played out among customers themselves, as well as between customers and the environment. They were intersubjective in the sense of constituting a number of subject others in the process of gambling. There were positive others like *lover-Other*, but there were also more negative others like *devil-Other* and *monster-Other*, which were evoked in the body of the player by the entertainment aspects of the gambling hall. Hence, the gambling hall constituted a place and process of the becoming of others – some of which were embraced hesitantly by customers. This was at once an experience of entertainment, play and pleasure in being with oneself, the gambling machine and fellow humans in a liminal state of affairs – in communitas – and a disturbing agent of dissociation, economic ruin and loss in the gambling process.

Part of the power of the gambling process was its capacity to bring about the sensory experience of moods and motivations, but also its power to incorporate and repro-

duce ‘ludomania’ as what Hacking calls an ‘interactive kind’ embraced by a medical taxonomy of pathology (Hacking 1999: 115ff.). I have showed that currently there is an intensification of a natural science process of isolating ‘ludomania’ as a specific problem involving a particular biochemical, neurological and organic disposition, just as mad travelling, according to Hacking, was explained as a neurological condition in 1800th century France when persons who returned from extensive train journeys were treated in doctors clinics. The invitation to take a ‘ludomania’ test in the pamphlets that were distributed in the gambling hall was part of a knowledge and therapeutic regime based on the psychiatric and psychological sciences of addictive behaviour, and more particularly on medical taxonomies of pathological gambling. Hence the notion of ‘ludomania’ as a pathology reproduced gambling as a deviant and sick practice in the face of an intensified policy by the state to legalise, market and normalise gambling as a popular everyday commodity alongside other daily provisions. Consequently, customers in the gambling hall were caught up in an act that they could not wholly defend, and yet they were at the same time thrilled by the adventure of chances and their search for luck and overall improvements in their lives.

Bauman has pointed out that we live in a world characterised by dividing lines between those who are inside and those who are outside the domains of recognition (Bauman 2008: 9). In this thesis, we have seen that people who gamble cannot completely escape the ‘ludomania’ category and that they are therefore related to and relate to it in different ways. When used creatively and interactively, this warned fellow players of the dangers of gambling, as well as teasing out and invoking sentiments in the gambling hall and the family. By submitting to it, people more or less accepted the category as opening the door to treatment and professional help; by objecting to it, they protested to it as a somewhat non-human or stigmatizing category. It is thus very evident in my work what a category *does*. This is not a new discovery in anthropology, as I have also pointed at, but it is nevertheless relevant repeatedly to emphasize it in processes where stigma results from categorisation.

I have not only shown how a categorisation stigmatises and reproduces itself interactively, I have also pointed out that my informants used the means at hand to escape from victimisation as a result of their gambling problem and the stigma attached to the ‘ludomania’ label. This, I believe, is an essential part of ethnographic work, where the anthropologist tells stories about particular moments and human lives from the field (Maanen

1988; Dalsgaard 2002). It has been my personal hope that by telling these stories I have added the kind of knowledge to gambling research which mirrors important moments in everyday human lives. Such knowledge may not constitute direct advice to take action in a particular direction in the field of addiction, policy and treatment. However, the interested scholar, policy-maker or therapist may nonetheless find in my work a reflection of human life in which it is possible to see 'ludomania' as rooted in social and cultural processes, and to see 'ludomaniacs' as humans who perhaps might be 'me' in a different situation.

These descriptions and discussions could not have been made without the kind of participation through which I was left to feel my own powerlessness in seeing how customers in the gambling hall bought time with the gambling machines. Yet as a consequence they lost their money in insisting on fair play in a society where gambling has become naturalised and inevitable in our environment. By involving the reader in the lives of real people, my aim has been to share what it was like to be in the dark and secluded gambling hall, to share the frustration of financial losses, as well as the comfort of human company. Thus I have not aimed at an ultimate truth about gambling. I have aimed to create an understanding of what it is like to be human under certain conditions (Jackson 1983: 340; Dalsgaard 2002: 76; Dalsgaard 2004: 137ff), in this case in the context of pathology, gambling and relative poverty in a consumer society. Here the problem of individual control and will continues to occupy a central place in the discussions of gambling addiction as pathology that rest on the diagnostic criteria of individual risk behaviour.

A problem of the will

When the Director of the Center for Ludomani, Michael Jørsel, writes in his book *Ludomani* that 'It is much too simple and one-sided to view "ludomania" as a disease'[143] (Jørsel 2003: 81), then this statement in fact contradicts the widespread use of the 'ludomania' label as a disease category, which Jørsel in fact invented himself (ibid.: 10). Jørsel's statement also contradicts the ongoing historical process of the medicalisation of gambling, which I addressed in the introductory chapter and discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5 as a phenomenon that is reproduced interactively in the intersubjective environment of machine gambling.

In my own research process, I discovered that in the Center for Ludomani, problem gambling was viewed as a behavioural dysfunction which might be corrected with adequate behavioural therapy. In Frederiksbergcentret, the Minnesota-based institution, I met therapists who argued for some kind of disease agent independent of individual will, thus acknowledging that gambling machines has some kind of trigger effect on the brain. Despite this important difference in perceptions of problem gambling, both treatment regimes operate with an acknowledgement of a disease factor, whether based on neurochemical processes in the brain or in the individual's psychological ability to control his or her impulses.

In my own work, I have proved that risk factors in gambling are as much a result of environmental processes and conditions as ones residing inside the individual – one got lost in the gambling environment as a hunter might get lost in the hunting field. When customers lost their sense of orientation in the gambling hall, were they to blame for this state of affairs? The answer must be yes if we take the view that humans have the capacity to control or suppress their passions, emotions, desires and longings. The idea of the individual capacity of the will for self-control fit well with a contemporary over-emphasis on individualised strategies to master every aspect of one's being: money, emotions, health, food, relationships – matters that one is confronted with on an every-day basis in, for instance, TV programmes. The distance from self-monitoring and self-blame is at times ultra-short. The notion of a disease agent residing in the brain might free one from the shame of being blamed, but it also placed one in a permanent position as a deviant – once a 'ludomaniac', always a 'ludomaniac'.

[143] *Det er alt for enkelt og unuanceret at betragte ludomani som en sygdom.*

My work has tried to move beyond such simplifications by locating the risks of gambling in processes in the environment. By suggesting that people were in fact using gambling partly as a means of retaining some sense of control over their lives, I have moved the discussion of the problems of gambling into the context of everyday life in contemporary consumer society. If Goffman is right that gambling is a problem of habit, one in which people are at least momentarily fulfilled in their search for autonomy and self-determination, then it may be seen as one of the existential conditions in human life: one needs to have a sense of being in control in order to feel human. In the gambling hall, this was played out in dramas of character and status concerns in the gambling process.

Furthermore, if the environment and gambling machines are humanised not only by the customers, who take gambling machines as sorts of friends, but also by the gambling industry, which designs gambling machines with human characteristics, then the marginal, the 'dream hall', is moved to the centre of human life. The problem of control that Lesieur points to as a 'spiral of option and involvement' (ibid.: 1-23, 217-240) in gambling has in my discussions been expanded to include not only financial gain, but the entire aspect of recognized being in contemporary consumer society. Therefore, if 'ludomania' exists as pathology, perhaps it is rather a kind of madness not pertaining to individuals but as I have discussed in relation to Kirsten Hastrup's analysis of Macbeth, a madness of the environment (Hastrup 2008).

However, the historical process of defining more and more problems of individuals' as psychiatric diagnoses continues. Thus from 1987 to 1994 the number of psychiatric diagnoses incorporated into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders increased from approximately 179 to 221 in the main categories, and from 160 to 220 in the subcategories (Association 1987; Association 1994). It has been argued that this historical process is being followed by an increasing tendency to treat, for instance, addictive states with neurochemical substances. Valverde, for instance, has demonstrated that in alcohol addiction research the inclusion of explanations invoking neurochemical processes in the brain underlines the disease model of alcoholism (Valverde 1998); and more recently she has argued that what she calls 'disorderly consumption' such as drinking is increasingly being managed by smart drugs like naltrexone (Valverde 2007: 169). This tendency to treat addiction as a problem of neurochemical processes in the brain is now also present

in the treatment of gambling (Grant 2006). This makes it even more relevant to pinpoint the experiential and phenomenological aspects of addiction.

The critical addiction psychologist Stanton Peele acknowledges that gambling is addictive in the sense that people may become completely absorbed in it and may pursue it in a self-destructive manner (Peele 2003: 211), but he also dismisses the idea that neurochemical adaptation can account for observed compulsive behaviour (ibid.). Thus according to both Valverde and Peele, the disease model of addiction relies on the notion of a biological system underlying addiction and is therefore thought to be irreversible. I have discussed the pathological model as what Hacking terms *indifferent kinds* – that is, as a disease agent, which is indifferent to the context in which it is present (Hacking 1999: 104-106). If such an indifferent kind actually existed, then some people should show symptoms of a distinct addiction syndrome, which according to both Peele and Lloyd has not yet been found (Peele 2000: 213; Lloyd 2002: 161).

When some of my informants referred to categories like 'monsters' and 'devils' as being partly responsible for their gambling behaviour, they were relying on a notion of some sort of disease agent residing in their bodies, perhaps out of convenience in trying to escape individual shame, guilt or responsibility for their situation. However, 'monsters' and 'devils' can hardly be said to be indifferent but rather interactive kinds, as I have discussed. Furthermore 'monsters' and 'devils' point to an obvious problem with the sensitivity of the body in interaction with the entertainment features of the gambling hall. In the experience of the players, the gambling machine does in fact interact directly with the human flesh in keeping with informants' categories: these 'monsters' and 'devils' 'fuck' their human bodies with their gambling machine 'eyes'.

I have heard representatives from the gambling business state that there are obviously people with problems who gamble and that the gambling industry cannot be held responsible for this – a view that has also been noted by Reith (Reith 1999: 22). The medical model of gambling primarily seeks solutions in therapy after everything has gone wrong for the individual. My own work suggests that the problematic consequences of gambling are created in a highly interactive environment, suggesting that 'ludomania' should be seen as much as an environmental madness, and therefore that solutions should be found there and applied there.

When gambling resulted in robbery, embezzlement, divorce and suicidal behaviour, following my argument, these were brought about by a gambling environment in which players were struggling to retain a sense of autonomy, dignity and faith in fair play as they gambled. As we have seen, people did not entirely welcome their embracing gambling halls, and some tried to escape them by moving to a home further away from such halls. Such an action, together with kicking gambling machines out of anger and irritation, as well as stealing money in order to be able to feed gambling machines, may be seen as a protest to the absence of fair play in the gambling hall. However, the body in the gambling hall was an open body, receptive and susceptible to the stimuli of the environment, and it might be seduced, when the gambling hall played on this sensitivity of the body and its imaginary capabilities.

Where now?

Understanding a phenomenon along academic anthropological lines as laid out in this thesis perhaps makes it even harder to take action on the problems of gambling in the here and now because it calls for solutions at several levels: the individual, the local community, business and legal/governmental. However, in probing into a few issues of concern in respect of change in the question of problem gambling, this may serve the interested politician, policy-maker, therapist or individual with gambling problems to reflect on what might be done.

The evidence I have put forward in this thesis may indicate a demand in residential areas for informal meeting places. Other anthropologists who have worked in suburban residential areas similar to my own field in Århus have noted a great many formalised activities with specific objectives (Lund, Christensen et al. 2002: 170ff.). We might rightfully ask, however, if more are needed overall or if there is a demand for more walk-in, informal meeting places, such as small cultural centres with options for play, creativity and recreational work, where one may participate on a non-membership basis as in gambling halls. In light of the evidence of what gambling does to the human body, it may also be an occasion to ask whether therapeutic intervention incorporates the sensory perspective – the body in its solutions? A third question that may be raised is whether the legal premise

system in gambling is suited to protecting customers from the illusion of fair play in using gambling machines? If such protection is appropriate, it should be directed at the premise system of gambling, not just at the individual customer's inability to control his or her impulses.

If I have succeeded in my descriptions of the gambling hall and of 'ludomania', then it should by now have become clear that it is not possible to imagine 'getting burned on to the gambling machine', as Ahmet and others phrased it, is a very pleasant experience. Nor is it possible to imagine that being labelled a 'ludomaniac' and being exposed to therapy to control ones behaviour are nice experiences in one's life. Yet there is something very life-conforming in everything I have witnessed. Maybe the evident weaknesses and longings manifested by people who gamble helps the rest of us see how far we are willing to go in our insistence on fair play, in belonging to the human community, and not least in our recognition as worthy citizens and consumers.

We live in a world where risks in the environment are increasingly being seen as risks in individual behaviour. This kind of thinking emphasises a dividing line between those who act within the norms of behaviour, where self-control in the face of temptations or dangers in the environment of, for instance, consumption is a virtue, and those who fall outside that line and defined in terms of pathological criteria. Were my informants victims? I did not meet anyone who saw himself or herself wholly as a victim, and everyone acknowledged individual responsibility. Yet they felt trapped in circumstances that they experienced as being beyond their individual control.

When Niklas said 'We are all 'ludomaniacs' and another player said that 'There are no 'ludomaniacs', they were in a sense saying the same thing. Either there are no 'ludomaniacs' or we are all 'ludomaniacs' – that is, we are all the same (humans), and therefore such categories are discriminatory and nonsensical. We need to ask ourselves whether we really must overcome the problems that gambling obviously creates for many of those who engage in it by controlling, labelling and treating individuals, or whether we need to look at the situation from a different perspective. Are gambling halls a fair way to tax the poor? Does our society create or even encourage a consumer ethics of gambling? How can we expect customers in gambling halls to continue to know their place as addicts and 'ludomaniacs', that is, as normalised outsiders?

Appendix

List of persons appearing in the thesis

The list provides a few socio-demographic facts about persons appearing in the thesis, where I met them and how much I talked with them.

All names are pseudonyms.

Ahmet: age 27, unemployed, has a girlfriend. Met him once in the gambling hall, where I had a long conversation with him while he gambled.

Alexander: age around 30, married, children, workman. Talked to him twice and saw him on several occasions in the gambling hall.

Anne: age 30, has a boyfriend, unemployed. Met her in a treatment centre therapy group; interviewed her twice in a café and four times in her home.

Ankar: age 30, Middle East origin, cleaning job, married and has a baby son. Met him twice in the gambling hall, where I talked with him while he gambled and we did a joint gambling session.

Bent: age 30, employed as a chef. Met him at a gambling machine business conference, where he gave a speech on his life history as a 'ludomaniac'.

Bo: age 31, unemployed when I met him, but employed in a bakery by the end of the research period. Met him in a treatment centre self-help group; interviewed him once in a café, once in my office, once in a treatment centre and once in my home.

Bodil: age 32, works as a social worker, has a boyfriend. Met her once in the gambling hall, where I had a long conversation with her while she gambled.

Christa: age around 60. Saw her in the gambling hall several times, brief conversations with her.

Erik: age around 60. Saw him in the gambling hall once when he required Ankar's assistance.

Ghanim: age 58, unemployed, Middle East origin, divorced, two adult children. Met him several times in the gambling hall, where I talked with him.

Habib: age 38, Middle East origin, unemployed, divorced, one adolescent child. Met him once in the gambling hall and talked to him for two hours in his home.

Hans: age 32, workman, a friend of Benedicte. Met him twice in the gambling hall, where I held long conversations with him.

Hazim: age 38, Middle East origin, unemployed, married, two adolescent children. Met him once in the gambling hall, where I held an hour-long conversation with him.

Irene: age 65, pensioner, two adult children. Met her in a treatment centre therapy group; talked to her once in a café and twice on the telephone.

Jabir: age 41, Middle East origin, unemployed, divorced, two young children. Met him in the gambling hall; interviewed him in once in a café and once in his home.

Jan: age 30, workman. Met him in a treatment centre therapy group.

Jang: age 33, Chinese origin, workman. Met him in the gambling hall; had a long conversation with him once while he was gambling.

Jørgen: age 30, workman. Met him in a treatment centre therapy group; interviewed him once in his home.

Johan: age 34, unemployed. Met him in a treatment centre therapy group.

John: age around 30, workman. Saw him once in the gambling hall, which he was attending with Peter and Tom.

Karl: age 63, retired workman. Met him in a treatment centre.

Leif: age 53, present almost every time I visited the gambling hall. Conducted small talk with him, and watched him in action.

Lene: age 60, pensioner, divorced, two adult children. Met her in a treatment centre self-help group; interviewed her once in the treatment centre and once in a café.

Lone: age 32, on long-term sick leave, divorced, living with her two adolescent children. Met her via Anne, interviewed her twice in her home and talked to her when I saw her in the gambling hall.

Mary: age 30, immigrant from Thailand, unemployed when I met her, but just found unskilled work in a warehouse at the end of the research period. Met her in a treatment centre therapy group; interviewed her once in her home and once in a bar.

Mette: age around 30, unknown occupation. Met her once in the gambling hall, and talked to her while she was gambling.

Nadim: age 27, Middle East origin, unemployed. Met him several times in the gambling hall, and talked to him for hours while he gambled.

Niklas: age 32, workman. Met him in the gambling twice, and conducted small talk with him while he gambled.

Peter: age around 30, workman. Saw him once in the gambling hall, which he was attending with Tom and John.

Ove: age 47. Met him in a treatment centre and talked to him on the phone once.

Poul: age 60, retired workman. Met him in a treatment centre self-help group; interviewed him once in the treatment centre.

Qasim: age 30, Middle East origin, unemployed. Met him in the gambling hall twice, and talked with him about his life while he was gambling.

Steen: age 24, student. Met him in a treatment centre; interviewed him once in his home.

Tobias: age 30, workman. Met him in the gambling hall twice, and talked to him while he was gambling.

Tom: age around 30, workman. Saw him once in the gambling hall when he was attending together with Peter and John.

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